



# CSL NEWSLETTER

1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY – 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2021

## HIGHLIGHTS

Active Citizens Workshop

MOU on Water Sanitation

Pongal Celebration

Western Regional Peace Forum

Challenges of Climate Change and the Role of Religious Leaders to Mitigate them

A Story of Fight Against Poverty

Caritas Mannar Valvuthayam Housing Programme

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CSL COVID-19 Response

Formation of Federation in Mannar & Vavuniya

Webinar on Issues Related to Human Trafficking and Labour Migration in the Context of COVID-19

Proposed Projects

*"We are Brothers and Sisters to all"*

# CARITAS SRI LANKA SEDEC

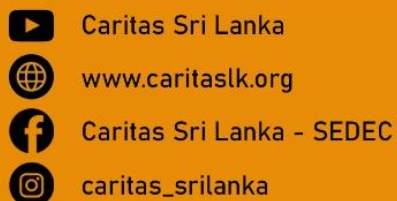
Social and Economic Development Centre

## National Director's Message

**Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke**

The creator does not abandon us; He never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. 'Fratelli Tutti', on fraternity & social friendship invites all communities to read the signs of the times, knowing the dangers of pandemic, invites to show human fraternity & care of creation.

The dicastery for IHD in Vatican very clearly states the need to ensure access to vaccine as the sole remedial action for the global health crisis.



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## RESPONDING TO THE CRY OF THE PLANET

### Active Citizens Workshop <

*Caritas Sri Lanka together with The British Council, organized the Active Citizens Programmes on Climate Change for the youth of Chilaw, the programmes were hosted by Caritas Chilaw, from 1st March to 6th March 2021 and from 14th March to 19th March 2021. There were 60 youth participants in these programmes. Caritas Sri Lanka was able to complete these programmes successfully adhering to COVID-19 regulations.*

*At the completion of the training, the participants recognized Social Action Projects to resolve issues in their localities that polluted the natural surroundings.*

### > MOU on Water Sanitation

*Caritas Sri Lanka and Kansarmen SL Foundation signed an MOU to implement projects on water and sanitation.*

*Representing Caritas Sri Lanka, Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director, and Mr. Chaminda Fernandopulle, Director, Kansarmen SL Foundation signed the MOU. Under this initiative, both organizations will work in partnership to implement projects in selected areas.*

*Caritas will work through the Diocesan Centres in the Northwestern, Central, Sabaragamuwa and Southern provinces in reaching out to the communities suffering with water issues.*



## ➤ Pongal Celebration

*Caritas Sri Lanka as an organization, has been an instrument that promotes religious and ethnic harmony throughout the island. We respect various religions and value their great teachings and customs. Under the Religious Amity Project funded by Caritas Norway, the staff of Caritas Sri Lanka had the chance of celebrating the Pongal Festival, on the 19th of January at the office premises. 'Pongal' is known as a harvesting festival or it can be considered as the 'thanksgiving' festival since the festival is celebrated to thank the sun for helping farmers reap better-yielding crops.*

*A thanksgiving Eucharistic Celebration was offered to thank God for His creation and His unconditional love shown to us by creation.*



## ➤ Western Regional Peace Forum

*Three Regional Peace Forums were formed through Healing and Reconciliation – Journey towards a Sustainable National Level Movement Project, funded by MISEREOR. The regional peace forums are Western Regional Peace Forum, Plantation Regional Peace Forum and North and East Regional Peace Forum. The second regional peace forum for the Western Region was conducted at Caritas Chilaw on 22nd and 23rd of April 2021.*

*The objectives of the meeting was to create a network among the Regional Peace Forum members and to build capacity on advocacy and lobbying, lastly, to come up with a position paper on common issues, identified at the regional level to be handed over to the relevant authorities.*



## ➤ Challenges of Climate Change and the Role of Religious Leaders to Mitigate them

*Being open to the appeal of Mother Nature, Caritas Sri Lanka initiated virtual workshops on 22nd and 23rd of June 2021, under the title "Challenges of Climate Change and the role of Religious Leaders to Mitigate them", in Sinhala and Tamil languages, to create awareness among various Religious Leaders throughout the country with the participation of 54 Catholic Priests and Nuns, 26 Islam Maulavis, 23 Buddhist Monks, 20 Hindu Kurukkal (Hindu Priests) and 9 Christian Religious Leaders in total 132 Religious Leaders. Mr. Gayan Rajapaksha and Mr. Remo Shihan, independent experts on the theme of climate change, facilitated the sessions and led the audience into the greater consciousness on; challenges of climate change and how we contribute negatively to this change in our daily life, best practices to adapt to the changes and the possible ways and means to mitigate these issues.*



