



# NEWSLETTER



## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CARITAS SRI LANKA

### CI CONSULTATION ON "THE FUTURE OF WORK, LABOUR AFTER "LAUDATO SI"

Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke attended the Consultation on "The Future of Work, Labour after Laudato Si" – Caritas Internationalis Consultation on Decent Work – Project "The future of Work, Labour after Laudato Si" held in Geneva from 18th to 20th March 2019. Recently the International Labour Organization celebrated its centenary. The combination of ILO's centenary, the framework set by the Agenda for Sustainable Development (in particular SDG 8), the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the publication of Encyclical "Laudato Si" of Pope Francis brought together a unique set of opportunities for promotion of the Decent Work Agenda.

In such a context, CI held a consultation "Decent Work – the future of Work, labour and Laudato Si" from the 18th to the 20th of March 2019. The aim of the consultation is to provide CIMOs with common definitions and practical tools to initiate, reinforce and sustain projects, programmes and advocacy campaigns etc.

In his presentation at the consultation Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director congratulated the ILO on the celebration of its centenary and promoting social dialogue and employment creation. He said that the special consideration given under ILOs decent work agenda and its inclusion of SDG 8 is commendable. He then shared Caritas Sri Lanka's contribution towards the poor and marginalized communities through its network of 13 dioceses in the country.



Among the important projects that are being implemented, he referred to 3 projects which included the Empowerment of Green Gold Harvesters which is focused on bargaining for the rights and betterment of both the living and working conditions of the tea estate plantation labour workers; under the project "providing legal and other services to Migrants and their families", Caritas Sri Lanka with the support of the Swiss Development Corporation is working to prevent women, men and children from being exploited and protect them from the lure of human traffickers. Cognizant that migration is a Right, Caritas Sri Lanka is working to ensure that it is done safely. This project is being implemented in all 13 dioceses.

Fr. Mahendra referred to the efforts of Caritas Sri Lanka in taking the lead to clean up several areas in the coastal belt which will be continuing during the whole of 2019. Finally, he also stressed that Caritas Sri Lanka is deeply involved in promoting sustainable agriculture to ensure food security by encouraging organic food production with the support of Caritas Norway. In his concluding remarks he thanked Caritas Internationalis, the members of the Steering Committee, the ILO and all those responsible for organizing this important Consultation and assured them that Caritas Sri Lanka will continue to closely collaborate with future programme undertaken to spread the message of Laudato Si".

### Caritas Sri Lanka -SEDEC warmly welcomes the New Bishop Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development



Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell G. Silva

*Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam, Bishop of Jaffna and Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell G. Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo have been appointed as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively of the Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka. We look forward to their Lordships' guidance in carrying forward the activities of Caritas Sri Lanka.*

### A REFLECTION BY RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS ON THE CURRENT CRISIS

Caritas Sri Lanka organized a discussion on the recent terror attacks on Easter Sunday and its aftermath at the National Centre on 9th May 2019. The discussion was graced by some prominent members of the Catholic, Christian and Buddhist clergy and leading members of Civil Society.



The Discussion was opened by Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director who explained the purpose of the discussion. He said that there is a loss of hope and a loss of economic stability in the aftermath of the disaster. Religious leaders strongly feel that they have a role to play to disseminate the message of peace. Fr. Mahendra referred to Pope Francis's message on Easter Sunday during Urbi et Orbi addressed to Sri Lanka and his letter to His Eminence Cardinal Ranjith expressing his profound solidarity once

*Cont. on pg.4*

CARITAS SRI LANKA-SEDEC, 133, Kynsey Road, Colombo 8.

Tel: + 94 11 2691885, 2693989, 2662474. Fax: + 94 11 2695136.

E-mail: sedec@slt.lk, sedec@caritaslk.org. Web: [www.caritaslk.org](http://www.caritaslk.org)

Apr.- Jun. 2019

Vol - 27 No - 31



## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ON RECONCILIATION ACTIVITIES IN RATNAPURA DIOCESE

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC in collaboration with Caritas Rathnapura – Sethmini organized a focus group discussion and a mid-line survey under the project titled, “Helping People move towards Reconciliation” on 27th of March 2019 in Rathnapura. The project is funded by CAFOD, the Catholic international development charity in England and Wales.

A group of 27 leaders of the Village Groups of Ellawala, Mudunkotuwa, Lavant, Tanjantenna and Kurupatta formed under this project attended the discussion and the survey. The objective of this was to ascertain the progress of the improved commitment and capacities of the participants who were involved in promoting unity and reconciliation in 5 villages of the Diocese of Rathnapura.



Addressing the participants, Rev. Fr. Sriyan Fernando, Director of ‘Sethmini’ Rathnapura reminded that the aim of establishing this group is to promote peace. He said that the purpose of the gathering was to evaluate and find out the present work carried out by them as an active peace group after being involved in the project for almost 2 years.

