



Forward

The **Plantation Community Empowerment Project** deals with one of the most marginalized populations in Sri Lanka: the Tamil estate community. The program aims to address the root causes of this inequity and marginalization by bringing stakeholders together and facilitating them to identify and resolve issues. This self-help, collective problem solving is very much the way CARE works, by focusing not only on assistance, but also on empowerment through capacity building and most importantly, by helping to build new avenues of communication and understanding between different interest groups.

The results are very promising. Many stakeholders in the estates where the program has worked in have seen benefits in the form of new livelihood options, savings, access to credit, training, and especially new relationships that include them in the wider local social networks. Thus, plantation workers and managers now sit at the same table and resolve issues in a non-confrontational way. Similarly, for the first time, members of the estate community mix with the mainly Sinhalese communities outside of the estates through new-found livelihood activities and more significantly, personal friendships. The central mechanism of this change has been the Community Development Forum pioneered by CARE and today supported by all the key stakeholders including the estate community, estate management, civil society outside of the estate, local government agents and other local NGOs.

These results clearly demonstrate the possibility for change, and suggest a methodology for achieving it on a wider scale within the plantations sector. This is all the more significant given the care taken by the project to align its results with the National Policy on the plantations sector set out by the Government of Sri Lanka.

I hope this document will help inspire others to contribute to this task in fostering a more harmonious and equitable society at this critical juncture in Sri Lanka's history.

