

A BRIEF REPORT ON

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES POLICY (OLP)

IN SELECTED MINISTRIES &

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS &

PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON OLP

IN SRI LANKA



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ON OLP IN SRI LANKA

CONDUCTED BY: CAPACITY BUILDING AND OUTREACH TEAM, CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVE (CPA)

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CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

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The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is an independent, non-partisan organisation that focuses primarily on issues of governance and conflict resolution. Formed in 1996 in the firm belief that the vital contribution of civil society to the public policy debate is in need of strengthening, CPA is committed to programmes of research and advocacy through which public policy is critiqued, alternatives identified and disseminated.

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Introduction

One of the fundamental modes of human communication is language, which has evolved to encompass a myriad of economic, social, political, and cultural factors deeply intertwined with people's lives and their societal contexts. Language has assumed a pivotal role in shaping discussions around the fundamental rights and dignity of individuals within a developed society. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that robust political and policy foundations are established and executed with respect to language, ensuring equitable access to the benefits of good governance for every citizen of Sri Lanka. These measures are instrumental in fostering coexistence, peace, reconciliation, and harmony as integral components of social progress.

Under Article 12(2) of Chapter III of the 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka, which outlines the statutory and policy framework, and within a context of firmly entrenched fundamental rights related to official languages, it is expressly stated that "No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth, or any such grounds. However, it is lawful to require a person to acquire sufficient knowledge of a language as a qualification for certain employment or office in the Public, Judicial, or Local Government Service, or in the service of any public corporation, where such knowledge is reasonably necessary for the discharge of the duties of such employment or office." Moreover, Article 18 of Chapter IV of the Constitution stipulates that 'The Official Language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala,' with the Thirteenth Amendment further designating Tamil as an official language.

Consequently, the state bears the onus of upholding its full commitment to foster understanding, diversity, and social cohesion within Sri Lankan society, characterized by its multi-ethnic, cultural, and religious tapestry. While the constitutional and statutory provisions vividly articulate the vision of language rights, it is imperative to assess the actual implementation of the Official Language Policy (OLP) by various Ministries and government institutions, as well as gauge citizen sentiments regarding its effectiveness and their level of satisfaction.

It is essential to emphasize that the active engagement and effective contributions of all ministries, departments, and local government authorities are imperative for the efficient implementation of the OLP. This responsibility has been underscored in the Extraordinary Gazette Notification No. 1620/27 dated 2009.09.25 and the Administrative Circular No. 18/2009 dated 2009.11.25, placing the primary responsibility for the proper implementation of the official language policy.

To facilitate this process, the Ministry of National Co-Existence, Dialogue, and Official Languages, which was entrusted with overseeing official languages, developed a guideline for formulating 'Language Plans' in all government institutions. This guiding manual is centered on four key principles to ensure the effective implementation of the official language policy, namely: 1) Visibility and Ambiance, 2) Administration and Documentation, 3) Service Delivery, and 4) Institutional Commitment and Support Mechanism. This study focuses on assessing the extent to which four selected Ministries and 25 government institutions adhere to these four key criteria in their implementation of the OLP, shedding light on the issues and core challenges encountered in this process.

Project Overview

Overall Goal: To identify the achievements, issues and challenges in implementing the Official language policy to its full extent at Selected Six Ministries and the 23 government institutions belong to those Ministries and assess the public perception on the OLP in those institutions in support of sustaining equality and reconciliation among citizens in Sri Lanka (Annexure 01).

There are three specific objectives of this language audit;

- Assessing the current state of affairs including achievements with regard to implementation of official languages policy in Selected 06 Ministries and 23 selected government institutions (Service Providers) under the purview of those Ministries.
- Understanding the issues and challenges faced in effective implementation of OLP and provide observations to address existing challenges.
- The public perception (Service Recipients) on the implementation of the OLP in selected government institutions.

Rationale for the project

Language represents a fundamental element intrinsically linked to an individual's identity, livelihood, and various other essential aspects of a dignified life—a universal entitlement transcending gender, race, nationality, and geographic location. Despite its close affiliation with economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions that profoundly shape people's lives and lifestyles, language rights have not consistently received the requisite attention and commitment from the political and administrative spheres. Even with constitutional guarantees and a range of public administrative directives mandating a bilingual approach in the public sector, the compliance with bilingual policies within Ministries and Government institutions does not consistently reflect a robust commitment to effectively implement the Official Language Policy (OLP).

Furthermore, language has evolved into a pivotal determinant of fundamental rights and dignity within developed societies. Thus, it becomes imperative to establish and execute fundamental political and policy frameworks related to languages to ensure that every Sri Lankan citizen can equitably access the benefits of good governance. This approach facilitates the integration of coexistence, peace, reconciliation, and harmony into the fabric of social progress.

A central concern pertains to the extent to which officials in various Ministries can effectively implement the OLP when they lack essential infrastructure, such as funding for language plans, training to establish Language Committees, access to translators, necessary equipment, and appropriate technical guidance and supervision. Similarly, it is essential to gauge the level of satisfaction among the general public, who possess the right to access and receive public services in their language of choice. This assessment serves as a vital component in comprehending the necessary policy and practice-oriented reforms within the OLP.

Significantly, the responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the Official Language Policy lies with Chief Official Languages Implementing Officers (COLIOs) and Official Languages Implementing Officers (OLIOs), with respective Secretaries and Additional Secretaries/Senior Assistance Secretaries assuming these roles in Ministries. However, government institutions under the purview of different ministries also share an equal responsibility in adhering to the OLP.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) brings a valuable perspective from previous initiatives, revealing that despite progress through the ratification of the Official Language Policy (OLP) in Sri Lanka at national and provincial levels, there remains a need to assess the actual implementation of the policy in six selected Ministries and gather public perceptions on the implementation of the OLP in 23 selected government institutions in Sri Lanka. Consequently, CPA, through the proposed Language Assessment, aims to provide decision-makers with a deeper understanding of the achievements, challenges, and issues related to the implementation of the OLP at the Ministerial and Government institutional levels, as well as insights into the satisfaction levels of the general public as service recipients.

Methodology

CPA employed a methodical approach to data collection, utilizing two semi-structured questionnaires for conducting interviews. These interviews were conducted with Chief Official Languages Implementing Officers (COLIOs), Official Languages Implementing Officers (OLIOs), or their designated representatives from respective Ministries. Additionally, institutional heads or suitable nominees from the respective government institutions were included in this data collection process.

In the context of assessing public perception regarding the implementation of the Official Language Policy (OLP) in 23 selected government institutions, CPA sought input from either the heads of these institutions or individuals capable of providing comprehensive responses to the questionnaires. It was paramount for CPA to ensure that the key issues outlined in this proposal were thoroughly addressed within these questionnaires. Following an initial pilot phase for the draft questionnaires, the research team meticulously refined and administered the final versions within the six selected Ministries (including three sub-ministerial portfolios with one main Cabinet Ministry) and 23 government institutions.

Moreover, a separate questionnaire was meticulously designed to gauge the perspectives of the general public, specifically "Service Recipients." A total of six respondents, consisting of three each whose mother tongue is Tamil and Sinhala respectively, were interviewed as part of this effort. These interviews covered 23 selected government institutions across five designated districts.

Ensuring the competency and preparedness of Field Researchers was a priority, and as such, comprehensive knowledge-building training sessions were provided. Follow-up debriefing sessions were conducted to maintain the quality and consistency of the data collection process. In addition, CPA enlisted the expertise of senior researchers, the Principal Researcher of this study, and external experts specializing in language rights to facilitate training sessions. These sessions were aimed at ensuring the effective utilization of both quantitative and qualitative data collected during the assessment of the implementation of the OLP.

For the purpose of data collection, a team of eight Field Researchers (08) was engaged in the study. The data collection process commenced in the third week of July and continued diligently until the third week of August 2023.

CPA has allocated complete one month for the field work of the study mainly because this is not only about the quantitative data and that the questionnaires will be inclusive of open ended questions for which qualitative information will also be sought from the respondents. A total of 29 respondents representing the Service Provider component and 167 respondents representing the Service Recipients component included in this study.

CPA, in ensuring the effective contribution of project activities to contribute to its objectives in this project initiative, special focus will be given to ensuring a better, effective, efficient and quality service delivery for citizens by establishing an enabling environment that facilitates proper implementation of official languages policy; by addressing the core four elements, 1). Visibility and Ambiance 2). Administration and Documentation 3). Service Delivery and 4). Institutional Commitment and Support Mechanisms which should be basis of criteria in each of the Ministry. Similarly, for the perception survey, opinions of general public will be gathered under each of the four elements mentioned above.

