



# SCOT NEWSLETTER

BULLETIN OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF TAMIL SPEAKING PEOPLE  
Registered Charity No: 274499

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[www.scot-uk.org.uk](http://www.scot-uk.org.uk)

## From the President

First, and foremost I would like to wish all SCOT members and well wishers a very Happy and a Healthy New Year. Let us all hope and pray that this New Year will bring a lasting solution to the suffering endured by our people in the North and the East.

My promise to you is that SCOT will carry on diligently with the yeoman service our founding fathers and their successors have been involved in for the past 35 years, ever since SCOT was set up immediately after the 1977 riots. Over the years we have established ourselves with our partners in Sri Lanka as a very reputable and dependable charity that helps the needs of our under privileged brethren consistently. We have always been seen by everyone as an organisation that has survived all these years, with absolute commitment towards our cause and also totally neutral from involving in politics.

I would like to mention very briefly about SCOT activities. The primary objective of SCOT is, according to its constitution, relieving of poverty and uplifting of Tamil speaking people. This entails undertaking of project activities and funding actions for which SCOT is well known for and also promoting the recognition of

human rights, inter-racial justice and equality.

On the first category, that is, on supporting project activities and funding, SCOT has always worked with our partner organisations that are close to their local communities; this is so to the present day. And SCOT funding policy is always in keeping with the needs and priorities of the community in the North and East; and application of available resources to where the need is greatest, and on the basis of sound value for money.

During the war in the North and East, and for a short period after the end of that war a significant part of SCOT effort was concentrated in helping the affected people to keep body and soul together. This focus has gradually shifted during the last couple of years towards new needs and priorities. These include income generating projects for war-widows families, and education and up-keep of Vanni ex-IDP camp children in prominent colleges in the North and of course our traditional support to needy and vulnerable people and children continues all the time.

With regard to the second category I mentioned above, namely promoting the recognition of human rights, inter-racial justice and equality, we used to be actively involved in these activities in the early days but not so in recent times. This was drawn attention to at our Annual General Meeting in November 2012. At that meeting, there was a lively discussion on the

matter, and the consensus that emerged confirmed a distinct desire that SCOT should be actively involved. The SCOT General Council has made serious note of this and will shortly explore how best SCOT can get involved in these matters once again. If you or anyone you know would like to get involved in this process please do not hesitate to contact myself or our General Secretary via email.

## Membership drive and future leadership

For any charity organisation to be effective, it needs a sound base of members supporting its causes. We recognise that and we are continuously looking out for people of the community who subscribe to our aspirations and our charitable objectives to join SCOT, work with us and to lead us in the future. I would be extremely grateful to all our members if they could each get at least one more member to join us. This will be the best gratitude you can show to our community. You can download a membership form from our website and forward it to my home address 69 Lincoln Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 7RH.

**Forthcoming fundraising event - 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013  
'Swagatham'  
Bharatanatyam recital by  
Miss Lakshmi Kuhendran  
at the Bhavan**

SCOT is planning to stage the above quality event in order to help fund two of our projects. The Mangayar Mandram groups formed by Hindu Council of Sri Lanka to train and fund war widows livelihood projects in the North and East and also fund the Nuffield school for the deaf and blind in Kaithady.

This dance program will be performed by Miss Lakshmi Kuhendran who is a disciple of Sri Prakash Yadagudde and also the granddaughter of one of our Past Presidents, Mr N S Kandiah (1985-1987). A chip of the old block, this young lady is a shining example to our younger generation to take on the responsibility of helping our community in the future.

Young Lakshmi, the versatile SL Tamil dancer, has during the last 4-5 years given a number of recitals at the Bhavan and at other famous institutions, including the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and at a World Dance Festival in Spain. By invitation, she also performed at the State of Karnataka Indian Independence Day celebrations in 2011 for the audience of the State's Chief Minister.

She is well acclaimed by various college students unions of the London University. She is currently a final year medical student at Imperial College, London. The full-house annual charity show (about 700 students attended), which she project managed very successfully on behalf of Imperial College Tamil Students Association last year, is a testimony to this. I believe the net proceeds from that event was donated to Tamil charities based in Sri Lanka.

Kindly support Lakshmi and the causes of SCOT by attending this event that is well worth your time. Contact a GC member for tickets or call me on 07958 907 634.

