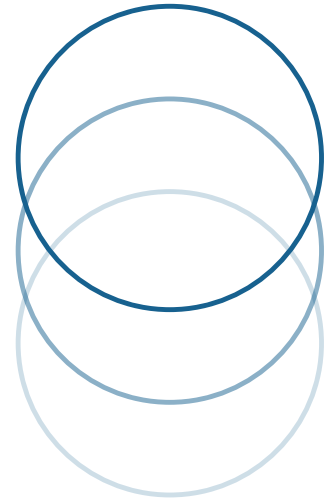




HELP-O
SRI LANKA



2024 NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER





ABOUT US

HELP-O is a non-governmental organization (NGO) established in 1992 to serve the local community by making it a better, happier place to live in harmony with nature.

The vision of the organization is "Equitable Economic Development, Social Justice, and a Safer Environment for All," while the mission is "To identify the risks confronted by Sri Lankan communities and implement effective solutions through proven integrated approaches with the participation of stakeholders."

The five strategies HELP-O adopts in achieving its mission include empowering the marginalized community socially and economically, recognizing the importance of community participation and leadership, dedicating efforts to protecting the environment through an integrated process, safeguarding human rights and justice, and ensuring sustainable development.

Our programs and projects mainly focus on community empowerment, rehabilitation, relief assistance, protecting human rights, community participation in local governance, community financing, livelihood development, economic resource mobilization, nurturing biodiversity, mitigating the impact of climate change, pollution prevention, waste management, optimal utilization of marine resources, and optimal utilization of forest products.

Our organization is dedicated to making a sustainable positive impact on the environment and the lives of people in Sri Lanka through a multisectoral approach in different sectors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** **Empowering Communities Through Technology: The e-Sabha Revolution- Hambantota District**
- 02** **Little Hands, Big Impact: Mahamaya Girls' College Cleans Up Hikkaduwa Beach**
- 03** **Global Plastics Treaty and Discussion on Galle Municipal Council Integrated Waste Management Plan**
- 04** **A discussion to review the progress of the Weligama Pradeshiya Sabha's right to voice project was held at the council premises.**
- 05** **One-Day Workshop: Empowering Community Investigators to Promote e-Sabha Mobile Application and Participatory Governance - Galle District**
- 06** **A progress review discussion on the Right to Voice project was held at the Matara Municipal Council**
- 07** **Awareness Program on the e-Sabha Application Held in Bentota**
- 08** **Supplementary Nutritional Feeding Program Achieves Success at German Sri Lanka Friendship Women's Hospital, Galle, Karapitiya**
- 09** **HELP-O Participation at the 13th Asia Smart City Conference: "Advancing Decarbonization and SDG Localization"**

Empowering Communities Through Technology: The e-Sabha Revolution- Hambantota District

In a world where technology increasingly shapes our lives, local governance in Sri Lanka is taking a digital leap with the E-Sabha app. This innovative platform bridges the gap between citizens and local authorities, offering a seamless way to report issues, access services, and engage with community development. The app's rollout has been met with enthusiasm across various sectors, with inspiring stories of its introduction emerging from the Hambantota District.



A Step Forward at Katuwana Pradeshiya Sabha



The staff of the Katuwana Pradeshiya Sabha were among the first to embrace this transformative tool. On November 18, 2024, the Secretary of the Katuwana Pradeshiya Sabha unveiled the E-Sabha app, highlighting its potential to revolutionize public service delivery. The session sparked curiosity and optimism, setting the stage for more efficient administrative processes in local governance.

Women Leading the Way

On November 19, 2024, the women of the Nawinna Jesmine Women's Organization gathered to explore the app's potential under the guidance of Mrs. Nasmiya Ahamad. With a hands-on demonstration, participants learned how to download and navigate the app. Their excitement was palpable as they discovered how this tool could amplify their voices and streamline access to essential services.



Bridging Technology and Business

The journey of E-Sabha didn't stop at administrative offices. On November 11, 2024, it reached the commercial heart of Katuwana. The app was introduced to staff at the People's Bank, Bank of Ceylon, and owners of local grocery shops. The Secretary of the Katuwana Pradeshiya Sabha showcased the app's ability to make complaint reporting and service requests faster and more transparent, inspiring businesses to adopt this digital solution.

From Concern to Action

The E-Sabha app's real-world impact became evident when a citizen visited the Katuwana Pradeshiya Sabha to report a dangerous tree threatening public safety. Mrs. Supun Sandamali, Secretary of the Hambantota Right to Voice Project, introduced the app to the concerned individual, empowering them to submit their complaint digitally. This incident demonstrated the app's ability to respond to community needs effectively.



