



Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust

Empowering communities; building trust

Vision

The establishment of a just, equitable and peaceful society

Mission

To collectively promote peace, reconciliation and human rights, sharing responsibility, resources and risks through strategic partnerships with civil society, public sector, business community, diaspora,

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Improving reading access for the visually impaired in the North

A sharp increase in the number of disabled people was seen in the Vavuniya district during the ethnic conflict. Many people took refuge in Vavuniya, owing to the war conditions that prevailed in the surrounding districts. The Organization for Rehabilitation of the Handicapped (ORHAN Vavuniya) was established under the auspices of the District Secretariat with the aim of providing assistance to people with disabilities.

NTT is supporting ORHAN Vavuniya to implement an 18 month project titled "Advancing the Rights and Access of Disabled People" (ARAD Project), with the primary objective of enhancing the ability of disabled communities to access information. Approximately 4060 people are expected to benefit from this initiative. The setting up of a braille unit and a talking books unit for the visually handicapped youth and children at the Mullaitivu Public Library are key elements of this project.

The braille unit was set up on 29 February 2016, in the presence of Mr. C. Sabeshan, the Secretary of

the Mullaitivu Pradeshiya Sabha.

A total of 54 braille books are at the unit at present, all of which are in the English medium. Tamil translations of these books are expected to be printed soon. Furthermore, 714 audio books have been installed in the unit's computer, which include works of fiction as well as educational material.

The librarian at the Mullaitivu Public Library, who is to be trained by ORHAN in the use of the braille machine is confident that these new facilities would be immensely beneficial to the visually handicapped as they would now be able to read and understand the contents of these books. Slow readers would also be able to improve their reading skills. Awareness will be raised about the availability and facilities of this unit, especially among schools, in order to encourage people with visual disability to benefit from it.

Those wishing to make use of the facilities of the new unit are expected to have a basic understanding of handling a computer, according to Mr. Thivahar, the Project Coordinator of ORHAN.



SAVE THE DATE! 17th Neelan Tiruchelvam Memorial Lecture

By Dr Ronald C. Slye, Professor of Law at Seattle University

on **Sunday 31 July 2016 at 6 p.m. BMICH, Committee Room "A"**
Buddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7

Sithie Tiruchelvam Women's Fellowship Programme

The WFP is an 18-month programme which seeks to enhance the capacities of women working at the community level to increasingly assume leadership roles within families, communities and villages, while obtaining a comparative perspective on strategies and methodologies they could employ to enhance their interventions and community engagements. The programme comprises of 3 phases, and the periods between each phase of training enables participants to return to their workplaces or communities and begin incorporating what they learn into their work. The first programme began in 2013.

The first phase of the 2015 programme was implemented in partnership with the EKTA Resource Centre for Women in Madurai, India from 6-16 June last year, in Tamil. EKTA helps to create a gender just society, and implements its courses in local languages.

Second phase covers personal development and leadership

The programme of the second batch took place from 23-26 January 2016 at NTT. Two main areas were covered during the programme, i.e. personal development and leadership.

Personal Development - Conducted by Jayanthi Siva, the session provided an introduction to the basics of Non Violent

Communication (NVC). The principles of NVC involve a radical shift from right/wrong judgements into need-based consciousness. This basic training set the context for NVC and presented the basic concepts and tools that are used to resolve conflict and improve the quality of participants' personal and professional relationships. Discussions were held on how to stay rooted in a chaotic environment, and how to choose to respond to difficult situations in a way that will strengthen connections and move towards collaboration and community engagement.

Leadership - Conducted by Lalinda Wickramaratne, Manager Programme and Grants, NTT

This session looked at topics such as understanding the differences between a leader and manager, the 80/20 principle, the 7 habits of highly effective people (Author Stephen Covey) and the SWOT Analysis.

After completing the programme, a follow-up meeting was held in Vavuniya on 3 March 2016. Individual analysis of the SWOT framework was discussed during the meeting. Mr. Subramaniam, the President of ORHAN shared his experience working with disabled people, with special focus on women with disabilities.

Participants shared how they made use of the knowledge gathered from the 2nd phase of the programme in the fields that they work in.

NTT Commissions Islandwide Scoping Study

NTT is currently carrying out an island-wide scoping study with the objective of gaining on-the-ground information which will feed into the design and development process of future interventions that can be carried out by the Trust. The study will set out the current situation, identify current and recent interventions and gaps in strategies and provide recommendations for the future.

The study focuses on three thematic areas: **Inclusive Economies**, **Gender Justice** and **Human Rights**, and will enable NTT to:

- Gain in-depth understanding of these issues.
- Identify institutions/individuals who are working on the above issues, with a clear and strong commitment to reduce inequality and promote social justice and inclusion.
- Provide effective and impactful grant-making.

