

*COVID-19 has both challenged us and provided us with opportunities. Women, youth and communities we work with have experienced significant hardships in the short term and face an uncertain future as they navigate pre and post COVID issues. COVID-19 further highlighted the existing marginalization and vulnerabilities. We have observed the leadership, motivation and sheer courage of people that stood up not only to help themselves, but their neighbors and those in the frontlines of the response.*

*COVID-19 has also reassured us that our mission for an inclusive diverse growth where women and youth are leading the way - remains even more relevant.*

*This issue highlights our ongoing work that confronted a pandemic and still managed to deliver on its promise and more!*

# Catalyzing Change

## October 2020

Within the last six months Chrysalis has been privileged to augment its Board of Directors by the inclusion of a remarkable professional who has reached the pinnacle of the corporate sector with sheer commitment and determination. With 31 years and counting at the Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC, Ms. Tamara Bernard is currently the Assistant General Manager, Corporate Banking at Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC.

It was great to catch up with Tamara on how she sees her role at Chrysalis ....

**"I'm very excited to be part of Chrysalis because I've heard great things about the way it is doing things differently. We need professionals to come together and think beyond profits and promote social impact".** Looking at things from the perspective of a banker she pointed out that **"in Corporate Banking too, ultimately, we talk of justice, equality and treating people better and if you are in a position of authority, you must influence such dialogue in a way that people see the purpose and the value associated. These processes of change are time consuming and you must be patient if you want to make real change happen. I find myself influencing such changes within the bank".** While working in this kind of environment with the passion she already has, she was delighted to receive the invitation to work with Chrysalis. **"I see it as an opportunity because I was looking to do something more to make a difference – not just in the board room, but more widely across the organization and in communities".**

It is her opinion that being part of an international organization like CARE International gives Chrysalis a great deal of credibility. **"I think we have a unique situation, where we have a history of being existent in the country, being known to have done good work, for having a good set of people to execute, and the world is out there wanting work done, so we just need to do it as close as possible to the ideal.**



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Ms. Tamara Bernard

As we talked about an ever-changing world and what Chrysalis' role would be Tamara was optimistic. **"I think the world is changing in such a way that the whole corporate ideology is changing to be people-oriented and socially responsible. This is why I see that there is a lot of opportunity for organizations like Chrysalis to use this opportunity to influence the corporate sector. Chrysalis is not a typical non-governmental organization because it brings development expertise and corporate ideologies together. I think this mix, brings more transparency, more depth to the whole process and outcomes. This hybrid identity will allow Chrysalis to make a big difference in the corporate world."**

As we wended up Tamara mentioned some key factors in running today's businesses.

**"If you look at the corporate sector which includes the banking sector, economics and bottom lines matter.**

If we are trying to influence their thinking and behavior, we must demonstrate the economic incentives in promoting social change. Since gender equality has now become a catchword, people are interested and are much more aware of gendered implications, which represent an opportunity to discuss social and economic benefits of promoting gender equality within the banking sector. Whatever the motive, it's critical to address gender-based discrimination even if it means taking small steps towards increasing representation of women and creating an enabling environment. The banks are also beginning to see the potential of women entrepreneurs and I believe there will be huge opportunities in the future."

## Business tackles COVID 19

*"The COVID-19 pandemic really proved that alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much more. I am privileged to be part of the team that helped form the Moneragala Business Consortium, composed of small and medium entrepreneurs who are continuing to sew face masks for frontline workers. Everything was done online and it was amazing how a rural committee who are not tech savvy was able to organize and come together as a team."*

- Jayalath Bandara,  
Project Coordinator,  
ENTERPRISE Project



Established on the 25th of January 2020, the Monaragala Business Consortium (MBC) consists of 35 active Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with the active involvement of 35 MSMEs. The role of the consortium is to create an enabling environment for micro and small businesses to have a common platform to raise their voices collectively, without the direct interference of the District Chamber. Usually led and managed by large-scale businesses and traders, the District Chamber does not fully comprehend the issues of the MSMEs and hence the voice of especially the MSMEs led by youth and women is not heard.