The following were the key observations:

- There was a clear sign of improved capacities and they expressed their ideas confidently.
- Attitudinal changes towards reconciliation of the villagers were clearly visible from the activity presentations.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the peace process, co-existence and conflict resolutions.
- Civil Security Societies were established with the assistance of the Police Station of the area to handle small-scale security issues.

## CARITAS PAKISTAN VISIT SEDEC

A six member staff from Caritas Pakistan arrived in Sri Lanka on 8th April 2019 on a 6 day exposure and exchange visit. They wish to learn from the project activities of Caritas Sri Lanka and at the same time share their own experiences of projects being implemented in Pakistan. On the 8th of April 2019, the respective staff teams met for a brief exchange of views on the activities that are being implemented by their organizations.



Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director in his opening remarks gave a brief introduction on the projects that are being implemented by Caritas Sri Lanka and the institutional policies that have been developed as per the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards.

There was a fruitful exchange of views on topics related to institutional policies, migration, disaster risk reduction, sustainable agriculture and peace & good governance. The team from Pakistan visited Anuradhapura DC to observe and study the projects implemented in sustainable agriculture including disaster preparedness.

## A LITTLE RELIEF TO PAKISTANI REFUGEES AT PASYALA MOSQUE

After the 21st of April, Easter Sunday bombing, everyone living in Sri Lanka were faced with a number of difficulties and challenges. Especially for those who live in the peripheries or in vulnerable conditions, the ordinary living experience became something which they never thought of. For the refugees and asylum seekers who are based in Sri Lanka till their applications are processed, unfortunately had to face many difficulties in their rented places in Negombo as they were suspected of being involved in the Easter Sunday incidents by the locals.

As a result, a little more than 1,600 family members mainly from countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq were displaced and UNHCR, the UN organization for migrants through ZOA, an INGO operational in Sri Lanka looks into the welfare of these refugees and asylum seekers. After a visit to the Negombo Ahamadia Mosque in Periyamulla where nearly 340 persons were housed by the end of May 2019, Caritas Sri Lanka was able to understand the plight of these families and decided to provide 250 mosquito nets to the people which were an immediate need for them due to the risk of spreading dengue fever in the area.



The nets were handed over to the ZOA officers at the Pasyala Ahamadiya mosque on 28th of May 2019. The mosque housed nearly 700 persons then and the provisions helped the migrants to minimize the discomforts which they experienced from flies and mosquitoes. The IHD Unit of the Caritas Sri Lanka and members of the Safe Labour Migration Programme spearheaded the noble initiative under the leadership and direction of Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC’s National Director, Rev.Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke.



## CARITAS SRI LANKA – SEDEC FAMILY COMMEMORATES THE VICTIMS OF EASTER SUNDAY BOMB ATTACKS

The Caritas Sri Lanka (CSL) played a pivotal role in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday bomb blasts that devastated the island nation of Sri Lanka by joining hands and concentrating on the immediate requisites of the victims in close liaison with the government authorities as well as with the international and national voluntary organizations that responded positively at the hour of need.

On the 30th of April 2019, Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director spearheaded a befitting Commemorative Service conducted at the CSL National Secretariat with the active participation of the entire CSL Family. The day's proceedings commenced with a Requiem Mass at the CSL Chapel in remembrance of all those who lost their lives in the Easter Sunday bomb blasts at 6 different locations.

The entire CSL Family appropriately attired in white wore black mourning bands throughout the day as a mark of respect to the victims and vehemently condemning the inhuman attack. During the Requiem Mass, sharp at 8.45 a.m. six candles were lit symbolically in remembrance of over 250 innocent women, men and children including foreigners who sacrificed their lives and nearly 500 injured. During the Commemorative Service, prayers were offered for the repose of the souls of all those who sacrificed their lives and for the speedy recovery of those injured, building trust upon the power of the Risen Lord.



### Caritas Sri Lanka's Programme to support the Victims

Meanwhile, Caritas Sri Lanka and Dioceses staff of Colombo and Batticaloa have been supporting the distressed through numerous means including helping the family members of the victims to identify, make claim and transport the dead bodies to native villages where they come from. In addition, Caritas Sri Lanka and Caritas Colombo – Seth Sarana in collaboration with the Family Apostolate of the Archdiocese of Colombo is implementing a Psychosocial and Pastoral Programme to help the victims of this tragedy. The programme will include counselling, spiritual and social empowerment, livelihood development and legal assistance with the support and coordination of a group of professionals including priests and religious.

### PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE CURRENT CRISIS

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC (CSL) has organized a series of panel discussions to create awareness on the present social political and religious atmosphere prevailing in the country and to shed more light into the current crisis from various perspectives. The first of this series of programmes was telecast on VERBUM television on 4th Saturday and 5th Sunday of May 2019.

