

Youth for Change- PBN FAMILY Project-2017

REPORT 2

Introduction

As planned at the launching of the project, the different teams designated to conduct different activities, planned and executed their tasks with the coordination rendered by Sr. Labora Mary Croos, the Project Coordinator, support from Regina Ramalingam, the Asian Lay Leader and with the overall support from the Jaffna Unit Team Leader Sr. Christa Mariathas.

Step 1. IDENTIFYING THE VULNERABLE YOUTH

Sr. Nevis, National Leader of the Lay Associates, Jaffna Unit, Sr. Josephine Mary, Director MARDAP and Mr. Devanayagam, National President of the Lay Associates of the Jaffna Unit, worked as a Team in identifying the youth in Jeyapuram and Mallavi, the project areas. As mentioned in the Project Proposal, it is a necessity to obtain permission from the respective Government authorities. Sr. Labora, made the preliminary arrangements to inform the authorities about the project, which made it possible for the team to discuss further about the project.



Field visits were done consistently on 31st Jan.2017, 3rd,4th , 5th , 12th , 17th , 26th February and 25th March 2017. The authorities met were: District Secretary (DS) of Thunukkai, Skill Development Officer on behalf of the DS of Pooneryn, Grama Niladhari(Village Officer- GS), Development Officer, and the Samurthi Officer (A poverty alleviation project personnel of the Govt.). Two volunteers from Jeyapuram North and South also opted to support in identifying the vulnerable youth.

The authorities were very supportive but at the same time requested us to give the list of the people who are to be selected for Livelihood support to avoid duplicity and to make sure not to miss the needy youth.

Besides the Local Authorities, the Parish Priests of Mallavi and Mullankavil under which Jeyapuram is a sub-station were also approached and they too rendered their support in

identifying the youth. The Team also visited the houses to identify the youth while getting first hand information on the situation of the youth and their families.



Selection of Target Beneficiaries:

In Jeyapuram and Mallavi, it was noticed that when projects for youth are being called for, there has been a mixture of young people coming together; even young married men and women; young widows wish to be included into the group. When we analyzed the situation we found that during the war to escape both from the Armed forces and the LTTE, many were forced to marry young and hence the “**youth**” of these areas are between the age group of 18-30/35 and it is necessary to include married youth also into the project since they feel left out from normal projects as well as purely designed for youth

The youth are defined according to the UN as follows: “the United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.”¹ Definition of youth perhaps changes with circumstances, especially with the changes in demographic, financial, economic and socio-cultural settings;”

Entity/Instrument/ Organization	Age	Reference
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO Youth	15-24	UN Instruments, Statistics
UN Habitat (Youth Fund) Youth	15-32	Agenda 217
The African Youth Charter Youth	15-35	African Union, 200610

Since our project focuses on reconciliation and building peace, while ‘Creating Awareness among the war affected youth and facilitating them to lead an inclusive life style’, it was considered to include youth up to 35 years and also include married youth if they feel left out of other programmes. (List of Beneficiaries attached- Annexure-01)

Process of conducting the meetings

- Sr.Nevis explained the project and the purpose of selecting the youth and category of the young people.
- Sr.Josephine Mary spoke about benefits from the project. She also informed that, the youth, young widows/deserted, young men who lost their wives and looking for work, and persons with disability would be given the priority
- Mr.Thevanayagam emphasized on the participation of the target group as the key for the success of the project.
- Sr.Labora explained the planned activities of the project.
- The youth were more enthusiastic to know more about the activities that would take place. During self introduction they were asked to say something about their situation after re-settlement, their expectation, needs to be fulfilled and their personal desires.
- During the discussion, they revealed the situation and the environment of the village, economic status, barriers, needs, and wants. Unemployment is the great worry for them.
- Most of the girls go to the garment factory; most of the boys go out of the district-Colombo, Kandy and other places to look for jobs. They get odd jobs with low salary. This place is also controlled by the military civil affairs. Youth who came for the meeting preferred to come on Sundays.
- Some of the boys revealed their desire to learn driving because of the financial constrains.

A total number of 156 youth were identified, 63 From Jeyapuram, 60 in Anichiyankulam and 33 in Therangkandal in Mallavi.



Step 2. NEED ASSESSMENT

Need Assessment was done with selected participants in Jeyapuram and Mallavi, to ascertain their status- present and future by Regina Ramalingam. 40 Youth from Jeyapuram and 40 from two villages Anichiyankulam and Therangkandal in Mallavi participated, in finding the particular needs of the targeted 150 youth, in order to **‘Create awareness and enhance their potential to build peace and reconciliation within themselves and among the community’** which is the project goal. The sessions were conducted at the Jeyapuram Mahavidyalayam in

Jeyapuram and in two Multipurpose Halls in Mallavi, on 26th February 2017 and 12th March 2017 respectively.



Instead of following the technique of discussing the problems as the basis for need analysis, the **Appreciative Inquiry- AI Technique** was introduced to understand the hidden potentials and resources available within the participants and environment, to motivate positive energy among the participants. The key feature of AI is its positive focus. It discovers existing good practice, strengths creativity, reaffirming people's confidence and enthusiasm, and builds on this foundation to deliver long-term, sustainable improvements.



'WOW' Stories

Few youth related the difficult situation they faced in their lives and how they overcame it with their determination and hard work.

