

ALL ISLAND QUIZ CONTEST

The all island national level quiz contest was held on the 23rd of November, for the students of the advanced level classes in the 2492 schools in the island. These students are the future of Sri Lanka, they are the people who will govern the country and be future leaders. Therefore it is important to ensure that they are aware of the human rights so that they could preserve and respect these laws to avoid any injustice.

According to the organizers, Kushani, Gayani and Balasubramaniam , in the months of July and August, heads of the schools of the 25 districts were requested to nominate a team of four students from each school to face a written test for selecting four teams from each district. Following the district level contest the provincial level contest and finally the national level contest were held. The winner of the national level contest was the Meegalawa Mahaweli National School from the Kurunagela district. Second place was secured by Kaluthaweli Maha Vidyalayam from Batticaloa and third place went to the Monaragala Alpitiya Maha Vidyalaya.

Objectives

- This contest was a significant tool for sensitizing school children as well as their teachers and parents of the need for upholding Human Rights in keeping with the UN charter for ensuring peace and security of persons and property in a just and democratic society.
- To create awareness of the need for devolution of power, recognition of the rights of the minorities and an appreciation of the fertility of ethnic and religious diversity.
- To ensure that the youth grow up with respect for pluralism and the rights of others and also become responsible citizens.

The distribution of prizes was held on the 10th of December, on 'Human Rights Day', at the New Town Hall in Colombo. The Chief Guest for this event was the Dr. A.T Ariyaratna the leader of Sarvodaya Movement. Other prominent personalities that attended the event included, Hon. Deshabandu Karu Jayasuriya, M.P., Hon. Prof. Tissa Vitharana, Minister of Science and Technology, Prof. G.L Peries M.P. , Mr. Nevil Piyadhigama, Chairman of National Police Commission, Mr A.G Darmadasa, Commissioner of Registration of Persons, Hon. Alewimaulana, The Governor of the Western Province, Mr. Sarath Jayasundara, Senior Superintendent of Police, and Hon. R Sampathan, M.P., Leader of Tamil National Alliance.



PAFFREL STAFF

VIEW

2/10/2006

'Ahinsa Peace Programme'
at Anuradhapura 'Samadi' statute
Participated the Chairman of PAFFREL, Mr.
Rohana Hettiarachchie, Deputy Executive
Director and PAFFREL Staff



17/11/2006

Welcome Meeting for New Membership of
PAFFREL
at auditorium of the Marga Institute
Participated - PAFFREL's Board of Directors

23/11/2006

Quiz final contest for national level
participants at SLBC

10/12/2006

Prize giving of Quiz Contest of International
Human Rights Day
at New Town Hall

14th Nov. - 15th Dec. 2006

Mr. S. B. Nirmausan participated as an
International Observer in Aceh Election,
Indonesia, 2006

26 to 28/12/2006

PAFFREL's annual trip
Colombo to Kataragama

MR. KINGSLEY RODRIGO

Chairman of PAFFREL

10th - 15th October 2006

Engaging youth in Modern Democracy.
at Sydney - Australia
Participated - Mr. Kingsley Rodrigo,
Chairman of PAFFREL
and Prof. Siri Hettige,
Head of the Sociology Department,
University of Colombo

30/11/2006 to 10/12/2006

Presidential Elections in Venezuela -
International Election Observation.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON PREVENTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The American Centre for International Labour Solidarity, (ACILS) has supported PAFFREL in implementing a two day workshop on Training of Trainers on Prevention of Human Trafficking.

The objectives of the workshop were,

- To create awareness on human trafficking among the participants
- To train civil society individuals to be anti-trafficking trainers
- To collect case studies from the workshop Districts

The first phase of the workshop was conducted in Polonnaruwa and Batticaloa.

The focus of the workshop was to determine and explain of the meaning of human trafficking and causes of it, the international conventions relating to the prevention of human trafficking, Act No. 16 of 2006, other legal provisions related to human trafficking and the role of civil society in prevention of human trafficking.

In the workshop the participants were educated to realize that trainers have to gain sufficient knowledge on the subject for them to become trainers. Participants were briefed on the different methods of participatory training such as lecture methods, group discussions, brainstorming, case study and role play etc.

