

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

May 2025

5th Edition



Message from the National Director

Dear Friends and Partners,

The month of May has been a period of significant progress and reflection for Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC. As we strive to uplift the lives of the most vulnerable people through our various projects, I am encouraged by the commitment and collaboration demonstrated across our diocesan network.

Key highlights for this month include national-level workshops centred on reporting and documentation, capacity-building initiatives, field visits, and engaging activities under the SSEP and LLPP projects. These efforts have not only strengthened our teams but also empowered the communities we serve, particularly women, youth, and farmers. Initiatives such as the Entrepreneurship Training of Trainers and the formation of Environmental and Savings Associations have opened up new pathways for growth and sustainability at the grassroots level.



Despite challenges like the premature closure of the LLPP project, our determination to serve the most vulnerable remains strong. These experiences remind us that adaptability, solidarity, and faith are vital to our mission.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our diocesan directors, coordinators, field officers, and partners for their unwavering dedication. Together, let us continue to build a just, compassionate, and sustainable future for all.

Blessings,

Fr. Luke Nelson Perera
National Director

Highlights of the month

Project
Updates

Monitoring &
Evaluation

Workshops &
Trainings

Success
Stories

Strengthening Reporting Practices for the Food Security Project Bi-Annual Reports

The Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security (SA & FS) Unit successfully organized a national-level workshop titled “Meeting on Strengthening Reporting Practices for the Food Security Project Bi-Annual Reports” on May 2, 2025, at the National Centre. This important event was part of the project “Improving Rural Livelihood, Enhancing Food Security, Building Climate Resilience in Sri Lanka” and brought together key Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) officers and Food Security Coordinators from all 13 Diocesan centres.

The primary objective of this meeting was to introduce and orient the diocesan teams on the revised Bi-Annual Reporting Format for the Food Security Project for 2025, in accordance with the updated reporting requirements from Caritas Norway. The workshop aimed not only to enhance the technical capacity of our Diocesan teams but also to emphasize the critical role that effective reporting plays in measuring impact, ensuring accountability, and communicating the transformational work we do at the grassroots level.

The program began with a campaign prayer and a warm welcome address from the National Director. Following this, Miss Deepthi, the Regional Coordinator, introduced the new activity report format to the participants. The remainder of the day featured skillful facilitation by the National Coordinator of the SA & FS Unit, who led participants through a comprehensive discussion on the new reporting structure. The following key components were covered during the session: Narrative Report (Parts I & II), Monitoring Mechanisms, Results Framework, and Risk Matrix.



Field Monitoring Visit to Caritas Chilaw

From May 14 to 16, 2025, the Food Security Unit of Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC conducted a comprehensive monitoring visit to Caritas Chilaw. The purpose of the visit was to review the progress of the “Improving Rural Livelihoods, Enhancing Food Security, and Building Climate Resilience” project. The focus was on evaluating project achievements, budget utilization, and alignment with the 2025 MEAL framework.

The visit began with individual presentations from the Food Security staff, followed by a joint discussion with the Diocesan Director and team. Together, they assessed progress against targets and identified areas for improvement. Field observations included visits to project sites, facilitated by officers Ranjith, Neluka, and Niraj. Highlights included thriving initiatives in beekeeping, youth group involvement, school gardening, and home gardens maintained by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Active Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), such as Pipena Siyapath and Uppalawatta, demonstrated strong grassroots engagement. However, some sites were still in the early stages of development.

Practical guidance was provided to strengthen home garden models, promote inclusivity, and enhance sustainability. The visit concluded with a debriefing session and a thorough review of the results framework, offering strategic direction to improve performance and maximize the project’s impact.



Field Monitoring Visit to Caritas Batticaloa



A field monitoring visit to Caritas Batticaloa took place from May 14 to May 16, 2025, to evaluate the progress of the Food Security Project titled “Improving Rural Livelihoods, Enhancing Food Security, and Building Climate Resilience in Sri Lanka.” The visit focused on assessing project implementation, financial utilization, and compliance with the 2025 MEAL framework.

