



# CARITAS SRI LANKA SEDEC

Social and Economic Development Centre

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER – 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2024



## Election Awareness Program Empowers Participants



On September 2, 2024, Caritas Sri Lanka held an Election Awareness session under the Misereor-supported Peace-building project at the CSL auditorium. This program gathered 36 project coordinators, stakeholders, 13 Diocesan Centre Directors, and National Centre staff to prepare them for the 2024 Presidential Election. The session aimed at enhancing participants' understanding of the electoral process and empower them to disseminate accurate election-related information in their communities.

Mrs. Nadeshani Perera, Executive Director of Transparency International Sri Lanka, facilitated the session. She provided a comprehensive overview of the presidential election process and addressed how Sri Lanka's economic challenges influence its political landscape. Through active discussions and participant engagement, the session ensured a thorough grasp of the material covered.

A significant outcome was the empowerment of participants to educate others within their networks, promoting broader community awareness of the election procedures. Furthermore, Caritas Diocesan Centres partnered with PAFREL for election observation, reflecting Caritas Sri Lanka's commitment to promoting informed and active civic engagement.

## Community Markets: A Step Towards Economic Empowerment

On October 14, 2024, the Caritas Chilaw Diocesan Centre launched community markets in Baththulu Oya and Akkarapaha under the CAFOD project. These markets aimed to empower local communities by creating sustainable income opportunities and promoting collaboration among diverse groups.

The markets featured homegrown products, including fruits, vegetables, and handmade goods where women play a central role in organizing and managing the initiative. The project promoted economic independence and inter-community unity, reflecting Caritas Sri Lanka's dedication to building resilient and cohesive societies.





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## Regional Peace Forums Promote Dialogue and Harmony



Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC, supported by MISEREOR, conducted Regional Peace Forums in 2024 across the Plantation, Western, and Eastern regions to address local conflicts and build peace. These forums brought together community members, religious leaders, and peacebuilders to promote collaboration and resolve conflicts.

In Galle, discussions focused on risk management, teamwork, and skill-building for peace. The Western Region forum in Chilaw, led by Dr Ravindra Ranasinghe, explored conflict management strategies, while the Eastern Region forum in Trincomalee, facilitated by Mr Ravi Chandra, emphasized practical solutions to regional tensions.

These forums provided a platform for knowledge-sharing and collaboration, empowering participants with conflict-resolution tools to foster peaceful coexistence.

## Caritas Jaffna Hosts Microbusiness Planning Training



Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, supported by Caritas Slovenia, organized a microbusiness planning training program from October 2nd to 4th, 2024, at Caritas Jaffna. This initiative aimed to enhance the livelihoods of 20 vulnerable families from the Jaffna Peninsula, addressing issues of poverty, food security, and overall community well-being.

Facilitated by Mrs Thevaranjini, Senior Lecturer at the University of Jaffna, the training covered key topics such as venture selection, SWOT analysis, business organization and management, and financial planning. Participants learned about marketing strategies, cost calculations, and creating comprehensive business plans. By the end of the program, each family received Rs. 50,000 in financial support to either start or expand their micro businesses. The training empowered participants with knowledge and practical tools to make informed decisions and pursue sustainable livelihoods.



## World Food Day Celebration in Hatton

On October 16, 2024, Caritas Kandy SETIK hosted a World Food Day celebration in Hatton under the theme “Right to Foods for a Better Life and a Better Future - Leave No One Behind.” The event emphasized the importance of accessible and nutritious food for all, highlighting Caritas Sri Lanka’s efforts in addressing food security.



Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson Perera, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, delivered a keynote address, stressing sustainable practices to build resilient food systems. Mrs. Nilani Tissera, National Coordinator of the Food Security Program, provided insights into global and local challenges in food security. The event featured an engaging exhibition showcasing traditional and modern sustainable agricultural practices. Community participation was strong, with local CBOs sharing their experiences and exploring methods to implement these practices in their regions. This celebration served as both a commemoration and a call to action for sustainable food security initiatives.