The programmes will include religious leaders and other experts on various fields to discuss ways and means to touch and heal the hearts of Sri Lankans from the Easter Sunday Bombing. The programmes will be carried out with an indepth analysis to achieve real and pragmatic solutions towards peace and reconciliation, especially for the directly affected and for each and every citizen in Sri Lanka who is disturbed by shock and dismay.

The first discussion in this series was based on the themes of peace and reconciliation, healing the minds and how to deal with extreme ideologies.



The Panelists of the First Discussion : Most. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe – Chairman, National Commission for Social Communications of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka/ Bishop of Galle, Swami Gunatitananda – Chinmaya Mission of Colombo, Rev.Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke – National Director, Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC, Mowlawi Arkam Noor Amith – All Ceylon Islamic Theologian Council, Dr. Kumbalgoda Dhamaloka Thera – Kirinda, Puhulwella, Sawanamulla, Sri Vardhanaramaya and Mr. Millan De Silva – Host from Verbum Television.

## REFRESHER TRAINING FOR SAFE LABOUR MIGRATION COORDINATORS

Caritas Sri Lanka organized a refresher training for the Diocesan Centre (DC) coordinators of the Safe Labour Migration Project on 13th and 14th of June in Colombo at the SEDEC premises. Six coordinators representing the Dioceses of Badulla, Chilaw, Colombo, Galle, Kandy and Kurunegala participated in the workshop to share their grass root level experiences. In addition two Diocesan Directors of Badulla and Kurunegala also took part.

The two-day workshop enhanced their knowledge on the issues and possible interventions and solutions of the migration cycle. The participants were divided into three groups and asked to identify the gaps, issues, ways of identification of migrant cases and where to lead the victims for solutions in the Migration Cycle stages of pre-departure, in service and return. The participants actively engaged in the interactive sessions and discussions and shared numerous geographic sensitive cases of migrants.



They were given hands on experience on the MSD system (Migration Support Database System) and from now on the DC Coordinators will be able to upload cases to the system and would be able to see the updates related to the specific cases facilitated by the National Centre.

Ms. T. Madushika Lansakara, Senior National Programme Officer, Global Programme Migration and Development of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) joined the sessions on the second day and explained about the project

expectations of the funding partners.

The project titled, "Provision of Services for Migrant Workers and their families in Sri Lanka" has been implemented since 2016, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project is implemented with the coordination of 11 Diocesan Centres and 6 Deep Impact Partners such as Caritas Colombo, Caritas Jaffna, CHRC in Kurunegala, ESCO in Batticaloa, SWOAD in Ampara and PREDO in Nuwara Eliya.

### *A Reflection by Religious and Civil Society Leaders... Cont. from pg. 1*

more as well as the Cardinal's message of caution not to harm anybody and let the law enforcement authorities enforce the law. He then referred to the activities which Caritas Sri Lanka has already initiated to implement a Psychological and Pastoral Support Programme in coordination with Caritas Colombo – Sethsarana.



Rt. Rev. Dr. Diloraj Canagasabai, Bishop of the Anglican Church said that they were meeting at a time when the Catholic and Christian communities were severely hurt. When one part of the body is hurt, the whole body is hurt because we are made of the body of Christ. The Bishop said that as Christians, we had a role to play, to build bridges and structures to promote reconciliation. This was not optional, but mandatory.

Ven. Dr. Kumbalgoda Dhammaloka Thero, a Buddhist prelate referred to the Buddha's first sermon where he advocated moderation in behavior and exhorted people to shun extremism. The Ven Thero said that the Buddha had reiterated that dividing ourselves on ethnic and religious basis was foolish. Every human being has a right to choose what to believe and worship. We all have to live together in harmony.

Mr. Javid Yusf, Lawyer and former Ambassador of Sri Lanka in Saudi Arabia representing Muslim civil society said that a group of individuals defied all norms of human behavior in indulging in such attacks. Human beings needed to resolve differences through dialogue. Islam stressed the sanctity of life and killing one life was akin to killing humanity. We needed to become an example of a country that can live together.

Dr. Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council said that the country needed to take a sophisticated and nuanced approach to deal with this situation as the group that was involved was foreign inspired and they had a global vision. There was thus a need for National Security response. The biggest challenge is to carry on with the security operation without marginalizing any community. He stressed that our society should not see a common enemy, but resolve this problem together. He concluded by emphasizing that the Catholic Church had a role to play in preserving the peace.

### **New DC Directors**

**We welcome Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson Perera and Rev. Fr. Sanjeewa Peiris**

**both of whom recently assumed duties as**

**Directors of Caritas Chilaw and Caritas Ratnapura respectively.**

**Caritas Sri Lanka assures them of its support**

**in managing and developing their respective institutions.**