## A Story of Fight Against Poverty ◀

*Under the Civic Dialogue and Cross Community Activities Project, funded by Caritas Korea, a paddy field which was barren for 10 years in Maduragama in the district of Puttalam was harvested by the CBO members of the project on the 14th of February 2021. The initiative came as a solution to the poverty widespread in the region. Caritas Chilaw has formed 5 Community Based Organizations (CBO) in Maduragama in 2020 and trained the communities in many aspects of community development and empowerment including the training on advocacy and lobbying. As a result of the intervention, a 27 acre paddy field belonging to the government has been acquired with the required permission last year, and each member has been given ½ an acre to engage in paddy cultivation.*



## Caritas Mannar Valvuthayam < Housing Programme

*Caritas Mannar Valvuthayam launched its Housing Programme for displaced families with the support of Caritas Sri Lanka and MISEREOR. A project to construct 50 permanent houses for displaced families were planned. Initially, the first 20 houses were constructed for Mullikulam villagers.*

*People from Mullikulam, Mannar who were part of Musali DS division, displaced from their homeland due to the civil war and even after the resettlement process initiated by the government and other agencies, they could not get back to their own lands due to various reasons. Only in the recent past, the people were able to resettle in their own lands with the support of the Bishop of Mannar after years of gruesome advocacy processes. These people faced enormous suffering in their day today life and they were in desperate need of a shelter to live in.*

## > Sustainable Agriculture to Ensure Food Security

*Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC is implementing the programme "Addressing causes for poverty and ensuring Food Security for farming communities in Sri Lanka" by aiming to safeguard food security with the support of Caritas Norway/ NORAD in all 13 Caritas DC networks. The spreading of COVID-19 has somewhat affected proper functioning of the programme due to the prevailing situation in the country. However, the government allowed farmers to work even during the restrictions. Since this crisis period is very crucial to make people aware of the importance of engaging themselves in sustainable home gardening, by utilizing the funds approved by Caritas Norway, we took necessary action to provide plants & seeds, agro bags, water tanks, livestock, farm equipment to project beneficiaries and also nutritious food, seeds and agro bags for mothers of pre-school children to feed their children and to start organic home gardening.*

*The food security programme itself is one of the great impacts on the farming households during the lockdown and restricted period. The other significant observation is that the CBO and Self-Help Group members shared their excess yield from their home gardens within their communities, especially with those who did not have sufficient food.*





## ➤ COVID-19 Response

Sri Lanka was one of the early movers on COVID-19. Within two weeks of public declaration as a pandemic, the government established a special action committee and worked closely with the World Health Organization to devise a proactive response. Since March 14th, shortly after the first local patient was confirmed, Sri Lanka has taken strong measures to manage and mitigate the crisis. Beginning on

March 20th, the country moved into a police-managed lockdown with severe restrictions on civilian movements and zero tolerance of social gatherings. Sri Lanka's "curfew" kept everyone at home. Most citizens adhered to the regulations, but the disruption of livelihoods caused concerns in some communities, particularly among daily wage-earners, families living in plantations, women-headed households, and people living with disabilities. Although the government voiced concern for low-income citizens, emergency food relief and other basic support measures have been slow to materialize at the grassroots level. By mid-April, the government had arranged for a grant of LKR 5,000 to citizens whose livelihood had come to a standstill, while several civil society organizations collaborated with local authorities to supply care packages and dry rations to those who had fallen on hard times. Caritas Sri Lanka, with the generous support of her funding partners carried out a rapid relief programme for the most vulnerable communities among the 13 Diocesan Counterparts, to be in solidarity with the affected people. The support was given in terms of Dry Food Packs, Hygiene Packs, and Personal Protection Equipment, Cash Grants for Medical Assistance and Awareness Material such as leaflets and posters.