During the visit, a meeting was held with Mr. K. Hershanth (Regional Coordinator), the Diocesan Director, and Food Security staff. Discussions centered on accelerating the implementation of activities and optimizing budget usage. Field visits to Vantharamualli, Vaharai, Sorikalmunai, and Navithanvelli allowed for direct engagement with smallholder farmers, youth, persons with disabilities, and school gardening initiatives. The team observed model home gardens, composting units, integrated pest management (IPM) practices, and Village Knowledge Centres. Beneficiaries received technical advice on organic cultivation, crop diversification, and sustainable

water use. Community-Based Organization (CBO) meetings provided a platform for community feedback, highlighting both successes and challenges such as pest control, water scarcity, and market access.

Beneficiaries expressed the need for continued training and support to improve productivity and sustainability. The visit confirmed a strong grassroots impact and provided actionable insights to enhance project outcomes and ensure timely and effective delivery across target communities.

Field Monitoring Visit to Caritas Badulla



As part of the ongoing monitoring efforts for the project titled “Improving Rural Livelihoods, Enhancing Food Security, and Building Climate Resilience in Sri Lanka,” the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Unit conducted a field visit to Caritas Badulla from May 27 to 30, 2025. The visit was led by Mrs. Nilani Tissera (National Coordinator), Mrs. Amali Shamani (Regional Coordinator), and Miss Deepthi Jayakody (Regional Coordinator), with support from Rev. Fr. Pradeep Nishantha, Director of Caritas Badulla.

On Day 1, the team held a comprehensive review meeting with the diocesan Food Security staff. Each staff member presented their work progress from January to May 2025 and received individual evaluations. This was followed by a collective discussion regarding project targets, budget utilization, and MEAL strategies.

On Day 2, the team visited the field operations of Food Security Officer Ms. Christy, which included a vibrant Community-Based Organization (CBO) meeting with over 100 participants from Malangamuwa and Egodagama.

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Training of Trainers (TOT) on Entrepreneurship Development Programme for the FS Staff of all Sinhala-speaking DCs at NC

The SA & FS Unit successfully organized a four-day Training of Trainers (TOT) on the Entrepreneurship Development Program from May 20 to 23, 2025, at the National Centre. This event saw the participation of 42 staff members from eight dioceses: Anuradhapura, Badulla, Chilaw, Colombo, Galle, Kandy, Kurunegala, and Ratnapura.



This initiative is part of the ongoing Food Security program titled “Improving Rural Livelihoods, Enhancing Food Security, and Building Climate Resilience in Sri Lanka,” which is supported by Caritas Norway.

The training utilized the CEFE (Competency-based Economies through Formation of Entrepreneurs) methodology, emphasizing the development of entrepreneurial skills, business planning, innovation, and market access. Experienced CEFE trainers—Mr. W.M.S. Wijesinghe, Mr. H.M. Balasooriya, and Mrs. Nilani Tissera—facilitated engaging and experiential learning modules aimed at enhancing participants’ capacity to support income generation at the community level.

This program was organized under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson Perera, with coordination provided by Mrs. Nilani Tissera and support from the NC Food Security team.

It directly contributes to Outcome No. 02 of the Food Security project by equipping diocesan staff to improve rural livelihoods and strengthen economic resilience in vulnerable communities



Monitoring Visit to Caritas Badulla - Cont from pg. 2

The team observed several impactful initiatives such as home gardening, mushroom cultivation, poultry farming, youth engagement, and community savings programs.

On Day 3, the team traveled to the Monaragala District to visit the field sites of Mr. Niroshan, a Food Security Field Officer. The day began with a meeting with CBO members from the villages of Bohitiya, Aluth Waththa, Val-Golla, Kapu Yaya, and Ampitiya, representing a total of 30 members. Mrs. Nilani Tissera addressed the group, explaining the importance of the Food Security Project and its long-term benefits for rural communities.

A fruitful discussion ensued, during which beneficiaries shared details about the support they had received and the activities conducted under the project. Afterwards, the team visited several beneficiaries’ home gardens to witness first-hand the implementation and impact of the project at the household level.

Lighting the Lives of the Plantation People – Project Closure Event

The project “Lighting the Lives of the Plantation People” (LLPP) was initiated to improve the lives of plantation communities in Sri Lanka’s upcountry regions. Its official closure event took place on May 16, 2025, at the Caritas Sri Lanka SEDEC Upper Conference Hall. Although the initiative was originally planned as a ten-year program set to conclude in September 2031, it was unexpectedly terminated early on April 30, 2025, due to the suspension of USAID funding by the U.S. Government.

