



The National Languages Equality Advancement Project (NLEAP) is a Bi-Lateral Project between the Governments of Sri Lanka and Canada.

A 4.5 year, CAD 10.85M project, funded by Canada, NLEAP supports the goal of the Sri Lankan National Government to protect and promote the language rights of all Sri Lankan citizens.

The Project aims to improve the socio-economic equality of Sinhala and Tamil speaking women and men throughout Sri Lanka through the strengthened implementation of the Official Languages Policy of Sri Lanka. To this end, NLEAP works closely with key government institutions and civil society organizations to build gender-sensitive bilingual public services and to enhance public awareness about language rights and its role in society.

The key focus areas of NLEAP

- Improving the capacity of key ministries to deliver public services in both Sinhala and Tamil, at national, provincial and local levels, especially in bilingual divisions
- Strengthening the gender-sensitive bilingual communication skills of public servants
- Increasing general public awareness and acceptance of language diversity and language rights
- Cultivating the ability of citizens to communicate in both official languages

Several ministries and institutions are engaged in the project

The Ministry of Public Services, Provincial Councils and Local Government

The ministry is mandated with the formulation of policies, programs and projects as well as monitoring and evaluating what concerns official languages and all related matters, within all government ministries and institutions. The Ministry is charged with addressing matters, as well as introducing and implementing programs and activities, supporting solidarity and coexistence between communities.

Department of Official Languages (DOL)

The DOL is a statutory institution established to ensure standards relative to translation and interpretation services within the public sector in the Official Languages of Sinhala and Tamil, as well as the Link Language, English. The DOL is mandated to: conduct written and oral tests for public officers who are required to obtain Official Language proficiency; provide translation services to the government in the three languages of Sinhala, Tamil and English; compile glossaries in the three languages in various subjects as well as trilingual dictionaries; conduct Sinhala, Tamil, English and foreign language classes; host professionally invigilated language proficiency examinations for staff of establishments external to the Government of Sri Lanka; provide practicum training to students emerging from translation and interpretation programs at recognized educational institutions.

Official Languages Commission (OLC)

The mandate of the OLC is to recommend principles of policy relating to the use of the Official Languages and to monitor and supervise compliance with the provisions contained in Chapter IV of the Constitution. Its mandate also encompasses the promotion and appreciation of the Official Languages and the acceptance, maintenance and continuance of their status, equality and right of use. Finally, the OLC is uniquely empowered to conduct investigations - both of its own initiative and/or in response to complaints received - and to take remedial action. These elements are encompassed in the Official Languages Commission Act of 1991.

National Institute of Language Education and Training (NILET)

NILET is mandated with the provision of quality training of the Sinhala, Tamil and English languages. The Institute is additionally mandated to conduct research and studies related to language training, establish a repository of information relating to languages, generate competent and adequate translators and interpreters, and conduct language courses for special categories of persons as required.

University Grants Commission and Universities

NLEAP in collaboration with the University Grants Commission (UGC) will initiate a fourth university (Eastern) to offer the four-year Bachelor of Arts Translation Special Degree program. The delivery of a Bachelor of Arts Translation Special Degree Program in Jaffna, Kelaniya, Sabaragamuwa Universities was previously initiated under the National Languages Project (NLP). NLEAP will provide all four universities with Technical Assistance from the University of Ottawa to mentor the academics, develop syllabus and revise existing syllabi of Kelaniya, Jaffna and Sabaragamuwa universities.

In addition, NLEAP will also: initiate a Diploma Program in Interpretation in one university which will be identified in consultation with the UGC; formulate a Professional Learning Community (PLC) consisting of academics from all four partnering universities; conduct an online training program for the benefit of academics of the partnering universities with the support of the School of Translation of the University of Ottawa.

National Languages Fund

NLEAP administers the National Languages Fund (NLF) of CAD 2M. This fund supports a variety of Sri Lankan organizations including women's and youth groups, to promote language rights towards reconciliation, a better acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity as a national strength.

The Fund enables a diverse range of creative initiatives that -

- Strengthen the governance of Co-Existence/Language Societies
- Develop the capacity of civil society organizations
- Foster effective partnership amongst synergistic organizations
- Improve language teaching
- Raise citizen awareness of language rights and of government obligations
- Support national/local fora and research to disseminate best practices

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Sri Lanka recognizes the right to language as a fundamental right of all women and men. But women and men in Sri Lanka have diverse experiences in the realization of their language rights.

NLEAP appreciates the need to analyze, understand and address issues of marginalization and exclusion experienced by women and men and to identify diverse sociocultural reasons that impact and impede the full enjoyment of language rights. This understanding of gender dimensions and issues of women's empowerment when considering language rights in Sri Lanka prompts NLEAP to take a two-pronged approach to equality - gender equality and a specific focus on women's empowerment.

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (GEWE Strategy) of NLEAP stems from commitments enshrined in the Constitution of Sri Lanka as well as commitments to national and international instruments promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This Strategy is strengthened by the commitment to Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) which sees gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the core area of Canada's international assistance.



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Alinea International (Formerly Agriteam Canada) was selected to be the Executing Agency to manage and implement the project by the Government of Canada.

Alinea International is a global international development consultancy providing technical and management expertise that helps people improve their lives.

"Alinea" refers to introducing new ideas, which is how Alinea approaches the world's changing challenges.

This approach emphasizes participatory methodologies, capacity development, inclusive governance, gender equality, environmental sustainability and innovation. Over 34 years, Alinea has managed more than 500 projects in more than 80 countries. To learn more about how the Alinea team works every day to be catalysts of change and opportunity around the world visit Alinea's website and follow Alinea on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.



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