



# SCOT NEWSLETTER

BULLETIN OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF TAMIL SPEAKING PEOPLE  
Working for our people since 1977  
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[www.scot-uk.org.uk](http://www.scot-uk.org.uk)

## From the President

The SCOT General Council and I have great pleasure in inviting you, along with your family and friends, to our '**Tamil New Year Lunch and Lecture**' on **Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2014**, at Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, Chiswick, London W4 4JN.

This event will be a good forum for all our members to participate and raise their views on the direction we should take in terms of alleviating poverty and uplifting our people after the long drawn out war that lasted over 30 years. I will be pleased if you could make an effort to attend.

We have made arrangements for an eminent speaker for the day, who will address us on the current human rights and future of Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka. Details are attached. The lecture will be followed by a brief discussion session

During the war and in the immediate aftermath it was felt prudent that SCOT should support our brethren who have been left scarred and homeless. A decision was taken at that time not to support capital intensive projects but to concentrate on providing relief to refugees and their rehabilitation. Five years have gone by and the needs of our people have shifted, thus calling for a strategic re-think of SCOT's future funding of projects.

The current need of our people is different to what it was immediately after the war. They are struggling to support themselves due to the rural economy having gone out of reach of the rural people. We also find

that a significant number of our women are disadvantaged and require special assistance and training in livelihood activities to become better breadwinners.

We feel that if we can connect our people to the best technical know-how and make them able to manage their own businesses better, then it will be of long term benefit to the whole population in the North and East. To this end SCOT is continuing its work with Hindu Council of Sri Lanka to set up the third phase of their Mangayar Mandram, a livelihood support programme in Mullaitivu. The first two Mandrams are running successfully in the Eastern Province.

SCOT is also planning to commence soon a demo farm project in the Vanni to provide innovative ideas to our farmers, so that they can achieve above average yields from their crops. More on this is given in the article below. This has been tried and tested in Tamil Nadu and proved to be a great success in almost trebling the yield of fruit, vegetable and cash crops per acre.

Another project SCOT feels very strong about is the repair and renovation of a students' hostel at the Central College in Pudukudiyiruppu. This will be a very worthy project that can deliver a lasting benefit to the orphans and destitute children who need a roof above their heads to continue their education. I urge all those who want to help our people to come forward and grab this opportunity of being able to fund through SCOT. However small your contribution may be, it is most welcome. Every little will count and we can also receive a

tax credit of 25% from your contribution from the Inland Revenue. More details on this project and on how to contact us are also given below.

Attached is a request from our youth committee chairman Mas. Sayon Rudran. for our younger generation to join hands and support our people at this critical time. I am certain you will encourage your children and other friends to come forward and join our youth committee.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

Fabian P Swampillai  
President

## Editorial

### Socio-economic development in the North

At a conference in Colombo recently on *Post War Socio - Economic Development and Constructive Engagement with Sri Lankan Diaspora*, the Northern Provincial Council Chief Minister, Hon Justice C V Wigneswaran delivered the keynote address. The theme of the address was *Accelerated Provincial Development: The Way Forward*. He expressed the view that Development in the North has been impeded by policy failures and specific problems. The failure to be people centric and attempt top-down approaches to development is a major policy failure. He went on to say that development must go hand

in hand with the needs and aspirations of the people who are destined to benefit by it - not foisted by forces from outside. But the decision-making process currently in place (in the Northern Province) with regard to socio-economic development is devoid of participation by the People's Representatives.

He stated that no problem can be addressed properly without understanding the problem in its entirety and outlined a glimpse of the prevailing ground situation in the Northern Province, and what he considered as "meaningful and pragmatic steps that should be taken to rebuild the Northern Province on the principles of equity and sustainable development".

He cited Amartya Sen, an economist and Nobel laureate, in stating that freedom is at once the ultimate goal of social and economic arrangements and the most efficient means of realising general welfare.

Recounting the hardships endured by the people of the Northern Province, the Chief Minister stated that a large number of IDPs are yet to be resettled in their places of traditional habitation. Refugees languishing in camps in South India since 1983 have almost lost hope of repatriation. Similarly, a significant number of detainees under the PTA remain incarcerated not knowing their future. All of these have deleterious effects not only on the persons concerned, but their families and the Northern society itself.

He stated that "The rural economy has gone out of the reach of the rural people. Absence of basic infrastructure for the revival and development of the economy, the numerous restrictions on the locals on fishing and the deliberate importation of Southerners to fish in areas where locals have been fishing for centuries, all impede development".

