



JOYFUL JOURNEY

Girls' Friendly Society, Sri Lanka
January - April 2024



President's Reflections

My Dear Members,

As I reflect on the first four months of 2024, a profound sense of joy fills me as I witness the Girls' Friendly Society, Sri Lanka continue to move forward and upward. This spirit of joy is beautifully captured in this newsletter, which serves as a vibrant chronicle of this period. It brims with impactful programmes, inspiring initiatives, and the unwavering faith that guides us.

As we celebrate these achievements, our hearts overflow with gratitude to God. **Proverbs 3:5-6** beautifully resonates with our journey: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."

The Girls' Friendly Society, Sri Lanka is embarking on an exciting journey as we gear up to host the World Council in 2026.

We are truly blessed to have remarkable teams, both at our Colombo headquarters and in the outstations. Their unwavering dedication and passion are the very lifeblood that propels the Society forward.

A heartfelt 'thank you' goes out to our generous members who extended a helping hand during recent emergencies, like the flood relief efforts and eye camp. Your compassion and willingness to support those in need exemplify the very essence of the Society.

Delve into this newsletter and let us share the remarkable achievements of these past few months. May your journey with GFS continue to be a source of immense joy and fulfillment!

With warm regards,

Rohini Ratnam

Joyfully Journeying with Jesus

I am a teenage girl who experienced a major surgery when I was five years old. I lived in Nigeria with my family for two years. Things were going well until my parents discovered that I am hyperactive and sweat frequently. I was taken to the hospital, and the doctors claimed that I was healthy. Days went by, and my heartbeat increased faster than usual. My family and I flew back to Sri Lanka for treatment because Nigeria lacks sufficient medical care. We consulted a cardiologist, who discovered that I had a hole in the heart. Many doctors had lost hope in me surviving, and my family was devastated by the news.

Their only hope was in the Almighty Jesus Christ. My parents had been afraid on the day I had undergone the surgery, but God's support gave them courage. There is a phrase that states "God will never abandon His loved ones". Accordingly, Jesus reassured my family that I survived the surgery. Here I am sharing my testimony and journey with God with all of you in an energetic, wholesome, and strong manner. This is one of the miracles that occurred in my life. He is watching over us, guiding and protecting us. Never give up your only hope which is in Jesus Christ. Praise be unto the Lord!



Eglah Tinisha Kamalenthiran
A junior member – GFS Colombo

'WE CARE FOR YOUR EYES' - Eye Camp in Dickoya

The GFS desires to support the poor, needy and marginalised communities by looking into ways and means to support the well-being of children and adults, by sharing the love of Jesus through our work. Eye health remains a serious public health challenge in the rural areas in Sri Lanka.

The first eye camp was successfully conducted on the 23rd March 2024 for 122 participants at Christ Church, Dickoya. We thank Samarasinghe Optometrists, Ms. Naomie Gurusinghe for the donation of spectacles and ServeNow for joint financial sponsorship together with the GFS, Rev. S. K. Daniel - Area Dean, Upcountry, the members of the Mothers' Union and the GFS Branch members in Christ Church, Dickoya. Three members from the GFS Executive Council and the CEO participated in this eye camp.

We have already received a donation of Rs.50,000/- from a member towards the eye surgeries of a deserving elderly couple! Look forward to reading success stories from the beneficiaries in our next edition!



CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Creating change in the lives of women and girls is an important aspect of the work of the GFS worldwide. With this being a key area of focus, the GFS dedicated the month of March to conduct programmes to celebrate International Women's Day (which falls on the 8th March). Various programmes were conducted in our GFS branches.

17th March 2024

**All Saints' Church, Agarapathana
All Saints' Church, Masekeliya**

**St. Mary's Church, Bogawathalawa
Church of St. John the Baptist, Watawala**

It is noteworthy that the Presidents or office bearers spoke on relevant topics at these programmes. Games were played and tea was served in all the branches. The ladies enjoyed the programmes very much.

28th March 2024

The GFS Headquarters in Colombo - A programme for 22 ladies from less privileged families living in Colpetty was organised. We also launched the GFS Kolakenda project on this day by giving the ladies a free cup of Kolakenda. Dr. Priyanthi Molligoda, an experienced Pediatrician was invited to speak to the ladies. The objective of the programme was to address misconceptions and myths especially with regard to children.