Country Director **Michael Rewald**
CARE International Sri Lanka July 2011

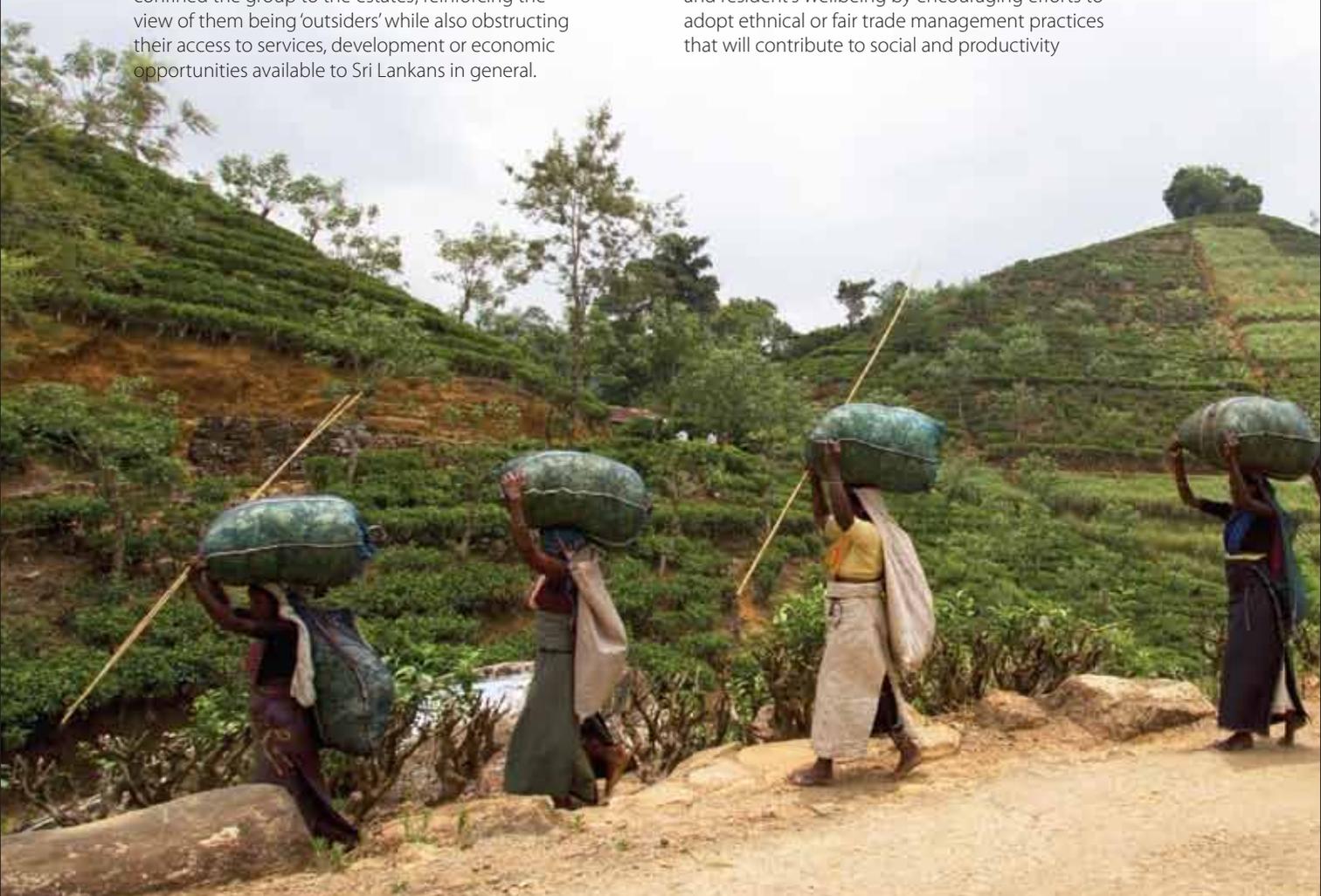
Background

First grown by the British, in Sri Lanka in the 1800's, tea remains one of the country's primary export earners and employers. World renowned, 'Ceylon Tea' accounts for the third of the tea produced globally while it remains one of the largest exporters of tea in the world. Nationally tea is one of the primary export earners, while the industry employs 10% of the country's labour force, mostly consisting of women. Despite its pivotal role in the country's economy for two centuries, those who live and work on the tea plantations are some of the poorest and most marginalized in the country. Mainly Tamil, whose ancestry can be traced back to the emigrant labour brought from Tamil Nadu, South India by the British in the 1800's, nearly a million still work in and call 'estates' home. While linguistically and religiously similar to the larger Sri Lankan Tamil community, political identities remain distinct. Stripped of their voting rights and consequently citizenship in 1948, the community faced decades of neglect and discrimination, to only be fully regain citizenship in 2003.

Though health, education and working conditions have improved, decades of isolation, discrimination, ineffective political representation, and poor services, the group's social and economic indicators lag far behind national averages. Alienation as a result of spatial and socio-political dynamics has often confined the group to the 'estates', reinforcing the view of them being 'outsiders' while also obstructing their access to services, development or economic opportunities available to Sri Lankans in general.

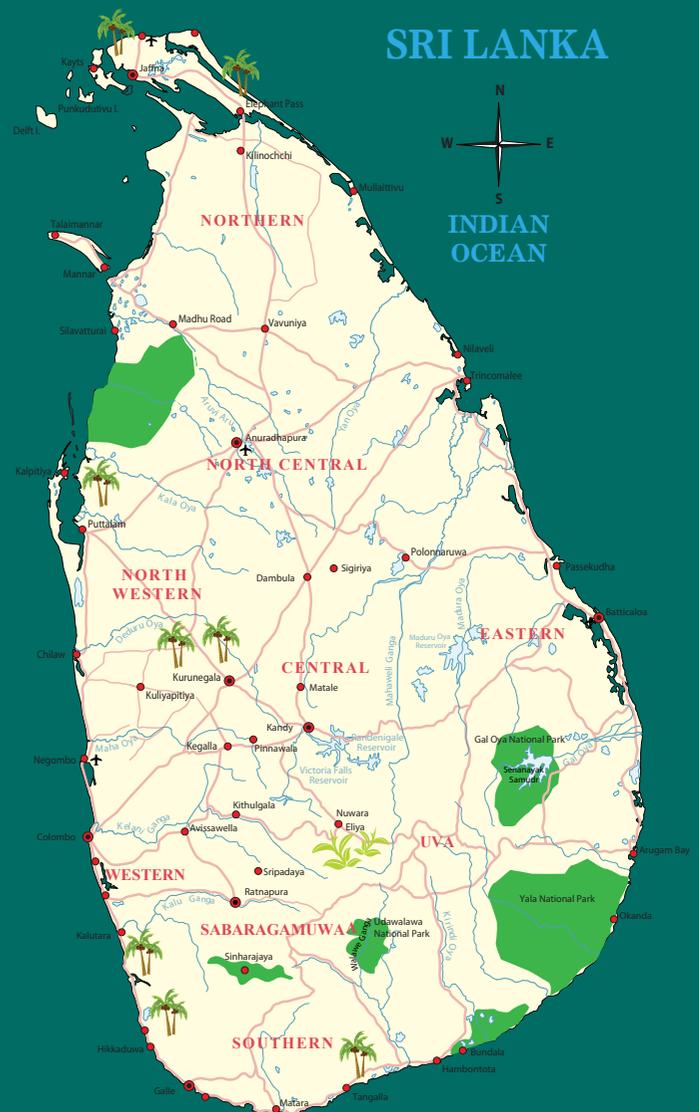
CARE's initial work in the plantations sought to improve the living conditions of plantations community. Two decades on, CARE's focus has changed. CARE recognizes that in order to make lasting changes it needs to work on addressing the root causes underpinning the estate community's poverty and marginalization. Today, CARE's work seeks to transform the lives of the men, women and children residing in Sri Lanka's tea estates by helping them "achieve their full rights as equal and integrated citizens of Sri Lankan society within a viable, profitable and more specialized tea industry".