And continued "As we attempt to forge a way forward, we ought to address the political, humanitarian, human rights and rule of law dimensions of the post war context. There is an imperative to lay the foundation for the people of the North and East to embark on a development path in keeping with their needs and aspirations within the sphere of democratic governance. This means there is an immediate and urgent need to set about demilitarizing the society at large, including reduction of armed forces, disbanding of paramilitary apparatus, demilitarization of civilian institutions and curbing militarization of economic life of people of the North and East".

On the positive side, he stated that there had been considerable infrastructure development undertaken by the State so far in the North - the opening of macadamized roads, the gradual opening of the Railway presently up to Kilinochchi, the extension of the railway lines further into the Peninsula presently up to Chavakachcheri, and many other local projects with the help of International Donors. But unfortunately none of these have reached our people in the real sense. When the roads were constructed hardly any locals were employed. A people-centric approach would have prioritized the needs of the people, it would have

employed locals in the workforce, it would have taken into consideration the specific context of the post-war scenario of the North.

Democratic freedom contributes towards national security. The aim should be to attain both - not use national security as an excuse to deny fundamental freedoms.

Explaining how this policy failure translates into problems, he said "The Army engages in large scale agriculture and commercial activities, including the operation of golf courses and tourist resorts. This presents a barrier for the entry of civilians into those areas and forces out competition from civilians. Even the tea kiosks on your way down A9 have been opened by Army men or their relatives or proxies. The military presence directly and indirectly leads to numerous vices ....".

"The Army directly interferes in the provincial administration by influencing and participating in the decision making process of the various sectors of the administration. In the North-East of the Peninsula over 6000 acres of lands have been taken over by the Army and they have completely destroyed the habitations of the locals ...."

"They cultivate the lands of the unfortunate displaced in the Wannu and sell at a price the produce from the people's own lands to the very same owners. More and more lands are being grabbed, especially in the Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and

Mannar Districts with the backing of the Armed Forces”.

By way of resolving these problems his suggested way forward:

“There is a critical need for a context specific policy framework. The policy failures I referred to at the outset have to be reversed. In other words, a commitment to an inclusive approach to development, a focus on the specific needs of the people and a balanced approach towards freedom and security has to be ensured”.

“An inclusive approach will start with the full implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and proceed apace with the stalled political discussions. Regretfully, the 18 rounds of talks that were held between the Government of Sri Lanka and TNA leadership during the period 2011 and 2012 led to naught but disappointment”.

“Focusing on the specific needs of the people means understanding the context and taking cognizance of the mandate given to elected representatives”.

“Unfortunately, when we are attempting to give expression to the voice of our people, as mandated, we are now being forced to carry on with the Government’s agenda for development along national policies”.

He concluded his address by making a six point request to his audience, whom he referred to as the academic community and the intelligentsia of society.

The six-point request included:

Making the Southern polity understand the needs of the North and East in the post-war context, countering false media propaganda by explaining that the Northern polity is committed to non-violence and a political settlement within a united Sri Lanka, showing responsible leadership on critical issues of national importance, promoting and supporting the Rule of Law, democracy and fundamental freedoms, fostering climate of cooperation between provincial councils and central government and finally, persuading Governments to keep their promises and commitments.

Let us hope the Chief Minister and the Northern Provincial Council will soon succeed in beginning to achieve these goals for the benefit of the people of the Northern Province.

## Our Project News

### Project to Enhance Farm Income (Demo Farm)

**1. Objective:** To promote the adoption of a simple, “small-farmer business model” based on improved farming practices and appropriate technologies among local farmers in north and east Sri Lanka through demonstration of the possible benefits as shown in Demo Farms operated by the Project.

**2. Improved Technologies:** Since 2005 Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), with financial support from the State Government, has been promoting the adoption by small farmers of its Precision Farming Model that incorporates a number of the university’s tried and tested improved farming practices /

technologies. The Model, which relates to cultivation of vegetable, fruit and cash crops, has the potential to more than treble the net income per acre. After seeing the financial successes of a few farmers who had initially taken up this Model, tens of thousands of farmers in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra and Kerala have adopted the Model, introducing great positive impacts on the rural economy.

### 3. Strategy for Enhancing Farm Income:

Though a few farms are operating in Vanni, where high yielding seeds and drip irrigation are used, the yields they obtain are much less than those achieved in Tamil Nadu – probably due to inadequate understanding and incorrect application of the appropriate technology. After a detailed study of the Precision Farming technology, including a personal visit to TNAU by a professional SCOT member, the GC agreed that the TNAU Model should be adopted, with necessary modifications to suit local soils and agro-climatic conditions in different parts of the North and East to obtain much higher financial return per acre.

