



eNTRUST

The Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust Newsletter

June 2015

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Remembering Sithie Tiruchelvam

A celebration of the life of founder trustee of NTT Mrs Sithie Tiruchelvam was held on her first death anniversary on 22 March 2015. The event provided a space for Sithie's friends, family and colleagues to remember her and to launch two special initiatives of NTT.

'[Sithie] believed it was important to feel angry about injustice, it was important to care enough about one's community, country and the world to do something about it, and most importantly to do it without any fuss or drama'

- Ambika Satkunanathan, Chairperson

Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust

*"empowering communities
building trust"*

Vision

*The establishment of a just
and, 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, academia and
donors*

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The first was the formal launching of the Sithie Tiruchelvam Women's Fellowship Programme. A pilot phase had already been concluded wherein 5 women from the war-affected areas were selected for an 18-month long leadership programme, involving training, peer learning and overseas exchanges. A similar programme is scheduled to begin in June this year and we are proud to have the John Keells Foundation as a partner in this venture.

Another initiative that was announced by Chairperson Ambika Satkunanathan was the Friends of Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust (FoNTT), a giving circle enabling all those who wish to be a part of the NTT's journey, to donate of their time, skills or in kind to further the work of the Trust.

As a tribute to Sithie's love of the arts, the evening included two performances, a carnatic vocal piece by Meera Srinivasan and a dance solo by Thajithangani Dias of the Chitrasena Vajira Dance Foundation.



CAMP: Contemporary Artists Meeting Point

FACT SHEET

Organised by

Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust
&
Vibhavi Academy of Fine Arts

Sponsored by

Prince Claus Fund
for Culture and Development
Workshop Venues

Batticaloa, Jaffna, Colombo



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Fonds

Prince Claus Fund for
Culture and Development



The war that alienated communities in the country also had an impact on an entire generation of artists with little or no connection to their contemporaries from other parts of the island. Artists have come to reflect the mistrust and misunderstanding between the ethnic communities.

As a step towards bridging this gap NTT partnered with the Vibhavi Academy of Fine Arts on the Contemporary Artists Meeting Point (CAMP) project, with funding from the Prince Claus Fund. CAMP aims to create a socio-cultural environment for mid-career artists to explore partnership with counterparts from other ethnic communities in other parts of the country through the medium of visual art.

The project enabled visual artists -- drawn from different parts of the island, across the ethnic and language divide -- to meet in a holistic, friendly environment and to share their experiences and life-stories. The meeting place was conceived to be a space that allowed them to share their stories through a no-holds barred framework aimed at breaking down pre-existing barriers, and create thought provoking art.

One-week 'workshops' were held in each of 3 cities: Jaffna,

Batticaloa and Colombo, which provided the opportunity for artists to meet with mentors from these cities as well as visit each other's homes. This effectively challenged some of the prejudice and misconceptions they held regarding members of other communities, which in turn enabled the deconstruction of hegemonic narratives created by propaganda and politics, broke silences and expanded dialogue between artists from all parts of the island. The final round in Colombo was a longer, residential workshop that saw artists engaging in the production of creative work.

At CAMP the artists shed their inhibitions and preconceived ideas of each other and shared their most personal experiences and creative inspirations openly in a spirit of camaraderie. Open, honest dialogue occurred, paving the way for deeper understanding. Most of the artists in the programme come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and had faced severities throughout childhood, and while only a few had been directly affected by the 30-year war, they said it had left a lasting impact on their outlook. The expectation is that some of these connections may grow and in other instances their experiences of sharing and learning will be reflected in their artistic work.



Stories from the front



A group that emerged as part of the wave of leftist movements that sprang up as a resistance to the introduction of the open market, the Rural Women's Front has grown from a small collective of women to being the centre of a large network of women's organisations, and respected as a mentor within the women's movement in the South.

The Symposium of Women Leaders held on the 20th and 21st of June 1988 at the Sathyodaya Hall in Kandy acted as the catalyst for RWF's activism. The theme of the symposium was 'The role of women's organizations in solving the problems faced by women'. At the time there were only a handful of women's organizations in the country, almost all representing the urban middle or upper middle classes, and as such their work focused on urban populations, marginalizing the 74% of the female population residing in villages. The women leaders of the symposium felt there a critical need for a movement that could muster the collective strength of the rural female population of the island, and with this in mind the RWF was inaugurated.