*Fabian P Swampillai*

## Editorial

SCOT Newsletter is not a new phenomenon. It was published regularly from the late 1970s to late 1990s as a hard copy and distributed to members mainly by post. Its function was not just to inform and update members about SCOT events and activities but assumed the role of commenting on policy issues and laying bare how SCOT, as a charity organisation, set about achieving its objectives. This is well illustrated by a couple of extracts from a copy of the newsletter of that era. SCOT Newsletter of April 1994 described SCOT method of working by saying: % places great emphasis on debate, consensus and accountability and members with different political inclinations and beliefs come together with a common objective of working to alleviate poverty and pave the way for a sound base for social and economic upliftment of their fellow people+. The same issue of the publication, while commenting on a SCOT initiative of that time commented: %While proudly adhering to its non-political status, SCOT has matured into an organisation, which has not hesitated to speak out on issues concerning the protection of human rights+. In its heyday, SCOT Newsletter was popular with its readership and much sought after by members and non-members alike.

It is difficult to say precisely how its demise came about. Difficulties of production and distribution were certainly a problem. Increasing popularity of email in the 1990s could have persuaded those involved in the production and distribution of the publication to

abandon the typescript method of production in favour of adapting the electronic medium and somehow the intended change may not have happened as planned.

Whatever the reason for ceasing publication in the late 1990s, the present decision to re-launch the Newsletter is a welcome one. The plan envisaged in the past to use the electronic medium in the production and distribution process is feasible now; this method is convenient, quick, efficient and cost effective. At present the circulation need not be confined to the United Kingdom. It could now effectively reach out to its supporters and well wishers wherever they may be and it is envisaged the Newsletter will play a useful role in the dissemination of information to SCOT partner organisations in Sri Lanka. The intention at present is to publish the Newsletter at least biannually to start with.

It is hoped the Newsletter would play a valuable role in affording opportunities to members and well-wishers to bring fresh ideas into the open, to encourage discussion and debate, and help achieve consensus. Encouraging proposals aired at SCOT AGM in November 2012 that the organisation should engage robustly on matters like promoting the recognition of human rights, inter-racial justice and equality is clear evidence that the members have the will for positive action in this respect. A Newsletter with wider circulation will be a useful tool for such action. The intention at present is to publish the Newsletter at least biannually to start with.

SCOT initiative to re-launch the Newsletter and the interest and enthusiasm of the members involved in this worthwhile venture is admirable. No doubt all members, friends, well-wishers and beneficiaries of SCOT will

warmly welcome the reappearance of SCOT Newsletter. Long may it continue in the service of the community.

## SCOT and Human Rights

The Tamil community in the Vanni and other regions of the North East of Sri Lanka has suffered immense trauma and suffering beyond imagination over the last four years and more. It will take many years for our brethren to recover from the violence leading up to the end of the war in 2009 and the subsequent displacement and / or incarceration of hundreds of thousands of them. The Tamil Diaspora watched, more or less helplessly, as the international community stood by, at best oblivious to, but by some accounts tacitly supporting, the violence.

Since the end of the war, despite some pressure from various international Governments and other international organisations, hardly any progress has been made by the Sri Lankan Government in investigating the allegations of Human Rights violations that took place and the events that led to over 40,000 civilians losing their lives. Various Diaspora organisations have launched reasonably successful campaigns calling on the international community to put pressure on the Sri Lankan Government to investigate these violations and to restore normality to the war torn areas by allowing civilians to return to their traditional homes and rebuild their lives as far as that is possible.

Meanwhile, the people of the Vanni, and elsewhere continue to suffer, every day, unable to return to their homes because they are prevented from doing so, or where they do return, struggling to eke out a meagre living. Families have been shattered, parents without children, brothers without sisters or orphaned.

Understandably, all they ask for at this stage is to live in relative safety and security, to make a living and slowly recover somewhat from their suffering. They face many obstacles and threats from the security forces, outsiders as well as people from their own community and even the weather.

What is SCOT's role in this dire situation? We are a UK Registered charity since 1977 with the primary constitutional objective to provide relief of poverty and social upliftment of Tamil speaking people and in furtherance of this, amongst other activities, promote the recognition of human rights, inter racial justice and equality. There is no doubting our achievement of our primary object. SCOT has had success in raising funds and supporting many projects that are pivotal to its above mentioned primary object in Sri Lanka for over 35 years. We clearly need to do even more in the present time of grave need. Raising significantly greater funds, coordinating on the ground with recipients and other organisations in order to facilitate these projects, and providing other support are paramount to achieving our primary object.