Accordingly, CPA, in its questionnaires, focused on the usage of official language policy in relation to "Visibility and Ambiance" which includes a diverse range of name boards, front office services, handling telephone calls, institutional capacity to communicate in the languages of service recipients' choice and the availability of public announcing system; will be analyzed and presented in this project.

Further, the capability of conducting functions connected to “Administration and Documentation” in line with the fundamentals of official languages policy was assessed. Furthermore, CPA ensured observing the sufficiency of physical and human resources needed for proper implementation of official languages policy, use of bilingual approach in documents prepared and adequacy of translators which is also very important in effective implementation of OLP.

Thus, as part of “Service Delivery” questionnaires of this study assessed the ability to respond in the same language for letters received by the selected six Ministries and the public perception on the implementation of the OLP in 23 selected government institutions including some service recipients accessed certain ministries (mainly the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils, and Local Government), bilingual competency of officers employed in respective divisions, application of bilingual approach in communicating with people and the compliance with official languages policy in terms of operationalizing the respective ministerial web sites.

Further, CPA assessed the degree to which assigned officials of selected six Ministries and the public perception on the implementation of the OLP in 23 selected government institutions reflect sufficient and dedicated intervention for the purpose of strengthening the “Institutional Commitment and Support Mechanisms” towards effective implementation of official languages policy.

Accordingly, specific attention was given in this study to factors such as the formulation of language plans and their current status, categorization of staff in line with their language proficiency levels, conducting language skill development programs, deploying and positioning staff having bilingual proficiency to most appropriate service points, maintaining records of staff receiving incentives on language proficiency and resource mobilization for the purpose of implementing language plans.

Limitations

Although the initial plan for this study aimed to encompass all Cabinet and State Ministries to facilitate a comprehensive comparison between the current findings and those derived from a 2017 language study conducted across 47 Ministries in Sri Lanka, resource and time limitations compelled us to restrict the research scope to just six (06) Ministries (). This significant reduction in the sample size has hindered our ability to make a meaningful comparison between the findings of the 2017 and 2023 studies.

While the National Language Equality Action Plan (NLEAP) proposed surveying a total of 74 government institutions, with the expectation of achieving a comprehensive representation, practical constraints in terms of resources and time constraints resulted in the survey being conducted in only 23 government institutions.

Additionally, due to the aforementioned time and resource limitations, we had to restrict the number of service recipients included as respondents in the perception survey, which aimed to evaluate the satisfaction levels of the general public. Consequently, our study involved interviews with only six respondents in one government institution each, comprising individuals whose mother tongue is either Tamil or Sinhala, as part of the perception survey.

Key Findings (Summary)

This section provides the most significant findings of the study.

- All surveyed Ministries and government institutions comply with the OLP in their respective main name boards. All such name board are available trilingual.
- All name boards of various sections/divisions of respective institutions comply the OLP in 26 institutions out of the total 29 institutions.
- Regarding the designation name boards, while all designation name boards in 16 institutions are available bilingually, 75% of designation name boards comply the OLP in seven institutions. Out of the 29 institutions, 50% or less name boards are available bilingually only in six institutions.
- Regarding other name boards, 20 or more institutions claim that those are available bilingually.
- Out of 29, overwhelming majority of institutions (27) claim that Bilingual Services from the Entrance/Reception/Inquiry Office are available.
- Out of the 19 institutions that provide some kind of forms, applications and formats to service recipients, 14 institutions claim that all such documents are available in Tamil and Sinhala languages.
- Notably, 17 institutions out of 24 institutions that use various forms, formats and applications in various departments and sections other than the entrance office claim that all such documents are available bilingually.
- Out of the 21 institutions with public announcing systems, 21 institutions claim that the announcement is done bilingually.
- Regarding the availability of translators with bilingual competency, 21 institutions claim that they do not have adequate translators while eights institutions claim they have.
- All 29 institutions claim that they have the ability to respond to letters they receive in Sinhala language while only three institutions indicate that they do not have the same capacity.
- Majority of institutions (18) indicate that all awareness programs, where relevant, are conducted bilingually while only five institutions claim that they do not do so due to insufficient human resources with necessary bilingual competency.
- Notably, 20 out of 25 institutions with websites claim that all information are available in Tamil and Sinhala languages.
- Regarding the adequacy of human resources to develop information need to be published in websites, 17 institutions claim that they have sufficient human resources a while eights institutions indicate adequate human resources are not currently available to do so.
- While 18 institutions claim that they have a language committee established, 11 institutions.
- Majority of institutions claim that no sufficient financial resources are allocated to implement language plans while only 11 institutions indicate that adequate financial resources are allocated.
- Majority of institutions claim that they have not received assistance from non-state actors to implement the OLP related initiatives while notably 11 institutions indicate that the have linkages with non-state actors in implementing the OLP.
- With regard to budgetary allocations for the implementation of the OLP, which being one of the crucial pre-requisites, 10 institutions claim that no annual budget allocation was made for the last

year to implement the OLP while eight institutions indicate that the allocations are not adequate. Only three institutions claim that the annual budget allocation of the last year was extremely adequate.

- Insufficient resource allocation is claimed to be the most decisive impediment followed by the absence of sufficient translators with necessary bilingual competency.

Findings of the study - Service Providers

In alignment with the methodology employed in this study, this section provides an overview of the current status, highlighting the key issues and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Official Language Policy (OLP). The language study undertaken herein was structured around four pivotal criteria, namely: 1) Ambiance and visibility, 2) Administration and documentation, 3) Service delivery, and 4) Institutional commitment and support mechanisms. The key findings derived from this study are presented in a twofold manner. The initial segment presents the survey findings pertaining to Service Providers, encompassing government institutions. Subsequently, we present the findings gleaned from the survey conducted with the general public, who represent the service recipients of the respective government institutions.

Visibility and Ambiance

Introduction

Within this sub-topic, an analysis is presented regarding the application of the official language policy in various contexts. This analysis encompasses a diverse range of areas, including the utilization of official languages in name boards, front office services, telephone communication, the institutional capacity to communicate in languages preferred by service recipients, and the presence of a public announcing system.

As part of this study, the state of affairs about the name boards was observed under four areas. Thus, main name boards, section name boards, designation name boards and other name boards were established within the premises of each of the government institutions surveyed.

Main Name Boards

All surveyed Ministries and government institutions comply with the OLP in their respective main name boards. All such name board are available trilingual.

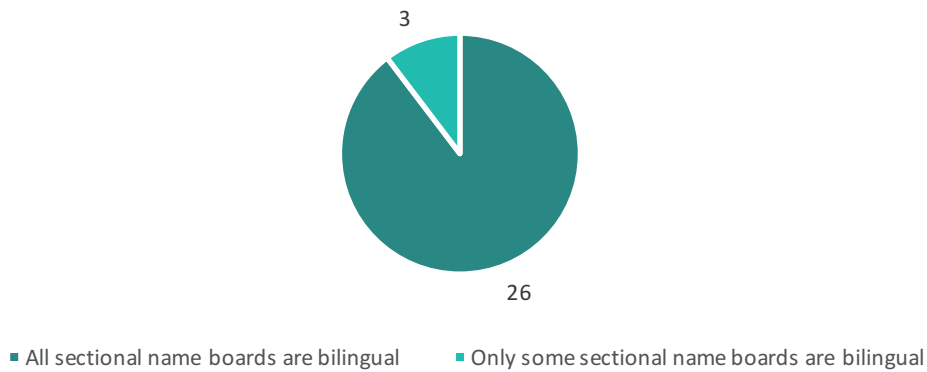
Table 1: Languages used in Main Name Boards in 29 institutions

OLP compliance of the Main Name Board	Languages used in Main Name Boards		Number of Institutions
		Sinhala	29
		Tamil	29
		English	29

Section Name Boards

All name boards of various sections/divisions of respective institutions comply the OLP in 26 institutions out of the total 29 institutions.

