

Concept Paper

Changing the name of the Language Societies to “Coexistence Societies”

Background

The Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages was established by the Gazette Extraordinary No.1945/40 dated 18.12. 2016.

As per the above Gazette notification the main duties and functions of the Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages are :

1. Implementation of the Official Languages Policy and the matters related therewith.
2. Introduction and implementation of national dialogue programmes to establish solidarity and co-existence between the communities.
3. By use of the national languages and the link language, providing necessary facilities for the communities to acquire a mutual understanding of their cultural, social and religious backgrounds.
4. Formulation of policies, projects and programmes relevant to the above subjects in collaboration with the affiliated institutions of the Ministry and carrying out follow up actions and appraisal.

Establishment of coexistence between different communities, religions, cultures, languages as well as marginalized groups, in a positive manner at grass root level and implementation of the Official Languages Policy can be considered as the most significant tasks among the above duties and functions.

The affiliated institution under the Ministry: the Department of Official Languages, Official Languages Commission, National Institute of Language Education and Training (NILET) and the National Secretariat for Non-governmental Organizations as well as the Coexistence Division and the Policy Development Division are currently carrying out various projects, programmes, and activities towards accomplishment of the above tasks.

At present, this Ministry has registered 2891 voluntary organizations which have been set up island wide at village level, by the name of “Language Societies”. Since the above Language Societies have been established in all districts, these Societies can be utilized to promote coexistence at grass root level and create dialogues among the Sri Lankan people belonging to diverse ethnic, religious and cultural communities. Through the said Language Societies, language training classes are conducted free of charge to teach the Tamil Language to the Sinhala Speaking people, and the Sinhala language to the Tamil speaking people. Further, financial assistance is provided by this Ministry to the Language Societies for implementation of various projects and programmes relevant to promotion of coexistence and dialogues, and implementation of the Official Languages Policy at village level.

According to the present requirement in the country and the government policies, it is essential to give priority to create a Sri Lankan Nation through promotion of coexistence among the various communities. Since establishment of the coexistence is a main task entrusted to this Ministry, by changing the name of the Language Societies to “Coexistence Societies”, the national need of establishment of coexistence can be carried out in a broader manner.

Duties and Functions

- 1) Identifying suitable programmes in collaboration with the public institutions, private sector institutions, voluntary organizations and civil society organizations which are related to establishment of coexistence and effective implementation of the Official Languages Policy at village level, and implementing thus identified programmes after obtaining approval of the Ministry.
- 2) Taking action to promote harmony and coexistence among the communities through cultural, literary and religious festivals and sports tournaments.
- 3) Implementation of promotional programmes among the people of the area in relation to teaching of Sinhala, Tamil and English languages.
- 4) Acting as a peacemaker on the occasions of unrests between the communities that disturb their coexistence, and informing the relevant public and civil parties in that regard.
- 5) Acting towards elimination of the narcotic and illegal weapon culture in the society and preventing this culture from being promoted.
- 6) Launching publicity campaigns including publicizing national coexistence and the Official Languages Policy at regional level, and conducting conversational programmes.
- 7) Participation and making contribution on the occasions of public festivals and religious activities irrespective of differences.
- 8) Promotion of means of livelihood for the small scale entrepreneurs in the area.
- 9) Socialization and provision of necessary welfare facilities, if there are marginalized groups or persons.
- 10) Monitoring implementation of the Official languages Policy, carrying out follow-up actions and reporting in that regard to the Ministry

11) In the event of violations of the Official Languages Policy, making mediation on the order of the Ministry to rectify such violations and informing the relevant institutions

Membership of a Coexistence Society

Ordinary people who are interested in promoting coexistence and learning languages.

Organizational structure

- a) Coexistence societies are established at primary level, divisional level, district level and national level. At the minimum, a basic society shall comprise 10 members and membership is open for all people of the village, irrespective of ethnic, lingual, religious and political differences. A committee bearing responsibilities of the society shall be appointed for an each of the aforesaid basic societies. In addition to the offices of Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer, 04 other members shall be appointed as committee members.