One such initiative that supports this commitment is the European Union funded Plantation's Community Empowerment Project (PCEP). A core element of PCEP is to change the way different stakeholders relate to each other by setting up Community Development Forums that bring together estate residents, the management, state institutions and others, providing all an opportunity and space to negotiate and decide on development priorities and worker conditions in a collaborative, transparent and accountable manner. In doing so the project also equips the community and other stakeholders with the skills and information required to alter traditionally tense relationships with those that are constructive and collaborative. The project also supports state and industry efforts to enhance worker and resident's wellbeing by encouraging efforts to adopt ethical or fair trade management practices that will contribute to social and productivity



benefits. With state institutions the project seeks to improve the responsiveness of these to the communities needs in order to enhance service delivery and the states accountability to this community as citizens.

CARE's partnerships have been critical to the successes that are beginning to emerge. PCEP's implementing partner the Plantation Human Development Trust has been crucial for mobilizing and training communities while the engagement with the Ethical Tea Partnership has strengthened project efforts to promote the use of ethical trade practices. Critical to this has also been the invaluable support and collaboration of the 3 Regional Plantation Companies of Wattawala, Bogawanthalawa and Kottagala.



This booklet is a collection of stories of individuals living and working in the Carolina Estate operated by the Wattawala Plantation Company – one of the 13 estates the PCEP project works with. Located 116 km from Colombo in the district of Nuwara Eliya, the 471 hectare estate (that comprises of both tea and other minor crops) is home to 883 families. Bordering the estate is the village of Samanpura and Minuwandeniya which is home to 109 families. The project works with both the estate community as well as the villagers bordering the estate.

CARE recognizes that much still remains to be done and that the challenges are many, but there is also much to be celebrated. This collection of stories is CARE's attempt to do just that. The insights shared, CARE hopes will in a small way exemplify the enthusiasm, pride and commitment of all those CARE works with. And most importantly of the possibility of collectively creating change that lasts.



Making sure everyone is at the table.

A central focus of our work is to ensure that communities, particularly those that are not always included, have a place at the table in order to influence and control decisions that affect their lives. Accordingly, an integral element of all our work involves setting up community driven decision making structures and processes to be more inclusive, accountable and equitable, in order to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of decisions made. This includes equipping communities, groups or individuals with the skills, knowledge and information that will enable them to make decisions that are reflective of all their needs and not just of a few.

The Community Development Forums or CDFs have been set up to reflect these principles. Comprising of community representatives, estate management, government officials and other stakeholders, the CDFs are entrusted with leading the formulation of estate development plans that reflect priorities found to be most important through community consultations. A key feature is that these processes are community driven, with community members taking on key responsibilities for identifying, prioritizing and designing such plans and in its execution. While individual estates and the project partially finance these plans, CDF members are proactively leveraging or exploring other sources of funds. While representatives of the estate community are elected to the CDF, the larger community's capacity to influence and control decisions is of critical importance, therefore considerable emphasis is placed on empowering the community to hold their CDF officials accountable.

Since the Carolina CDF was set up, a total of 12 micro projects valued at Rs. 1,501,549 that include renovation of community infrastructure and income generation activities have been identified and completed. Often viewed as 'outsiders' in Sri Lankan society, the CDF has also been a doorway of sorts for S. Menon and his fellow estate residents. Participation in the CDF has helped him gain confidence to step out of the confines of the estate, "I now not only find solutions to my community's problems, I also contribute to finding solutions to problems faced by Sinhalese villagers who are part of the CDF", remarks Menon.

“
Our relationship
with the estate
management has
changed, now we
can talk to them, it is
like a
mini-parliament.”

*S. Menon,
CWC Trade Union Leader and
estate worker*



Investing in the future.

While the quality of education in the plantations sector has improved, it continues to lag far behind national standards. In a country that boasts over 90% literacy rate for women, only 67% of the women in estates are literate. Over 15% of the children do not attend school compared to the national average. The community also has one of the highest school drop-out rates for 9-13 year olds in the country. Poverty, lack of appreciation for education often culminate in high drop out rates or poor attendance. While schools in the rest of the country face resource restrictions, conditions faced in the estates are far worse. For example, in 2007 teacher student ratio for the estates was 1:45 compared to the national average of 1:22. While much needs to be done to improve the estate communities' access to quality education, community members such as Esther are slowly leading the way and by doing so encouraging others to appreciate the need for education and most importantly getting on with the business of making it happen.