The role of the civil society in preventing human trafficking-as considered by the participants

- To create awareness among the community on human trafficking.
- Identify the situations where trafficking may occur.
 - Identify the brokers of trafficking in the area
 - Information on trafficking to be forwarded to the law enforcement authorities
 - Pay more attention towards vulnerable people (ex. Low income groups, parents, children, migrant workers, families)
 - Collect Data periodically of the area
 - Educate the school children
 - Direct the affected people to the relevant institutions

The two day training sessions ended with evaluation of the workshop by the participants. They decided to meet to discuss the situation periodically in their respective Districts.



AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

PAFFREL conducted 96 dialogues on good governance and human rights with 6 civil society organizations in 5 districts of, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, Kalutara, Galle and Matara.

This programme focused on minority rights, federalism, devolution of political power and electoral law reforms.

This awareness programme was held from the 1st of October 2005 to the 30th of September 2006 and It was successfully completed. A second programme, which included 135 dialogues, to raise awareness among the general public in some other eight districts of Kalutara, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Matara, Hambantota, Polonnaruwa, Badulla and Monaragala about good governance, human right and voter's right was also funded by the NED. This began on the 1st of October 2006, and is presently being carried out.

We would like to thank NED for all their support in conducting these programmes.



OBSERVATION OF ACTIVITIES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION IN SRI LANKA

PAFFREL has already made arrangements, with the assistance of locally based trained impartial observers to monitor the activities in selected local government institution in 5 administrative districts of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Galle, Matara and Rathnapura. Currently, there are 330 local authorities in the country. They are consists with Municipal Councils, 2 of Urban Councils and 19 Pradeshiya Sabhas. Their duties mainly include of certain administrative and regulatory activities such as housing, drainage systems, roads, entertainments, parks and libraries, and provision of services such as street lighting, conservancy, scavenging and vector control.

Unfortunately, there has been much criticism with regard to the functioning of the local authorities within their present scope and capacities. We have identified that one major cause has been the lack of direct participation in the activities of the local government institutions by the local people. Therefore PAFFREL felt the need to enter this area of local government with a view to bring about a change and decided to implement a monitoring programme of activities in the Local Government Institutions.

The following aspects would be observed,

- Inherent specialties of local government
- The Organizational capacity *Ex: Garbage disposal facilities*
- Financial Capability
- Transparency in financial transactions and tender procedure
- Tender board participation
- Local Government Meeting and Public Participation
- Special projects implemented by Local Government bodies

By early December, we had discussed with the Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils, Secretary of Provincial Commission, Commissioners of Provincial Councils, Heads of the selected Local Authority, Political Party Leaders and Secretaries about our monitoring mission. At the same time in order to set up the observation unit a discussion took place with the district coordinators. We are also preparing material which is to be included in the study-packs which is to be given to the Monitors.

PAFFREL wish to thank the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) for funding this programme, which in our view will help to upgrade the democratic institutions in our country.

PROMOTION OF WORKERS' RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS

PAFFREL implemented a project which was funded by the American Centre for International Labour Solidarity (ACILS) under the entitle of, 'The Role of Civil Society Organizations in the Consolidation of Democracy and Promotion of Workers' Rights as Human Rights', from the 1st of July 2006 to the 31st of December 2006. The project consisted of 12 educational workshops being conducted in 11 districts, of Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura, Matara, Galle, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle, Kandy, Rathnapura, Digamadulla, Batticaloa and Ampara.

The objectives if this project is as follows:-

- To create awareness on human rights, democratic values and principles and on worker rights among civil society organizations.
- To keep the coordinating organizations active in the districts by organizing the educational workshops.
- To strengthen the partnership between PAFFREL and the ACILS.

The participants for this workshop included government officials, the private sector, the media and the trade union people.



ACEH ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION - 2006

It is true that Tsunami has brought a major scale disaster on Aceh. However, paradoxically, the terrible war waged for nearly twenty nine years came to an end with the Tsunami. Aceh can be considered as a phoenix bird that emerged from the ashes of war and a model province for the other conflict affected countries.

Under the Helsinki MOU signed between Government of Indonesia (GOI) and Free Aceh Movement (GAM) ten international observers from ANFREL member countries and sixty six observers from European Union on long term and short term basis were invited by ANFREL (Asian Network for Free Elections) to visit Aceh.

The monitoring programme led by ANFREL to support the democracy and ensure a free and fair election started on 15th November 2006. From November 16th to 18th ANFREL observers participated for the sessions of orientation conducted by expert resource persons on election monitoring missions. At the completion of this programme Ms. Somsri, the ANFREL Executive Director, assigned me the responsibilities of election observation at central Aceh. Considering my election observation experience gained at PAFREL the operational committee made a decision to deploy me alone with an interpreter and a driver.

