

NEWSLETTER

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CARITAS SRI LANKA

CARITAS SRI LANKA-SEDEC PROCLAIMS GOLDEN JUBILEE

Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC officially launched its Golden Jubilee Year on 7th of November 2017 at the SEDEC National Centre premises. The organization that serves as the social arm of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka will commemorate half a century of service to the poor, marginalized and vulnerable during the next 12 months. Plans are underway to conduct specific programmes and activities to celebrate the Jubilee Year at Diocesan and national levels.



At the launch ceremony Caritas Diocesan Directors, members of the Caritas Advisory Committee, Caritas Diocesan and National Centre Staff joined in a Thanks Giving Holy Mass celebrated by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, Bishop of Kandy, who is also the current Chairman of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace & Human Development under which Caritas operates as its national secretariat.

Delivering the Homily, then Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando, recalled the early beginnings of SEDEC and the services rendered during its long history to the most affected due to conflict, disaster and poverty based on the foremost virtue of 'love'. At the end of the Thanks Giving Service, Bishop Vianney read out the proclamation of the Jubilee, which was handed over by the oldest serving member of the staff, Mr. K. T. Palitha.



Cont. to pg. 4

WORLD FOOD DAY COMMEMORATION 2017

Caritas Sri Lanka commemorated this years' World Food Day on October 16, at the Maithripala Sirisena Buddhi Mandapaya in Polonnaruwa under the global theme, "Change the future migration - Invest in food security and rural development".

More than 1600 farmers, government officers, Polonnaruwa District Secretary Mr. Ranjith Ariyaratne, Ambassador of Norway to Sri Lanka and Maldives His Excellency Thorbjørn Gaustadsæther, the Bishop of Anuradhapura, Rt.Rev.Dr. Norbet Andradi, Programme Adviser to Caritas Norway Mr. Aron Halfen, Dr. V.R. Haridhas - Zonal Manager of Caritas India and Coordinator for Agriculture of Caritas Asia, Caritas Diocesan Directors and a large group of invitees participated in the ceremony.

The day's programme commenced with a public walk where the famer communities participating at the event carried posters and placards depicting key messages advocating for a "Healthy Life and a Poison-free World".



Welcoming the invitees, the National Director Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, Rev.Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke stated that the Church through its social arm Caritas has taken on the responsibility towards contributing to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), especially the second SDG which is 'Overcome Hunger', by engaging directly with the poor famer communities in the Dioceses of Anuradhapura, Batticaloa and Kurunegala.

The key note address was given by Dr. T.S.P. Jayaweera, Senior Lecturer Faculty of Agriculture Sciences, University of Sabaragamuwa on the day's theme "Change the future of Migration, Invest in Food Security and Rural Development".

Cont. to pg. 3



Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC
GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR

November 2017 - December 2018

CARITAS BUILD HOUSES IN TRINCOMALEE

Caritas Sri Lanka handed over 44 newly built houses to the families in Neenakerny Village on 23rd October 2017 with the funding support of Caritas Swiss.

In 2004 Tsunami hit this area, and thereafter in 2006 when new violence erupted once again, the families got affected heavily and fled from this village towards Batticaloa district. When they returned to the village later, their former houses were all damaged due to the war.

At this juncture Caritas Trincomalee-EHED took up the challenge to uplift the lives of these families. With the support of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, EHED approached Caritas Spain to build some houses for the displaced. Later in 2016, Caritas Swiss after doing a feasibility study provided 44 new houses to the families in Neenakerny. The intervention was further enriched with the donation of paints by McLaren's Holding and Lalan's Fabrics Pvt Ltd.



In addition as water was a problem to these families, Caritas EHED with the kind funding assistance of Caritas Italiana, was able to provide water connections to 93 families in Neenakerny which was a grave need to the returned families.