Dr. Molligoda spoke on "Actions you can take to live a healthy life" covering important areas. Important leaflets were distributed amongst the ladies.



Children's Motivation And Relaxation Programme - St. Mark's Church, Badulla

Rev. Nadaraja Jency Manjuka - Vicar St. Mark's Church, Badulla and Area Dean, Uva Province, organized a programme for children on motivation and relaxation before school commenced for the year 2024. Rev. Manjuka's target was to help children start their schooling happily and purposefully.

Objectives of this programme:

- How to face their issues
- Identifying their talents
- How to help others

The children who attended the programme were predominantly from the tea estates. There were a mix of Sinhala and Tamil children, aged 6 years and below 16 years.



Emergency Flood Relief

Hambanthota: 1 family received a pack of dry rations worth Rs. 2,500.00. 25 families were given packs of dry rations at St. Andrew's Church, Batticaloa. Each pack consisted of dry rations worth approx. Rs.2,000.00. 36 families were given 1 kg of Dhal and 250gms of Soya meat at St. Paul's Church, Mylambevelli, Batticaloa.



GFS Home Gardening Project in collaboration with 'Operation Joseph', a project of ServeNow

Plants were distributed to 55 beneficiaries from the GFS branches in Christ Church, Dickoya, St. Mary's Church, Bogawathalawa, All Saints' Church, Maskeliya and Church of John the Baptist, Watawala. Six varieties of plants were bought from Gandhi Farm in Kotagala; beetroot, leeks, tomatoes, brinjals, salad leaves and green chilies were bundled together.



Some of the beneficiaries with Mr. Raffaideen

It was nice to have the President, Vice President and Treasurer of the GFS assisting with making 55 packs of vegetable plants to be distributed. The Regional Coordinator contacted Mr. Raffaideen - the Officer in-charge for Agriculture in the Divisional Secretariat, Ambagamuwa, Ginigathena and invited him to speak to the beneficiaries. He explained clearly on how to take care of the plants. He offered his services and support to the GFS branches and will work with small groups.



Operation Joseph - progress after one month on the tomato plant supplied

Ayurvedha Medical Camps - Matale District

The GFS has been able to conduct a number of Ayurvedha Medical Camps in rural villages in the Matale District (Central Province). This is an initiative of the GFS Branch in Christ Church Matale under the leadership of Rev. Rohini Ranasinghe. She has done yeoman service in organizing these camps for the poor and needy people. The Ayurvedha Doctor from the DS Division, Matale and a nurse conducted these clinics. We are grateful to ServeNow for being the financial sponsor of these camps. Camps were held in two locations: Imbulgolla serving 50 patients and Gammaduwa serving 120 patients during the months of January and February 2024.



Educational Support - Help a Child Stay in School

This year too, we continued this project by supporting 5 children from each GFS branch. They were given school bags sponsored by ServeNow and 90 pencil cases made by the GFS.

Computer Classes - Regional Office, Hambantota

This project is done in the Hambantota Regional Office. The objective is to train volunteer ladies who in turn will conduct classes for children and mothers.

Christianity Classes Regional Office, Hambantota

The school that a few Sunday school children attend does not have a teacher for Christianity. Identifying this as very important, the Development Officer started a project to teach Christianity according to the school syllabus for 12 students, both boys and girls.



Working Together with the Mothers' Union

It is certainly a joy and privilege to work together with the members of the Mothers' Union in various Churches.

- GFS and Mothers' Union at Hambantota met to discuss and plan on visiting widows.
- The Mothers' Union at Christ Church, Dickoya gave us tremendous support in organising the 'We Care For Your Eyes' Eye Camp held on the 23rd March 2024.

Spiritual Development - GFS Goal 1

The GFS has always placed a strong emphasis on nurturing the spiritual growth of its members. Recently the GFS sisters at Christ Church, Hambantota embarked on a journey of spiritual renewal through dedicated prayer and fasting sessions.

Branch Visits - Nuwara Eliya District

On the 23rd and 24th March 2024, the GFS Staff visited Christ Church Dickoya, St. John the Baptist Church, Watawala, St. Mary's Church, Bogawantalawa, All Saint's Church Maskeliya and St. Margret's Church Kotagala. Programmes were conducted at each branch. We thank Rev. S.K. Daniel and Rev. Edwin Raj for the exceptional support they gave us.