Central Aceh, consist of Aceh Tengah, Bener Meriah and Gayo Lues districts, are very sensitive areas. However, in spite of the sensitivity of erupting conflicts I was able to meet a number of religious leaders, the chief of Police, the election commissioner, all the candidates, NGO's, civil societies, human right activists, women's groups, Business community, the other local and international observers and voters in the area. The information I gathered from them were invaluable for me to monitor the election during pre-election period, Election Day and post-election period in an effective manner.

On the Election Day, 11th December 2006, I observed proceedings at the polling stations, vote counting centres and met the voters, police officers, election commissioner and other key personnels.

At the completion of observation mission ANFREL held a press conference to brief our findings to the international and local media. Now, after the election, Aceh has returned to normal life in which the blood shedding or sounds of gun fire has faded away. As I observed, generally the citizens live in harmony and satisfaction with all the common amenties and essential services restored and functioning smoothly. However, people feel that they have to encounter and deal with a new enemy; namely the corruption that is engulfing the whole Aceh province. The fact that years back Aceh governor was sent to jail on the charges of corruption, has led, to a certain extent, the candidates for mayor and governor elections to give an important place in their election manifestos for a corruption free society.

In accordance to the Helsinki memorandum of understanding the election was conducted in NAD 19 districts. While the number of Mayor candidate varied from district to district in Mayor elections, in the governor elections & candidates contested in the Aceh province.

One of the distinctive characteristics of this election is the emergence of Mr. Irwandi Yusuf, the former rebel leader, as the governor of Aceh province with the voters' choice. Many academics have claimed the December 11th election as an historical event after a prolonged violence in past decades and a devastating tsunami.

I was able to contribute as an international election observer representing PAFFREL along with 10 other observers from Asia to witness this historically important election which sets forth the conducive examples for the other conflict ridden countries especially in the region. I trust that I must thank Mr. Kingsley Rodrigo, the chairman, PAFFREL who has offered me this valuable opportunity and the rest of the PAFFREL staff for the moral support extended to me.

*Reported by
S. B. Nirmanusan*



THE NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS CAMPAIGN GOES FURTHER

As stated in the previous newsletter, before the local government election in May 2006, PAFFREL made a break through when it filed a petition before the Appeal court requesting the court to order the election commissioner and the commissioner for the registration of persons to issue identity cards to all voters. The court gave the verdict in favour of PAFFREL.

This programme was implemented to provide National Identity Cards to the citizens of Sri Lanka who do not possess one, lost theirs due to various reasons. This campaign started on the 24th of July by PAFFREL in collaboration with the Department of Registration of Persons. By the end of November we were able to cover 12 Districts. From the 4th of September to the 1st of December National Identity Cards were provided in Matara, Galle, Ampara, Colombo, Monaragala, Polonnaruwa, and Kandy. During this period a total number of 63,614 applications were collected. This program extended to cover a large number of Divisional Secretary's Division in each district; with following break down. Matara District - 16 DS Divisions, Ampara District - 20 Divisions, Colombo District - 13 DS Divisions, Monaragala District - 11 DS Divisions, Polonnaruwa District - 7 DS Divisions, Kandy District - 20 DS Divisions, Matale District - 11 DS Divisions and Kurunegala District - 30 DS Divisions.

This island-wide mobile service programme which was initiated to assist people to obtain National Identity Cards was a great success. We would like to cover more districts in the future and empower more of our citizens by providing them with National Identity Cards.

The Lutharan World Relief foundation funded for several programmes in number of divisions in four districts, including Galle District (Hikkaduwa, Ambalangoda, Balapitiya, Benthara, Habaraduwa and Gravets), Matara District (Dikwella, Devinuwara, Matara, Weligama),

Hambantota District (Tangalle, Ambalantota, Hambantota, Tissamaharama) and Kalutara District (Panadura, Beruwala, Kalutara). All the other districts that we covered were funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

*Reported by
Dilani Fernando*



STRENGTHEN TSUNAMI AFFECTED COMMUNITIES THROUGH INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES AND CITIZEN MOBILIZATION