The idea behind the MBC was to build synergies between entrepreneurs and facilitate networking among all SMEs in the District and relevant stakeholders: to contribute to devising solutions; facilitate advocacy and lobbying in order to bring forth MSME related issues; support each other in terms of supply chain managements; value additions, resource and technology sharing; at times share risks in terms of emergencies by building solidarity between enterprises and raising a collective voice at different decision-making forums related to enterprise development.

Managed by a 5 member steering committee the MBC comprises thirty-five MSMEs identified in the Monaragala district by the EU funded IRD Enterprise Project, which addresses the needs of rural and estate communities in Uva and Central provinces, with a special focus on women and youth. The project's objective is to develop an environment which enables the promotion of entrepreneurship as a means to increase the income opportunities of its participants and contribute to the overall economic development of the district and the two provinces.



The COVID-19 crisis, however, has transformed the consortium. Today, it is running in an equal and shared way for the benefit of its members. The consortium has produced and distributed 6,500 face masks to hospitals, police stations and villages. Furthermore, the consortium was invited by the Governor of the Uva Province to discuss problems faced by SMEs and to generate solutions. Since this meeting, the consortium has been asked to provide a written submission to the Governor and the Uva Provincial Council. This is being followed through a consultative process with its members.

Despite all the challenges posed by COVID-19, several MBC members responded positively during this emergency: donating reusable face masks to the MOH offices, Post Offices, STF Camps, Police, Hospitals, and the Monaragala District Secretariat Office and providing safety kits to hospitals. In this venture, MBC members genuinely worked together giving their best within their capacities; some through financial means, some by sewing face masks, and others by contributing from their products to delivering them safely to different sectors in the country. The MBC was able to create a unique identity as a collective body within this small period due to their dedication, quality of products manufactured, and the agility they showed in walking an extra mile to deliver on time, according to the urgency of the need adhering to WHO and local security standards.

## Second wind for pandemic hit entrepreneurs



Tharshini is a Weaver who also runs a shop which sells woven products. She is a beneficiary of the WEAVE project which is funded by the H&M Foundation, through CARE Nederland and implemented by Chrysalis, with an intention to empower and support small and medium female entrepreneurs who were emerging from a three-decade ethnic conflict. Just as Tharshini was making good progress to reach her goals, the pandemic hit her enterprise hard to the point that her looms became silent and she had to temporarily shut down her business and lay off her employees.

Sharmini, the proprietor of STR Coir Products was on target to transport a load of bristles for brushes and mattresses to be used in products for export in another province, when the nation-wide COVID-19 induced curfew was imposed. With mobility and inter-district mobility constraints, her consignment never reached her buyers who then no longer needed the material. Due to the inordinate closure of the airport and lack of a large storing space, the coir went waste.

Anuja, proprietor of Akkachchi Food production in Kilinochchi, runs a spicy traditional porridge and food items business and also caters to parties. Since April she has had no orders, even though April is generally a festive month and the following months are also auspicious for marriages. The pandemic depleted the finances of her enterprise, forcing her to scale down her business operation.

The pandemic has thus, disproportionately affected the ventures of already vulnerable entrepreneurs at grassroots level like Tharshini, Sharmini and Anuja.

There are many more similar cases. In this background, it was decided to channel grant-cum-loans to the WEAVE entrepreneurs in order to enable them to restart and sustain their business operation without being interrupted. The stimuli were provided to all the employers to pay two weeks enumeration for their employees as 50% in cash and 50% in-kind so that the employees would return to work in the face of the new normalcy. This was, indeed, seen as oil to reboot their business, while adhering to the health directives through the supply of personal protective equipment.

Each beneficiary, as part of this programme was entitled to a total amount of Rs. 10,000. A cash pack of Rs. 5,000 and goods worth Rs. 5,000 were provided. These goods were purchased from other WEAVE entrepreneurs dealing with essential food items, which in turn improved the turnover of those businesses.

The cash paid to the employers is an interest-free loan which has a grace period of one-month, and has to be repaid within a period of six months. The entrepreneurs were mobilized to form a Savings and Credit Group at district level in response, to alleviate the COVID-19 instigated financial straits that they experienced. The members agreed to make a monthly deposit of Rs. 2000. The repayment of the COVID-19 loan is being channeled to the Savings and Credit Group. With the loan recovery and monthly savings deposit, the Savings and Credit Group can offer a loan of reasonable value to its members when required. This revolving fund will re-instill confidence in them, enable them to weather a crisis of this intensity in the long run and ensure them a chance of survival.