Formation of the society should be carried out under the advice of the Grama Niladhari and the Samurdhi Development Officer and under the guidance and coordination of National Integration Coordinator/Sahayaka.

The Society shall, at the minimum, convene once a month, and meeting minutes shall be kept properly.

- b) Action shall be taken to set up Divisional General Societies which shall be formed with the membership of the chairmen and the secretaries of the Basic Coexistence Societies established in Divisional Secretariat Divisions. For this society as well, a committee comprising the aforesaid offices shall be appointed and the society will function under the guidance of the Divisional Secretary.
- c) District General Societies shall consist of the chairmen and the secretaries of the Divisional Coexistence Societies. A committee comprising the aforesaid offices shall be appointed for this society as well and the society shall function under the guidance of the District Secretary.
- d) National General Coexistence Society shall convene with the membership of the Chairmen and the Secretaries of the District General Coexistence Societies. A similar committee comprising the aforesaid offices shall be appointed for the national society as well and this society shall function under the guidance and coordination of the Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages.

National General Coexistence Society

Guidance and Coordination - Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages.

Membership - Chairmen and Secretaries of all District General Coexistence Societies. A committee shall be appointed out of these members.

District General Coexistence Society

Supervision and guidance – District Secretary

Membership - Chairmen and Secretaries of all Divisional General Coexistence Societies. A committee shall be appointed out of these members.

Divisional General Coexistence Society

Supervision and guidance – Divisional Secretary

Membership - Chairmen and Secretaries of all Basic Coexistence Societies. A committee shall be appointed out of these members.

Basic Coexistence Society

Supervision and guidance – Grama Nildhari and Samurdhi Development Officer

Coordination - National Integration Coordinator/ National Integration Sahayaka.

Membership - Chairman and Secretary and all members of the Basic Coexistence Society. A committee comprising office bearers and 04 selected members shall be appointed.

Constitution of the Coexistence Society of the Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages.

- 1) Name of the Coexistence Society.....
- 2) Address.....
- 3) Telephone Number..... Email.....
- 4) District..... Divisional Secretariat Division
.....
Grama Niladhari Division.....

- 5) **Vision:** Building a Sri Lankan Nation that suffers no grief due to archaic and unfair norms such as race, religion and cast, that does not resort to armed aggression to realize political objectives, that accepts and respects pluralism, that shares political power equally, that sheds no tears due to marginalization, that treats all equally, and in which all are treated equally and live with happiness and in coexistence celebrating the Sri Lankan Identity.

- 6) **Mission:** Living in coexistence, accepting the ethnic, religious and lingual identities in the society and promoting these coexistence concepts.

7) Objectives and functions

- 1) Identifying suitable programmes in collaboration with the public institutions, private sector institutions, voluntary organizations and civil society organizations which are related to establishment of coexistence and effective implementation of the Official Languages Policy at village level, and implementing thus identified programmes after obtaining approval of the Ministry.

- 2) Taking action to promote harmony and coexistence among the communities through cultural, literary and religious festivals and sports tournaments.

- 3) Implementation of promotional programmes among the people of the area in relation to teaching of Sinhala, Tamil and English languages.

- 4) Acting as a peacemaker on the occasions of unrests between the communities that disturb their coexistence, and informing the relevant public and civil parties in that regard.

- 5) Acting towards elimination of the narcotic and illegal weapon culture in the society and preventing this culture from being promoted.

- 6) Launching publicity campaigns including publicizing national coexistence and the Official Languages Policy at regional level, and conducting conversational programmes.
- 7) Participation and making contribution on the occasions of public festivals and religious activities irrespective of differences.
- 8) Promotion of means of livelihood for the small scale entrepreneurs in the area.
- 9) Socialization and provision of necessary welfare facilities, if there are marginalized groups or persons.
- 10) Monitoring implementation of the Official languages Policy, carrying out follow-up actions and reporting in that regard to the Ministry
- 11) In the event of violations of the Official Languages Policy, making mediation on the order of the Ministry to rectify such violations and informing the relevant institutions