The last lap of the Lutheran World Relief supported project ended in September 2006 with the conducting of Review Dialogues in 12 Divisional Secretariat Divisions in the Four Districts South of Colombo. The dialogues were carried out using participatory adult interacting techniques and the outcome was very realistic and immediate attention and action is required from the all who are concerned about a just and peaceful solutions to the following issues:-

- Health
- Permanent Housing
- Toilet Facilities
- Proper supply of drinking water
- Economic difficulties
- Difficulty in sending children to school
- State of insecurity for elders and children
- Indifference towards the survivors by authorities
- The lack of proper solutions to resolve the issues of the fisher folk
- Inadequacy of the houses provided for the Tsunami survivors are not in conformity with the size of the family and accepted standards,
- Increasing risks of child abusing
- Tsunami survivors being marginalized and vulnerable when resettled in other communities

This project which was in operation from 1st April 2006 to 30th September 2006 ended very successfully. Lutheran World Relief has been in Sri Lanka and committed to work through others for the last ten years. As a follow up practice negotiations to work continuously for the next three

years in the areas of Human Rights, Democracy and Co-existence in the district of Kalutara is under way.



DIALOGUES ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Under the project PAFFREL had decided to conduct 2 dialogues on good governance and 2 dialogues on human rights in each of the 6 Districts of Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Matale, Batticaloa and Vavuniya making a total of 20 dialogues. Unfortunately as the prevailing ground situation in Batticaloa and Vavuniya was not favourable for conducting the programme and two other tsunami affected districts such as Galle and Matara were added in place of them. However, PAFFREL was compelled to exclude the districts of Galle and Matara as another PAFFREL programme was being implemented in the two districts at the time. It was felt that the benefit of the dialogue programme be given to some other appropriate districts. Thus, the project was implemented in the districts of Kandy, Hambantota, Polonnaruwa, Puttalam and Badulla. A more number of dialogues on Human Rights than on Good Governance was held in the District of Badulla, as the collaborating organization made a request to that effect, in view of the fact that a large number of plantation workers live in the District and that ideas of rights needed to be promoted among them. The objectives of the project were:-

- to address some of the issues that affect social harmony and retard socio-economic development of the country,
- to raise awareness in the principles of good governance and human rights among the people.
- to strength the PAFFREL network by continuous activities.

These dialogues were conducted around the characteristics of good governance i.e., transparency, rule of law, participation, consensus, accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness. The Human Rights discussion had covered the importance of human rights for all people irrespective of their differences, such as class, creed, gender, etc.

This programme was sponsored by Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.



DONATION BY THE GERMAN EMBASSY

At a simple ceremony held at the German Embassy on 8th November 2006, Computer equipment worth of Rs.102,750/- was donated to PAFFREL, by the German Ambassador, His Excellency Jurgen Weerth. Mr. Kingsley Rodrigo the Chairman of PAFFREL, accepting this valuable gift on behalf of PAFFREL, recalled that it was the German Embassy which funded PAFFREL, in the very first year of its Incorporation in 1999. The funds which were donated for monitoring the Presidential Election held in December 1999, included a Siemens PIII computer, and a Cannon Photocopier, which are still in use. The spontaneous gift of computer equipment in December 2006, includes a Fujitsu P IV, with all useful accessories. Participating at the ceremony were Mrs. Caroline Heun and Mr. Andreas Hartmann from the German Embassy, and Mr. Cecil de Mel representing PAFFREL - Finance.



PAFFREL ANNUAL STAFF TRIP TO THE SOUTH

In keeping with the tradition of PAFFREL this year the annual trip was organized to visit the southern part of for three days from the 26th to the 28th of December 2006, with the view of improving the cordial relationship of staff.

First day on their way to down south the staff had the opportunity to visit the Maha Saman Devale at Rathnapura and then proceeded to Uda walawe wild life sanctuary for the lunch and observing the wild elephants.

Having rested at Kataragama in the first night in the next day the staff visited the Kiri Vehera, Kataragama Devale, Sella Kataragama and Yoda Ela. The staff enjoyed baths, boat rides at Yoda Ela before lunch. Next they visited the Kirinda harbour and they were able to see tsunami constructions and temple.

The third day the staff went to the spectacular Veherahena Temple and subsequently spent an enjoyable afternoon at the Polhena Beach Resort, sea bathing and frolicking on the sand, and then the staff returned to Colombo tired but happy.

*Reported by
Anne Sriyani*



Editor

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&

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