



"We are Brothers and Sisters to all"

CARITAS SRI LANKA SEDEC

Social and Economic Development Centre



CSL NEWSLETTER

1ST JANUARY – 31ST MARCH 2022



HIGHLIGHTS

- CSL EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS SITUATION -
- THE FEAST DAY OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA -
- YOUTH FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION -
- IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS OF VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS IN THE RURAL AREAS OF SRI LANKA -
- DISTRIBUTION OF REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS TO SMALL HELP GROUPS UNDER THE VASTENACTIE PROJECT -
- THAI PONGAL CELEBRATION AT SEDEC -
- SILENT SOLIDARITY PRAYER CAMPAIGN -
- WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION BY CARITAS SRI LANKA – SEDEC -
- CARITAS SRI LANKA DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PLAN -



CSL EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS SITUATION



The country is running out of food, fuel, and pharmaceuticals due to a serious economic crisis caused by a lack of foreign exchange reserves to finance crucial imports. As a result, Sri Lanka is negotiating for economic aid from donor countries and institutions.

From 1st of March to 22nd March, people from all sectors especially youth are protesting in different cities holding placards and lighting candles to portray, how we are facing darkness due to electricity cuts amid shortages of fuel and gas, rising costs of essential consumer goods.

However, in this political and economic crisis situation, Caritas Sri Lanka endeavors to stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable groups by enhancing their resilience to cope with the situation.

CSL strategy would be, First to create momentum among all people of 'good-will' to 'Stand in Solidarity with the most vulnerable, and second; to 'Mobilizes Resources' to enhance their resilience capabilities. In order to achieve the above following activities will be conducted in collaboration with Diocesan centers;

1. Conducting a series of national-level solidarity campaigns.
2. Developing Diocesan level disaster preparedness plans.
3. Collection and storage of basic food items for distribution among the poor and vulnerable during the food crisis situation.
4. Psychosocial support program for the victims and families
5. Orientation and study session of the IMF report on Sri Lanka
6. Providing dry ration packs to selected families affected by the present economic crisis.



THE FEAST DAY OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA



The feast day of St. Bakhita the patron saint for the victims of modern slavery and human trafficking was celebrated on 8th February.

St. Bakhita, a Sudanese nun also known as 'Mother Moretta' experienced the moral and physical humiliations associated with slavery in the hands of kidnappers at the age of nine itself. Her story of deliverance from physical slavery also symbolizes and all those who find meaning and inspiration in her life for their own deliverance from spiritual slavery.

Her feast day has been commemorated as a day of prayer reflection and action to end the injustice of human trafficking. On this special day, with the holy Eucharistic celebration, Caritas Sri Lanka family join hands with the Catholic National commission for migration pray for the intentions of upholding the dignity of labour and to make the process of migration safer enabling the migrants and their families to enjoy maximum benefits of migration.

On this year, CSL organized a special discussion with SETH FM on 'How the Catholic Church have been working for the betterment of migrant workers and its plan to prevent modern day slavery in Sri Lanka' with the participation of National Director and the National officers involved in the Safe migration programme implementation. The discussion was aired on SETH FM on 8th February 2022 from 2.00 to 3.00pm. The discussion was very informative on labour migration in Sri Lanka and the role of Caritas in combating trafficking. You can view it at YouTube:
<https://youtu.be/wrHbx4LSLyc>



YOUTH FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION



“A Modern, Dynamic and Youth Centered Approach to Peace Processes and Conflict Mitigation” is a three-year project that envisages youth participation in conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. The project commenced in January 2022. Caritas Sri Lanka together with 13 Diocesan Centers will train and capacitate 1040 young people on different approaches to conflict mitigation and provide facilitation for them to develop activities (mini-projects) to resolve identified issues (barriers) in pursuit of reconciliation.