# “The long-term impacts of COVID-19 will affect the tea plantation communities significantly and support to mitigate the crisis now and in the future is critical.”

The COVID-19 pandemic effected different communities in diverse and multiple ways. In particular the communities working and living in the tea plantations continue to face multiple challenges given their socio economic and political isolation. As a result of the lockdown many youth who were employed in the city as daily wage earners came home increasing the burden on households. It is estimated that approximately 100 to 150 people returned to each plantation. These are members of plantation households who were not employed by the estate (approximately 35% in any given plantation) and have no means of income on the estates.

As a result many households reported difficulties in providing adequate food for everyone. The tea industry that is dependent on international trade is faced with an uncertain future, further implicating the future of people working and living on Sri Lanka’s tea plantations. In the wake of this crippling economic impact on the plantation communities, Chrysalis succeeded in securing funding from our generous donors Knorr-Bremse Global Care V.e and Twinings, together with CARE Member Partners, to support 8,140 families and 31,081 people living on 8 estates belonging to the regional plantation companies of Bogawanthalawa, Agarapathana, Maskeliya and Malwatta Valley.

Chrysalis has for several years been working in the tea plantations to empower communities and addressing industry related challenges through the ‘Community Development Forum (CDF)’, a platform that brings together all stakeholders to define solutions for worker and industry related challenges. The CDFs led the COVID-19 dry ration distribution in consultation with communities, upholding all safety and security protocols. The CDF is best placed to define mid and long-term solutions for this and future crisis.

*“Thank you so much Chrysalis for helping the community, the plantation people were fortunate enough to have jobs during Covid-19 but then the economic impact and rise in cost of living has impacted them badly. So the fact that you came forward with this ration pack without any disparity of worker or non-worker, is very welcome. As a company also, we value this support to the community”.*

- Dharshani Karthigesu,  
Manager-CSR, Employee Engagement & Welfare,  
Bogawantalawa Tea Estate PLC



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Ensuring transparency through documentation

*“During the pandemic the estate community suffered immensely. Especially due to the loss of jobs of the non-workers who mostly work in Colombo and nearby towns. During such a crisis this dry ration distribution gave me a chance to reach out to the people, to identify their needs and how to work together with the workers as well as non-workers to bring sustainability to the estate both financially and socially.”*

Manoj Ramadas  
group manager, Aislaby Estate



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Respite for everyone



Following protocols for safety

***“Chrysalis, understood the need of the people during this crisis situation and distributed dry rations to all households worth millions. This is the only time we received such a large donation of this nature. Staff, workers and I are grateful for your support. Even now, people mention this initiative/support given to them and ask me to convey their heart felt gratitude. Thank you, Chrysalis for your hard work and dedication”***

**- Mr. Mudannayake,  
Manager of Strathspey estate**



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Knowledge is Power

***“ I was happy to see that this book is written in Tamil. We often receive booklets like this but most of them are in either English or Sinhala. The book is informative and provides details of the institutions providing services to us. Especially as women, this book contains information where we can complain if we undergo any form of abuse”.***

**- Gaureshwary (24 years)  
Nayabedda Estate, St. Catherine Division**



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Keeping the one metre distance

With the huge implications brought on by the pandemic, the dry ration distribution is only a tiny respite as the pandemic has now raised its head again. Chrysalis also partnered with IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems), to share information on Covid-19 preventive methods, misconceptions, essential services to contact during an emergency/Covid, as well as key state services and their contact details for future reference.



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Safety first



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Explaining the contents of the IFES booklet



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Many came amidst difficulties to collect their dry rations

# CHRYSLIS ADVISORY SERVICES

## A Feminist Review of CARE's VSLA Groups

Zainab Ibrahim and Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala of Chrysalis together with support from the CARE International Secretariat and CARE USA, lead the Life Free From Violence outcome (Gender based violence) area outlined in the 2020 Programme Strategy of CARE.

In January 2020, Jayanthi and Zainab were invited by the West African Regional Management Unit of CARE, together with colleagues from CARE Niger, CARE Cote D'Ivoire, CI Secretariat, CARE Norway and CARE USA to carry out a feminist exploration of a signature programme in West Africa - The 'Village Savings and Loans Assistance' (VSLA).