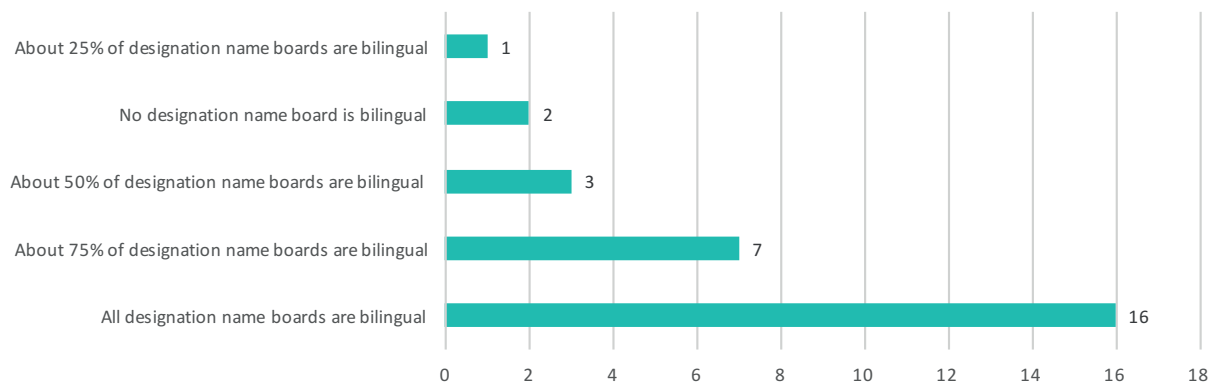
Figure 1: Bilingual compliance of Section Name Boards - 29 institutions



Designation Name Boards

Regarding the designation name boards, while all designation name boards in 16 institutions are available bilingually, 75% of designation name boards comply the OLP in seven institutions. Out of the 29 institutions, 50% or less name boards are available bilingually only in six institutions.

Figure 2: Bilingual compliance of Designation Name Boards - 29 institutions



Other Name Boards

Regarding other name boards, 20 or more institutions claim that those are available bilingually.

Table 2: Bilingual compliance of Other Name Boards in 29 Institutions

Bilingual compliance of Other Name Boards in 29 Institutions	No. of Institutions		
	Available Bilingually	Not Available Bilingually	No Board in Place
Vision and Mission	24	0	5
Functions of the Ministry/Institution	20	4	5
Special Notices of public Services	26	2	1
Organizational Structure	22	4	3

Front Office Information and Compliance with OLP

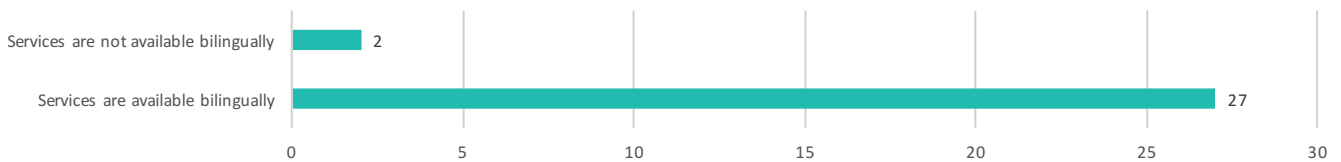
The rationale for conducting a survey on the establishment and utilization of bilingualism in front office services primarily stems from the fact that it serves as the initial point of contact for citizens when interacting with an institution, resulting in a higher frequency of engagement.

Figure 3: *Is there an Entrance/Reception/Inquiry Office established in your Ministry/Government Institution? - 29 Institutions*



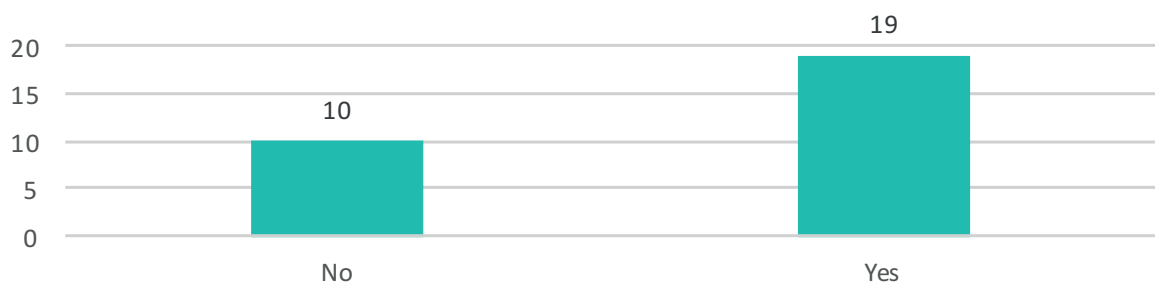
Out of 29, overwhelming majority of institutions (27) claim that Bilingual Services from the Entrance/ Reception/Inquiry Office are available.

Figure 4: *Status of availability of Bilingual Services from the Entrance/Reception/Inquiry Office - 29 Institutions*



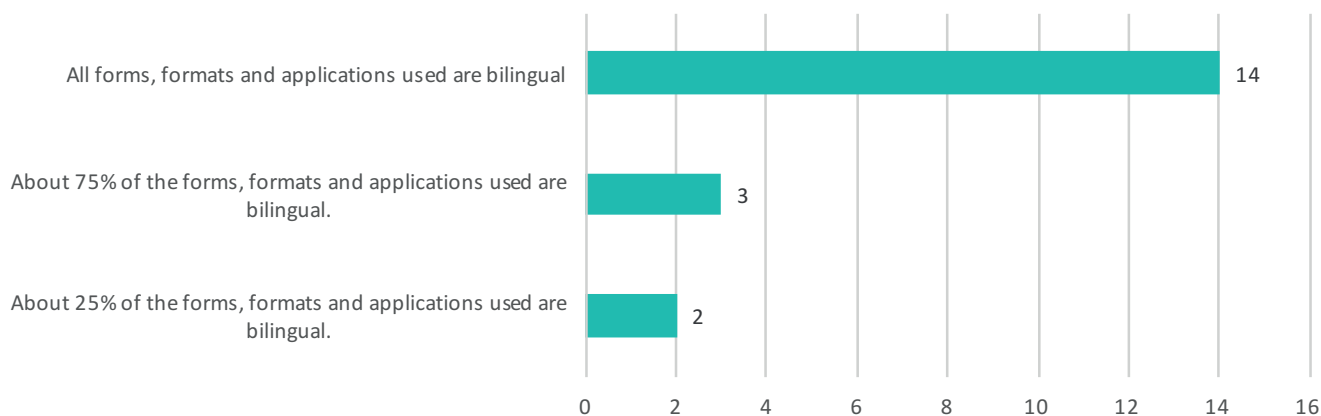
In terms of the forms, formats, application forms or any other documents provided by the entrance, 19 institutions claim that such forms are provided to service recipients.

Figure 5: *Are the forms, formats, application forms or any form provided by the Entrance/Reception/Inquiry Office for the persons coming to receive the services? - 29 Institutions*



Out of the 19 institutions that provide some kind of forms, applications and formats to service recipients, 14 institutions claim that all such documents are available in Tamil and Sinhala languages. Only two institutions claim that they have only 25% or less forms, applications and formats bilingually.

Figure 6: Bilingual use in forms, formats, applications or any kind of document provided by the Entrance/ Reception/Inquiry Office - 19 Institutions



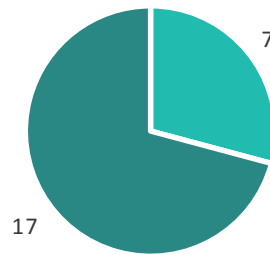
Majority of institutions (24) indicate that other than the front office related services, they use a range of other documents in the form of formats, applications, forms related to various services provided to citizens.

Figure 7: Other than the entrance office, do other sections of the institution provide forms, formats, application forms or any form to service recipients? - 29 Institutions



Notably, 17 institutions out of 24 institutions that use various forms, formats and applications in various departments and sections other than the entrance office claim that all such documents are available bilingually.

Figure 8: Bilingual use in forms, formats, applications or any kind of document provided by the Entrancel Reception/Inquiry Office - 24 Institutions



- About 75% of the forms, formats and applications used are bilingual.
- All forms, formats and applications used are bilingual

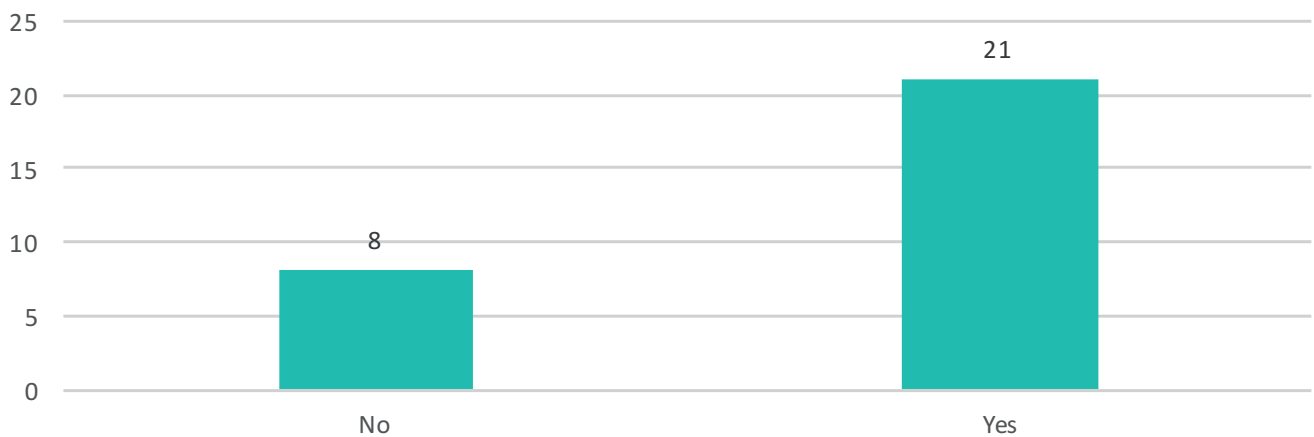
All 29 institutions claim that they have the bilingual capacity to manage telephone calls of service recipients.