“
I did not have the chance to go to pre-school and Montessori myself as we were a family of eight with little money. When I started school, I did not even know how to sharpen a pencil. With support from the CDF, I am now teaching children including my son to write in my own pre-school. I am able to give these children the opportunity that I did not have myself.

”

*M. Esther Nesamany
Dress maker, primary school teacher,
wife and mother.*



“
I started as a
volunteer, but after I
received training, I am
no longer scared to
talk with the estate
management...
I speak freely now.
”

*S. Annalectchamy,
Trade Union Leader, tea plucker*

The courage to do more than what is expected.

Annalectchamy is one of the first and few female community level ‘thalavars’ (trade union leaders), a role traditionally occupied by men. Annalectchamy and others like her are slowly chipping away at long held beliefs and practices that have discouraged women from taking on such positions. Fear often plagued Annalectchamy from talking to the estate management, but with training in leadership and opportunities to participate in decision making, has built her confidence helping her overcome this fear – most importantly she has recognized that what she has to say is important and that she can influence change.

Women in the estates as elsewhere face discrimination in families, communities and workplaces. Patriarchal practices often restrict women and men to particular roles, with women taking on a less public and more subservient roles in their families and society despite their considerable contributions. When it comes to leadership or decision making these gendered roles are often rigidly defined and maintained. In estates, though women account for those most employed, they rarely hold positions of authority that would enable them to influence changes in working conditions for example. Typically in an estate women are confined to the plucking of tea leaf, that requires them to work longer hours and more days in an year, out in the open despite difficult weather conditions, compared to their male counterparts.

Despite the pivotal role played by women in the industry, they rarely occupy leadership positions within trade unions. This inequity is not just confined to the workplace, women are also more likely to carry the burden of childcare and household chores. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that gender based violence is particularly high in the estates, with women at the greatest risk of exposure. Given the sensitivities of these issues, abuse is rarely reported while social customs and norms often excuse such behavior and limited understanding of recourse further prevents women from seeking help.



The power in recognizing ones own worth and believing in it.

For women entrepreneurs such as Esther, alternative income generating activities help in securing productive assets that she has control over, and in turn contributes to her economic independence that allows her to have greater influence over her family's financial decisions. For a community often plagued by feelings of 'powerlessness', confidence in their own skills and choices combined with exposure to the tools, knowledge and information is empowering individuals and families to take greater control over their present and future.

Today, poverty in the estates has decreased but it remains higher than the national average. Mainly daily wage earners, for a family dependant solely on income from work on the estates, meeting basic needs let alone investing in education, health or savings is a struggle. Though an estate households monthly income has increased since 2007, most is spent with little savings and of this almost half of what is spent is on food. Despite such spending, there is widespread malnutrition and anemia amongst women and children in the estates. A baby born in the estates is three times more likely than one born in the urban area to be stunted. Stunting and wasting is linked closely to mother's health and nutrition, that is often linked to awareness, accessibility to quality health services and value placed on women's' health.

Experience shows that the diversification of income sources helps families cope with external shocks while enabling savings that helps in reducing vulnerability. By helping women in particular earn and control such assets, it is more likely investments will be made in family health, nutrition or education. Therefore support to set up alternative income generation activities becomes critical to enhancing family capacities to cope with rising living costs while also enabling them to invest in education or health.

“
I have great pride in my achievements, but I also know what I need to do to progress. I have had to adapt to changing situations, and am confident that I can develop further.”

*M.Esther Nesamany,
Dress maker, primary school teacher,
wife and mother.*



Rewriting the rules.

According to Sasikala, in the past young women were only included in community activities to decorate or draw posters. Now not only are their voices being heard, their opinions also count. Since her first CDF meeting Sasikala has become an active member and is regarded as a 'representative' of the community. Sasikala is also helping herself through skills acquired from trainings, while she has also set up a soap making business that employs other youth. Advice from Visaka, another enterprising young woman and a pre-school teacher from the adjoining village of Samanpura, has helped Sasikala set up a pre-school. Today, Sashikala and Visaka are re-writing the 'rules' of what women and youth 'should' and can do.

Better educated than their parents, estate youth face the difficult choice of not wanting to follow in their parents' footsteps but lack the skills, resources and access to meaningful employment outside of the estates. A similar fate is faced by village youth. Both these groups are also less likely to be involved in community activities, fuelling their alienation from wider society, while weak interaction with others such as the estate community often reinforces suspicions and prejudices. Inability to communicate with each other and prejudices and fears stemming from past communal violence and the country's two decades old armed conflict further complicates such relations.

