



December 2025

Management Response

to the External Evaluation Report of the PHRD Programme in Sri Lanka (2015-2025)

Introduction / The process of the evaluation

- The Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) commissioned an external evaluation of its programme in Sri Lanka. This evaluation was completed in December 2025 as part of the PHRD's periodic reviews to assess its progress towards achieving its objectives in Sri Lanka, one of its priority countries.
- The evaluation's purpose was to assess value added and results of the PHRD's programme in Sri Lanka over the past 10 years (2015-2025) and to generate lessons for improvement, in view of informing the FDFA's decision on future engagement in Sri Lanka.
- The evaluation assessed the programme's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact, with particular attention to its multi-track diplomatic engagement, support for dealing with the past, reconciliation, and protection of human rights.
- The evaluation team noted that the programme's complexity—driven by a shifting political context—made it harder to evaluate the programme. PHRD also faced challenges accessing past strategic documents due to limited process-level documentation, requiring interviews with former staff to fill information gaps and reconstruct a comprehensive strategy and theory of change.
- PHRD welcomes the submission of the evaluation report and expresses its appreciation to the evaluation team for their rigorous analysis. The Division values the frank and constructive collaboration maintained throughout the process.

Overall appreciation of the evaluation report

- The PHRD confirms that the evaluation report on the PHRD Programme in Sri Lanka responds to all the objectives presented in the Terms of Reference.
- The rating system applied in the evaluation differs slightly from the one proposed in the Terms of Reference.
- We noted with appreciation that the evaluation report highlights the key unique role of the PHRD as a trusted, principled and highly valued actor, with flexible responses grounded in local realities, in a context that underwent dramatic changes during the evaluation period.
- In particular, the PHRD welcomes the fact that the evaluation confirms its role in maintaining human rights, justice and reconciliation on the national agenda, in strengthening the recognition of families of disappeared as a legitimate and central victim group, in enabling a democratic expression of the public's desire for systemic change and in providing frontline protection and solidarity to civil society organisations and actors.
- We agree that both the PHRD programme and Sri Lanka are at a critical juncture. PHRD stands ready to build its future actions in acknowledgment of the recommendations and will work accordingly to revise, when suitable, its approach and methods to bring all its previous work to a level of fruition, while building on its core strengths.
- Overall PHRD seeks to focus and consolidate its work rather than expanding the number of stakeholders and initiatives to remain coherent with its mandate and resources.
- However, PHRD would like to highlight that most of the recommendations are already embedded in its programme and approach, and some others lack clear formulation to be fully comprehensible.



ANNEX – Management Response with regard to the recommendations made to the FDFA

	Topic	Recommended Action	Management Response		
			Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree
DWP and reconciliation:	Working with Japan and South Africa Trilaterally	1.1 Continue work with troika taking a firm, clear and transparent position on accountability in line with previous international human rights commitments.	Agree		
			Measures: Ensure that Switzerland's position on accountability continues to be clearly communicated and articulated while working trilaterally with Japan and South Africa, who might differ in their approach. Comment: Switzerland maintained and continues to maintain a clear stance on accountability, including at the Human Rights Council. This position may differ from Japan and South Africa. Switzerland considers the work with the troika as complementary, without undermining its position on accountability. While acknowledging differing perspectives, Switzerland will continue its dialogue efforts with Japan and South Africa. It will also strengthen communication and articulation of this multi-fold approach towards concerned stakeholders.		
		1.2 Increase engagement bilaterally and through troika to work with GoSL to commit to a comprehensive transitional justice process with the UN HRC 30/1 as the guiding framework.	Agree		
			Measures: Continue and increase engagement with GoSL on a comprehensive transitional justice process, both bilaterally and with Japan and South Africa. Comment: It should be noted that the level of engagement with the GoSL does not only depend on Switzerland but largely also on the GoSL. The latter is influenced by a multitude of factors outside of Switzerland's control or influence. While UN HRC Resolution 30/1 remains a valuable guiding framework, the approach and framework should be broadened and balanced to better align with the ideological positioning of the government, opposition and other political parties and civil society.		

	DwP Alumni Group	1.3 Provide systematic facilitation support to help DWP alumni to develop and expand the cohort of active members.	<p>Agree</p> <p>Measures: provide more regular, facilitated platforms to strengthen the DwP alumni group and expand engagement beyond this group.</p> <p>Comment: Since 2024, PHRD has established a broader platform that brings together key stakeholders beyond and in addition to the DwP Alumni. We will continue strengthening efforts building on this expanded DwP Group.</p>
		1.4 Address knowledge gaps with DWP alumni by exposing the cohort to critical transitional justice scholarship and experts working on alternatives beyond the DWP conceptual framework.	<p>Agree</p> <p>Measures: expand the range of perspectives and experts with different approaches.</p> <p>Comment: PHRD does not fund scholarships as this is not part of its mandate and role.</p>
		1.5 Use expertise and experience, including through advanced trained DWP alumni to expand current transitional justice framework to better meet victim demands and context specificity.	<p>Agree</p> <p>Measures: continue to use the DwP alumni group and other existing networks to encourage progression and dialogue with the government on reconciliation with a focus on justice for victims.</p> <p>Comment: Encouraging progression and dialogue on reconciliation is being done with multiple parties including the government, opposition and other political parties and civil society. This inclusive method is a cornerstone of the program.</p>
	Constitutional reform		Agree

