



NEWSLETTER



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CARITAS SRI LANKA

Orientation on Right to Information Act (RTI)

With a view to create wider awareness on the Act to Right to Information (RTI), an orientation programme was organized by Caritas Sri Lanka at the SEDEC Auditorium on 9th March 2017. The session was conducted in the English language.



A group of nearly 65 persons consisting of Caritas Diocesan Coordinators, civil society leaders, priests and religious, academics, peace activists, and members of the Caritas National Centre staff participated in the half day programme. One of the three Commissioners to the RTI Commission, Ms. Kishali Pinto Jayawardena and Ms. T. Mathuri, Legal Researcher attached to the RTI Commission were the distinguished resource persons at the programme.

The Chairman of Caritas Sri Lanka, Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, moderating the session stated that there is a great lack of awareness among ordinary people of the laws enacted in the parliament. In that context the initiatives by Caritas Sri Lanka to create greater understanding of the RTI is an important step.



Ms. Pinto Jayawardena who was involved from the inception in the enactment of the RTI law in the country, making the opening remarks commended the Parliament of Sri Lanka for approving the important Act, which has been rated 3rd best in the RTI Global Ranking. (Mexico and Serbia are in the first and second places.) She further stated that the RTI law is meant for the 'poor' and encourages 'The Spirit of Voluntary Disclosure' rather than 'Disclosure by Challenge'.

The Symposium ended with a Q & A session and was appreciated by all.

*The Late Rev. Fr. Joseph Fernando
Founder Director SEDEC*

A Tribute to a Pioneer in Social Action

Every man comes to the earth with an embedded mission and vision though a few of us dare to realize the call during our stay on earth. Whether we bear witness to this, as lay or clergy, what matters is how far we go in our ways fulfilling the eternal aspirations and call.



In the same line, the spirit and the energy behind SEDEC or popularly known as Caritas Sri Lanka is the result or a realization of a call of a priestly son named Rev. Fr. Joseph Fernando. The pioneering and visionary priest, who started the Social and Development Centre (SEDEC), fondly remembered as "Father Joe", dedicated his entire life for the social action movement in Sri Lanka. A liberator of the poor together with his Board of competent Catholic laymen worked towards making SEDEC more as an apostolate rather than promotion of near economic productivity.

Born to the family of Mr. Paulu Gabriel Fernando and Mrs. Ambrosia Lambert on 25th September 1925, Fr. Joe was ordained as a Colombo Diocesan Catholic priest on 17th March 1949 by His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Cooray OMI.

As a young priest and assistant to Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernando, he went to the Sea Street Church in Negombo and spent 4 years there witnessing how the poor fishermen were ill-treated and abused by the rich boat owners who virtually did not consider the poor as human beings. The setting up of the Fishermen's Cooperative in Sea Street, Kudapaduwa was the result of the untiring work of Fr. Joe.

During the second year of service, he was asked by His Grace the Archbishop Thomas Cooray OMI to take over the parish and to continue the work of Fr. Anthony. Meanwhile he got a scholarship to study the Antigonish Movement at the University of St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish, Canada from 1956 to 1957.

Meanwhile he was asked by His Grace to meet Msgr. Bayar, the Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis and Msgr. Dossier, Secretary General of Misereor and

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Capacity Building Training in Project Management

A 3-day capacity building programme for the Caritas Diocesan Directors, key DC Staff and selected members of the National Centre Staff was held from 6th to 8th February 2017 at the SEDEC auditorium. This is the first of its kind programme, under the series of capacity building initiatives planned for the year, 2017.

The main objective of organizing such as programme was to strengthen the organizational capacity of the Caritas Sri Lanka network, especially in effective Project Management at all levels which would enable Caritas staff to meet required international standard and quality in project design & planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation and accountability.



Rev. Fr. Celestine Melchior Devasahayam, Consultant to CRS India and Mr. Kushal Neogy, Sub Regional Director Partnerships for CRS South Asia jointly facilitated the programme.

Inter-Ethnic Women's Interactive Session

Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC organized a 2-day Women's Interactive Programme recently, under the project titled, *"Advocacy towards Reconciliation, Unity and Good Governance in line with the LLRC Recommendations"* with the funding assistance from Caritas Australia with Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) and Misereor- Germany. The main objective of the workshop is to create a platform for different religious and ethnic groups to come together and share their views and experiences of the pre and post war situation, paving the way for closer understanding and respect for opposite views.



A group of 39 female participants from multi-ethnic and multi-religious backgrounds joined the programme which was held on the 2nd and 3rd of March 2017 at the Caritas Chilaw – Janasaviya Centre. This was one of the activities under the Healing and Reconciliation started in 2012.

Finance Workshop

A One-day capacity building and training workshop for the Finance Staff of the Caritas National Centre and the Diocesan Centres was held on the 14th February 2017 at the SEDEC auditorium. Six Diocesan Directors and a group of 48 members of finance staff participated in the session. The main purpose of the workshop was to discuss findings of the present finance operations, including Independent Audit concerns and provide new tools and resources to the Finance Staff to be more effective and efficient in their work while maximizing the output through Tally software system.