8) Responsibility Bearing Committee

- Chairman
- Vice chairman
- Secretary
- Deputy Secretary
- Treasurer
- Deputy Treasurer
- 04 other committee members
- Facilitator – National Integration Promotion Assistant/Coordinator, Sahayaka

9) Membership

Minimum membership is 10 members. Membership should be obtained on one's own free will with a view to fulfilling the above objectives. Membership is open for all. Making contribution to programmes in implementation is compulsory. Membership may be cancelled on the decision of the committee, in the event of the members acting in a manner contrary to the objectives of the society. Such cancellation of memberships shall be reported to the next general meeting, and the members who lost their membership also have rights to submit explanations at the general meeting. Decision of the general meeting is final.

10) General Meeting

After the initial meeting and appointment of the committee bearing responsibilities, the society can convene once a month, at a time and venue convenient to the members. At such meetings, the Secretary shall keep a record of attendance and meeting minutes. The term of office of the Committee Bearing Responsibilities is one year, and subsequently, a new committee can be appointed. The quorum of the meeting is 2/3. The society shall ensure that the Coexistence Society functions as an entity under the direct supervision of the Ministry.

11) Sub Committees

In order to fulfill the duties and functions under No.07, responsibility holders shall come together into groups of three and form three committees. These committees should propose Projects and programmes relevant to fulfill the above task to the Responsibility Bearing Committee and implement those projects and programmes.

12) Creating funds

In the case of requiring funds from the Ministry to implement projects in divisional areas, such project proposals together with the estimate should be submitted and financial assistance can be obtained based on the priority and availability of funds.

Funds can be established with the consensus of the membership of the society. When seeking assistance from non-governmental organizations, approval of the Ministry shall be obtained in that regard. Accounts should be kept by the Treasurer and accounts reports should be submitted to the Committee as well. At the end of the financial year, the accounts approved through the general meeting should be submitted to the Ministry. The Ministry reserves the right to terminate the registration of a society, if it is proved that a financial malpractice has occurred.

13) Monitoring

Within the periods determined by the Ministry, National Integration Promotion Assistant/Coordinator/Sahayaka officers shall send reports to the Ministry on the performance of the Coexistence Societies within the area under the District Secretariat/Divisional Secretariat to which such officers have been appointed.

14) Registration

All Coexistence Societies shall be registered with the Minister. Registration applications should be forwarded through the National Integration Promotion Assistant/Coordinator/Sahayaka officers appointed by The Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages to the relevant District Secretariat/Divisional Secretariat. In case of no such officers appointed to the relevant District Secretariat/Divisional Secretariat, applications can be forwarded with the recommendation of the Grama Niladhari.

15) Dissolution

Due to fulfillment of objectives or a situation in which the society can no longer function, it is possible to dissolve the society based on the decision taken through a general meeting. In case of such dissolution of the society, the same should be reported to the Ministry by Secretary of the Coexistence Society.

.....
Secretary

.....
Chairman

Date.....

Application for registration of the Coexistence Society

- 1) Name of the Society.....
- 2) Address.....
- 3) District

- 3.1 Divisional Secretariat Division
- 3.2 Grama Nildhari Division

- 4) Details of the office-bearers appointed at the general meeting

Name and Address of the Chairman

Telephone..... Email

Name and address of the vice- chairman

Telephone..... Email

Name and address of the Secretary

Telephone..... Email

Name and address of the Deputy Secretary

Telephone..... Email

Name and address of the Treasurer

Telephone..... Email

Name and address of the Deputy Treasurer

Telephone..... Email

Name, Address and Telephone number of the 04 committee members

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.....
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5) Following records are submitted herewith:

Meeting minutes of the First General Meeting
Attendance register

6) necessary steps to register our society.

Kindly take

Signature.....

Chairman

Signature.....

Secretary

Name.....

Date

Name.....

Date.....

Recommendation by the National Integration Promotion Assistant / Coordinator /Sahayaka /Grama Niladhari (In case of no Coordinator /Sahayaka appointed to a Divisional secretariat, kindly submit the application with the recommendation of the Grama Niladhari)

I recommend registration of the above society

Name

Designation.....

Signature.....

Date