Table 3: No. of Institutions with bilingual capacity to manage telephone calls

Ability to manage the incoming phone calls bilingually	No. of Institutions with bilingual capacity
	29

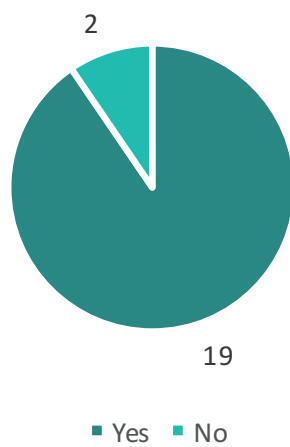
Out of 29 institutions, a public announcing system is available in 21 institutions.

Figure 9: Availability of a Public Announcing System - 29 Institutions



Out of the 21 institutions with public announcing systems, 21 institutions claim that the announcement is done bilingually while only two institutions lack the same ability.

Figure 10: Ability to operate the Public Announcing system bilingually - 21 Institutions



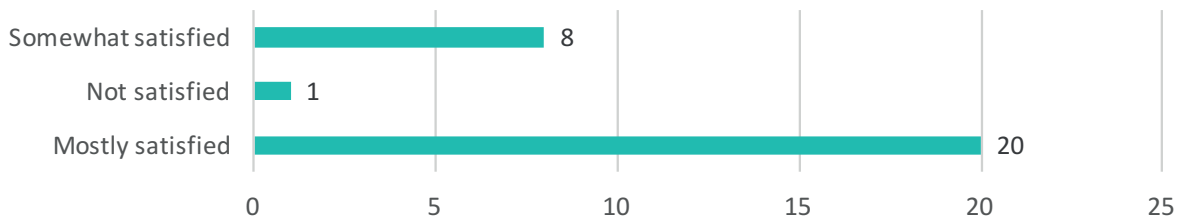
Administration and Documentation

Introduction

This chapter is centered on assessing the capacity of government institutions to perform tasks related to "Administration and Documentation" in accordance with the core principles of the official languages policy. Additionally, it delves into the examination of the availability of essential physical and human resources required for the effective implementation of the official language policy, the incorporation of a bilingual approach in documents generated by government institutions, and the sufficiency of qualified translators to support these endeavors.

With regard to the level of satisfaction on the availability of resources to prepare relevant documents bilingually, 20 institutions claim that they are satisfied with the available resources while eight institutions indicate that they only somewhat satisfied.

Figure 11: Level of satisfaction about the resources available for the preparation of documents bilingually - 29 Institutions



Regarding the availability of translators with bilingual competency, 21 institutions claim that they do not have adequate translators while eight institutions claim they have.

Figure 12: Are there sufficient translators with bilingual capacity - 29 Institutions



Service Delivery

Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to evaluate the proficiency of officials of government institutions surveyed in communicating with service recipient citizens in both official languages and the extent to which these officials employ a bilingual approach in alignment with the principles of the official languages policy when delivering services to the public. To accomplish this objective, we assessed various facets, including the capability to respond in the appropriate language to letters received by institutions, the bilingual competency of officers within specific divisions of institutions, the application of a bilingual approach in interactions with the public, and compliance with the official language policy in the operationalization of institutional websites.

All 29 institutions claim that they have the ability to respond to letters they receive in Sinhala language while only three institutions indicate that they do not have the same capacity.

Table 4: Ability of government institutions to reply letters received in Sinhala using in the same language?

Do you have the ability to reply letters received in Sinhala using in the same language?	No. of Institutions
Have ability to send replies for letters in Sinhala language	29
Do not have ability to send replies for letters in Tamil language	3
Have ability to send replies for letters in English language	29

Majority of institutions (18) indicate that all awareness programs, where relevant, are conducted bilingually while only five institutions claim that they do not do so due to insufficient human resources with necessary bilingual competency.

Table 5: Bilingual use in conducting awareness programs by government institutions

Bilingual use in conducting awareness programs	No. of Institutions
Yes, every program is bilingual	18
Yes, only some programs are bilingual (because clients only speak one language)	4
Yes, only some programs are bilingual (due to insufficient human resources)	5
Other	2

Official websites are available for 25 institutions surveyed.

Table 6: Availability of an official website in government institutions

Yes	25
No	4

Notably, 20 out of 25 institutions with websites claim that all information is available in Tamil and Sinhala languages.

Table 7: *Ability to obtain the relevant information and documents bilingually from the website*

No, all information is not accessible in Sinhala and Tamil languages	5
Yes, all information can be accessed in Sinhala and Tamil languages	20

Regarding the adequacy of human resources to develop information need to be published in websites, 17 institutions claim that they have sufficient human resources a while eight institutions indicate adequate human resources are not currently available to do so.

Table 8: *Adequacy of human resources to develop the information bilingually for the websites of the in respective institutions*

Adequate human resources are available	17
Adequate human resources are not available	8

Institutional commitment and support mechanism

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the findings, highlighting the present status, challenges, and issues related to fortifying institutional commitment for the effective implementation of the Official Languages Policy (OLP). It also places emphasis on assessing the extent to which respective government institutions have adhered to the OLP by ensuring compliance in terms of ambiance and visibility, administration and documentation, and service delivery.

Moreover, this study places specific focus on critical factors such as the formulation and current status of language plans, the categorization of staff based on their language proficiency levels, the implementation of language skill development programs, the strategic deployment of bilingual proficient personnel to the most appropriate service points, the mobilization of resources to effectively execute language plans and the specific suggestions and recommendations of the decision makers of respective government institutions to effectively implement the OLP.

While 18 institutions claim that they have a language committee established, 11 institutions

Table 9: *Has a Language Committee been established?*

Yes	18
No	11

Majority of institutions claim that no sufficient financial resources are allocated to implement language plans while only 11 institutions indicate that adequate financial resources are allocated.

Table 10: *Are financial resources allocated for the implementation of the languages plan*

Yes	11
No	18

Majority of institutions claim that there is a formal system of assigning officials with bilingual competency to appropriate positions while nine institutions note that no such system is currently in place.

Table 11: *Is there a formal system for assigning officers who have completed language proficiency to appropriate positions?*

Yes	20
No	9

Majority of institutions claim that they have not received assistance from non-state actors to implement the OLP related initiatives while notably 11 institutions indicate that they have linkages with non-state actors in implementing the OLP.

Table 12: *Has support been obtained through non-state actors to effectively implement the OLP*

Yes	11
No	18

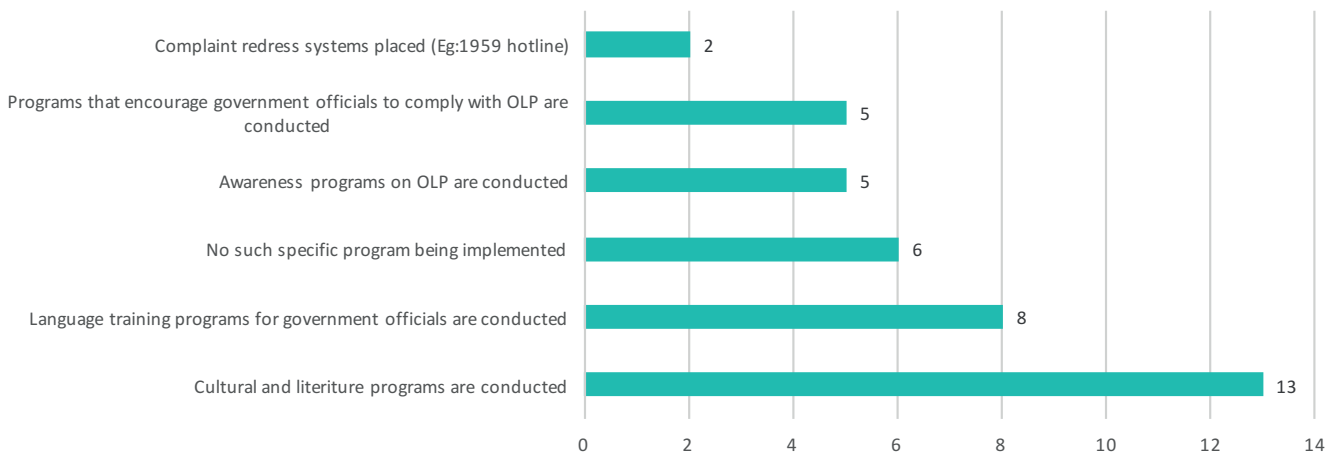
With regard to budgetary allocations for the implementation of the OLP, which being one of the crucial pre-requisites, 10 institutions claim that no annual budget allocation was made for the last year to implement the OLP while eight institutions indicate that the allocations are not adequate. Only three institutions claim that the annual budget allocation of the last year was extremely adequate.