Dry Food Packs  
7330 Families



Hygiene Packs  
6563 Families



PPE  
5406 Families



Cash Grants  
2398 Individuals



Awareness Material  
435 Banners  
25,800 Leaflets  
84,150 Posters



## ➤ Formation of Federation in Mannar & Vavuniya

A 2-day Knowledge Enhancement Workshop on formation of federation was conducted to the 40 CBO leaders of the 'Civic Dialogue Special Project for Mannar' by Caritas Valvuthayam in close collaboration with Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC on 24th & 25th of March 2021, abiding by the COVID-19 rules & regulations. The Civic Dialogue Project is an integrated and human development programme focusing on the aspects of social and economic development of the war affected families in the districts of Mannar & Vavuniya. Caritas Korea funds the project and the activities to uplift the lives of 391 beneficiary families in 8 villages since July 2019.

These collaborative efforts under the federation formation will strengthen the members in gaining access to government facilities and receiving more attention of the authorities for their local needs and issues.

## Webinar on Issues Related to Human Trafficking and Labour Migration in the Context of COVID-19

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC together with the Catholic National Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Talithakum Sri Lanka organized the above titled webinar on 8th February 2021. The programme was organized in line with the Feast of St. Josephine Bakhitha, the patron saint of human trafficking.

The main speeches were delivered by Ms. Minoli P. Don, Head of Migrant Assistance & Protection Unit, IOM and Mr. Andrew Samuel, Executive Director, Community Development Services (CDS).

Ms. Naoko Maruyama, Regional Coordinator of South East Asia and Oceania spoke at the webinar on behalf of the Vatican based Migrants and Refugees Section and Ms. Leeza Leeza, Thematic Manager, Migration and Anti Human Trafficking, spoke on behalf of Caritas India and the steering group of COATNET. Rev. Sr. Nilanthi Ranasinghe F.M.M, Coordinator, Talithakum Sri Lanka also spoke at the webinar.

**International Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking**

*"An economy without human trafficking"*

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA - 8 FEBRUARY 2021  
Patron Saint of Victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC Catholic National Commission for Migration. Talithakum Sri Lanka

# PROPOSED PROJECTS



## ➤ Holistic Support and Justice for the Victims of the Easter Sunday Attack (Legal, Psychosocial and Livelihood Support)

The project 'Holistic Support and Justice for the Victims of the Easter Sunday Attack (Legal, Psychosocial and Livelihood Support)' was submitted in view of seeking justice and compensation mainly through legal support to the victims of the horrendous attack that was carried out by extremists on 21 April 2021. The target group of the proposed project were the victims and their direct and indirect families who were affected by the attacks. The working area of the project was underlined as Colombo and Negombo, St. Anthony's Kochchikade and St. Sebastian's Katuwapitiya. Zion Church, Batticaloa exclusively requested for exclusion from the proposed project due to strict government and military presence in the area.



## ➤ A modern, dynamic, and youth centered approach to peace processes and conflict mitigation

Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC, having contributed to the National Reconciliation process, embarked on another measure to empower youth to actively engage in peacebuilding by submitting a project proposal titled 'A modern, dynamic, and youth centered approach to peace processes and conflict mitigation' covering the 13 Diocesan Centres across the island. The proposed project focuses on the dire need for inter-religious dialogue, all-encompassing awareness and emphasis on grooming youth to become agents of change in the society at large. It is understood that there is a need for youth to have a 'can do' framework of mind through these take-outs, mainly because instilling positive views will ensure a better future.



## ➤ A Stepping Stone to Safeguarding Sri Lanka's Natural Environment

Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC undertook another major step towards the benefit of the community at large by submitting a proposal titled 'A Stepping Stone to Safeguarding Sri Lanka's Natural Environment' covering the 13 Diocesan Centres across the island. The proposed project was to create attention among the target group to protect the natural environment - our common home, in measures of giving back to the environment through collective efforts of the people and to create awareness and mechanisms for better protecting Mother Nature's natural resources. Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC together with its Diocesan Partners identified 3 key vulnerable sectors (Food Security, Water Resources and Bio-diversity) to work under - to consolidate these sectors that in return protects the environment and in part, adapt to the impacts of climate change.



*I am not sure exactly what heaven will be like,  
but I know that when we die and it comes time for God to judge us,  
he will not ask, 'How many good things have you done in your life?'*

*rather he will ask,  
'How much love did you put into what you did?'*

*Mother Teresa*