Despite the premature closure, LLPP successfully implemented five key activities from October 1, 2024, to April 30, 2025, across six dioceses: Colombo, Galle, Ratnapura, Kandy, Badulla, and Kurunegala. The closure event brought together three Diocesan Directors, four LLPP Coordinators, three Field Officers, three Finance Officers, and representatives from the national office, including the National Director, Program Manager, Unit Manager, Program Coordinator, and Program Officer. The objectives of the event included reflecting on the project’s achievements, sharing best practices, discussing strategies for sustainability, identifying future donor expectations, and proposing the creation of a comprehensive community database.

Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson, the National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka, SEDEC, opened the event with a heartfelt address that emphasized the shared responsibility of maintaining the positive impacts of LLPP. He acknowledged the importance of continued engagement with plantation communities and highlighted ongoing efforts to secure new funding, specifically referencing a proposal submitted to Caritas Japan. Fr. Nelson stressed that the needs of the most vulnerable individuals must not be overlooked.



Participants were encouraged to document success stories and lessons learned to inform future initiatives and donor reports. These stories serve as proof of the community’s resilience and the tangible results achieved through LLPP. Although the project has officially concluded, its legacy continues. The relationships built, data gathered, and experiences gained remain valuable resources. Participants expressed optimism for future collaborations and reaffirmed their commitment to advocating for the welfare of plantation communities moving forward.

The formation of Village Level Environmental & Saving Associations (VLESA)

Caritas Sri Lanka has been implementing two significant projects: ‘Stepping Stone to Safeguarding Sri Lanka’s Natural Environment’ (SSEP), which began in 2022, and ‘Vitalizing the Income, Training & Agricultural Livelihoods in Sri Lanka’ (VITAL), launched in 2024. Both projects aim to address critical environmental



issues in Sri Lanka while enhancing the economic sustainability of targeted communities.

The connection between integral human development and environmental

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The formation of Village Level Environmental - Cont from pg. 4

conservation is recognized as essential. In 2024, through its diocesan network, Caritas Sri Lanka successfully established 41 Village-Level Savings Associations. These groups promote sustainable environmental practices and provide communities with a financial safety net, increasing their resilience to economic shocks.



The success of these associations has inspired the adoption of this best practice in the second phases of both SSEP and VITAL, which began in 2025. By linking environmental conservation with community-based financial empowerment, Caritas Sri Lanka is fostering long-term resilience and self-reliance at the village level.

Field Monitoring and Evaluation Visit to Caritas SED Galle

The Ecological Conservation Plantation Unit's teams from the SSEP (Stepping Stones to Safeguarding Sri Lanka's Natural Environment Project) and VITAL (Vitalising Income, Training, and Agricultural Livelihoods in Sri Lanka) projects conducted a monitoring and evaluation visit to the Diocese of Galle from May 27 to May 29. During this visit, the diocesan coordinator, Mr. Indunil, presented the progress of the projects for 2024 and the first quarter of 2025. Mr. Indunil has recently celebrated 25 years of service with Caritas SED Galle and the Caritas Network.

Under the VITAL project, 40 farmers were selected for climate-smart agricultural practices aimed at generating sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, 28 farmers were selected under the SSEP project.

Throughout the visit, the project team facilitated several programs, including the Livelihood Disaster Risk Reduction Awareness Program and the Saving for Transformation mechanism. They monitored lands where farmers successfully cultivated coconut as a perennial crop and practised inter-cropping.



One notable success came from the Gamunupura Village Level saving group, established in 2024, which achieved an impressive milestone by accumulating over 500,000 LKR in savings within the first quarter of 2025. The visit also included monitoring of the newly formed saving groups and prospective lands for cultivation related to both projects over the three-day period.

The visit concluded with a debriefing session during which the field observations, recommendations, and suggestions from the national coordination team were shared with the diocesan teams. The focus was on ensuring the smooth and successful implementation of the projects.



Second Session of Promotion of Caritas Inter Religious Training modules to the school

On May 22, 2025, we successfully implemented the second phase of the CAFOD project aimed at promoting peace and understanding among students of different religions. This program was held from 2:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. and focused on educating school children about various faiths through real experiences.