Table 13: Adequacy of the annual budget/resources allocated to institutions in the last year for the implementation of the Official Languages Policy

Adequacy Level of budget allocation to implement the OLP	No. of Institutions
Adequate to some extent	6
Extremely adequate	3
No finances have been allocated	10
Not Adequate	8
Not at all Adequate	2

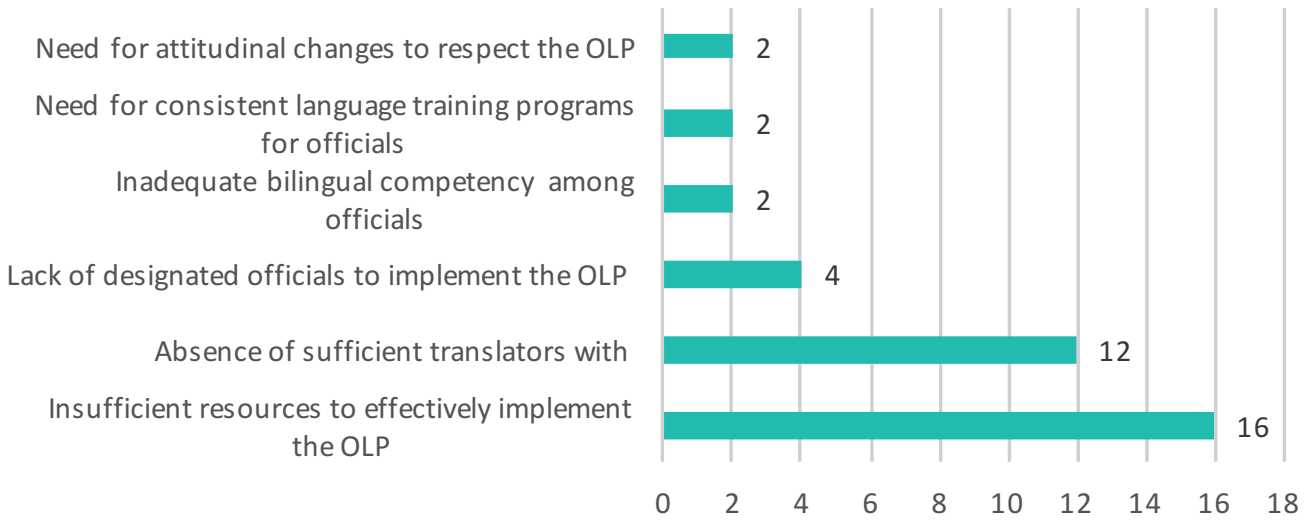
With regard to other programs being implemented to promote the official languages policy by institutions, cultural and literature related programs are claimed to be the mostly conducted programs followed by language training programs for government officers.

Figure 13: Other programs being implemented to promote the official languages policy



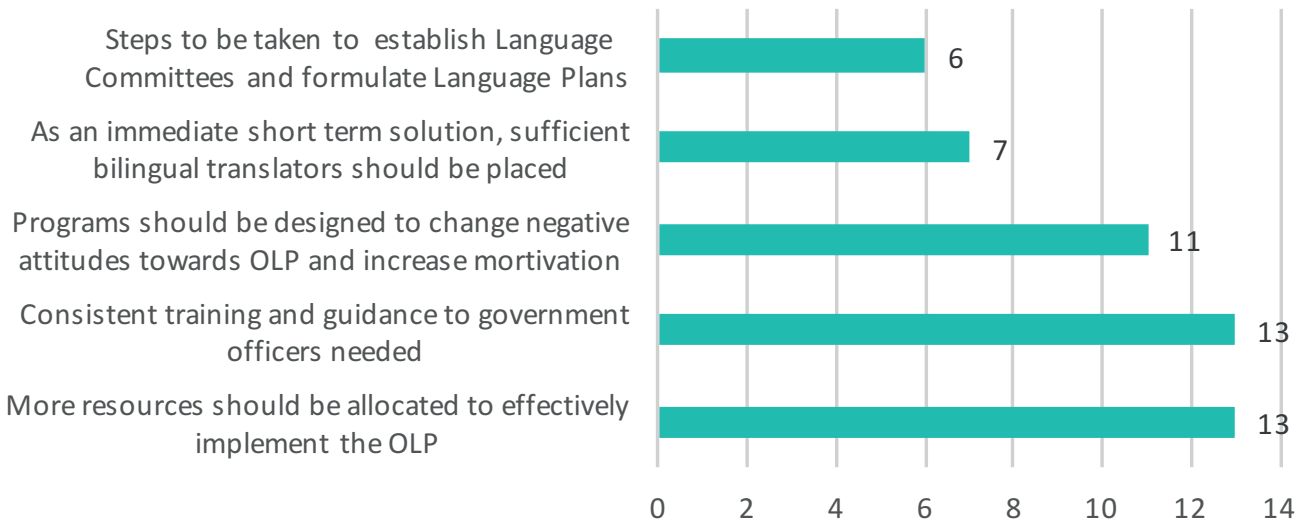
In terms of major challenges government officers faced in ensuring effective implementation of the OLP, insufficient resource allocation is claimed to be the most decisive impediment followed by the absence of sufficient translators with necessary bilingual competency.

Figure 14: Type of major problems and challenges in effective implementation of the OLP



As far as the suggestions and recommendations are concerned, more resource allocation for the purpose of implementing the OLP was mostly highlighted along with the sheer need for consistent language raining for relevant government officers. Additionally, the need for attitudinal changes and recruitment of translations with necessary bilingual competency are also among the suggestions highlighted.

Figure 15: Recommendations and suggestions related to the efficient and effective implementation of the OLP



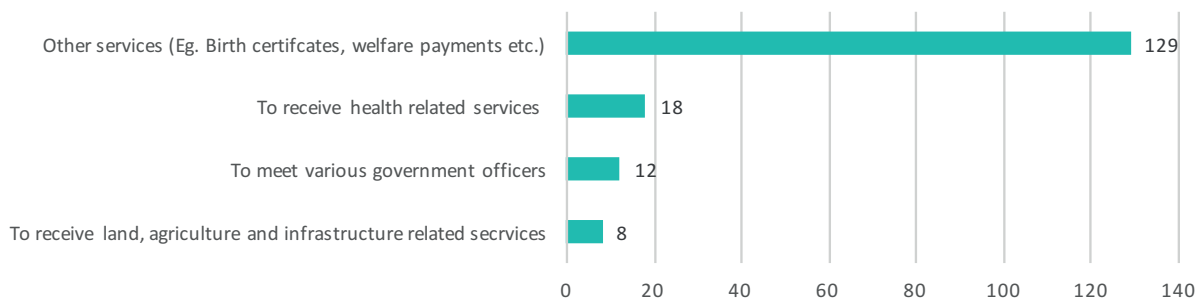
Findings of the Study - Service Recipients

This study encompasses a crucial component involving a survey conducted with citizens who are recipients of various public services provided by government institutions. The primary objective of this specific component within the broader study is to gain insights into the satisfaction levels of service recipients regarding the implementation of the Official Languages Policy.

Outlined below are the key findings derived from the survey conducted with service recipients of the respective government institutions.