Caritas Sri Lanka has invited each DC to train and capacitate 80 youth on conflict mitigation and provide facilities to at least 40 of them to engage in youth activities that will identify potential conflicts in their own villages/settings. The envisaged outcomes of the project are twofold; (i) Knowledge and Skill Transfer and (ii) Advocacy through youth activities. In relation to the first objective, the project expects that Youth groups (Tamil, Sinhala, and Muslim) at the community level are organized and skilled to overcome barriers to social cohesion and reconciliation. In relation to the second objective, the project expects that Civil-society groups have built networking relations and brought important reconciliation-related issues to the relevant government groups/institution. We have initiated conducting first series of training.



IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS OF VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS IN THE RURAL AREAS OF SRI LANKA



Caritas Sri Lanka network is being implemented the program "Addressing causes for poverty and Ensuring Food Security for farming communities " in Sri Lanka by aiming to safeguard food security for selected subsistence farmers in Sri Lanka from the year 2018 to date. Caritas Sri Lanka –SEDEC has conducted three workshops to review and share the best practices, and discuss the challenges to implementing the program and the way forward. The first workshop was conducted at Caritas Kandy for the plantation region comprising Caritas Badulla, Caritas Ratnapura, Caritas Kandy, and Caritas Galle covering 10 administrative districts in Sri Lanka on the 18th of January 2022, the second workshop was conducted at Caritas Chilaw auditorium for Caritas Colombo, Caritas Chilaw, Caritas Anuradhapura and Caritas Kurunegala on 03rd February 2022 and third workshop was held at Caritas Mannar on 3rd February 2022 for Caritas Jaffna, Caritas Vanni, Caritas Batticaloa, Caritas Trincomalee, and Caritas Mannar.

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The program has been highly successful in reaching the overall goal of improving food security and the livelihoods of vulnerable households in the rural and urban areas of Sri Lanka. Caritas Sri Lanka has already established 28,221 domestic economic units in 869 selected villages covering 25 administrative districts in Sri Lanka and upgraded unproductive home gardens and paddy lands for them to secure their food supply throughout the year. Participating families are now able to consume a nutritionally balanced diet. Now about 70% of their daily food comes from their own home gardens and as a result, participants save about Rs. 7,000.00 per month on the food bill. The majority of them use these savings for children's education or save for emergency expenses. The novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID -19) epidemic has impacted on people's ability to access food by reducing income and increasing job insecurity. In light of the above, 'home gardening' has emerged as a viable idea to provide people with enough local food production and income, especially in selected communities of the program.

The mobilization of the communities is important to reach the overall goal of the program. As evidence of substantiation of community institutions, the communities are mobilized and formed into 2,838 Self Help Groups (SHGs) and strengthened in leadership, financial management, group dynamics, and guidance to start their own domestic economic units. The Self Help Groups have been later turned into local Community-Based Organizations. As a result of it, 742 CBOs were formed and strengthened colligated into 30 District, Diocesan level federations. Women tend to assume active leadership roles in most of the CBOs formed by Caritas Sri Lanka; on average, 76 percent of members are female. CBOs have been involved in advocacy programs for the issues of Human elephant conflict, deforestation, selling of inland properties, privatization, and other community-level issues and they won 170 rights related to agricultural production and community needs. Continued training on advocacy and lobbying to gain land and water rights have also given many positive results and will have a big impact on the overall goal achievement of strengthening rural and marginalized peoples' position in Sri Lanka.

As a small island and a developing nation, Sri Lanka is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Consequences of natural disasters due to extreme weather conditions such as prolonged drought, flash floods, and landslides deprive lives and livelihoods of people. The farmers have been given training on disaster risk awareness and preparedness by traditional & novel technologies to cope with future challenges covering farm water management, multiple cropping systems, and protected agriculture. Through these training programs, the vulnerable communities have reduced the negative impact of floods and droughts. Proper nutrition is an essential aspect of a healthy lifestyle and disease prevention. Child malnutrition is linked to poverty, low levels of education, and poor access to health services. Therefore, sufficient and good quality nutrition is critical for the development, health, and survival of current and succeeding generations. The program has provided education to 27,892 mothers of pre-school children on family nutrition and encouraged them to start their own organic home gardening to increase the availability of diverse nutritious food at home. The program has contributed to the overall goal of reducing malnourishment in targeted communities.