## Establishment of Village Knowledge Center for Farmers at Caritas Vanni



On November 23, 2024, Caritas Vanni inaugurated a Diocesan-level Information Centre for farmers in the Vanni Districts. This initiative promotes sustainable agricultural practices across various sectors, helping farmers improve productivity and access market resources.

The Information Centre provides essential services such as crop calendars, seed storage programs, and both theoretical and hands-on training on sustainable farming methods. In addition, a protected house for vegetable farming was established to demonstrate sustainable cultivation, offering benefits like climate control, pest protection, and reduced labour costs. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries and stakeholders, reinforcing Caritas Vanni’s commitment to empowering local farmers and fostering sustainable agricultural development.



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## Prize Giving of the Home Garden Competition



On December 17, 2024, Caritas Colombo organized the Prize Distribution Ceremony for the Home Garden Competition as part of its food security project. This initiative supported 411 smallholder farmers and 57 persons with disabilities (PWDs), focusing on sustainable agricultural practices in urban environments. Techniques such as potted agriculture were introduced to help farmers grow food in confined spaces. His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith presented awards to the most successful home gardeners and PWDs. This program contributes to Caritas Sri Lanka's broader mission of enhancing food security and building climate resilience across the nation.

## Visit to Blind & Deaf School in Ratmalana by the Kindermissionswerk

The Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) project, supported by Kindermissionswerk, recently underwent a comprehensive final evaluation conducted by Ms Sahunthai Muthurajah (LLB Hons UK, BA in Social Work NISD SL). In late June, Ms. Muthurajah conducted site visits to Mannar and Vanni dioceses to assess the project's effectiveness and impact.

The evaluation provided an in-depth analysis of the project's implementation, highlighting its successes and areas requiring further improvement. The final evaluation report contains detailed observations and practical recommendations designed to enhance the project's overall impact and better align its objectives with community needs.

In addition to the evaluation, an exposure visit to the Blind and Deaf College in Ratmalana was organized, involving volunteers and coordinators from Mannar and Kilinochchi diocesan centres. This visit offered valuable insights, enriching their understanding and supporting the mission of the CBR project in empowering persons with disabilities.





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## Capacity Building and Exposure Visit in India



From November 1st to 5th, Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC organized a national-level capacity-building program and exposure visit in Chennai, India, involving participants from the National Centre and diocesan representatives from Badulla, Chilaw, Kurunegala, and Batticaloa. The primary goal was to explore India's successful strategies in Thalassemia care and gain insights into improving patient support systems in Sri Lanka.

The program featured engaging sessions with experts such as Ms Mumtaj Suriya, a Thalassemia patient and activist, Dr. Revathi Raj, a senior pediatric haematologist, and Mr. L. Lobithas, a disability consultant. These professionals shared advanced treatment methods, advocacy techniques, and the importance of social support structures under India's Disability Act.



One of the key takeaways was the integration of Thalassemia into the Disability Act, which has significantly helped patients access specialized healthcare, financial aid, and social services, reducing the stigma associated with the condition. Participants also explored iron chelation therapy, blood transfusions, and dietary management as essential components for enhancing patients' quality of life.

In Sri Lanka, while blood transfusion services are established, managing iron overload remains a challenge due to repeated transfusions. The exposure visit underscored the need for establishing specialized centres for Thalassemia care, including Bone Marrow Transplants (BMT) for severe cases.



Furthermore, the visit highlighted the potential for creating a National Thalassemia Association in Sri Lanka to advocate for improved care, subsidized medication, and regular screenings. The use of technology for patient care tracking and remote consultations was emphasized as a means to enhance patient support systems.

The visit concluded with concrete steps toward implementing the gained insights, including the formation of the National Thalassemia Association and its registration with the International Thalassemia Federation, aiming to strengthen local capacity and improve the quality of life for Thalassemia patients in Sri Lanka.