Honourable Governor Mr. Rohitha Bogollagama was the chief guest of this occasion while His Excellency the Swiss Ambassador Mr. Walker Nederkoon was in attendance as the Guest of Honour. Government agent of Trincomalee, Mr. N. A. A. Pushpakumara, the Bishop of Trincomalee, Rt. Rev.Dr. Christian Noel Emmanuel and Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, the National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC and the Divisional Secretary, Mr. V. Yoouff graced the occasion.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Caritas Jaffna-HUDEC organized a felicitation ceremony for the students who have excelled in the grade 5 scholarship examination 2017, on 15th of November 2017. Under the Caritas Korea funded project titled 'Supporting Primary Education for Poor & Vulnerable Children', HUDEC sponsored 202 poor students from the 12 schools in the Jaffna District.

The certificate award ceremony was presided by Rev. Fr. S. Eugene Francis, Director of Caritas Jaffna- HUDEC and Mr. Yu Hwa Li, Senior Executive Manager of Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Mrs. Padmini Kiriheena, National Coordinator of the project and Mr. Nobert Uthayakumar, Divisional Education Officer of Chankanai were the other special guests present at the occasion.

At the ceremony the students were awarded with certificates while Bank Saving Account books were handed over to them with the support of Cargills Bank. Each savings book had an initial balance of Rs.1,150.

School Principals, teachers, parents and HUDEC staff participated at the ceremony at the occasion. Further, the students were given educational materials, nutritional food pack, school bags and shoes under the project.



CARITAS' 3RD INTER-RELIGIOUS SYMPOSIUM IN VANNI

The third and final symposium on Religious Harmony, organized by Caritas Sri Lanka was held in Kilinochchi on the 12th & 13th of October 2017 under the theme "Religious Harmony for Peace and Prosperity". This is part of the project titled "Religious Amity", funded by Caritas Norway/NORAD from 2015.

A group of approximately 130 participants representing the Dioceses of Chilaw, Colombo, Kurunegala, Trincomalee and Vanni took part in the 2-day programme. There were Religious Leaders of different faiths, members of the Inter-Religious Forums of the respective Dioceses and several staff from the Caritas National Centre and Caritas Vanni-HUDEC.



Similar to the previous two symposiums, this programme too was consisted of religious observances, group discussions and cultural presentations.

The chief guest for the inauguration session was Ms. Rupawathi Ketheeswaran, the Government Agent of Mullaitivu District. Addressing the gathering, she stated that the Religious Leaders should take the lead role promoting reconciliation among different ethnic and religious groups. She also pointed out the importance of respecting the religious and faith values and rituals of others while following our own.

The main speech at the event was delivered by Rev. Fr. Fancis Jeyasekaram of Jaffna. He spoke on the timely need of unity among different religious groups and the role of Religious Leaders in promoting reconciliation. He further mentioned that there were so many conflicts among our people in the past. Small incidents or conflicts were blown out of proportion or exaggerated to the extent that it created un-necessary and sometimes dangerous situations in the environment. He said that it is unfortunate that such intolerance had spread among the religions too and become 'ammunition' in the hands of extremist groups. Fr. Jeyasekeram referred to an attack on Christians in Kenya in 2015 in which both Christian and Muslim passengers travelling in a bus were targeted. When the

Cont. to pg. 4

Cont. from pg. 1 - WORLD FOOD DAY ...

His Excellency Ambassador to Norway, Thorbjørn Gaustadsæther, speaking at the occasion commended the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka and Caritas for bringing much needed development to rural Sri Lanka and appreciated the direction taken towards promoting organic farming and homestead gardening as means towards sustainable agriculture and long term food security.

Mr. Aron Halfen Program Advisor, Caritas Norway, Dr. V. R. Haridas, Manager, Climate Adaptive Agriculture & Livelihoods, Caritas India also spoke on behalf of Caritas Norway and Caritas Asia respectively.

A special feature of the program was the handing over of a 'Sannas Pathraya' containing key demands and 'Call to Action' to the Government of Sri Lanka by famer communities representing the three Dioceses to Mr. Ranjith Ariyaratne, District Secretary of Polonnaruwa, who promised to forward same to His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka.