DISTRIBUTION OF REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS TO SMALL HELP GROUPS UNDER THE VASTENACTIE PROJECT



As part of CAFOD's ongoing capacity strengthening support to Caritas Sri Lanka, together with Caritas Chilaw implemented "Supporting livelihood diversification and increasing communal harmony in North Western Sri Lanka" in Kattaikaduwa Parish in Puttalam District since 2021. The core of this project is the provision of a revolving fund to develop livelihood opportunities among the selected project participants. After the successful accomplishments of skills development trainings, the first round of distribution of revolving loan funds for eleven Small Help Groups was held on 22nd February 2022 at Community Hall- Pannichchiwilluwa. This event was graced by the presence of Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatilleke, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC. Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson, Director Caritas Chilaw, and Rev. Fr. Vinsent Jayarasa, Parish Priest of Kattaikaduwa Parish were also presented at this event.



THAI PONGAL CELEBRATION AT SEDEC



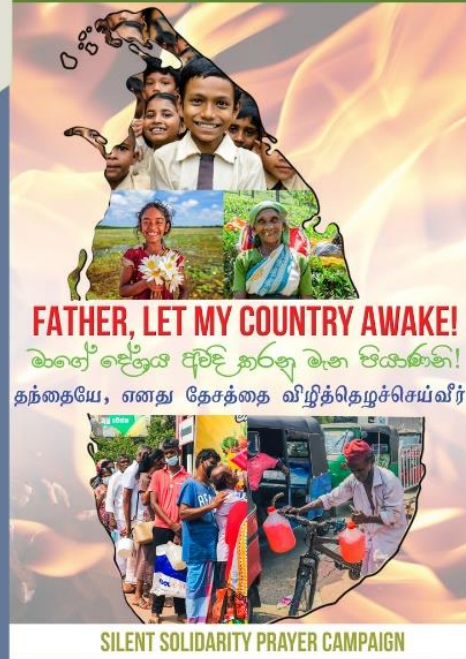
Thai Pongal festival falls on 14th Day of January every year. That is, 1st day of the Thai month in Tamil Calendar. This day is celebrated by Hindus as the festival, Thai Pongal. This is to thank the Sun God mainly, as the Sun helps cultivation. The farmers reap their harvest in January and they prepare Pongal with the rice harvested and offer it to the Sun God as a thanks giving, after the Pooja they distribute the Pongal rice to the visitors and neighbors.

Thai Pongal festival was celebrated at SEDEC National Office premises on 19th of January 2022. Initially, the Holy mass was offered at 8.30 a.m. by Rev. Fr. Director. The national centre staff members, including Rev. Fr. Michael and Sister Vijaya were present.

Thereafter, we gathered near the refractory area. This place was decorated with the palms and the Mango leaves. In addition, two banana plants were placed at the entrance on either side. The brick stove with firewood was kept ready to cook the Pongal rice. After the fire was lit for preparation of Pongal rice, Rev Fr. Michael gave a speech describing the historical tradition of the event by the Tamil Community. Subsequently, the game of drawing a festival Kolam was done by the staff, along with another traditional game. Once the games were over, the Thai Pongal rice and the other food such as murukku, wade and bananas were shared with fellow staff members and others present. All who were present enjoyed the celebration.



SILENT SOLIDARITY PRAYER CAMPAIGN



A silent solidarity prayer campaign on the theme “Father, Let my country awake”, was organized and led by Caritas Sri Lanka- SEDEC, the social arm of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, as an immediate response to the crisis situation in our country. The main objectives of the campaign were to pray for divine intervention & stand in solidarity with the people of our country and to pray for wisdom & guidance for the leaders of our country.

The event was held on the 9th April 2022 at the Church of Ceylon premises, in collaboration with the CBCSL Commissions, BSR of Church of Ceylon, NCCSL, NPC and CMRS. Addressing the gathering on the day of the event, His eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith emphasized the importance of establishing a system that upholds unity among all communities, demolishing corruption and stated the importance of a new beginning for Sri Lanka that unites hearts and protects justice.

The campaign was successfully conducted at the Diocesan level as well by the Caritas Diocesan centers.



WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION BY CARITAS SRI LANKA – SEDEC



With The United Nations theme of International Women's Day 2022, 'Gender Equality for a Sustainable Tomorrow', We Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC organized a special program on 18th March 2022 under the vision and guidance of National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC, Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatileke to celebrate, appreciate and honor the heroes of those conserving the environment of Colombo area which helps us to keep our infrastructures impeccable.

Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC implemented this program especially for the cleaning women workers of Colombo area working under Abans CleanTech organization. This program consisted of 50 women with different social and cultural background where they have dedicated their time and life for this job role for one month to more than 33 years.

For this reason Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC family gave them a rose flower as a token of appreciation and a symbol which affected their life as for some it was their first time receiving a rose for their entire life story. Moreover, this program audience was addressed by the Women's Management Founder and Chairperson, Dr. Sulochana Sigera with more than 23 years of experience building awareness on financial literacy empowerment and in many more areas which impacts a woman's life. Dr. Sulochana Sigera explained the worthy of Women's self-love, Self-worth and how women should be confident enough disregarded their age, career and to love and live in a fast moving world where they should face the world without fear by boosting up their self-esteem. Media coverage was continuously given by the SETH FM, Verbum, Catholic Press and Lake House to make it a success. Once the program was over, all the 50 women were given a service appreciation certificate, PPE kits along with a financial fund followed up by a special treat organized for them.

Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC family would like to share their heartfelt thanks and gratitude to National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka, Rev. Fr. Mahendra Gunatileke, Mr. Reshan Wickramasinghe, Mr. Senevirathne, Mr. Gihan Thushara and media coverage partners. Especial thanks goes to Dr. Sulochana Sigera for being there sharing and empowering the women's life on motivational and positive thoughts with advices and lastly Caritas Sri Lanka- SEDEC Family to make this program a success.



CARITAS SRI LANKA DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PLAN

The present political and economic crisis and the situation on the ground in Sri Lanka suggest that the state of uncertainty will continue to jeopardize the economy and society. Having this in mind Caritas Sri Lanka endeavors to stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable groups by enhancing their resilience to cope with the situation. It is done through a 'well-thought twofold intervention' as depicted in the following diagram.

First, Caritas Sri Lanka endeavors to create momentum among all people of 'good-will' to 'Stand in Solidarity with the most vulnerable'; and second; will 'Mobilizes Resources' to enhance their resilience capabilities as depicted in the following diagram.

'Caritas National Strategy for Crisis Response'

Stand in Solidarity

- Situation Analysis (Socio Economic Trends)
- Crisis communication (solidarity campaigns)
- Building self-governing norms
- Strengthening 'social safety nets'

Resilience

Resource Mobilization

- Revisit projects and activities to make them crisis responsive
- Campaign for resource mobilization and sharing
- International campaigns for fund raising

Caritas Sri Lanka as per the diagram has formulated two of the objectives. To achieve these two objectives, the following activities are proposed to be conducted within a time frame of one year.

Objective I: To stand in solidarity with crisis-affected communities and advocate for crisis-responsive social safety nets.