With young people, CARE focuses on building their skills as future leaders or agents of change and entrepreneurs, creating spaces for them to be part of community decision making and exposing them to opportunities that will strengthen their ability to secure viable self employment or seek employment in the open market. Special focus is placed on engaging young people and women in particular, in decision making in the CDF – roles traditionally occupied by elders and men. Youth are also actively engaged as community animators – as a result their communities see them as 'assets' rather than burdens. The multi-ethnic character of CDF's such as the one in Carolina has also provided rare spaces for youth from different communities to work together, helping in changing attitudes that are helping them overcome prejudices that may exist. Most importantly, the youth have gained confidence in their own potential to contribute to change within their communities and their own abilities to take greater control over their own livelihood choices – while inspiring others to do the same.

“
Sashikala and I did not talk to each other. Now we speak each other's language and are able to interact freely. The situation is the same between our two communities which now participate in each others' cultural activities and help each other in times of need. Our children are learning both Sinhala and Tamil so that a major obstacle to communicating is removed.”

*Vishaka Ranjani (on left)
Preschool teacher, mother, wife,
Samanpura Village*

“
I have had many opportunities to work with the Sinhala villagers on social development programmes and this has given direction and purpose for me. Other young people in my community respect me for developing the relationships with the outside society. I would like to help others also to reach my situation.”

*Jeyaraj Sashikala (on right)
Animator, entrepreneur*



“
We started with 15 savers, Rs. 540 in deposits in our first month. Today we have over Rs. 5 million in savings and 612 depositors.
”

*Murugaiya Nagalingam ,
Bank Manager,
Agra Credit and Savings Association*

From Rs. 540 to Rs. 5 million.

Run entirely by the estate community, the Agra Credit and Savings Association is its pride. Their 'bank president' is Murugaiya Nagalingam. Nagalingam and his fellow community members initially started working with CARE in 2003, as part of a project that sought to improve the community's living standards by changing saving practices and improving access to saving and credit facilities. At the time Nagalingam was a watcher in the Agrawaththa estate in Nawalapitiya, while he continues to retain his 'day job', his bank president responsibilities brings him the greatest pride. What started with 15 depositors now boasts 612 depositors and Rs. 5 million in deposits. "We are very proud of our bank" says Nagalingam. Interest rates are well below market rates at 6% to make loans affordable.

Prior to the setting up of the bank jewelry and other items would be pawned for high interest rates when health emergencies or weddings and funerals occurred. The depositors include 150 of the 160 households in the community while the service has also been extended to an adjoining village. There have been no defaulters. Many of the depositors are women, but there are also young people. The CDF has helped in finding the land for the building of the one room bank and the facilitation of funds to build the structure and for training required to manage a savings establishment. This support has been critical to the Association's growth. Today it is recognized as a model and has been visited by other estates, universities and banks to study its operations.



It was never just about the mushrooms.

A resident of the Miniwandeniya village that adjoins the Carolina estate, Siyaneris Anulawathi, is today a small business owner and the secretary of the Mushroom Growers Association in Ginigathhena. Discussions on helping women understand their rights encouraged Anulawathi to understand her own potential while trainings in mushroom growing and small business management helped set up her business. Anulawathi is not done yet. She feels strongly that she must be a role model to other women. Already sought out by others, she is proud of her accomplishments and the respect she has gained.

Greater interaction with mostly Tamil estate residents in the CDF has also changed her perceptions of them, "I now respect them, I know they are like me". In the past, relationships between the two groups had existed resulting in villagers such as Anulawathi's father protecting the estate workers from mobs during communal riots, but over time such relationships weakened as a result of limited interaction. Prior to the inclusion of the village in the CDF, the estate community assumed that the villagers were better off than them, but through discussions have realized that they at times are as neglected and underserved. Today the multi-ethnic CDF emphasizes that they don't see themselves as separate entities but rather as a collective unit. While much needs to be done and the obstacles will be many, the CDF believes that it will do just fine.

“
I had no job and was cut off from society, this experience has helped to open my eyes to the world and help me realize that life is passing me by.
”

*Siyaneris Anulawathi,
Grandmother, entrepreneur.
Miniwandeniya Village*



The benefits of working differently.

While seemingly inconsequential - for an industry with a history of strained and volatile worker-management relations - this is a sea change. Hierarchical in nature, worker-manager relations are often fraught with tension. Intermediaries such as trade union leaders often speak on behalf of communities, distancing workers from the management. Relations often become tense when worker/resident disputes arise. These are often expressed or resolved through go slow campaigns, strikes or chronic absenteeism, leading to losses and further worsening of relations. Transforming these relationships has been a critical part of CARE's work.

