

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

January 2025

1st Edition



Message from the National Director

Dear Friends and Partners,

As we welcome the year 2025, I extend my warmest greetings to each of you. This new year brings renewed hope and determination as we continue our mission to serve the most vulnerable communities across Sri Lanka.

Our unwavering commitment to food security, sustainable development, and social justice remains at the core of our work. Through our dedicated efforts, we aim to uplift marginalized communities, empower women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and promote climate resilience through sustainable agricultural practices. Moreover, our ongoing focus on education, peacebuilding, environmental conservation, and social protection highlights our comprehensive approach to development.



As we embark on another year of service, I invite all stakeholders—our diocesan centers, partners, and well-wishers—to join hands in strengthening our collective impact. Your steadfast support and collaboration drive our mission forward, and together, we can transform lives and build a more just, compassionate, and resilient society.

May 2025 be a year of growth, unity, and meaningful change for all.

With blessings,

Fr. Luke Nelson Perera

National Director

Mark Your Calendars

Here's what's coming up next month at Caritas Sri Lanka—stay engaged and be part of these significant moments!

Caritas Sri Lanka Partners' Forum

Date: 18th February 2025

Time: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Venue: Caritas Sri Lanka Auditorium

Caritas Sri Lanka will host the Partners' Forum 2025, bringing together key stakeholders, diocesan directors, and funding partners to discuss ongoing projects, strategic directions, and collaborative efforts to enhance our impact.

20th Anniversary Commemoration of the 2004 Tsunami

Date: 19th February 2025

Time: 8:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Venue: BMICH, Colombo

To mark 20 years since the 2004 tsunami, Caritas Sri Lanka will hold a commemorative event to reflect on the resilience of affected communities, honour those who lost their lives, and highlight ongoing efforts in disaster recovery and preparedness.

Virtual Orientation Meeting on 2025 Food Security Program Implementation

Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC is implementing a five-year project, titled “Improving Rural Livelihoods, Enhancing Food Security, and Building Climate Resilience in Sri Lanka” from 2023 to 2027 with the support of Caritas Norway. The project aims to safeguard food security for farming households, including urban and rural poor, marginalised communities, war widows, women, youth, persons with disabilities, schoolchildren, and also included in the program. The initiative focuses on promoting sustainable agricultural practices under the leadership of the National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC. The project is implemented across 25 administrative districts, spanning the dioceses of Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Kurunegala, Jaffna, Vanni, Trincomalee, Mannar, Kandy, Badulla, Colombo, Chilaw, Galle, and Ratnapura.



The Virtual Orientation Meeting for the 2025 Food Security Program Implementation was successfully held on January 9th for Sinhala-speaking Diocesan Centers (DCs) and on January 10th for Tamil-speaking DCs. The meeting brought together key stakeholders including Diocesan Directors, Food Security Program Coordinators, MEAL Officers, Agronomists, Field Officers, and Finance Officers. The primary aim was to provide comprehensive guidance and align all participants on the strategies, activities, and expectations for the upcoming program cycle.

The sessions focused on strengthening coordination, enhancing program efficiency, and ensuring alignment with Caritas Sri Lanka's broader objectives for food security across all dioceses. Through these

orientations, the participants gained a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities, equipping them with the necessary knowledge to effectively contribute to the successful implementation of the 2025 program. The interactive virtual format allowed for inclusive participation and the exchange of ideas across linguistic and regional lines, reinforcing a united approach to tackling food insecurity in Sri Lanka.

Virtual Meeting on Data Validation of Result Framework for the 2024 Food Security Project



The Virtual Meeting on Data Validation of the Result Framework for the 2024 Food Security Project took place from January 15th to 31st, 2025, aimed at ensuring the accuracy, consistency, and transparency of the data collected throughout the year of 2024. As part of the preparation for the Annual Report, the meeting focused on validating the data provided in various project documents, including the Information Sheet, Results Framework, Narrative Report, and Activity Report.

These reports are essential for a comprehensive review of the program's progress and achievements, ensuring they meet the expectations of Caritas Norway and other stakeholders.

The validation process involved a detailed review by Diocesan Directors, Food Security Program Coordinators, MEAL Officers, and other key personnel to cross-check data from field activities, outputs, and outcomes. The meeting provided a platform for sharing feedback and ensuring that all reports align with Caritas Norway's reporting standards and requirements. The outcome was a refined set of validated data, ready for submission in the upcoming Annual Report, demonstrating the project's effectiveness and progress in addressing food security across Sri Lanka.

Lighting the Lives of the Plantation People: A Step Towards Educational Empowerment

To start the fourth year of the "Lighting the Lives of the Plantation People" project with a more focused approach that aligns with donor requirements, the LLPP team conducted a comprehensive gap analysis across five dioceses to identify school dropout rates. This analysis included interviews and group discussions with



parents, zonal educational officials, principals, teachers, plantation managers, development officers, and members of civil society organizations (CSOs). We also collected approximately 100 quantitative data points from all the dioceses, providing valuable insights into the educational needs and real-life situations of the plantation community.