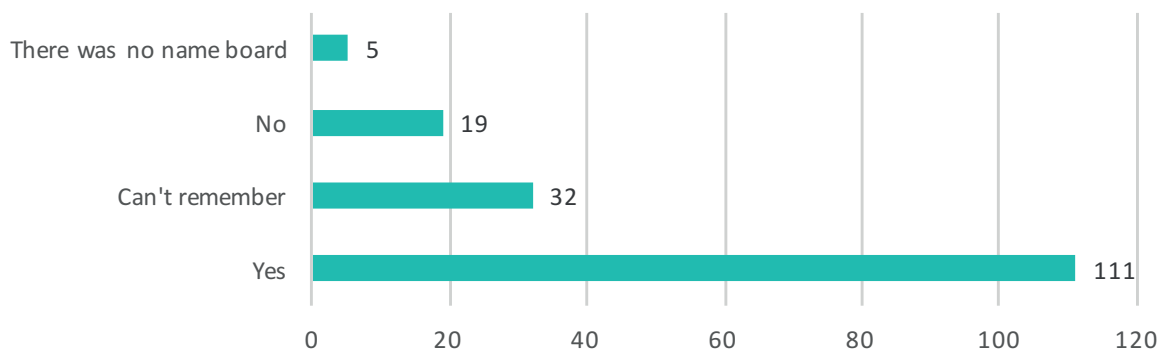
Out of 167, majority of the service recipients (119) claim that they accessed government institutions to receive general services such as receiving birth certificates, welfare payments etc. followed by 18 respondents accessed to receive health related services. Least number of service recipients (08) claim that they reached institutions to receive land, agriculture and infrastructure related services.

Figure 16: Type of services received by service recipients - 167 Service Recipients



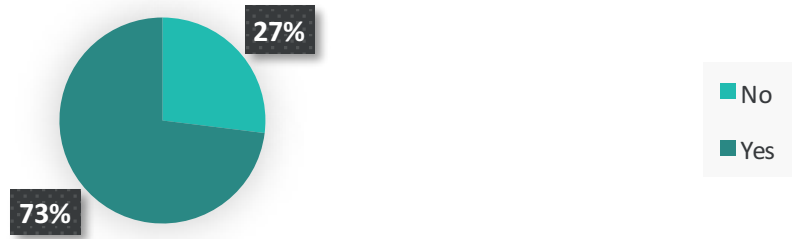
Overwhelming majority of respondents (111) claimed that the name boards in departments or sections of government institutions to which they accessed are in their respective mother tongues.

Figure 17: Was the name of the department you had to obtain the service, mentioned in your mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil)? 167 Service Recipients



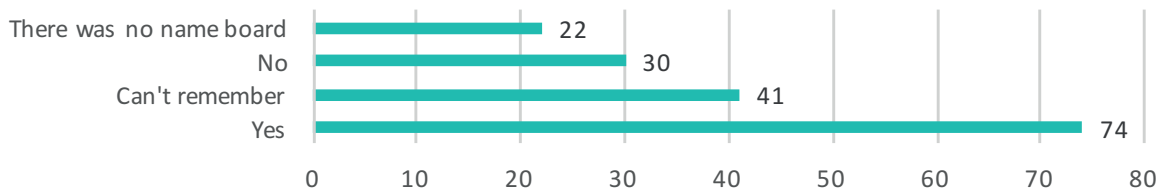
Majority of service recipients claim that the officer mainly responsible for providing relevant services is able to deliver service in their respective mother tongues.

Figure 18: Did the officer mainly responsible for the service you came obtain, operate in your mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil) when providing the services? 167 Service Recipients



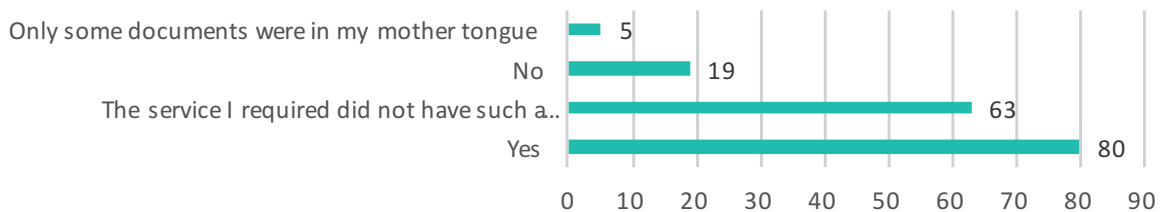
While 74 service recipients indicate that the officer who first dealt with providing the relevant service has his/her designation name board their respective mother tongues while 30 respondents claim the respective officer do not have the designation name board in their respective mother tongues.

Figure 19: Did the officer who first dealt with providing your service, have their designation displayed in your mother tongue? 167 Service Recipients



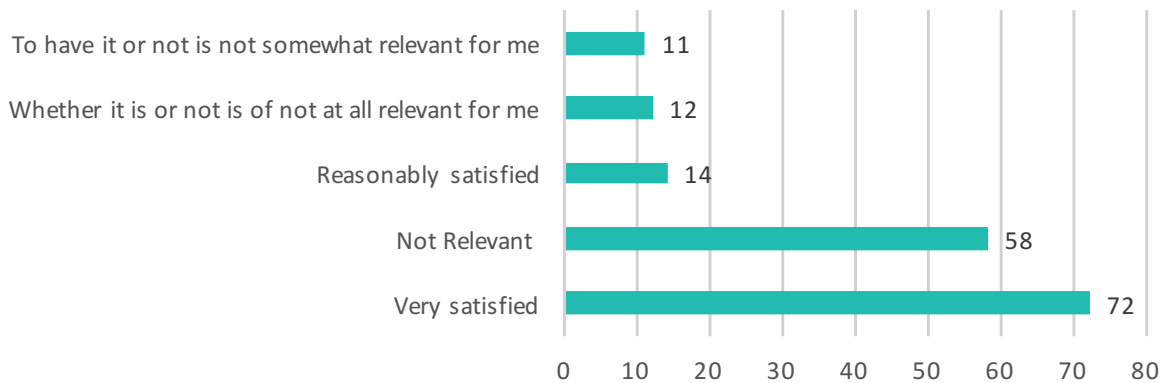
Majority (80) of respondents claim that the forms, formats, applications required for their service are available bilingually while 19 respondents indicate non-availability of such documents in their respective mother tongues.

Figure 20: Were the forms, applications, or any other paperwork associated with the service you received provided in your mother tongue?



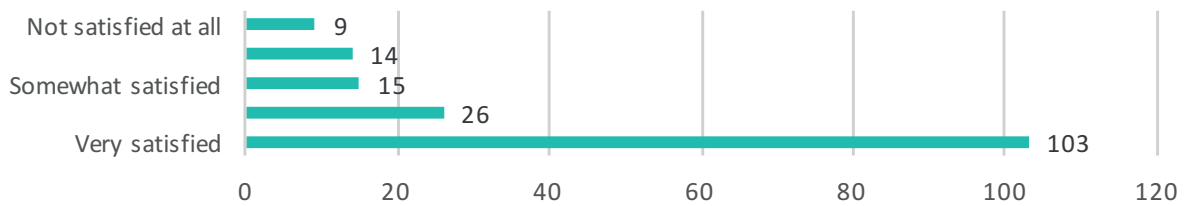
Respondents' opinion of the availability of forms, applications, or any other paperwork associated with the service you received provided in their respective mother tongues.

Figure 21: *In your experience, what is your opinion about having the forms, applications or other documents of this institution in your mother tongue?*



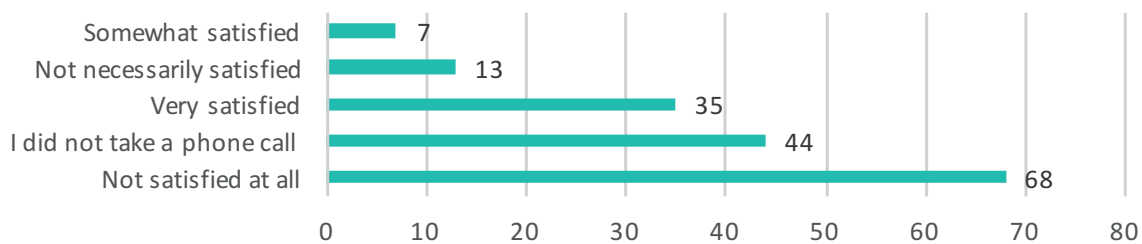
Respondents’ opinion of the ability of the officer who was providing you the service to address you and exchange ideas in their respective mother tongues.

Figure 22: *How satisfied are you with the ability of the officer who was providing you the service to address you and exchange ideas in your mother tongue?*



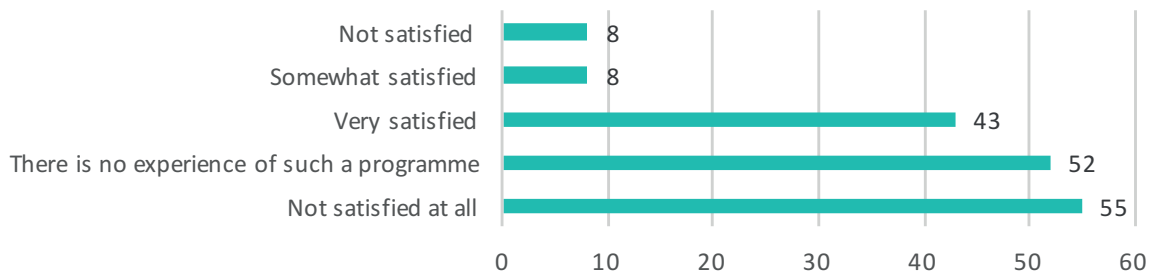
Respondents’ opinion of the responsiveness of the officer in their respective mother tongues when you contacted over the phone this institution in the past three months.