During the program, students visited four important religious sites: Mohideen Jummah Masjid (a mosque) and Sri Veerapathra Kali Amman Kovil (a Hindu temple) in Udappu, Sri Punyaranthararamaya Temple (a Buddhist temple) in Kiriyanakalliya, and St. James the Great Church (a Christian church) in Mundel.

At these sites, religious leaders shared insights about their faiths, rituals, and beliefs, providing an opportunity to clarify any questions regarding religious practices.

Participants included students from Grades 8, 9, and 10, along with their teachers, parents, and the school principal. Notable attendees also included Rev. Fr. Dilan Marius, Director of Caritas Chilaw; Mr. Samantha Kumara, CAFOD Project Coordinator; Ms. Rupa Sandalatha, Peace Project Coordinator; and Ms. Eureshi Kaveesha, CAFOD National Centre Project Coordinator.

After visiting the religious sites, all participants gathered at Angunawilla Maha Vidyalaya in Puttalam for a feedback and reflection session. Students shared their thoughts and experiences from the two sessions we organized. Many mentioned that it was their first time visiting places of worship outside their own faith, and they expressed eagerness to share what they had learned with their peers and communities.



From Savings to Self-Sufficiency – The Journey of Mrs. M.H.G. Nelum Walakulge



In 2024, under the VITAL project implemented by Caritas SED-Galle, the Gemunupura Haritha Liya village-level Environmental & Saving Association was established with just 25 members. Today, it proudly stands out as one of the top-performing savings groups within the diocesan network—thanks to the dedication and growth of its members, particularly one inspiring woman: Mrs. M.H.G. Nelum Walakulge.

Nelum's journey is a shining example of how community-driven initiatives can empower individuals to transform their lives. From the moment the savings association was formed, she committed herself to regular contributions, inspired by the sense of unity and shared purpose among her peers.

Recognizing the opportunity to improve her livelihood, Nelum took her first loan from the group to enrol in a vocational training course in tailoring and bag-making. With determination and hard work, she successfully completed

the course and fully repaid her loan. Motivated by her accomplishments and brimming with confidence, she applied for a second loan to purchase raw materials and start her own small business.

Today, Nelum is a proud entrepreneur who creates and sells hand-crafted garments, bags, and toys. Taking her business a step further, she markets her products through a dedicated social media page, reaching customers beyond her village and showcasing her creativity to a wider audience.

Reflecting on her journey, Nelum shares,

"This association didn't just help me save; it helped me see a future. I never imagined I would run my own business one day."

What began as a local initiative to foster savings and promote environmental awareness has grown into a powerful platform for personal growth and rural entrepreneurship. Through the establishment of grassroots savings associations like Gemunupura Haritha Liya, Caritas continues to unlock the potential of individuals, enabling them to shape their futures and strengthen the resilience of their communities. Nelum's story is not just one of financial success—it's a testament to the transformative impact of solidarity, opportunity, and the belief that sustainable change starts from within.

**Join Caritas Internationalis
Jubilee campaign to call for debt justice**
#Jubilee2025 #TurnDebtIntoHope

**TURN
DEBT
INTO
Hope**

Our Network of Support

At Caritas Sri Lanka, we believe that true change happens when we work together. During March, we were once again blessed by the generous support of our funding partners, friends, and collaborators.

Your contributions have helped us to continue our mission of serving the poor, protecting human dignity, and promoting justice and peace across Sri Lanka.

Whether through funding, technical advice, or collaboration on activities, your partnership has made a real difference in the lives of many people.

We are deeply grateful for your trust and commitment.

Together, we are building stronger, more hopeful communities.

Thank you for standing with us and believing in the work we do.

We look forward to continuing this journey with you, hand in hand, in the months ahead.

**Do you want to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those in need?
Caritas Sri Lanka invites you to be part of our mission to uplift communities,
promote justice, and foster sustainable development.**

Here's how you can help:

Join Hands With Us – Be the Change!



Donate – Your generosity fuels our projects, helping us reach more vulnerable communities.



Volunteer – Lend your time and skills to create real change on the ground.



Advocate – Raise awareness and be a voice for justice, peace, and human dignity.



Join Our Campaigns – Support initiatives for peacebuilding, sustainability, and social empowerment.

Every effort—big or small—makes a difference.

Take action today
and be part of something greater!

Visit our website or
follow us on social media
to learn more.

Together, we can transform lives!

Stay Connected – Be Part of the Change!

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