## Research Books Launching Events LLPP

On October 3rd, 2024, Caritas Sri Lanka launched two research books under the 'Lighting the Lives of the Plantation People (LLPP)' project, focusing on the challenges and rights of the plantation community in Sri Lanka. This marginalized group, especially IOTs (Indian Origin Tamils) or Malayaha Tamils, has faced systemic discrimination despite playing a vital role in Sri Lanka's export economy. The event highlighted the urgent need for education as a means to break the cycle of poverty and the importance of preserving the community's rich cultural heritage to address socio-economic challenges effectively.

The event was led by Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson Perera, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka, who reaffirmed Caritas' commitment to advocating for the rights and welfare of the plantation community. His speech was complemented by the presence of His Excellency Most. Rev. Dr Brian Udaigwe, the Apostolic Nuncio of Sri Lanka, emphasized the necessity for inclusive policies and political will to support the unique cultural identity of the Indian-origin Tamil community.

Additionally, Most. Rev. Dr Harold Anthony Perera, Chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, and Most. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis, Bishop of Kandy Diocese, graced the event as a distinguished guest. Hon. Justice S. Thuraiajah, PC, the first Tamil Supreme Court Justice of Indian origin, delivered the keynote speech, stressing the importance of recognizing the plantation community's contributions to the economy while advocating for their dignity and rights.

Special guests included Mr W. A. L. Wickramarachchi from the Ministry of Plantation and Environment, Mr. Trevor Ludowyke from the Canadian High Commission, Mr. Thomas Vanke, and Country Coordinator from AGIAMONDO. The event was attended by diocesan directors, religious leaders, academics, media personnel, civil society members, community representatives, and government officials, all coming together to support the rights and empowerment of the plantation community.



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## Celebrating Children's Day in Anuradhapura



On October 12th, 2024, Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC, in collaboration with Caritas Anuradhapura – Sethsaviya and Kekirawa Parish, organized a memorable Children's Day celebration. This event was part of the Caritas Korea project titled "Educational Assistance to Economic Crisis and War-affected Poor Children in Northern, Eastern, and North Central Provinces of Sri Lanka," with a strong focus on the psychosocial development of children and their families.

The program aimed to support both children and their parents through two main components. The first session was led by Rev. Fr. Shiran Chamaka Perera, an inspiring musician who introduced participants to the transformative power of music therapy. Through engaging activities, he shared valuable insights on overcoming life's challenges, encouraging parents to appreciate and accept their children as they are. This session strengthened family bonds and fostered a nurturing environment.



The second component focused on health and education. A total of 114 students received school books and bags, ensuring they were well-prepared for their studies. In partnership with Hatton National Bank, 114 savings accounts were opened for the children, teaching them the importance of financial literacy and the value of saving for the future.

The highlight of the event was the celebration itself, where over 300 children and their parents gathered to enjoy a variety of performances. The children showcased their talents through energetic and creative dance performances, filling the day with laughter and joy.

This Children's Day celebration in Anuradhapura was more than just an event – it was a heartfelt initiative to nurture the future generation. By addressing mental well-being, education, and health, Caritas Sri Lanka continues to empower children and their families, promoting a supportive environment for growth and development. We look forward to future initiatives that celebrate the joys of childhood and contribute to the holistic development of communities across Sri Lanka.





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## Anti-Human Trafficking and Migration Cluster Meeting



An awareness program on "Prevention of Human Trafficking" was organized by the National Secretariat of Non-Government Organizations on December 5, 2024, under the leadership of Mr Ravi Seneviratne, Secretary of Ministry of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs, held at Battaramulla Water's Edge premises.

The event saw the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Employment, Department of Labour, Department of Probation and Child Protection, Bureau of Foreign Employment, Department of Immigration and Affairs, Bribery and Corruption Investigation Commission, Social Services Department, and Ministry of Labour. Additionally, 41 representatives from various international and non-state organizations attended, including representatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Swiss Embassy, and others.