Figure 23: *How satisfied were you with the responsiveness of the officer when you contacted over the phone this institution in the past three months?*



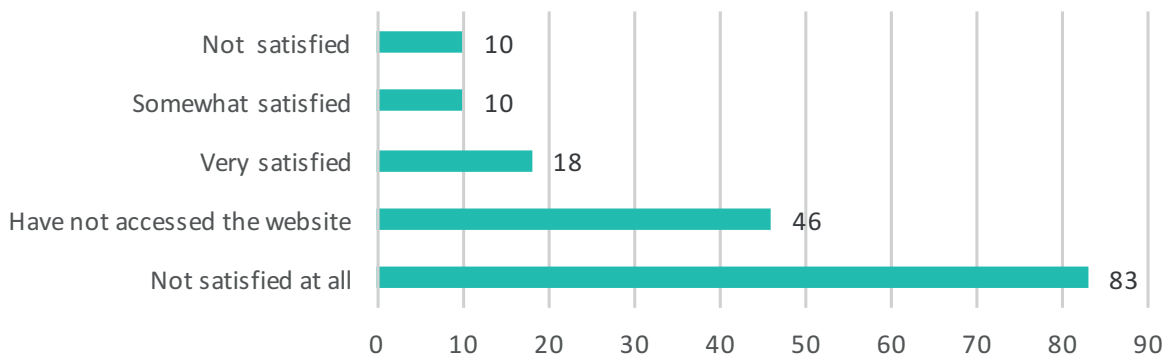
Respondents’ opinion of use of their respective mother tongues in conducting recent public awareness programs over the past three months by this institution.

Figure 24: How satisfied are you with the use of your mother tongue in conducting recent public awareness programs over the past three months by this institution?



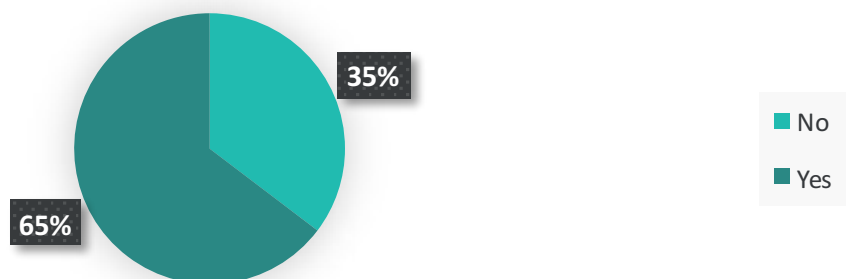
Overwhelming majority (83) of respondents claim that they are not at all satisfied with the availability of information in their respective mother tongues on the official websites of respective government institutions.

Figure 25: How satisfied are you with the availability of information in your mother tongue on the official website of this institution



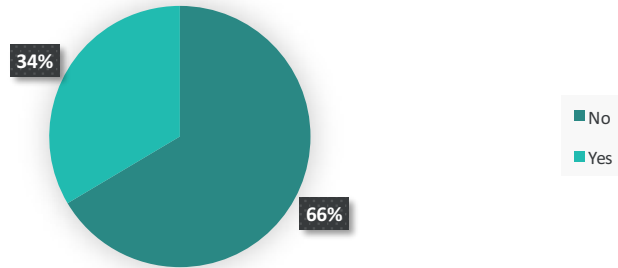
Majority (65%) of the service recipients claim that they do not know of their right to receive public services in their respective mother tongues.

Figure 26: Did you know that you have the right to obtain public/government services in your mother tongue?



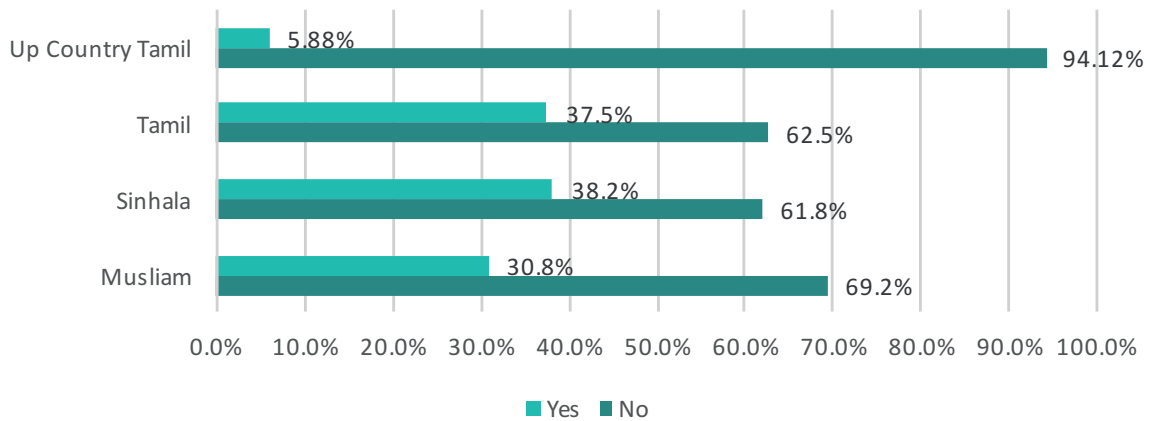
Majority (66%) of the service recipients claim that they do not know that they can complain if the right to receive public services in their respective mother tongues is violated.

Figure 27: Did you know that you can lodge a complaint if your right to receive public/government services in your mother tongue is violated?



Notably, service recipients whose mother tongue is Tamil language claim that they do not know that they can complain if the right to receive public services in their respective mother tongues is violated.

Figure 28: Did you know that you can lodge a complaint if your right to receive public/government services in your mother tongue is violated? By Ethnicity



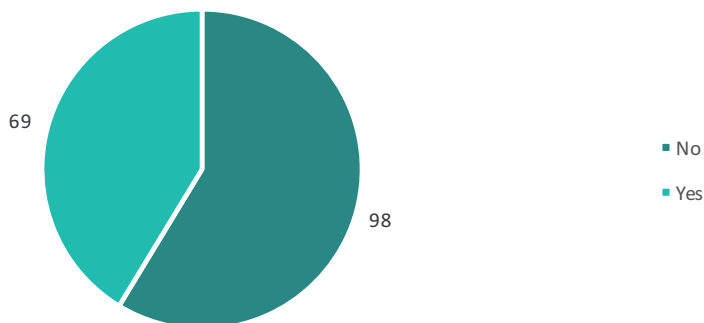
When asked if the respondents have ever complained about the inability to access and receive public services in their respective mother tongues, overwhelming majority (156) claim that they have not done so.

Figure 29: Have you ever complained to someone about not being able to obtain public services in your mother tongue?



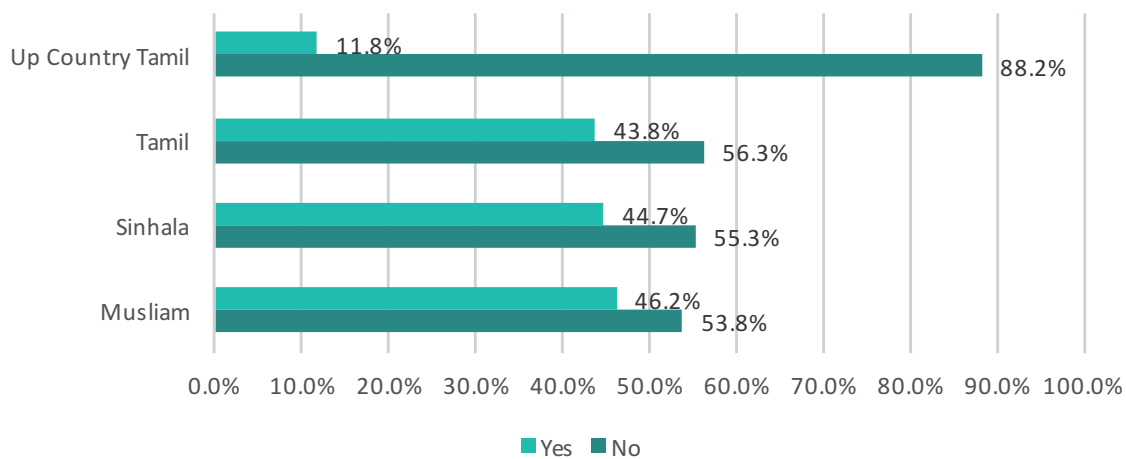
Majority of the respondents (98) claim that they do not know about the Official Languages Commission.

