



NEWSLETTER



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CARITAS SRI LANKA

CARITAS SRI LANKA

REACH OUT TO FLOOD AFFECTED IN THREE DIOCESES

Unprecedented heavy rainfall on 25th May 2017 resulted in several areas especially in the Western, Sabaragamuwa and Southern Districts being inundated with floods & landslides causing heavy destruction to life and property. As torrential rains lashed the country, Caritas teams led by Fr. Anton Sriyan Fernando, Fr. Indika Anthony and Fr. Lawrence Ramanayake in the respective Dioceses of Rathnapura, Galle and Colombo undertook the needs assessments of the displaced populations during the weekend of 27th & 28th May.



The early emergency response phase saw Caritas with local community support providing cooked meals, dry rations and essential non-food items to the affected in Galle, Matara, Colombo and Ratnapura under the respective Caritas Diocesan Centres of SED Galle, Seth Sarana and Sethmini. Caritas Colombo - Seth Sarana, launched several relief collection centres to receive donations from the general public, which were distributed in all affected districts in the ensuing weeks.

Caritas Sri Lanka successfully launched an Emergency Appeal with Caritas Internationalis for approximately Rs. 40,000,000.00 which was promptly supported by several Caritas Partner Member Organizations. The Caritas flood relief response focusses on provision of essential food, non-food items, kitchen utensils, hygiene kits, educational kits and cash-for-work programmes.

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NEW NATIONAL DIRECTOR ASSUMES DUTIES AT CARITAS SRI LANKA

Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke became the 11th National Director for the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development - Caritas Sri Lanka, succeeding Rev. Fr. Shanthi Kumar Welivwita who held that position from July 2016.

Fr. Mahendra, who is from the Colombo Diocese, was the former Director of the Colombo Catholic Press and the Editor of the Messenger, assumed duties as the new National Director for Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC on 4th of May 2017.

A past pupil of St. Joseph's College, Colombo, Fr. Mahendra was ordained a priest in 1992 and had served in parishes of Kimbulapitiya, Ratmalana, Kandana and Nayakakanda. In addition he was a member of the St. Aloysius Seminary for a period of 5 years and had served as the Chaplain for the Catholic inmates at the Welikada Prison during 1995-2001. He is the founder of the Christu Sevana, Home for the Elders and is the brainchild behind NIC (Neighbors in Christ) and YCF (Young Christian Family Fellowship) societies.

He obtained B. Phil and B.Th degrees from the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka, Kandy and also holds a postgraduate degree from the University of Kelaniya in Sociology.

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FINAL ADVOCACY PROGRAMME UNDER SAFE LABOUR MIGRATION

The third and final capacity building, training programme organized by the Migration Unit of Caritas Sri Lanka was held recently for the Diocesan Staff along with other stakeholders in the Safe Labour Migration Programme. The sole objective of the training was to enhance the knowledge of project staff of the 13 Diocesan Centres, civil society members, community leaders and local government authorities who work for the betterment and welfare of the migrant workers and their families. To achieve this, three separate programmes had been designed and of which the final one was held on 29th and 30th of June 2017 at the SEDEC Auditorium.

Addressing the participants, the National Director, Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke stated that migration cannot be stopped but only be regulated. He urged the participants to support this objective, especially in their work since our work among migrant workers and their families directly or indirectly contributes towards fulfilling the Church's mission.



Under the programmes, three thematic areas such as advocacy, capacity building, and guidance had been covered and technical tools, methods and concepts related to the above have been disseminated among the participants.

A total of 60 participants attended all the two-day trainings held in a series of three separate programmes in February, March and June. Out of them 57 participants received certificates.