Beginning from the fight to preserve a more eco-friendly, agrarian life style in the wake of the opening of the economy, the Front's work moved to other issues affecting women in the rural sector. The trials faced by one of their own drew them into the complex subject of migrant workers that, at that juncture received little attention from either the government or civil society. Over the years RWF took on many cases affecting women migrant workers in Sri Lanka and quickly grew into a national movement that became synonymous with the rights of women migrant workers.

Adapting to socio-economic changes, RWF has seen its mandate grow to include new and difficult issues that have arisen with the changing life styles of the rural population. They have risen to the challenge and have expanded their workload to include land rights, capacity building and leadership training of rural women, migrant worker issues,

environmental conservation and child rights. NTT has supported RWF over the past 5 years, among others to conduct and publish a survey on 'Returnee women domestic migrant workers and prospective women and domestic migrant workers and their families' last year, awareness programmes on women and child rights, legal and human rights counseling, and cultural programmes aimed at promoting ethnic harmony.

News corner

- * CAMP creative and theoretical workshops were held from the 2-21 March 2015 in Colombo.
- * NTT submitted an entry titled 'Empowering communities, building trust' for the 2015 Global Prize for Transformative Social Justice. The video can be viewed at [https:// www.youtube.com /watch?v=Z_G8RqDLSJ4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_G8RqDLSJ4)
- * We welcome two new members to the Programme Department. Ms Gayathri Gamage joined in February as Programme Officer. Gayathri holds a BA degree in Peace and Conflict Resolution from University of Kelaniya and an LLB from the University of London. She has been working with INGOs and NGOs for more than six years. Lalinda Wickremeratne joined as Programme Manager in June. Having moved away from the corporate sector he successfully led an agency working in the fields of livelihood, child development, resettlement and community development. He has managed projects in over 20 districts and has been involved in project design, monitoring and mentoring teams. He has been involved in the development sector since 1994.

Unwritten laws and its influence on community and human rights in Jaffna

Noolaham Foundation



The Noolaham Foundation (NF) has worked on a unique project researching and documenting unwritten laws that influence the lives of the people of Jaffna. Adapting to the needs and circumstances of each generation, the unwritten laws of the peninsula play a large role in deciding the direction of the ebb and flow of everyday life. The research also sheds light on the changes to these laws that have taken place in the post-war context.



NF digitized and archived their findings on the official website of the Foundation in order to facilitate access to the research by its global readership. They also worked towards creating understanding of these unwritten laws among youth, women, CBOs, and the community.

The Noolaham Foundation is a non-profit, charitable organization founded to provide enhanced access to information sources and foster knowledge-based development in Sri Lanka. Their mission is to document and preserve knowledge from all spheres related to Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities and make such knowledge accessible to all. NF maintains an

online digital library, facilitates information preservation programmes, provides financial assistance and technical guidance for digitization initiatives, and actively participates in awareness-raising campaigns. It also co-ordinates a range of fund-raising activities and collaborates with other organizations and individuals. The free Internet library [www.noolaham.org] maintained by the Foundation serves as a learning centre incorporating local knowledge and enabling social interaction with the view of achieving constructive social outcomes

Applying for a grant

NTT will soon be announcing a new Call for Proposals on “EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN AND BENEFIT FROM, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

NTT supports organisations whose work aligns with the Trust’s objectives, furthers its vision and mission, meets the organisation’s funding guidelines, and work on one or more of the organisation’s strategic programme areas. As the only indigenous grant-maker in Sri Lanka the Trust attaches importance in developing working relationships with small, new and emerging groups with projects that contribute to one or more of our focus areas of work.

Potential applicants are invited to visit our website for more details for our calls for proposals and or applying for a grant.

www.neelan.org

“empowering communities building trust”



NEELAN TIRUCHELVAM TRUST

cordially invites you to the
16th Neelan Tiruchelvam Memorial Lecture
Democracy in Plural Societies: Problems and Solutions
by
Dr. David Miller, FBA
Professor of Political Theory, Nuffield College, Oxford

Sunday 19 July 2015 at 6 p.m.
BMICH, Committee Room “A”
Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7