10 Winners of the 'Best Home Garden' Competition in the districts of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa also received their Award Certificates & Prizes on the day. The ceremony concluded with the Vote of Thanks by Rev. Fr. Srilal Fernando, Diocesan Director, Caritas Anuradhapura-Sethsaviya. Parallel to the World Food day, two more commemorations were held in Kurunegala and Batticaloa organized by the respective Diocesan Centres.



Annual Christmas Get-Together 2017

Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC held the Annual staff Christmas get-together on 21st of December 2017 at the SEDEC premises. All the staff and their family members participated in the event. Rev.Fr. Mehendra Gunatilleke, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka- SEDEC presided over the event and celebrated the Holy Mass.

The event was filled with many colourful items including singing of Carols by staff reminding everyone of the true spirit behind the birth of Jesus. A beautiful Christmas crib constructed by the staff and brightly lit up garden filled the air with the spirit of the season

The evening was fun-filled with children's games and games for the staff, which gave a sense of entertainment to the families present. This arrival of the Santa Clause family of mommy and daddy Santa with two children was a moment of fun and surprise to everyone present. All the children received gifts from the Santa family. There was great fellowship, sharing and Christmas cheer at this year's Christmas get-together.



Cont. from pg.1 - CARITAS SRI LANKA-SEDEC.....

On the same day, Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC launched its new website with a view to reaching out to a wider audience. In addition, Caritas Sri Lanka –SEDEC released its new Strategic Plan for the year 2018-2021. Mr. Yu Hwa Li, Senior Executive Manager presenting the salient features of the new Strategic Plan urged the Directors and staff present at the occasion to commit to effectively implementing the Strategy in the next three years towards making a significant contribution in integral human development, disaster risk reduction and advocacy. The first copy of the new Strategic Plan was handed over to the Bishop Chairman, Diocesan Directors, Advisory Committee members and representatives of Caritas Partner Organizations present at the occasion. Another significant feature of the event was release of the Golden Jubilee Theme song, written and composed by Rev. Fr. Cecil Joy Perera and its Tamil version written by Rev. Fr. Eugene Francis.

Cont. from pg.3 - CARITAS' 3RD INTER-RELIGIOUS SYMPOSIUM...

attackers demanded that the Christians identify themselves, both the Christian and Muslim passengers stood together and told the attackers to kill everyone if they want to do so. This was a good example of solidarity and unity among different religious groups.

Rev.Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, The National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka, quoting the Special LLRC Recommendation for Religious Harmony and the Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peace said that it is the responsibility of each one of us to carry the message of Peace and Harmony to our own communities. Further, he requested the continued support of all the Religious Leaders in the Peace initiatives of Caritas Sri Lanka.

The second day of the programme was more significant as the Programme advisor from Caritas Norway, Mr. Aron Halfen, was also present at the event. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Halfen stated that he is indeed privileged to witness the gathering of Religious Leaders from various parts of the country for the common purpose of finding avenues to promote religious harmony in their localities and communities. While appreciating the work of the Inter-Religious Forums from the year 2015, he also expressed importance of the continuation of the programme in the future.

The chief guest for the 2nd day was Very Rev. Fr. P. J. Jebaratnam, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Jaffna. In his speech he stated that after 30 years of war, it is not easy to bring peace within a very short period of time, it may need another 30 years for reconciliation. He said that the definition of war is a fight against evil and the definition for peace is also a fight against evil.

"During the war people had to make a lot of sacrifices. When it comes to peace we have to make more sacrifices. That is why all religions must get together in this effort. When there is a conflict between two parties, we have to accept our mistakes instead of saying 'I am right'. When you point one finger at another, there are three fingers pointing at you," he went on to say.

The programme was organized under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Joseph Francis, Director of Caritas Vanni- HUDEC.