The findings from this data collection process revealed several key issues. We identified the underlying reasons for school dropouts, including a lack of teacher engagement, which negatively impacts student learning, and parental indifference stemming from a lack of awareness about the importance of education. Financial difficulties also play a significant yet often hidden role in dropout rates, particularly with a noticeable increase in dropouts starting from Grade 8 onwards.

Moreover, a lack of support from community leaders and the absence of religious education have contributed to behavioural issues among young people. To address these challenges, establishing libraries and introducing vocational education opportunities after Advanced Level (A/L) examinations could provide students with better learning resources and alternative career paths. This approach aims to improve retention rates and reduce dependency on low-income jobs.

Our data collection also revealed broader issues beyond education. We observed significant concerns related to malnutrition and health within the plantation community, underscoring the need for holistic development efforts alongside educational improvements. Addressing these interconnected challenges through enhanced infrastructure, community involvement, and improved educational programs is essential for fostering a more supportive and thriving learning environment.

Orientation of the project "Stepping Stone to Safeguarding Sri Lanka's Natural Environment" (SSEP) Phase 2

Following the successful completion of its first three-year phase, Caritas Sri Lanka is proud to announce the renewal of the SSEP project for a second phase, spanning from 2025 to 2027. Phase two aims to build a resilient agricultural landscape by introducing climate-smart agricultural practices. This initiative seeks to empower local communities, enhance food sovereignty, improve livelihood opportunities, and promote the regeneration of natural resources.

The session was held on the 30th of January 2025 at the Subodhi Training Center in Piliyandala, bringing together representatives from nine diocesan centres including Caritas Colombo Sethsarana, Caritas Anuradhapura Sethsaviya, Caritas Vanni HUDEC, Caritas Badulla USCOD, Caritas SED Galle, Caritas Ratnapura Sethmini, Caritas Batticaloa EHED and Caritas Mannar Valvuthayam.

The session was graced by the presence of Rev. Fr. Luke Nelson Perera, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka, who emphasized the importance of sustainability in the project. He highlighted how the initiative would not only benefit the communities but also contribute to the well-being of "our common home" by fostering environmentally friendly practices.

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Orientation of the project (SSEP) Phase 2 - Cont...

Mr. Jayasiri Premarathna, Unit Head of the ECPP, along with SSEP program officers and Mr. Dhanushka, the finance officer, provided detailed insights into the planned activities and key indicators for the project. Their presentations outlined the strategic approach to achieving the project's goals, ensuring transparency and accountability.

The diocesan centre staff shared valuable experiences from the first phase, reflecting on both the successes and challenges encountered. Their stories underscored the transformative impact of the project on local communities and the environment. The session concluded on a high note, with all participants expressing their commitment to supporting the upcoming activities and ensuring the project's continued success.



Orientation of the project "Vitalizing Income, Training, and Agricultural Livelihoods (VITAL)" - 2025

The second year of the project is inaugurated on the 1st of January 2025 to the 31st of December 2025. The project aims at "Enhancing Livelihood Security and Resilience: Empowering Vulnerable Households to Foster Peaceful, Safe, and Nourishing Family Environments. The orientation of the project was held on the 31st of January 2025 at Caritas Sri Lanka SEDEC.



The session was facilitated by the project team, led by Mr. Jayasiri Premaratne, and the Project Officer. The finance officer presented a comprehensive financial summary for the project year 2025, ensuring transparency and accountability. This was followed by an engaging discussion on achievement plans, key indicators, and activities tailored to each diocese's unique context. The collaborative approach allowed participants to share insights, align their efforts, and strategize for maximum impact.

After the orientation session, the participants were guided through the Environmental Stewardship Tool (EST) by Ms. Niamh Furey, the Environmental Advisor of the CAFOD. This insightful session was able to facilitate the basic steps and methods to utilize the EST, which will allow us to plan a project comprising environmental sustainability.

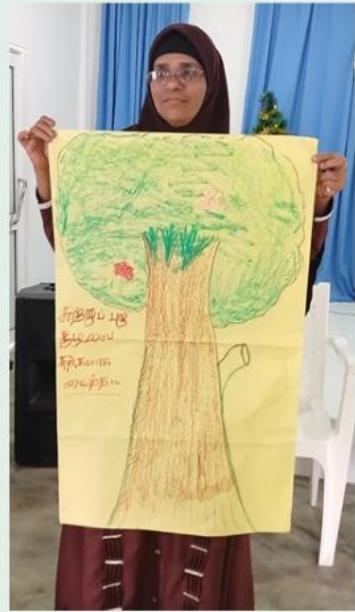
Caritas Anuradhapura Sethsaviya, Caritas SED Galle, Caritas Mannar Valvuthayam, Caritas Kurunegala Janasetha and Caritas Kandy SETIK participated for the session. As the second year of the project unfolds, Caritas Sri Lanka remains steadfast in its mission to create peaceful, safe, and nourishing environments for vulnerable households. By empowering communities with the tools and knowledge they need to thrive.