Through the CDFs, space has been provided for workers, managers and residents to amicably discuss and collectively resolve issues without the need for intermediaries. Changes in these relationships have also meant that the management and estate workers have begun talking about productivity issues and how the workers may contribute to the growth of the estate. While this has benefited the 'bottom line' for the estate workers, it has been critical in terms of workers feeling appreciated and valued for their contributions while also having a greater sense of ownership over estate growth and the potential dividends. While worker problems have not disappeared, how these are discussed and who is part of the discussions to resolve these has changed.

“
The most important result has been the transformation of relations between management and the workers.
”

“By being able to talk face to face in the CDF, both sides are beneficiaries. The workers understand our requirements better and can thus appreciate the position of the management on certain issues. Productivity has improved and labour issues are rare. From the workers' perspective, they have direct access to the management and can directly explain their needs and explore ways in which management can help them.”

*Alex Samuel,
Group Manager, Carolina Estate,
Watawala Plantations*

Respect.

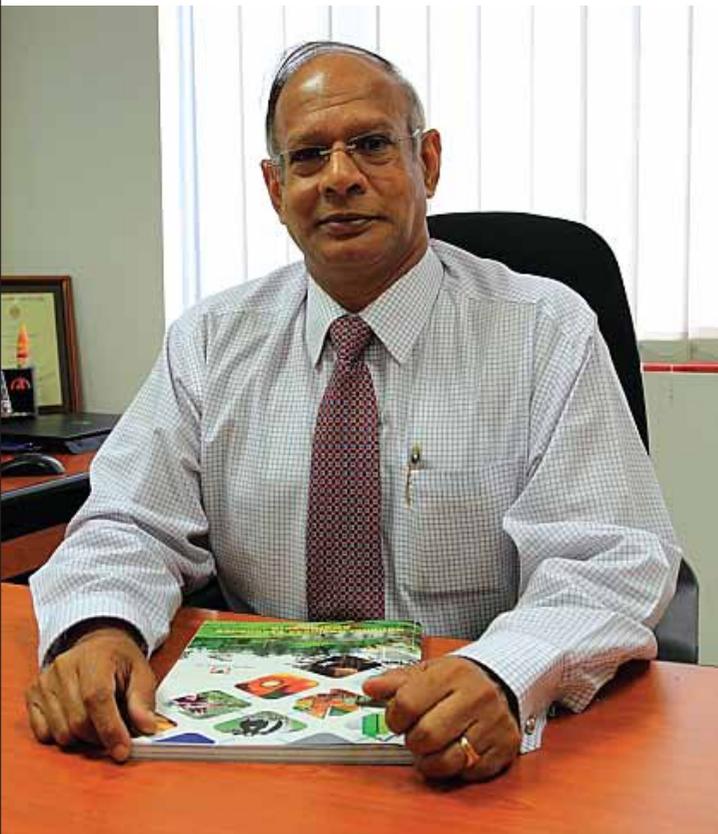
As a Deputy Manager of the Carolina estate, Prasanna was schooled in the traditional way of doing things. But he was struck by the way people were solving problems in the CDF. "In the past, we gave the solutions, there was no discussion. Now decisions are made together after discussion. People feel their ideas are respected and this gives them a sense of pride", says Prasanna. During an island wide strike, these relations were tested, "the workers in this division still came to work despite the risks, and after work we had our meals and tea together. This is very difficult to achieve".



“
This has challenged
me to change as a
manager and as a
person...”

“When I came to this estate, I was used to the conventional way of management where we dealt with the workers very formally and kept them at arm’s length. The CDF had already been established. Because of my conventional training, I did not initially like the idea, and was reluctant to participate. But soon I was struck by the way people were solving their problems. Now if I am transferred to another estate, I would like to replicate this process there.”

*Prasanna Premachandra,
Deputy Manager, Carolina Estate,
Watawala Plantations,*



Making Business Sense.

According to Dr. Seevaratnam, CARE's open mindedness and a truly bottom up approach that focused on workers' needs and effectively communicated these to the estate management, helped in facilitating processes that created win-win situations. For Dr. Seevaratnam the attitudinal change fostered was a critical first step that helped in fostering mutual respect and trust. This process of learning and mutual understanding in Dr. Seevaratnam's opinion has contributed to transforming the traditionally hierarchical management structure. As the Dr. Seevaratnam elaborated "this mutual respect has made possible a range of practical activities that led to improvements in various aspects of both worker wellbeing and the estates productivity". In April 2010, this change in perceptions was further solidified when the company decided to refer to managers and workers as 'associates' - thereby "institutionalizing the view of equal partners working towards common goals".