Figure 30: Do you know that there is an institution called Official Languages Commission?



Among the respondents who do not know the existence of the Official Languages Commission, respondents whose mother tongue is Tamil are more than respondents whose mother tongue is Sinhala.

Figure 31: Do you know that there is an institution called Official Languages Commission? By Ethnicity



Recommendations for better implementation of OLP

One of the primary objectives of this survey is to solicit input and recommendations from officials within service provider institutions aimed at enhancing the effective implementation of the Official Languages Policy (OLP). Furthermore, this survey comprehensively analyzes all key findings, resulting in a set of recommendations corresponding to each category under which these findings have been categorized.

Based on the information gathered and a thorough analysis of the overall assessment conducted in this study, which primarily centers on evaluating the current state of the official language policy's implementation in accordance with the four fundamental criteria previously delineated, as well as the methods employed to achieve these objectives. Insights and feedback were acquired through face-to-face interviews with a diverse array of designated officials from various ministries and government institutions. Additionally, recommendations were synthesized from the suggestions provided by service recipients.

In light of this, a collection of suggestions and recommendations is presented below, poised for careful consideration. These recommendations are intended to facilitate the effective and efficient implementation of official language policies. It is anticipated that the information presented throughout this report, encompassing positive trends, areas necessitating improvement, critical issues, challenges, and the accompanying recommendations, can serve as a foundational framework for the development of well-crafted and operationally feasible language plans as an integral aspect of the effective implementation of OLP.

Visibility and ambiance

- Ensure that all section, designation, and relevant name boards not in compliance with the official languages policy are redesigned where applicable.
- Recognizing the pivotal role of front office services in the implementation of the Official Language Policy (OLP), in cases where a dedicated front office is deemed unnecessary, the respective institutional leaders should take measures to assign staff with sufficient bilingual competency to effectively assist and direct service recipients to the appropriate sections, divisions, or officials for their service needs.
- Respective and relevant government institutions without established public announcing systems should undertake necessary actions to implement such systems in accordance with the principles of the official languages policy.
- Implement measures to ensure that all documents, including applications, forms, and templates issued by front office services and other departments intended to be completed by service recipients, adhere to the official language policy.

Administration and documentation

- It is recommended to undertake a comprehensive assessment to ascertain the sufficiency of both human and physical resources, encompassing IT equipment, necessary for the effective implementation of the official languages policy across all government institutions.
- Consequently, any existing resource deficiencies concerning the availability of documents in both official languages (including English) should be meticulously documented and incorporated into institutional performance reports, along with proposals for remedying these gaps.
- In close collaboration with administrative or human resources divisions, institutional leaders should conduct a thorough needs assessment to determine the requisite number of translators essential for their respective institutions.
- To facilitate the meaningful delivery of public services, immediate action should be taken, first, to identify the demand for translators, and second, to fill all vacant translator positions within government institutions where such services are deemed vital.
- As measures are taken to address human resource gaps with individuals possessing adequate language competencies, it is advisable to concurrently design and make available all necessary and pertinent documents in a bilingual format for public accessibility.
- Authorities should pay specific attention to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in the context of implementing the official languages policy and take necessary actions to safeguard their rights.

Service delivery

- Decision-makers within government institutions should conduct assessments to gain a deeper understanding of the demographics, particularly the language preferences, of their respective service recipients. This understanding should guide the determination of the level of bilingual relevance required for effective communication.
- Government institutions should ensure that they respond to a variety of requests for information, inquiries, and complaint notifications in the language chosen by the service recipient. To accomplish this, institutions should deploy officers with sufficient bilingual proficiency to suitable sections or roles within their respective entities.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that the content of each institution's website, as well as information related to divisional-level services, is available in both official languages.
- Decision-makers within government institutions, in collaboration with their respective line ministries or departments, should proactively identify any deficiencies in terms of human and other resources needed for content translation into the Sinhala and Tamil languages on websites.
- Given the increasing digitalization of public services, it is recommended to initiate a comprehensive review aimed at identifying gaps and challenges in maintaining the official websites of government institutions.
- Responsible officers across various government institutions should communicate to their respective line departments or ministries any technical or resource requirements necessary to ensure compliance with the Official Languages Policy (OLP) in disseminating information via websites.

- Decision-makers within government institutions should take the necessary actions to ensure that, as required, at least one staff member with adequate bilingual proficiency is assigned to each respective institution. These staff members should be positioned to provide bilingual expertise in matters related to service delivery, including awareness programs, information campaigns, instructions to the general public, and public warnings.
- Within this component, heads of institutions should guarantee that activities such as community consultations, assessments, data collection processes, and similar initiatives are overseen by officers possessing either bilingual capabilities or institutional arrangements for engaging with service recipients in both official languages. Periodic assessments of service recipient satisfaction levels should also be conducted.

Institutional commitment and support mechanism

- Decision-makers within government institutions should annually conduct a comprehensive needs assessment related to the implementation of the Official Languages Policy (OLP) and share the resulting report with the Department of Official Languages, the Official Languages Commission, and the National Institute of Language Education and Training, which operates under the purview of the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils, and Local Government.
- Additionally, these assessments should be communicated to the Chief Official Language Implementing Officer (COLIO) and Official Language Implementing Officer (OLIO) of the respective higher authorities responsible for line management.
- To ensure effective strategies for OLP implementation tailored to the specific institutional scope and scale, decision-makers within government institutions should seek guidance and advice from the Department of Official Languages.
- Government institutions' decision-makers should request copies of the overall "Language Plan" from their respective line ministries, departments, provincial councils, provincial ministries, provincial departments, municipal councils, urban councils, and pradeshiya sabhas, as applicable. Subsequently, divisional-level institutions should adapt and customize the overall plan as needed to develop institutional-level plans for OLP implementation.
- In close collaboration with their respective Chief Official Language Implementing Officers (COLIOs) and Official Language Implementing Officers (OLIOs), decision-makers within government institutions should include realistic budget allocations for OLP implementation in their annual budget proposals, following appropriate procedural protocols.
- In instances where government allocations prove insufficient for effective OLP implementation, institutional leaders should explore alternative resource mobilization strategies to support language implementation plans and ensure compliance with the OLP when delivering public services.
- Institutional heads should manifest their commitment to OLP implementation by strategically assigning staff with enhanced bilingual competency to service points where the majority of service recipients access services. Furthermore, staff members should be provided with opportunities to participate in language training programs, with a strong emphasis on the significance of bilingual competency when functioning as government officers in bilingual DS divisions.
- Decision-makers within government institutions, in collaboration with respective COLIOs, OLIOs, and other authorities responsible for ensuring effective OLP implementation, should design programs that encourage public officials to commit to adhering to the OLP and promote attitudinal changes as necessary.

Annexure 01. Selected Six (06) Ministries and 23 Government Institutions

District	Government Institutions and Ministries
NuwaraEliya	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divisional Secretariat – Nuwara Eliya 2. Nuwara Eliya Hospital 3. Police Station – Nuwara Eliya 4. Nuwara Eliya Labour Tribunal Court 5. Municipal Council – Nuwra Eliya
Galle	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. District Secretariat – Galle 7. Divisional Secretariat – Town & Gravets 8. Municipal Council - Galle 9. Karapitiya Base Hospital 10. Police Station – Galle
Vavuniya	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Divisional Secretariat – Vavuniya South 12. Divisional Secretariat – Vavuniya 13. Divisional Secretariat – Vavuniya North 14. Urban Council – Vavuniya 15. Divisional Secretariat – Vengalcheddikulam
Trincomalee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. District Secretariat – Trincomalee 17. Divisional Secretariat – Town & Gravets 18. Town & Grivets, Municipal Council 19. Police Station – Tricomalee 20. Chief Secretariat Office-Trincomalee, Eastern Province
Puttalam	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Divisional Secretariat – Kalpitiya 22. Divisional Secretariat –Vanathavilluwa 23. District Secretariat – Puttalam
Colombo (including three sub-ministerial portfolios with one main Cabinet Ministry)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 24. Ministry of Provincial Councils & Local Government Division 25. State Ministry of Home Affairs 26. Ministry of Public Administration (Internal Administration). 27. Ministry of health 28. Ministry of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms 29. Ministry of Public Security

A BRIEF REPORT ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES POLICY (OLP)
IN SELECTED MINISTRIES & GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS & PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON OLP
IN SRI LANKA

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CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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மாற்றுக் கொள்கைகளுக்கான நிலையம்

August 2023