CARITAS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (CDI) OF CARITAS BANGLADESH VISIT SEDEC

A seven member team from the Caritas Development Centre (CDI) of Caritas Bangladesh visited Sri Lanka from 11th to 16th June 2017 for an exposure visit. The team comprised of Mr. Theophil Nokrek, Director (CDI), Mr. Joseph Rozairo, Coordinator Training, Mr. Golam Maainuddin, Coordinator Research, 3 Senior Faculty Members Ms. Khurshidha Akhtar Jahan, Mr. M. D. Shafiqul Islam, Ms. Sukti Kona Sangma and Mr. Mohammed Mamunur Rashid, Senior Manager from Caritas Bangladesh National Centre.

The exposure visit provided an opportunity for the visitors as well as the host, Caritas Sri Lanka to share the best practices and to learn from each other.

The main objective of this exposure visit was to get acquainted with Sri Lanka's experiences, practices and processes of attaining self-reliance and technical independency in running training & research institutes and development agencies, and also to get a different understanding of, how to conduct effective and qualitative training and research in an organizational context.



LOCAL CORPORATES MCLARENS & LALAN FABRICS CO-PARTNER WITH CARITAS SRI LANKA IN POST-CONFLICT HOUSING

Two of Sri Lanka's well known Corporates, McLaren's Holdings and Lalan Fabrics (Pvt) Ltd., joined hands with Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC, in contributing towards post-conflict housing in Neelankerny, Muttur Trincomalee.

The two reputed Companies responded to the needs in colour washing and painting of the 44 houses built under the 'owner-driven' methodology with funding assistance from Caritas Switzerland. The 44 families who are among the poorest of the poor and severely displaced by back-to-back disasters of the north/east conflict and the 2004 Tsunami were identified by Caritas Trincomalee-EHED in 2015. Each house which is 475 sq. ft. in size costed Rs. 620,000.00 and built through the owner-driven approach with community participation.



The Causeway decorative paints were made available by Macbertan (Private) Ltd., were distributed to each family and the painting of the 44 houses has been completed by the communities themselves.

Caritas Sri Lanka is grateful to Ms. Shehara Jayawardena, Group Managing Director McLaren's Holdings and Mr. Dilip Parikh, Director Lalan Fabrics, and their respective Teams for the generous support and contribution in this effort.

CSL STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

The Management of Caritas Sri Lanka (CSL) initiated a review process of the current National Centre Strategic Plan 2015–2018 on May 23-24, 2017 with the participation of all 13 Diocesan Directors and key staff from the National Centre & the respective Diocesan Centers in Chilaw. The two day review workshop was facilitated by Mr. Kushal Neogy, Sub Regional Director-Partnerships for Catholic Relief Services, South Asia. Participants engaged in several group exercises to:

- Analyze the Uniqueness, Relevance of the current Strategic Plan; Improvements needed based on the current context and key information required to define the overarching 'goal';
- Analyze Internal & External Shocks; Key Trends at Diocesan Level; Organizational Assets, Structures & Systems; and
- Identify current Challenges & Issues; Opportunities and required Organizational Capacities for Caritas.

The two days of meetings were led by Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director.



The interactive sessions and group discussions at the workshop provided a forum for reflection and sharing of key strategic ideas which could inform the future Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021. Mr. Neogy, facilitating the two day workshop, encouraged the participants to 'prioritize' key programmatic and sectoral interventions rather than

embrace all issues faced by the poor, marginalized and the vulnerable populations served by Caritas across the 12 dioceses. "We need to realize that we will neither have the resources nor the capacities to do 'everything' as an organization", Mr. Neogy stressed.

It is expected that the outcome of the discussions will lead to the formulation of first draft of the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan for Caritas Sri Lanka in the next few months.

Rev.Fr. Anton Wyman Croos, Director of Caritas Chilaw-Janassaviya assisted in coordinating the workshop in Chilaw.

We welcome our new Diocesan Director,
Rev. Fr. Lawrence Ramanayake who recently assumed as Director of
Caritas Colombo - Seth Sarana.