The Aruna Friends Club Embrace the Future



The Aruna Friends Club welcomed the E-Sabha app on October 27, 2024. Mr. N.V.P. Upali, Treasurer of the District CBO Forum, led an engaging session for club members, emphasizing the app's role in promoting active citizenship. The members expressed excitement about how the app could enhance their involvement in local governance.



Denipitiya Sanasa Society Goes Digital

The introduction of the E-Sabha app reached the grassroots level with the Denipitiya Sanasa Society. Mrs. Dilhani Eshwara Arachchi, Secretary of the Provincial CBO Forum, guided the society's Manager and Field Officer through the app's download and usage. Their readiness to adopt the app reflects the growing recognition of technology's role in strengthening community networks.

A Path to Inclusive Governance

The rollout of the E-Sabha app across diverse sectors demonstrates its versatility and promise. From government offices to grassroots organizations and community clubs, this platform is transforming how people interact with local governance. By making services more accessible and responsive, E-Sabha is paving the way for a future where every citizen can actively participate in building a better, more connected community.



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Little Hands, Big Impact: Mahamaya Girls' College Cleans Up Hikkaduwa Beach

On 20th November, the students of Mahamaya Girls' College, Hikkaduwa, joined hands with environmental organizations to lead a remarkable initiative promoting coastal conservation. The program, organized by the Negombo Recycling Club (NRC) and Janathakshan, with support from HELP-O, also saw the active participation of the Environment Officer from the Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat.

The day commenced with an energetic awareness walk from the school to the Hikkaduwa beach. Students carried banners and placards featuring powerful messages about the dangers of marine pollution and the importance of sustainable waste management. Their march through the town turned heads and spurred conversations, drawing attention from locals and tourists to the growing issue of environmental degradation.

The program continued with a hands-on beach cleanup, where students, guided by HELP-O volunteers, diligently worked to remove litter strewn across the shoreline. Large amounts of plastic waste, fishing gear, and other debris were cleared, significantly improving the appearance and ecological health of the area. The cleanup also served as a practical lesson for the students on the impact of pollution and the importance of collective action in addressing such challenges.



The involvement of the Environment Officer from the Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat added an official touch to the event. They emphasized the importance of community-driven conservation efforts and commended the students' enthusiasm, highlighting their role in shaping a more sustainable future.

This initiative demonstrated the power of partnerships between schools, local authorities, and environmental organizations. Beyond the immediate impact of cleaning the beach, the program cultivated environmental awareness and responsibility among young participants, inspiring them to become advocates for change in their communities.



Through their actions, the students of Mahamaya Girls' College sent a strong message about the importance of preserving Sri Lanka's natural beauty for future generations, leaving an indelible mark on the community and its surroundings.



Global Plastics Treaty and Discussion on Galle Municipal Council Integrated Waste Management Plan

A significant dialogue program aimed at raising awareness and fostering collaboration on the Global Plastics Convention, Plastic Waste Management, and the Galle Municipal Council's Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan (2024-2030) took place at the Galle Hasara Hotel on 22nd of November, 2024. The event brought together a diverse group of participants, including government officials, private institutions, community leaders, and NGOs.

Prominent attendees included the Secretary to the Chief Ministry of the Southern Province, Mr. Krishantha Mahendra, and the District Director of the Central Environmental Authority, Mr. Samaratunga. Representatives from the Galle Municipal Council, university delegates, Lions Club members, and business leaders also joined the program, showcasing a collective commitment to addressing plastic waste challenges.

The event was organized by HELP-O in collaboration with the Environmental Justice Center. Key contributors from HELP-O included CEO Dr. Chathuru Welivitiya, Vice Chairman and former Ministry Secretary Dr. Sirisena Deshapriya, Project Advisor and former Ministry Secretary Dr. Ashoka Siriwardena, and Project Manager Lahiru Udumalagala. Environmental Justice Center representatives, including Director Sesath Jayakody and Environmental Manager Indika Rajapaksa, also played vital roles in the initiative.

This program emphasized education, partnership, and actionable strategies to advance sustainable waste management and reduce plastic pollution in Galle City.





e-Sabha Progress Review Discussion- Weligama Pradeshiya Sabha

On 26th November 2024, the Weligama Pradeshiya Sabha held a discussion to assess the progress of the Right to Voice Project, with a special focus on the e-Sabha application. This platform has played a pivotal role in strengthening citizen engagement and transparency within the community.



Key Achievements of the weligama PS:

1. Enhanced Public Awareness:

- The Sabha included e-Sabha promotional messages in over 20,000 publicity leaflets distributed alongside garbage management campaigns.