Capacity Building Programme under Safe Labour Migration

The Migration Unit of Caritas Sri Lanka organized a capacity building and training programme recently for the DC and National Centre Staff along with other interested stakeholders in the safe labor migration programme. This programme is the first of its kind, and one out of three, planned with the prime objective of capacitating the individuals who work towards safe labour migration in Sri Lanka. Under the current first stage, a 2-day workshop was held on 16th and 17th February 2017 at the SEDEC Auditorium for a group of 71 participants.

The resource persons, Mr. M. Rohan Wijesena, Additional Manager, SLBFE Legal Division, Ms. Swairee Rupasinghe, National Project Coordinator ILO, Mr. L.K. Ruhunage, Migration Consultant and Mr. A.V. Samuel, Executive Director, Community Development Service facilitated the workshop.



Delegation of Caritas Australia visit Sri Lanka

A two-member delegation of Caritas Australia, comprised of Mr. Frank Elvey, Head of the Asian Department and Mr. Michael Peyra, Programme Officer visited Sri Lanka from 14th to 21st January 2017.

They met Fr. Shanthi Kumar Weliwita, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka, project staff and discussed status of the projects implemented with the support of Caritas Australia. The main objective of their visit was to assess the progress and the impact of the projects implemented with the support of Caritas Australia.



During the visit to Jaffna, the delegation met Rev. Fr. S. Eugene Francis, Director of Caritas Jaffna-HUDEC and the relevant project staff to review the progress of the Housing & Livelihood Project. The delegation also met the Bishop of Jaffna Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin B. Gnanapragasm and received an update on the present situation in Jaffna.



Livelihood Support & Training towards Decent Life

Under the project intervention supported by Caritas Slovenia, 7 poor families in Kurunegala Diocese were given training on Micro Business Planning to start or expand a business activity. This is the third batch of beneficiaries who received support under the project titled *“With Work towards a Decent Life-Support for Poor Families”*.

Through the current third stage, 7 families were chosen by Caritas Kurunegala – Janasetha and were given training on 19th, 20th and 21st of January 2017 at the Janasetha Centre. The resource person Mrs. Nilani Tissera, M & E Consultant and Coordinator for the project from Caritas National Centre facilitated the sessions. At the end of the 3-day training sessions, they were handed over Rs.25, 000 each to embark on their desired livelihood venture.



**We welcome our new Diocesan Directors,
Rev. Fr. J. Francis, and Rev. Fr. Anthony Indika
who recently assumed as Directors of
Caritas Vanni- HUDEC and Caritas SED Galle respectively**

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other leading aid agencies. They all insisted him of setting up an organization which could become a partner of these funding agencies. This is the humble origin of SEDEC in 1968 which in Hebrew (SEDEQ) meant "Justice". Fr. Joe along with 4 other staff, including the current Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith during his formative years outside the seminary, joined in to start the SEDEC office at the ground floor of a building adjoining to the present-day Joe-Neth Studio along the Kynsey Road.

Moving from SEDEC, later in 1979, Fr. Joe was called to the Caritas Internationalis to serve and share his expertise at the international level until 1987. Even in his later years, Fr. Joe stood for the social causes actively and enthusiastically and helped the Directors at SEDEC to define the Catholic Social action and interventions.

Rev. Fr. Joe was called to eternal rest on 23 of February 2017, after 91 years of dedicated service in the church's vineyard. "What does the Lord require of you.. To do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

May his Soul rest in Peace!

Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC

Capacity Building Programme for the Plantation Leaders

Under the project titled, "Inclusion of Marginalized Estate Labour Communities with Access to Government Services" funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through SPICE Sri Lanka, a 2-day capacity building programme was organized by Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC.

The Training workshop held from 21st to 22nd of February 2017 at the SEDEC auditorium had 40 participants.



Mr. M. Vamadevan, Advisor to the Ministry of Hill Country New Villages, Infrastructure and Community Development and Mr. Siyon de Alwis, Training Consultant were the resource persons of the training workshop.



One of the objectives of the workshop was to provide awareness and guidance to the participants on the implementation of the 5 Year National Plan of Action (NPA) formulated by the Ministry of Hill Country New Villages, Infrastructure and Community Development in March 2016.

Caritas Sri Lanka Workshop to Define Its Policy on "Development"

A two day workshop was organized by Caritas Sri Lanka with a view to defining its future organizational Policy on "Development". The initiative was part of the joint undertaking by Caritas Sri Lanka and Caritas Italiana under the Accompanying Partnership Agreement that exists between the two organizations.



The participants of the workshop which included Diocesan Directors and staff and key Managers and staff of the National Centre, engaged in identifying key elements which would define the preferred target beneficiary community; model of development and the implementation methodology. Dr. Nishara Fernando, Senior Lecturer of the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo

provided valuable insights on successful models and approaches of sustainable development in Sri Lanka and globally, while Prof. Anton Meemana reminded the participants of the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching, Charity and Social Justice.

Dr. Jehan Perera, Executive Director National Peace Council provided the current post-conflict context and possible approaches to sustainable peace and reconciliation. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Pamela Peiris. A total of 40 participants were engaged in the 2 day deliberations at the Tewatte Retreat Centre. Caritas Sri Lanka hopes to develop the first draft of the proposed Policy on Development, based on the outcomes of the workshop by end of June 2017.