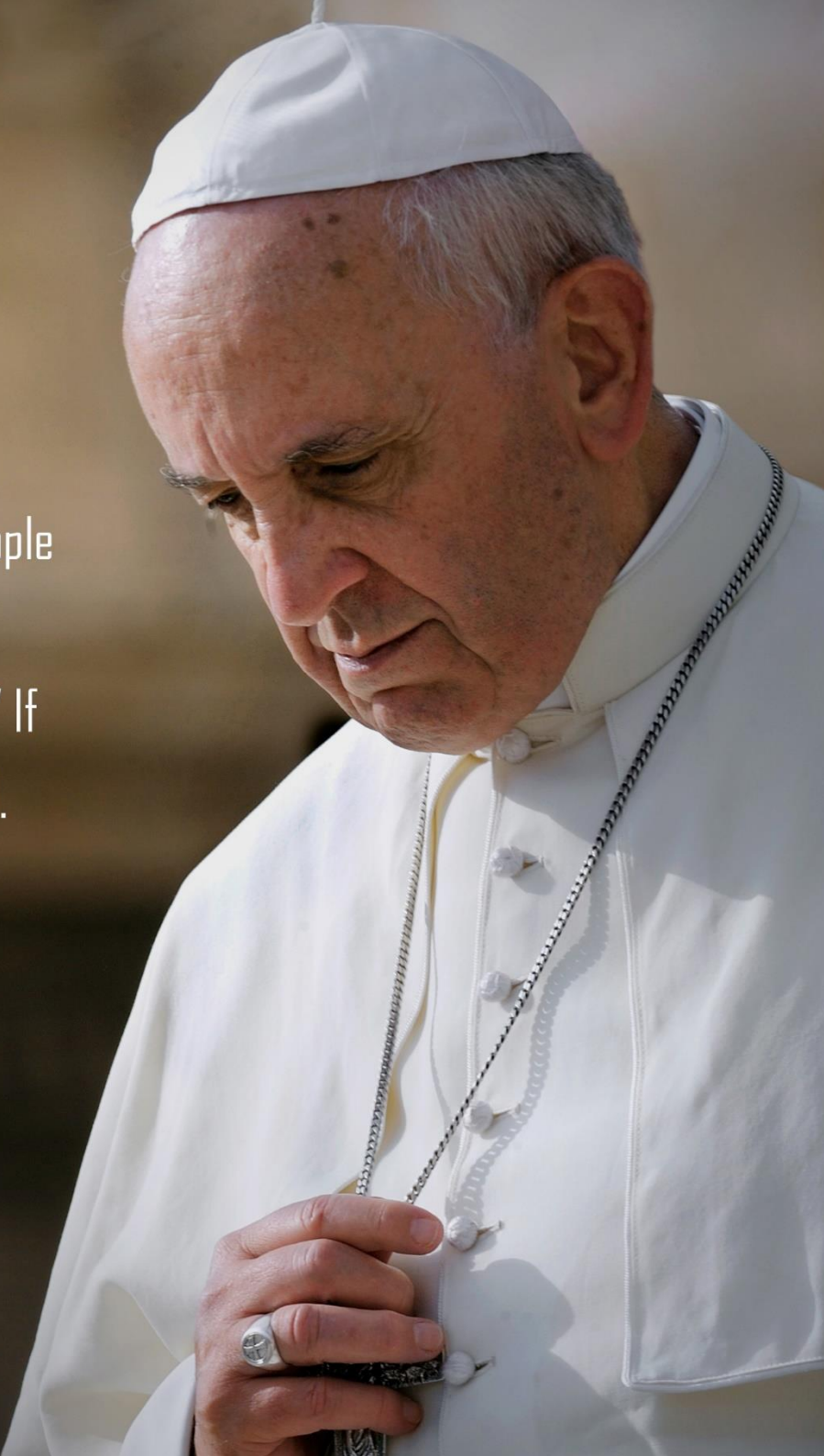
1. Preparation of Situation analysis and sharing with partners and like-minded organizations
2. Conducting a series of national-level solidarity campaigns in collaboration with the community
3. Conducting awareness sessions on self-governing norms at the community level – Promoting value education programs
4. Capacitating and strengthening Community institutions to be resilience to the economic and food crisis
5. Diocesan level disaster preparedness plans will be developed and linked to the regional disaster management units.
6. Conducting Orientation and study session of the IMF report of Sri Lanka for the religious and laity

Objective II: To mobilize resources at various levels for strengthening crisis responsive social safety nets.

1. CSL will campaign for fundraising to conduct the following activities for the betterment of vulnerable families
 - Collection and storage of basic food items for distribution among the poor and vulnerable
 - Providing dry ration packs to selected families affected by the present economic crisis.
 - Conducting psychosocial support program for the victims

2. Revisiting projects and program activities to make them crisis responsive.

CSL envisages that the proposed interventions will ease the burden of the community affected, and create enabling environment for resilience and recovery.



Every man, every woman who has to take up the service of government, must ask themselves two questions: 'Do I love my people in order to serve them better? Am I humble and do I listen to everybody, to diverse opinions in order to choose the best path.' If you don't ask those questions, your governance will not be good.

- Pope Francis -