My name is Preethini Roshika Perera. I am 27 years old, a third year undergraduate at the University of Kelaniya. I am from Yaya 2, Rajanganaya in the North Central Province. We come from a very poor family and my father is a labourer and mother is a house-wife. I have one sister who is two years younger to me. We live in a half-built house.

"I am thankful and happy that I am helped till this day."

From my childhood I wanted to become a teacher and help the poor children like me in my village. I studied hard and passed the G.C.E. O/L exam well. However things changed rapidly and transformed all our lives to something which we never imagined.

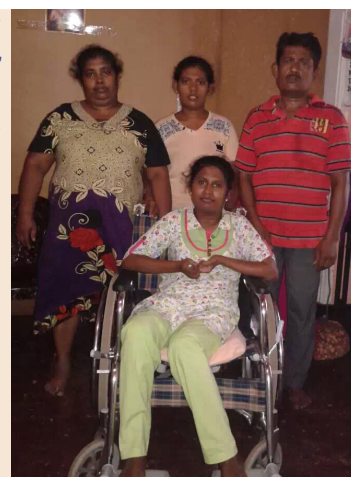
I can never forget that day. It was Saturday the 17th of March 2007 around 7.30am in the morning, a very much an ordinary day, the day that my life was changed. I was sweeping the outside compound of our house and I was supposed to attend a class around 10.30 am. It started with a small neck pain and in the next 10 minutes my hands became paralyzed. Within half an hour, it spread to my whole body. I was immediately admitted to the Yaya 5 Hospital and from there I was transferred to the Anuradhapura General Hospital. Within hours the situation worsened and I was sent to the ICU. For 2 months, I was attached with an artificial respiratory device. I was virtually a lifeless body.

I learnt that I was infected with a disease known as transverse myelitis, a neurological condition in which the spinal cord is inflamed. I became very weak and my limbs dysfunctional. I needed help in all the sense I could imagine. All my family members worked very hard to bring me back to life. Months later, I had to go through physiotherapy at the Digana Rehabilitation Centre in Kandy. I was trapped to a wheelchair and I became desperate and sad. It was not what I expected. All my dreams of the future turned upside down. My situation affected my studies as well as my family in many ways.

In 2011, we had our church feast and the priest who came to our parish visited all the houses in the area. He happened to come to ours to bless our house and witnessed my condition. He asked me, "Do you like to study further?" I replied, "Yes". Later he arranged me a donor who sent me Rs.5000 each month and I started my A/L in art stream. Two teachers came and helped me with the subjects in political science and Sinhala while a Rev. Sister and a catechist helped me with the Catholicism subject free of charge. My exam results were 2 As and 1 B and was selected to the University.

However with that I expected more troubles and difficulties. As I am unable to do anything alone, my parents and the sister also had to reside close to the university and we rented a house for Rs.10,000 per month. In March I underwent further surgery and was told by doctors that after several years I may be able to recover. I feel that I still have a long way to go and the freedom of life is further away from me. Then it came as a surprise, under a scholarship programme of Caritas Anuradhapura – Sethsaviya, I was selected and receive regular financial support to further my higher studies. In addition I receive support from the Welfare Ministry and my relatives. I am thankful wholeheartedly to everyone who supported me on my journey. It is important to identify who really needs assistance and to reach out to them. I am thankful and happy that I am helped till this day.

Preethini was supported to further her higher studies under the Poland-Caritas Sri Lanka Scholarship Programme implemented by Caritas Anuradhapura – Sethsaviya under the guidance of Caritas Sri Lanka. This is a project supported by Caritas Poland.



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Appreciating the generous contributions of Caritas Network and by the Catholic and other faithful at Parish levels, Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, who recently took over reins as National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC said, "At a time of a national calamity, it is heartening to observe that people of all walks of life coming forward to help our own fellow brethren, amply demonstrating the very principles of Catholic Social Teachings such as 'Solidarity, Community participation' and 'Human Dignity'".