Nuwara Eliya District GFS Branches Regional Meeting

We are happy that for the first time, the Regional Coordinator, Upcountry was successful in gathering most of the Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers of the Churches with GFS branches in this region for a meeting at the Regional Office in Dickoya on the 23rd April 2024.



It was a very productive meeting. Many topics were discussed and a plan for the first quarter for the FY 24/25 was discussed and activities planned. The meeting ended with food and fellowship. We pray God's blessings upon them and look forward to positive reports.

FUNDRAISING

April Market on the Green

This annual sale was held at the GFS Hall on the 5th April 2024. A variety of items were made available for sale at reasonable prices in 35 stalls. Our sincere thanks go out to all our faithful stall holders and all of you who contributed to the GFS stall.



Tea Project

In an endeavour to raise funds to make the regional office in Dickoya self-sustainable, a tea project was launched in the month of April. Please support this initiative by spreading the word to your friends and family. We invite all of you to enjoy a delicious cup of tea (BOPF grade) all the way from Upcountry!

A 500 gram pack costs only Rs.1,300.00!
Hurry and place your order! **076 096 4391**

NEW PROJECTS

Launching the GFS Kitchen and a Kolakenda Project at the Headquarters

As fundraising initiatives for the work of the GFS as well as a service to the public, the GFS Kitchen and Kolakenda projects were launched in February and April respectively.

The GFS Kitchen caters for many occasions; conferences, parties, functions, events etc. We are happy to report that we have already provided short-eats to 3 functions since the launch.



Delicious food from the GFS Kitchen!

Fish Patties, Fish Cutlets, Fish Rolls, Fish/Egg/Chicken Sandwiches

Kavum, Kokis, Aluwa, Halapa, Butter Cake, Iced Coffee, Tea, Coffee

Pre - Orders 2 days prior Minimum 25 of each Item

011- 2573215
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GFS Sri Lanka : Women helping Women
58, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha, Colombo 03.

Start your day enjoying a delicious, nutritious and hygienically prepared cup of Kola Kandha. from the GFS Kitchen!

Orders are undertaken

Kola Kandha (Per cup) Rs. 100/-
Kola Kandha (Take away) Rs. 120/-

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Girls' Friendly Society held its AGM on 2nd March 2024. Following the official business there was a Guest Speaker, Ms. Stella Richards, a Psychologist, who gave a talk on "Living a Life of Abundance", drawing inspiration from John 10:10 in the Bible. The AGM concluded with a delicious lunch prepared by the GFS Kitchen and served to all attendees.



World President
Jeanne Withanage

The Executive Council

Rohini Ratnam
President

Sugi Jebamani
Vice President

Marcia Seneviratne
Vice President

Nimalee Gajasinghe
Hony. Treasurer

Jean Tisseveersinghe
Asst. Secretary

Chryshanthi Manuel
Asst. Treasurer

Staff Members

Devini Tissaarachy
CEO

Gayathri Gajamange
Manager - Admin & Finance

Saritha Fernando
Executive – Accounts & Programmes

Mercy Arulanandam
Programme Coordinator

Thushari Fernando
Development Officer

Jemima Moses
Regional Coordinator - Dickoya

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND STAFF NEWS

The Honourary Secretary of the Executive Council, Ms. Aloma Gunsekera tendered her resignation with effect from end March 2024. We thank her for all her contributions to the GFS as a member of the Executive Council and wish her well.

The GFS bid farewell to our Programme Manager, Ms. Linda Yogeshwaran who served us well. We wish her the very best in her new endeavours.

We also said 'Sayonara' to Ms. Udeshika de Silva who worked as a Senior Executive with us for 10 years, as she left the shores of Sri Lanka.

We also bid farewell to Ms. Abiya Anbarasu who worked as the Assistant Coordinator at the Regional Office in Dickoya and wish her success in her studies.

We recruited two experienced ladies, Ms. Mercy Arulanadam as the Programme Coordinator at the Headquarters and Ms. Jemima Moses as the Regional Coordinator in Dickoya. We wish them a happy and joyful journey with the GFS!



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 **FB – Girls' Friendly Society, Sri Lanka**
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GFS Sri Lanka : Women helping Women