Ethno-Drama: Encouraging Peace and Reconciliation in Batticaloa

On 9th January 2025, Caritas Sri Lanka organized an impactful program titled "Ethno-Drama to Encourage Communities in their Narrative of Peace and Reconciliation" at the Batticaloa Diocesan Center (DC). This event was part of the "Helping People Move Towards Reconciliation" project, generously funded by CAFOD. The aim was to foster peace, healing, and reconciliation within the community through the unique medium of ethno-drama.

Held in the village of Iyankeni, the workshop brought together local women's groups and provided a platform for them to engage with key issues affecting their communities. Sr. Deepa Fernando, an experienced facilitator, led the session as the resource person. The primary focus of the ethno-drama workshop was to encourage both economic and psychological growth among the participants, particularly women, who have historically faced numerous challenges.

By improving their skills and overall well-being, the workshop aimed to create a supportive environment that would nurture peace and reconciliation at the grassroots level. In addition to its therapeutic and empowering effects, the event also enabled participants to critically analyze the challenges they face and explore ways to address them collectively.



This workshop was an important step toward strengthening community bonds and creating a foundation for a peaceful, reconciled society, one where every individual has a role in the shared narrative of healing and growth.



Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities: A Family-Centred Approach to Peacebuilding

On 29th January 2025, Caritas Sri Lanka launched its latest peace project for 2025-2027 with an orientation program at the Institute of Integral Education, Subodhi, Piliyandala. This initiative, supported by Misereor, marks a significant milestone by introducing, for the first time, a family-centred approach to peacebuilding within its network of 13 Diocesan Centres (DCs).

The project recognizes that peace begins at home and aims to empower women, engage youth and children, and involve men and community leaders in fostering harmony within families and communities. By strengthening family bonds and promoting dialogue, this initiative seeks to address the root causes of conflict and build more resilient and peaceful societies. With the active participation of DC coordinators, the project is set to create lasting impacts by ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are inclusive and holistic. Caritas Sri Lanka remains committed to working hand in hand with communities to build a future where families serve as the foundation for sustainable peace.





On 10th January 2025, an orientation session for the project "Mitigation of Thalassemia Disease: Embracing Progress, Empowering Lives" was held from 9:30 AM onwards, with active participation from the Diocesan Director, Project Coordinator, Finance Officer, and Field Officer. Representatives from the diocesan centers in Kurunegala, Badulla, Chilaw, and Batticaloa also attended the meeting.

level. Participants deliberated on potential challenges that could arise during the project's execution and ways to address these issues effectively. The team also briefly touched on the limitations of the project, ensuring that everyone was aligned on the implementation strategy to ensure its successful delivery across the diocesan centers.

Strengthening Social Protection: A Multi-Stakeholder Consultation

On 3rd January 2025, a significant consultation took place at Sarvodaya Headquarters in Moratuwa, bringing together religious leaders, civil society representatives, and experts to discuss the future of Sri Lanka's social protection system. The event fostered a dynamic exchange of ideas on how religious organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) can contribute to shaping policies, ensuring inclusivity for marginalized communities, and strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance social protection outcomes.

Key presentations provided valuable insights into Sri Lanka's National Social Protection Policy and the Aswesuma Social Assistance Program, focusing on grievance redress mechanisms and community engagement strategies. Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne emphasized the need for a participatory approach, advocating for a system where all voices—especially those of vulnerable groups—are heard in decision-making processes. Ms. Manu Tissera further enriched the discussion by sharing research findings on the role of religious leaders and CSOs in driving social protection initiatives.

The consultation concluded with an engaging discussion on community-based social protection, addressing both opportunities and challenges in fostering greater collaboration among stakeholders. Participants collectively explored strategies to create a more inclusive, effective, and sustainable social protection system that leaves no one behind.

Caritas Sri Lanka remains committed to advancing these discussions and working alongside diverse partners to strengthen social protection frameworks for all Sri Lankans.



Our Network of Support

Caritas Sri Lanka extends heartfelt gratitude to our funding partners and collaborators whose generosity and commitment continue to strengthen our mission. This month, we acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our partners who have supported initiatives in education, peacebuilding, livelihood development, and humanitarian assistance.

Your unwavering support enables us to reach marginalized communities, empower individuals, and create lasting change. Together, we are building a more just and compassionate society. We look forward to deepening our collaboration 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!

Stay updated on our latest initiatives, impact stories, and opportunities to get involved by connecting with us online. Follow, engage, and spread the word!

Follow us on:

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-  LinkedIn: Caritas Sri Lanka -SEDEC
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Together, let's keep making a difference one step at a time