The proposed strategy is, in Phase 1, to establish a 2.0 acre Demo Farm in each district and formulate the business model that is financially, socially and environmentally viable, and lends itself to be replicated in subsequent phases by thousands of local farmers in different areas. To achieve this, a Vanni farmer has to undergo short term training in Precision Farming from a suitably qualified farmer in Tamil Nadu. In Phase 2 provide help to those farmers who, having seen for themselves the high yields and lower production cost in a Demo Farm, come forward to adopt the business model in their respective farms.

### 4. Phase I - Setting up First Demo Farm:

Considering the high economic improvement this would bring to the North and East, SCOT

has discussed this Project with Tamil Diaspora organisations having similar interest. Last February a study team of three specialists SCOT, International Sustainable Livelihood Foundation (ISLF) of the US and Assist Rehabilitation & Renaissance (Assist RR) of the UK visited Vanni, did field assessments and obtained on lease a good 2.0 acre plot inside a SECURE property in north Vavuniya to establish the first Demo Farm.

The Project received the blessing of the Provincial Agric Minister. The team has set up a project management unit in Sri Lanka, which is expected to have technical support from the Agric Faculty of Jaffna University. An educated farmer with experience in horticulture has been selected and will be trained in Tamil Nadu.

**5. Financial Assessment of First Demo Farm:** The total cost to set up the Demo Farm and operate it is estimated at Rs 1,150,000, (£5,500) Of this, Rs 600,000 is given as a LOAN for providing a drip irrigation system (capital investment), the loan to be returned when sufficient income accrues to the Demo Farm through sale of produce during the three year lease period. It is estimated that the net income (profit) would be Rs 775,000 each year.

**6. Project Implementation and Monitoring Challenges:** Various potential challenges and risks associated with project implementation have been identified and the project study team has dealt with them. Also, the team has identified specific indicators to monitor the progress during implementation and assess the Project's sustainability.

**7. Project Funding:** SCOT has the primary responsibility to provide the needed funding for this Project. SCOT GC has approved £5,500 to fund the first Demo Farm. SCOT will have to find 22,000 more to fund another four Demo Farms in 2015. In addition, it will have to collect a further £60,000 during 2015-16 to provide short-term loans to 30 small farmers who come forward to adopt the "small-farmer business model".

## Are you able to help us?

### Puthukudiyiruppu Central College Hostel Repair & Renovation

Children of Mullaithivu District who lost either both their parents, or one of them, are now living with their grandparents, relatives or in hostels in Jaffna. Most of these children live / study on grants provided by charities. Some of these children are exploited by their guardians, who spend the grants for their own needs and even on alcohol.

The grants would be effectively spent if the children could live in school hostels, which would be conducive to studies. Caring relatives would have liked to visit the children in Jaffna hostels more often but travel costs prevent it, while some of the children find the challenges of Jaffna living, for long periods away from their caring relatives, too much to cope with. Further, the existing rules on admission to universities, including standardisation of marks and district quota, would be disadvantageous to these children if they were to sit their O/Ls in Jaffna.

Currently, schools in Mullaithivu District have no hostels. Mullaithivu District Educational Development Trust Fund, headed by the GA Mr Vethanayagan, suggested that hostels for the senior children be provided in Mullaithivu. Though, Lycamobile has laid a foundation to build a hostel at Mulliyavalai Sivanantha Vidyalayam, its capacity is inadequate.

It was therefore suggested by Mullaithivu District Educational Development Trust Fund, headed by GA Mr Vethanayagan, that a hostel facility should be provided in Mullaithivu. Lyca mobile has already laid a foundation for building a hostel at Mulliyavalai Sivanantha Vidyalayam, which won't be able admit all these number of children. SCOT has agreed through our partner organisation Assist RR to find funds to renovate a building at PTK Central College and convert it

into a hostel. Photos of war damaged buildings of Central College are given below. It is possible to repair and convert one of these buildings into a hostel. The college has agreed to provide a building and assist the children to learn at their college.

The cost of this project is currently being estimated and would be provided within a few days. We anticipate it would be around £8 to £10 thousand pounds.

SCOT is committed to completing this project soon. If any member or well-wisher would like to contribute towards this worthy cause please contact the President via email on fswampillai@yahoo.com



#### Important Message

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