In an independent evaluation conducted by the project in 2010, found that the CDFs were saving managers roughly 16 hours per month in dispute resolution with their workforces resulting in a 25% increase in the number of hectares plucked by the same size workforce that was yielding a 10-20% increase in the volume of quality, marketable tea produced by an estate.

Wattawala Plantations is one of the 14 Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) in Sri Lanka that own the large majority of the tea plantations in the country. CARE's deliberate engagement with the RPC has been critical for ensuring commitment to the making the project objectives a reality and ultimately for the sustainability of the changes we and our partners seek to make.

“
Attitudinal change
has been at the heart
of the project's
success.”

*Dr. Dan Seevaratnam
Chief Executive Officer,
Wattawala Plantations*

Community Interface.

In addition to providing different groups with a space to interact with each other, the CDF's are also being increasingly used and recognized as interfaces, that communicate or negotiate with service providers such as Berendina. Estate development plans developed by each CDF are critical tools through which each community approaches and negotiates its needs with such groups, providing them with greater control and leveraging power.

Berendina Development Services is an independent non-profit Sri Lankan organization which, together with Berendina Micro Finance Institute, provides practical interventions to eliminate poverty of rural and plantation workers, primarily of Kegalle and Nuwera Eliya districts. Through private-NGO partnership, it also conducts programs to create income and employment opportunities for youth.



“

The CDF provides a neutral platform to bring all actors together including local government and NGO service providers. It is a place for them to meet representatives of the people they are meant to serve and to discuss their needs. The representatives in the CDF are free to speak as equals. People in Carolina estate have the confidence to talk to different people, and to express their needs. This is very different from other estates.

”

*Mohammed Raheem,
Manager - Plantation Program
Berendina Foundation*



Building partnerships.

The Plantations Human Development Trust was set up in 1992 for the purposes of improving the living conditions of the plantations community. The Trust is managed by a tripartite board comprising representatives of plantation companies, trade unions, and relevant government ministries. The Trust is a critical partner of the PCEP project. Entrusted with the mobilization of the community and provision of trainings, the Trust is also responsible for facilitating the setting up of a 'trust fund' that will be used by the CDFs in the 13 estates to sustain their operations. The Trust engagement in the project is also intended to serve the purpose of improving its own responsiveness to the needs of the community.

“
CARE, shares PHDT's vision of enhancing the dignity of estate workers through capacity building and dialogue. I feel that CARE has made progress towards demonstrating how this can be done to a very large extent through this project. It has been able to do so by adopting a truly grass roots approach to identifying and empowering stakeholder groups while simultaneously engaging the estate management early on in the process.
”

*Mr. Ranjith Ellegala,
Director General
Plantation Human Development Trust*

“
This is a significant change in terms of facilitating collective decision making. Now even the vulnerable groups have a voice in planning development.
As a result of the knowledge I have gained through this project, I am confident I can be an effective social mobiliser. I also understand better the ways in which marginalised communities can be helped. I feel I have reached beyond the traditional role of the social mobiliser, and beyond the PHDT mandate.
”

*Waratharaj Jothiraj,
Social Mobilizer
Plantations Human Development Trust*



Making good on a promise.

One of the core strengths of the CDF for the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) has been its diverse and balanced composition that includes, workers, management, non-worker residents and members of local communities living around the estates, local government officials and others service providers. As Mr. Perera explained previously the ETP engaged primarily with the management because of their difficulties to access the workers, eliciting perspective from the CDF's diverse membership has helped to authenticate results. With the CDF, the ETP has been able to develop questionnaires as part of its compliance monitoring system while CDF members have also been involved in the development and implementation of action plans with the ETP to improve social and environmental performance, in order to make sustainable change much more likely.

The ETP is a non-commercial alliance of over 20 international tea packers who share a vision of a thriving global tea sector that is socially just and environmentally sustainable. Established in 1997, as a result of a ground breaking decision to work together to promote sustainability in the sector, rather than competing on ethics, ETP works to monitor and improve the social and environmental conditions under which tea is produced, and to improve the lives of tea workers. In Sri Lanka CARE is one of many organizations that ETP collaborates with to achieve its goals.

“
This flattening of the worker – management relationship has infused the workers with a sense of belonging and ownership as equal partners in decision making in matter affecting their well being. This is an extremely difficult challenge in the estate sector and should not be underestimated.
”

*Dushy Perera
Regional Manager,
Ethical Tea Partnership - Sri Lanka*

Collective responsibilities.