Constitutional reform and political settlement:		2.1 Re-establish engagement on constitutional reform and build on recent parliamentary study tour to increase understanding of federalism leading to, at the minimal, cross-party agreement on increased devolution.	<p>Measures: continue and build on engagement on constitutional reform with PHRD's network and consolidate the dialogue with all political parties and civil society partners.</p> <p>Comment: While PHRD can facilitate the dialogue between different parties, the outcomes depend on external factors outside of the influence of the Division.</p>
	Dialogue among minority political parties	2.2 Facilitate dialogue among minority political parties to build consensus around a unified minimum platform for a political settlement.	<p>Agree</p> <p>Measures: facilitate dialogue spaces building on existing relationships with minority political parties.</p>
	Himalaya Declaration	<p>2.3 Leverage existing work done on the Himalaya Declaration toward greater inclusivity, legitimacy and initiative by:</p> <p>2.3.1 Facilitating increased support by other diaspora groups for HD vision, 2.3.2 Convening inter-religious leadership group to sign up to HD</p>	<p>Partially agree</p> <p>Measures: reconsider engagement with all partners involved in the Himalaya Declaration and undertake a strategic collective reflection on how to effectively achieve the expansion of its outreach, inclusivity and acceptance.</p> <p>Comment: While PHRD agrees with the overall recommendation to leverage existing work for greater effectiveness, previous efforts aligned with the proposed measures have not succeeded in achieving broader acceptance of the Himalaya Declaration process. PHRD therefore believes a fundamental rethinking of the approach and strategy is required—both with current Himalaya Declaration partners and beyond—in order to build a wider coalition that can lead these efforts. Overall PHRD seeks to focus</p>

		vision and work towards building a new understanding on TJ and reconciliation in line with religious positioning, 2.3.3 Conduct dialogues with Tamil communities on the HD initiative and address concerns on its design and process.	and consolidate its work rather than expanding the number of stakeholders and initiatives to remain coherent with its mandate and resources.
Democracy and Human Rights	Increasing Impact	4.1 Build on impact and results achieved on strengthening democracy and increase work on this together with current human rights mandate.	Agree
	Extend human rights work to socio-economic rights	4.2 Extend human rights work to socio-economic rights, especially on post-war gender justice.	Agree Measures: include a lens on socio-economic rights where and when relevant, as a cross-cutting issue in parts of the programme, while preserving the focus on PHRD's core strengths and mandate.
	Diversity management	4.3 Develop work on diversity management that is inclusive of all communities and based on a strong minority rights framework relevant to Sri Lanka.	Partially agree Measure: strengthen inclusion of representatives from all minority communities in dialogue platforms where relevant, particularly in processes related to constitutional reforms. Comment: PHRD acknowledges that its core approach has focused on engaging conflict actors and conflict-affected communities, in line with its core mandate. However, PHRD recognizes the importance of ensuring

			broader inclusion of all minority communities and does so in relevant dialogue platforms, particularly on constitutional reform and governance matters. This should not constitute a new line of intervention but is integrated as a cross-cutting element within existing processes, building on PHRD's core strengths.
	Training on IHR	4.4 Train key staff on international human rights and humanitarian laws, norms and frameworks to ensure normative basis for work.	<p>Disagree</p> <p>Comment: PHRD staff is recruited based on relevant knowledge and competences and provides opportunities for continuing education, which key staff have made use of regularly.</p>
Strengthen Strategic Decision Making and Programme Management	Networking with political parties and political coalitions	5.1 Identify key NPP and JVP interlocutors, build networks within these parties and assess new approaches and strategies to engage with them.	<p>Agree</p> <p>Measures: build on the existing established relationships to expand the network with the current government while maintaining engagement with all political parties and coalitions.</p>
	Encourage innovative initiatives	5.2 Encourage innovative initiatives within existing thematic areas to enhance relevance and adaptability.	<p>Agree</p>
	Civil Society Partners		Agree

		5.3 Review and, where necessary, recalibrate relationships with long-term civil society partners to ensure continued alignment with evolving objectives and context.	Measures: foreseen joint partner meeting in early 2026 to take stock and strengthen strategic alignment of partners in current context.
	Internal procedure methodologies for monitoring, reporting and decision-making	5.4 Establish rigorous, transparent methods for strategic and programmatic decision-making to improve coherence and accountability.	Partially agree
		5.5 Introduce a light but systematic internal structure for monitoring and reporting to strengthen institutional learning and oversight.	Comment: PHRD has recently reviewed its internal procedures and methodologies for strategic and programmatic decision-making, monitoring and reporting and, in late 2023, PHRD established a strategic document for each priority country, precisely for this purpose. This document is constantly updated and provides an overview of PHRD's activities in the country, including lessons learned and an annual self-evaluation of the programme.
		5.6 Design and implement a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework to track progress, assess outcomes, and demonstrate results more effectively.	