A joint action plan involving non-government organizations was developed during the meeting to formulate effective strategies to prevent human trafficking and smuggling. This collaborative effort reflects a united front in addressing the urgent issue of human trafficking, with a clear focus on fostering safer environments and protecting vulnerable individuals.

## Scholarship Distribution Program in Collaboration with DFCC Bank



At Seth Sarana—Caritas Colombo, a meaningful community kitchen project was carried out in partnership with DFCC Bank's CSR Unit, providing nutritious meals to those in need. Additionally, on September 14, 2024, Caritas Colombo organized the distribution of 150 scholarships to underprivileged children at the Archdiocesan Social and Economic Development Centre, Raddolugama.

92 schoolchildren and their parents participated in the event which empowered these children to continue their education and foster a brighter future for them. Caritas Sri Lanka extends heartfelt gratitude to DFCC Bank for their generous contributions, which made this initiative a success.



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## Awareness Sessions on Sustainable Waste Management



Caritas Sri Lanka, in collaboration with dioceses, conducted a series of awareness sessions on sustainable waste management under the Stepping Stone for Environmental Protection (SSEP) project. Throughout these sessions, a total of 39 sessions were held across different dioceses, reaching approximately 500 to 900 school students per session. These sessions focused on educating students about waste segregation and sustainable waste management practices.

In addition to the sessions, 39 waste collection bins were established in schools, providing a practical tool for students to engage in proper waste management. This initiative aimed to instil environmental consciousness among the younger generation, ensuring sustainable practices for a cleaner and greener future. The awareness sessions were well-received, with students gaining insights into how effective waste management contributes to protecting the environment and minimizing ecological impact. This initiative forms a crucial step in promoting environmental sustainability among students, encouraging them to adopt responsible practices in their communities.

## Fostering Secure Sustainable Livelihoods and Nourishing Environments



The Empowered Households project, supported by the One Body One Spirit movement, continues to uplift rural families across five dioceses in Sri Lanka. Focused on fostering sustainable livelihoods through Savings for Transformation, Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices (CSAP), and the development of small and medium entrepreneurs, the project aims to build community resilience and promote economic independence.

Recognizing outstanding farmers, the project selected 10 farmers from a pool of 300 based on their success in perennial crop cultivation, intercropping, and adoption of CSAP techniques. These farmers have contributed significantly to sustainable agricultural practices and have set examples for others to follow. Furthermore, Livelihood Disaster Risk Reduction (LDRR) training sessions were held, benefiting 204 participants. These sessions equipped farmers with practical knowledge to mitigate agriculture-related risks and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The selected entrepreneurs, supported in developing innovative business plans, are advancing areas such as Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices, coir product development, onion seed germination, and coconut cultivation, demonstrating sustainability and innovation. Through these targeted initiatives, the Empowered Households project continues to empower communities, fostering sustainable livelihoods and resilience for long-term development.

# Get Involved: Join Hands with Caritas Sri Lanka

Are you passionate about making a difference in the lives of those in need?

Caritas Sri Lanka invites you to be a part of our mission to serve communities and uphold humanitarian values across the nation.

Here are some ways you can get involved:

1. **Volunteer:** Become a volunteer and directly contribute to our projects and programs aimed at uplifting the underprivileged.
2. **Donate:** Your generous donations enable us to reach more individuals and families in need. Every contribution, big or small, makes a significant impact.
3. **Spread Awareness:** Help us raise awareness about our initiatives and campaigns by sharing our stories on social media platforms or organising awareness events in your community.
4. **Join Events:** Participate in our events and fundraisers to support our ongoing projects and connect with like-minded individuals who share a passion for serving others.
5. **Partner with Us:** If you represent an organization or business interested in collaborating with Caritas Sri Lanka, reach out to explore partnership opportunities.

Together, let's create a more compassionate and equitable society.  
Join hands with Caritas Sri Lanka today and be a part of positive change!



**To all our supporters, volunteers, donors, and partners,  
thank you for your unwavering commitment  
to Caritas Sri Lanka's mission.**

**Together, we make a difference.**



Caritas Sri Lanka



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