For decades estates not only offered employment to the resident workers, they were also responsible for housing, educating and seeing to its workers and their families health needs. This relationship was codified in law and while these helped protect the workers prior to independence in 1948, they effectively obstructed the community from accessing state services enjoyed by the rest of the Sri Lankan population once independence was gained. The community's disenfranchisement in 1949 would further compromise their accessibility to services and entitlements afforded to their fellow citizens.

While the community is now recognized as citizens of Sri Lanka, and government services are provided, the unique nature of the plantations system has meant that outreach and the quality of state services is weaker than elsewhere. Thereby a central focus of the PCEP project has been to work closely with state structures to enhance community accessibility and the responsiveness of services.



“

The value of the CDF is the fact that people can deal with both the estate management and the government at the same time. This is a huge change for them, and we are able to identify the problems and needs of these people better. Having other development agencies in the CDF also helps government address issues that we alone cannot address.

”

*JM Jayantha Bandara
Social Service Officer,
Ambagamuwa Divisional Secretary Division.*



From the left standing –

- AAP Kumara Saparamadu (Driver)
- Sivalingam Sasikumar (Field Coordinator)
- Roshan Prashantha (Field Coordinator)
- Ananda Alahakoon (Project Director)
- FA Cader (Program Director)
- H.Gamini Kularathna (Driver)
- Abdul SM Faizal (Junior Finance Manager)
- Kothandapany Murugesh (Field Coordinator)
- Indralal Jayasundara (Gender and Training Coordinator)
- Viswanathan Sudeshkumar (M&E Officer)

Seated from right –

- Wimansa Soysa (Capacity Building Coordinator)
 - KTDA Wasantha Kumara (Driver)
 - Chamari Kulathunga (Strategic Support Coordinator)
 - DR Edirisinghe (Custodian).
- Absent – Chaaminda Jayasinghe (Teamleader).

The Team

For the team this project showed that to enable real change it takes time. When trying to change decades of entrenched ways of working and thinking, trust and acceptance must be fostered amongst a wide range of actors and stakeholders. To do this we needed to understand the diverse contexts we worked in to be able to collectively articulate a vision for change. We also recognized that we needed to become part of the people we were trying to influence. This cannot be done in the short term. It was a step-by-step approach where the next steps needed to be given time to become clear and to be accepted. It was also essential to not simply accept existing perceptions of what is and is not possible.

The committed support of key actors and stakeholders has been critical, without buy in of the plantation company management on each estate, or other key actors this process of change would not have been possible. To overcome their skepticism and reservations we needed to demonstrate the practical benefits of the project and how their involvement would make a difference. Most importantly the community members we worked with, needed to want to make a difference in their own lives and own this project. That is when real change became possible.

As a team, cohesion and mutual trust have been most important. We work as one family. We work through discussion and not through orders. Developing and working towards a shared vision of the change we sought to create was also a key factor in our effectiveness. Our different backgrounds and skills also became our strengths rather than lines of division.

A STORY OF CHANGE AND HOPE IN AN ESTATE COMMUNITY

THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE TEA



Plantation Community Empowerment Project



Implemented by CARE International-Sri Lanka and
the Plantations Human Development Trust



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This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

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CARE INTERNATIONAL - SRI LANKA

Established in Sri Lanka 1956, CARE is registered as a Non-Governmental Organization under the Voluntary Social Services Organization Act (No. 31 of 1980 as amended by Act No. 8 of 1998) with the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations in the Ministry of Social Services (Registration No. L45810).

CARE was first established in 1945 by a group of 22 American agencies to provide life saving support to survivors of World War II. Today CARE's scope and focus has changed considerably to reflect the global and local realities of its over 50 million beneficiaries living in over 70 countries. CARE's mission is to serve the poorest communities around the world, by strengthening capacity for self help, providing economic opportunity, delivery of relief in emergencies, influencing policy decisions at all levels and addressing all forms of discrimination. CARE works to address the root causes of poverty, marginalization and social exclusion. In Sri Lanka CARE initially began working at the invitation of the Government of Sri Lanka in 1950, with the Ministry of Health on maternal health and child malnutrition. Since then CARE's work in the country has evolved to better address the needs of the poorest and most marginalized in Sri Lanka. Today we work with a wide range of government, private sector and civil society partners in 9 districts and focuses on three main population groups: poor and landless farming families in the southern dry zone, poor and marginalized communities living in areas directly affected by the armed conflict in the north, north-central and east of the country and tea plantation residents living in the central province.



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