However, many members of the Tamil community, and a number of SCOT members, ask for demonstration of our role in promoting Human Rights and inter racial justice. The need to address the Human Rights of our brethren has arisen on a number of occasions in the past years and SCOT has been involved in a number of initiatives in this area in the past. In the light of perceived conflicts of interest between our charitable aims and potential accusations of political interests, over the past 10 years or so, SCOT has taken a very low key approach to campaigning on Human Rights issues.

Is this the correct position for SCOT to continue to adopt in the current environment? Human Rights, the inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being, are being ignored blithely and with impunity in the Vanni and elsewhere. Fundamental freedoms as described in the UN charter are denied to large numbers of Tamils. Arrests, detention without trial, torture and unlawful killings abound. The people of the Tamil regions live in subjugation in a militarised land. There clearly is a need for us to change our stance!

However, what is the most effective stance for SCOT to adopt in addressing the Human Rights needs of our people? Should it be SCOT's role to join the pressure groups campaigning for investigations in to the long list of recent past Human Rights abuses? Should we join pressure groups attending UNHRC meetings and influence foreign Governments? Should we join the campaign against the arrests and detention of University students in Jaffna? Many insidious institutions associate HR activities with politics. Even though we are not political, there is a danger that we will be politicised if we enter this well justified campaign without due consideration. Moreover, there are other very successful organisations within our Diaspora who are very effective and active at drawing attention to the above who we could support tacitly or personally.

On the other hand, we could consider putting our primary object of poverty relief and social upliftment at the centre of our aims and selectively engage in Human Rights issues in an advocacy role rather than in campaigning roles. In doing this we would involve ourselves in specific activities and use our good offices to meet influential persons and

help them understand the Human Rights challenges that the even more disadvantaged in Sri Lanka face. The widows and orphans, the elderly, and others marginalised minorities are amongst the many we could represent we could represent quietly and effectively through our advocacy. While the high profile Human Rights issues continue there are thousands suffering who don't have the privilege of profile. Let us campaign for their natural, fundamental rights.

The greatness of SCOT is that we can have these discussions and arrive at a consensus whilst agreeing to disagree with some!

*Mr. Sri Srikanthan  
(Past President 2004-2006)*

## Our projects News

### 'Mangayar Mandram' (MM)

After completing four Mangayar Mandrams successfully in the East, SCOT is involved in setting up five more Mandrams in the North and East in 2013 helping the war widows set up their livelihood projects.



Partnering with Hindu Council of Sri Lanka (HCSL)

### Development Strategy of MM

HCSL staff motivates widows to form self-help groups. About 20 women join together to form a Mandram. Since March 2011 the Mandrams have been applying micro-financing concept for generating some of the needed funds for their ventures.

Each member pays Rs 10 / week into its Mandram's savings account, and committee uses this to provide short-term, small loans to members to help them start or operate any livelihood activity.

Each member credits Rs 50 / month into her savings account, to pay for any livelihood activities requiring higher investments in the future.

Council staff give organisational support to groups, and when they reach the required competency HCSL gift the needed machinery to start the chosen ventures.

HCSL provided following machinery free of cost to Mandrams  
Grinders (wet or dry) to produce batters (for thosai / iddli / vaddai mix - breakfast packets), short-eats, rice flour, chilli powder, etc;

Sewing machines (normal or embroidery work) to make dresses, blouses & other garments.

HCSL gave interest free, short-term loans, up to Rs 5000, to some members as seed money to start their ventures.

It is now negotiating with Peoples Bank and Hatton National Bank, to pave the way for the members to secure longer term loans.



### We value your views and opinion

If any member wants to contribute to our future Newsletters kindly forward your content to the President.

## General Council 2012-2013

(To contact us please visit our website)

President . Fabian P Swampillai

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## Our future correspondence

If you prefer in the future to receive SCOT correspondence via email rather than by post, please let the President know by contacting him on his email [fswampillai@yahoo.com](mailto:fswampillai@yahoo.com)

This will save cost and time in reaching you regularly.