The VSLAs were initially set up in Niger in 1990 - 30 years ago. Since then this model was adopted by many other countries that CARE works in. However, over the years, the success of this programme has only been measured in relation to financial and economic aspects.

The goal was to try and understand if the VSLAs are 'Gender Transformative' and to capture not only the economic impact but also the socio-political impact that the VSLAs were having on these women. The team was also keen to find out and document the ways in which the VSLA groups were actually creating spaces for women to come together and build their agency, help with relations in their family and community and challenge patriarchal structures.

A feminist exploration of the VSLAs begins from the position that, if women and girls are at the heart of all the work, then programmes need to be aligned in a way that recognize that unless their rights are centered in this effort, and the relations and structures that discriminate against them are proactively challenged, we will not reach meaningful outcomes. This includes ensuring that existing power hierarchies are not reinforced or reproduced and that women's power and agency are actively raised and prioritized at all levels.



The Curiosity Collective in discussions with CARE Niger (left) and CARE Cote D'Ivoire (right) teams, together with Women's Ministry officials, VSLA Members, women's rights and LGBT rights activists. January 2020.

The team prepared a report which captures all the observations and recommendations which will feed into future VSLA programming guidance and practice across the CARE Confederation.

# Community Voice. Community Action. Access to basic rights!

Providing community WASH Infrastructure and Services to vulnerable and remote families in Uva and Central Province, Sri Lanka.

*Funded by Knorr-Bremse Global Care and CARE and implemented by Chrysalis, this project focused on providing essential water and sanitation infrastructure to marginalized communities, who are unable to access these themselves, due to remoteness of location, economic status and lack of awareness of services and rights. It also provided basic training on WASH-related aspects and best practices.*

*Chrysalis coordinated the implementation through two forms of community development bodies which have been established through past or on-going programmes. These bodies – Praja Mandala (PM) for villages and Community Development Forum (CDF) for tea plantation communities – have been set up to identify and address the needs of the community through participatory decision-making processes.*

*"This project was a great opportunity to learn and have a bottom-up approach to development. Our Pradeshiya Sabha needs to adapt this process and focus on strengthening the partnership with the people. It is the people that selected the beneficiaries, designed and implemented their projects. They were committed to complete the projects on time. We used to think that being participatory in community projects will create problems, but this WASH project completely changed our view and now we understand that people's participation in decision making and planning proved to be a strength that leads to success. We hope to continue to apply what we experienced from this project in our future work at the Pradeshiya Sabha".*



Nalani Kulasekara  
Development Officer  
&  
Priyadarshanee Rajapaksha  
Community Development  
Officer,  
Poojapitiya Pradeshiya Sabha

*"During my 27 years of government service, I cannot recall a single event in which I was part of deciding, planning and implementing a common activity, as we did in this village water supply scheme".*

72 year old Roy Jayasooriya, a retired Gramaseva Niladhari expressed his appreciation for this project from a different perspective.

*"The uniqueness of this water project are the building skills of the villagers to undertake the operation and maintenance of the water scheme by themselves. A water scheme built 18 years ago collapsed due to pure neglect because the community did not participate in designing and building the old scheme"*



G.D. Swarnamali,  
President,  
Janasetha Praja Mandalaya

Swarnamali is an invisible force with a passion to work for the community and she was able to drive the whole process with the fullest support from the community.

*"The learning and training we got as members of the Praja Mandalaya is the secret of the success of this water scheme. The training received on Participatory Rural Appraisal, communication and record keeping was of immense use for us to write our project proposal. The sense of ownership nurtured by this project is so strong that the community contributed for the project more than expected. I have no doubt about the sustainability of the project as they have already put their own operation and maintenance system, for sustainability".*



Roy Jayasooriya,  
President,  
Watagommana Praja Mandalaya

*"Fortunately, I had secured membership of our Praja Mandalaya about three years ago and I was overjoyed when I was informed that I would get a toilet under a new project. I attended all the meetings that educated us on keeping toilets clean and the hygiene practices that should be adopted. These sessions broadened our knowledge of hereto unknown important health practices" – Nayana, mother of two*