

The official quarterly newsletter of ADRA Sri Lanka

# Reflections

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## Selling Fish for a Living

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## EDITORIAL

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## MESSAGE

### Worth the Wait

Waiting... Waiting... Waiting. It's not something that most of us like to do. We get impatient when the internet is slow and it takes too long to open a webpage, or traffic is congested and it's taking longer than we planned to get somewhere. Most of us have gotten used to an instant society where we don't have to wait and we get what we want immediately.

So, it wasn't easy when our family planned and prepared to move to Sri Lanka, and then we had to wait. For over six months, we waited in Canada to receive our work visas and travel approval. At times we felt discouraged and wondered if we'd ever be able to come. But we continued to stay hopeful and pray that the visas would be processed in God's perfect time.

In Galatians 6:9, Paul encourages us with these words: "Let us not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up." God wants to pour down an immense blessing on us. It will come at the "right time" – His time – and we might have to wait for a while, but if we don't give up, the wait will be worth it!

And for us, the wait was definitely worth it! Even though we arrived in Sri Lanka in the middle of a lockdown, we've been so blessed to finally be here and to join the ADRA Sri Lanka family!

**Mai Whitty**

Programs Officer  
ADRA Sri Lanka





# COVER STORY



## Selling Fish for a Living

“ADRA helped us start our own business and gave us a new lease on life. I’m so thankful to them,” were the words of gratitude expressed by 62-year-old Munusamy Subramaniam.

Munusamy and his family are refugee returnees who are now settled in Koomankulam, a small, remote village in the Vavuniya district. They were forced to flee Sri Lanka in 1990 due to the civil war. He now lives with his wife and his youngest son and daughter. His other two children are now married and settled in India.

Back in India, they lived in a small, confined housing facility offered by the Indian Government in the Themalipattu camp. Munusamy describes his life as a refugee as one of the most challenging times of his life. He says that their lives are relatively better now.

Munusamy sold fish for a living while he was in India. He had been a fishmonger for more than a decade. Ever since he came back to Sri Lanka, he always wanted to start selling fish again but didn’t have the capital required to do so. His younger son and daughter are working. He and his wife, Thangaponne, survived on their children’s income even though they always wanted to earn a buck for themselves.

ADRA discovered them through the third phase of the Local Economic and Social Strengthening (LESS) project funded by the Australian Government’s Department of Home Affairs. Through the project, ADRA helped them start their fish selling business by providing them materials to build a shed to sell their fish and a freezer to preserve them. They successfully purchased fresh fish from wholesalers and sold it to more than 100 of their neighboring families. However, crisis struck when people stopped buying fresh fish due to the MV X-press Pearl oil spill. They have been selling dried fish ever since as an alternative and have been extremely successful. “We now earn a reasonable income to fulfill our household expenditure thanks to ADRA, allowing our children to save some money for themselves,” says Munusamy.

Over the years, through the LESS project, ADRA has supported the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of more than 5000 Sri Lankan refugees in India. The project contributes towards strengthening Refugee Reintegration Networks (RRNs), local government institutions, and other key stakeholders involved in the repatriation and reintegration process. Furthermore, the project provides livelihood support to refugee returnees and creates awareness regarding regular and irregular migration.



# STAFF TESTIMONIES

## Buddhika Olupeliyawa

Finance Director

"I joined ADRA as an intern back in 2008. Upon completing my internship program, I was promoted to Junior Accountant and subsequently became the Accountant, Senior Accountant, Chief Accountant, and finally the Finance Director. I also spent a year and a half serving internationally for ADRA in Sudan.

My journey with ADRA has been an amazing one. It has undoubtedly helped me build myself and has given me international exposure. ADRA is my second family. It played a pivotal part in my personal and spiritual growth and still does. It taught me how important it is to be committed to God's work and appreciate his many blessings. ADRA has also taught me work-life balance, which is something that all of us struggle with. ADRA has allowed me to balance work and family time.

ADRA's flexible working atmosphere motivates and encourages everyone to do their best. I'm grateful to God for giving me the opportunity to support communities in need through ADRA."

## NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### Mobile Awareness Fair in the Estates

A mobile fair, conducted from the 28<sup>th</sup> of September to the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, covered all 30 estate divisions under the ACCEND project. ADRA was able to create awareness about the importance of preventing the spread of COVID-19, with an emphasis on improving overall lifestyle to combat the disease. Health-related messages highlighted the importance of proper hydration, nutrition, rest, exercise, avoidance of harmful substances, and the importance of breastfeeding for infants, in addition to COVID-19 prevention protocol and vaccination. The project also provided high-quality, anti-bacterial, re-usable masks to all civilians who were not wearing masks during the mobile fair.



### Training of Trainers for Public Authorities



The third phase of the LESS project conducted six ToT training programmes for the staff of the divisional secretariats in Kilinochchi and Vavuniya districts. The training covered finance and debt management topics such as household finances, saving money, microfinance, revolving credit, and capital management. As an outcome, the trained participants will complete four community-level training programmes in each division. The LESS III project is funded by Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs and is implemented by ADRA Sri Lanka with the support of ADRA India.



# SPECIAL FEATURE



## BRAVE Project: Building Resilience & Vaccine Awareness

The COVID-19 pandemic has had global effects. In Sri Lanka, the impact of the virus has left businesses to close, workers being laid off, and at times, a shortage of beds in hospitals. ADRA's Building Resilience and Vaccine Awareness (BRAVE) project is working in collaboration with interfaith groups to raise awareness and increase access to vaccines in high-risk communities.

According to a study by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Health, most communities are taking measures to prevent the spread of the virus. However, the study also revealed that people are being misled due to widespread misinformation through social media platforms and there has been a gap in disseminating factual information. The BRAVE project is working with the interfaith groups to identify myths that people have embraced, de-bunk those myths, and provide them with correct information. The information will be shared through IEC means such as videos, social media posts, etc. BRAVE is also working with an Adventist youth group and the Ministry of Health to develop video messages using sign language specifically designed to reach the deaf community, a group of people that are often not included in traditional communication methods.

In recognition of Global Handwashing Day on October 15, the BRAVE project team spent the morning at the Nugegoda public market doing handwashing demon-

strations and sharing information on vaccine awareness. Those who took part in the demonstrations and has already gotten the vaccine received the ADRA re-usable mask. Word quickly spread through the market and many people came, eager to participate.

As part of the vaccine rollout, the project also distributed comfort kits to those receiving the vaccine. With the help of the interfaith groups, the project will identify 800 low-income families that are struggling to meet the standards of sanitary hygiene and provide them with sanitary packs that include items such as masks, soap, and sanitizer. The project will also be donating 3 ICU beds along with other medical equipment to hospitals to help with shortages. Lastly, in the final stages of the project, ADRA will provide business training and material support for small businesses that are struggling due to the pandemic, including a blind community that does sewing projects for their community.

As ADRA works to build resilience and bring vaccine awareness to Sri Lanka, the hope is that by establishing these interfaith groups within the community, they will already be in place and ready to respond in the future as other needs arise.





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