2. Inclusive Religious Outreach:

- Awareness about e-Sabha was shared in churches during religious sermons, with announcements provided in Tamil to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all communities.

3. Increased Complaint Management:

- The application now handles an average of 10-15 complaints daily, showcasing its growing adoption and relevance in addressing public concerns.

4. Budget Integration:

- Budget proposals submitted through e-Sabha have been actively incorporated into the upcoming budget, reflecting a participatory approach to governance.

Acknowledgments:

The exceptional dedication of the Secretary of the Weligama Pradeshiya Sabha has been instrumental in these achievements. Special commendations are also due to the Community Development Officer and e-Sabha Administrator for their steadfast commitment to driving this initiative forward.



This discussion underscored the remarkable strides made under the Right to Voice Project, positioning Weligama as a model for community-centered governance.

One-Day Workshop: Empowering Community investigators to Promote e-Sabha Mobile Application and Participatory Governance - Galle District

HELP-O successfully conducted a transformative one-day workshop under the Right to Voice Project Programme, dedicated to training community leaders. Held on 27th of November 2024 at Aradhana Hotel in Galle, the workshop served as a platform to empower these leaders to champion the e-Sabha mobile application and promote participatory governance.



The event was honored by the presence of the Honorable Governor of the Southern Province, Mr. Bandula Harischandra, who extended his unwavering support to the initiative. In a further testament to the program's importance, Ms. Sheila Richards, Head of the Bolstering Civil Society Programme, graced the occasion as a special guest.

Prominent officials from the Southern Province also attended, including the Secretary to the Chief Ministry, the Local Government Commissioner, and the Assistant Secretary. Their engagement highlighted the collaborative effort required to foster a more inclusive and responsive governance system.

Key contributors to the program included HELP-O CEO Dr. Chathura Welivitiya, Deputy Chairman Dr. Sirisena Desapriya, and project consultant Mr. Asoka Siriwardena, whose experience in diplomacy and reconciliation added great value to the discussions.

This workshop is another step toward creating a vibrant and empowered citizenry. Together, we aim to bridge the gap between communities and governance, paving the way for a brighter, more participatory future.

HELP-O remains steadfast in its mission to strengthen community voices and drive impactful change through innovation and collaboration.





A progress review discussion on the Right to Voice project was held at the Matara Municipal Council

A progress review meeting for the Right to Voice Project was held on 29th November 2024 at the Matara Municipal Council premises. The primary focus of the discussion was the effective management of complaints received through the e-Sabha application, which has significantly enhanced citizen engagement in governance.



Key Areas of Discussion

1. Awareness Raising through Community Committees

- The meeting highlighted efforts to increase public understanding of the e-Sabha application by engaging community committees in outreach activities.

1. Awareness Raising of Community Boards

- Progress was also reviewed in mobilizing community boards to educate citizens on the application's role in facilitating participatory governance.

1. Task Sharing Among Departments

- Emphasis was placed on the efficient division of responsibilities across municipal departments to ensure swift resolution of complaints.

Achievements and Acknowledgments

The new progress made in these areas was commended, reflecting the dedication of the key officials involved. Special recognition was given to the Municipal Commissioner, Community Development Officer, and e-Sabha Administrator for their unwavering commitment to improving community services and fostering transparency.

This meeting underscored the positive impact of the Right to Voice Project, setting a benchmark for inclusive and efficient governance in Matara.



Awareness Program on the e-Sabha Application Held in Bentota

On 30th November 2024, the Bentota Community Organization Group, under the Right to Voice initiative, hosted an awareness program to promote the e-Sabha application. Held at the Induruwa Galagama Grama Seva Office, the event highlighted the app's benefits and encouraged active participation from the local community. The session aimed to empower residents by fostering better engagement with local governance and services.



Promoting eSabha: Training for Early Childhood Teachers

A training session aimed at popularizing the eSabha mobile application was conducted on November 30, 2024, targeting sixty female teachers from early childhood development institutions in the Bentota Pradeshiya Sabha area. The event, organized by the Bentota Community Organization Forum, sought to enhance awareness and adoption of the app, which facilitates communication and engagement within local communities.

This initiative reflects efforts to integrate digital tools into community development and empower educators with modern platforms for better collaboration.