In addition to a desk review, the scoping exercise will include contributions from key person interviews, focus group discussions, field visits to CBOs and NGOs as well as structured and semi structured questionnaires and phone interviews. The NTT programme team along with groups of consultants working individually or in teams are involved in this exercise.

The study, which is supported by the Ford Foundation is expected to be completed by June this year.



The travelling exhibition “*Anne Frank – A History for Today*” is now in Sri Lanka through a partnership between **Anne Frank House**, the Netherlands and **NTT** made possible with financial support from the Embassy of the Netherlands in Sri Lanka.

Annelies Marie Frank (12 June 1929 – February or March 1945) was a German-born diarist and writer. She is one of the most discussed Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Her book, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, which documents her life in hiding during the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II, is one of the world's most widely known books.

This international exhibition has been shown in more than 40 countries, coordinated by the AFH in collaboration with local partners such as NTT. AFH has adopted a novel way of involving youth by selecting school students and youth as ‘peer guides’ who use the knowledge gained to assist visitors to the exhibition, guiding them through the panels and providing explanations as required. In Sri Lanka, a pilot project of the Anne Frank Travelling Exhibition was held in January and February 2015. The project, consisting of an exhibition, documentary and peer guide and teacher training, was very well received by students, teachers and the general public. A total of 611 persons visited these exhibitions, 12 students were trained as peer guides to the exhibition and 17 teachers participated in a seminar, learning innovative ideas for teaching the story of Anne Frank, the holocaust and human rights. The exhibition also travelled to Jaffna in December last year.

This year, the Anne Frank House has partnered with NTT to bring the travelling exhibition to Sri Lanka once again. The next phase of the project is to start in Colombo, and travel to other districts thereafter.

The overall goal of the project is to raise awareness, to increase the levels of knowledge on historical and contemporary issues, to further engage on issues of social cohesion and tolerance in general, amongst students, teachers and the general public.

The exhibition and the documentary, that together form the foundation of the Anne Frank project, is housed at NTT and can be made available to any organisation/school who would like to hold an exhibition in their premises. The exhibits are unique because the text of the panels is in Tamil and Sinhala. NTT will also be producing the documentary in Sinhala and Tamil, making the entire initiative accessible to students and public island wide.

Locations of future exhibitions envisaged: Colombo, Galle, Kandy and Batticaloa.

*If you are interested in hosting the travelling exhibition at your school/in your community,
please write to us at ntt@neelan.org or phone 011-2690991.*



“I hope Anne's book will have an effect on the rest of your life so that insofar as it is possible in your own circumstances, you will work for unity and peace.”

- Otto Frank, Anne Frank's father

“Dear Children, Sincerely” part-supported by NTT

Dear Children, Sincerely... – a conversation across generations, is a play that was devised by Sri Lankan and Rwandan artists through interviews conducted with elders of both countries who were born in the 1930s. This remarkable generation, who are now nearing the end of their lives - would have lived through the entire history of modern Sri Lanka - colonialism, independence, the insurrections, the civil war, the technological revolution and post war Sri Lanka. They are responsible for setting up some of the foundations of our society, and many of the decisions that changed the course of this country. What have they learnt? What are they proud of? What do they regret?

The overall objective of this project is to use artistic expression to create imaginative links in the minds of Sri Lankans at a very critical time for the country.

Part of a wider ongoing theatre project initiated by Stages Theatre Group, the first performance and international collaboration took place in 2015 in Kigali, Rwanda at the Ubumuntu Arts Festival held to commemorate the Rwandan Genocide. It was then held in Colombo in January 2016, and toured India in February.

This project was subsequently adopted by 8 other countries – Ireland, Palestine, Rwanda, the UK, DRC, Belgium, Serbia, and Burundi – creating opportunities for cross-country collaboration and learning.

Three stories were created for this play, which examine key events in the two countries. The first story titled ‘Seven Decades Deep’ takes a look back at seven decades of both countries. The second story titled ‘Marriage, Sex and Love’ brings to us what this all meant to our elders. The third and final story shows the gruesome horrors and terrors both countries faced in their times of conflict and war, and is titled ‘Upside Down Land’.

The play is written and directed by Ruwanthie de Chickera, and produced by the Stages Theatre Group and Mashirika Performing Arts and Media Company. It is performed by Sri Lankan as well as Rwandan actors. With a total running time of 60 mins, the plays are largely physical with minimal use of the language.



NTT supports publication of 3D THINGS

3D THINGS: Devices, Technologies and Women’s Organizing in Sri Lanka, a book by Shermal Wijewardene and Kumudini Samuel was released in late December 2015. It was conceived at a time when some women’s organizations in the country had begun to explore how they could do their mobilizing through social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, as well as on blogs. The book focuses on the devices and technologies that shape the organizing around women’s issues and women’s rights in Sri Lanka.

3D THINGS is published by the Suriya Women’s Development Centre (SWDC) and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), with the support of the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust.

Copies of the publication may be obtained from any of the above organisations.