Supplementary Nutritional Feeding Program Achieves Success at German Sri Lanka Friendship Women's Hospital, Galle, Karapitiya

The supplementary nutritional feeding program, launched on October 1st at the German Sri Lanka Friendship Women's Hospital in Galle, Karapitiya, is progressing successfully. The program, supported by Mr. Krishantha Mahendra, Secretary of the Southern Provincial Chief Ministry, and Mr. Arjuna Velaratne, Secretary of the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture, has seen a significant rise in patients participating, with an increasing number of inpatients consuming breakfast daily.



Dr. Thilini Athukorala, a nutritionist, led a workshop to emphasize the importance of breakfast and nutrition, which has contributed to growing awareness. The program is praised for the respectful manner in which patients receive the food, regardless of their social status. The hospital staff, led by Dr. Somaratne, have shown remarkable dedication, and support from local businesses, voluntary organizations, lion clubs, community leaders, and the Karapitiya Faculty of Medicine has been instrumental.

For those wishing to contribute, you can contact:

- Dr. Chathura Welivitiya: 0773737824
- Mr. Saman Athukorala: 0777909192
- Mr. Suranga: 0718656804 (Women's Hospital)



HELP-O Participation at the 13th Asia Smart City Conference: “Advancing Decarbonization and SDG Localization”

HELP-O had the privilege of participating virtually in the 13th Asia Smart City Conference (ASCC), held from October 22–24, 2024, in Yokohama City, Japan. Under the theme of “Decarbonization,” the conference brought together nearly 2,200 participants from 46 countries, including Asian cities, international organizations, private companies, academic institutions, and other key stakeholders.

The event featured 18 sessions led by prominent experts, focusing on innovative solutions to decarbonization challenges and visions for sustainable growth. A key milestone achieved during the conference was the declaration of a partnership between 39 overseas cities and government organizations, reinforcing collaborative efforts toward achieving decarbonization in Asia.



As a CityNet SDG Cluster Co-lead, HELP-O proudly showcased case studies from Galle City. The Director (Urban Planning), presented the organization’s key initiatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during a virtual presentation. Our contribution highlighted the importance of strengthening city-to-city networks by promoting synergies between SDG localization and climate action. This aligns with our mission to foster sustainable development and advance climate action in the Asia-Pacific region.



The conference also served as an opportunity for meaningful exchanges, with participants sharing cutting-edge knowledge and exploring pathways to a sustainable future.

CityNet SDGs Cluster Seminar 2024

Synergies of SDGs and Climate Action

- Promoting the SDGs through City Networks -

Agenda & Speakers

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| 13:10-13:20 | Opening Session / Overall Explanation | 14:10-15:00 | Discussion Session, Q & A |
|  | Opening Remark: Hiroataka Sato Deputy Mayor, City of Yokohama |  | Moderator : Junichi Fujino Affiliation Principal Researcher / Programme Director of Integrated Sustainability Centre, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) |
| 13:20-13:30 | Keynote Speech |  | Panelist : Chris DiGennaro Senior Program Officer, CityNet Secretariat |
|  | Speaker / Panelist : Omar Siddique Lead, City Climate Action and SDGs Localization, Sustainable Urban Development Section, ESCAP |  | Panelist : Donna R. Tabangin City Planning and Development Coordinator, City of Baguio, Philippines |
| *In addition, speakers from ESCAP and SDGs Cluster Leads City will take the stage as panelists. | | | |
| 13:30-14:10 | Initiatives Presentation by the SDGs Cluster Leads/Co Leads | 15:00-15:05 | Closing Session |
| <p>[SDGs Cluster Leads]</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>  <p>Speaker / Panelist : Tadahiro Saegusa Director General of the International Affairs Bureau, City of Yokohama</p> </div> <div>  <p>Speaker / Panelist : Arang Ma Manager of Evaluation, Planning and Coordination Department, Seoul Metropolitan Government</p> </div> </div> | |  <p>Rumi Kurita Head of Office, CityNet Yokohama Project Office</p> | |
| <p>[SDGs Cluster Co Leads]</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>  <p>Speaker / Panelist : Mohd Azlan Shah Bin Abdullah Deputy Director, Urban Transport Department, Kuala Lumpur City Hall</p> </div> <div>  <p>Speaker : Nadeeka Amarasinghe Director (Urban Planning) HELP-O Video Presentation</p> </div> </div> | | 15:05-15:10 | |
| | | Group Photo Session | |
| <div style="border: 2px solid #00bcd4; padding: 10px; background-color: #e0f2f1;"> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; color: #00bcd4;">CityNet Youth Activity!</p> <p>At PR booth in G3 room, you can find the achievements of CityNet youth activity. VR technology will invite you to the virtual exhibition room with works on SDGs by students from Japan and Mongolia. Please stop by there and have a look at their impressive works !!</p> </div> | | | |



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