- One of the Youth informed of achieving great help to the community that was difficult to obtain.
- Another participant talked about her efforts to study in the university, facing difficulties because of poverty but overcame them with her courage and determination.
- A young widow with two young children after her husband's death with her hard work is managing her life

- Though rejected by the employer, a young boy was determined to learn the sewing trade and now has opened a shop
- Being an LTTE cadre from 15 years old, got injured in the stomach and partially blinded and was unable to even sit straight, couldn't eat rice, others gave up hope but she was determined to survive and by her own efforts cured herself, now married with two children
- Three children injured and the mother became mentally imbalanced witnessing it, dad lost the left hand, one of the brothers can't move an arm and leg- yet looked after them being in the camp and working as a carpenter and has learnt not to bother much about an issue but go on living
- Though challenged by the authorities how to build the house as a young widow, worked as a coolie to escape paying wages and finished the house. Now she feels she can take her own decision and stand on her own feet. Earlier was afraid to do anything now feel brave.
- Rejected by the bank and relatives to give money to open a press, but worked by themselves and opened it.
- Settling debts by working in the garment factory and looking after the family.



The following table gives a holistic view of the outcome of the sessions:

<p>1.FOCUS QUESTION- Definition</p> <p>‘Developing confidence among the war affected youth to lead their lives by themselves by creating awareness to overcome psychological impacts and negative attitude, while exploring employment facilities to sustain livelihood and develop the community ’</p>	<p>2. STRENGTHS-</p> <p>Discovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selfconfidence, patience; common good, facing challenges, leadership, accepting reality, sustaining self needs, self respect, saving, mindful in spending, independent, achieving objectives/goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coping with poverty, ▪ Supportive to the community, ▪ Working capacity, Achieving what cannot be achieved, Appreciation ▪ Though widowed yet achieved through consistency ▪ Working hard to look after their families 	<p>4.NEEDS</p> <p>-Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding Who am I. -Improving leadership qualities. -Developing communication skills, promoting cordial understanding among the Youth. - Identifying and solving problems. - Life skills to improve livelihood status. - Supporting and encouraging in healing inner wounds of the past by war and present with unemployment and other adverse situation. - Taking up issues with right authorities in achieving basic needs of the village. - Acceptance by the community - Money management 	<p>3. DREAMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing financial issues - building their own house - In a good job and a mother of a child - Counseling others - Self employed - Learnt a skill and finding employment - Developing the community - Leader in the community/village
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Findings & Analysis

- ✓ Most of the participants feel frustrated
- ✓ Participation was good
- ✓ Though the objective of the project calls for building peace and reconciliation, their living condition is such that, their priority is employment/work to get a sustainable income to maintain their families. Educating their children is much voiced by many and these needs are very realistic and demand urgent attention
- ✓ Many were affected by the war; disability is evident; young women headed families are more; living condition is poor
- ✓ those who are able to voice and influence are getting more assistance provided by the Govt. and others; frustration in not getting support is expressed
- ✓ other organizations have done projects as projects only and not to make any change in their lives, they feel
- ✓ authorities are partial and afraid that they would not get what is promised
- ✓ Employment facilities are poor

- ✓ infra- structure development is slow or not available; roads are in bad condition; drinking water facilities is needed
- ✓ there are only two children who are following Advance Level in Therangandal. Support for Religious Classes for Hindu children needed;
- ✓ Want to make changes in their lives. Resources available could be utilized.
- ✓ Willing to listen to the sisters and considering them as an opportunity to get advice and feeling relieved.

Follow up

A tailor made package is designed with the following topics to enable achieving the RESULTS that will help in contributing towards achieving the Objective

1. Self-understanding- Who am I?
2. Conceptualizing leadership and probing qualities of a ‘Servant Leader’
3. Enjoying inner peace- Counselling and psychosocial behavioural changes
4. Interactive and Non-violent communication
5. Conflict sensitivity and Conflict Resolution
6. My Leaky Bucket- Money Management
7. Advocacy
8. Skills for selected livelihood opportunities

Feed back

It was encouraging to understand that the participants enjoyed the sessions as well as found it to be different to what they have been already exposed to.

1. Enjoyed forgetting weaknesses and looking at strengths
2. Looking forward to such sessions
3. Feeling blessed with the presence of the Sisters
4. Expecting the project to be different from others- discussing more about and with them
5. I have never thought of tomorrow but through this workshop I have discussed about how am I going to be in 03 years; what would I do to achieve it etc. and that was excellent.
6. Came to know others and their stories

Step 3. GROUP FORMATION

On 5th, 12th and 19th of March 2017, sessions were conducted to 75 participants from Mallavi and Jeyapuram to form them into groups in order to inculcate the essence of ‘Being and Building Family’

Sisters Labora, Elizabeth, Genova and Pathmasegari facilitated the sessions.





Games were the media through which they learnt lessons as well as enjoyed participating in them.

- ❖ The participants were encouraged to understand their identity through the story of the “Eaglet and the Chicken” which were brought up together, yet helped by the eagle to identify itself as an eaglet. The participants said their names with a tune and also identified the meaning of their names. (One of the participants mentioned that though her name is ‘Puhall’- means Glory, yet nothing has happened in her life as such)
- ❖ The participants were also given some questions to understand themselves deeply and some of them shared their feelings. A few spelt out their anger and still want to take revenge on those who have abused them. They also said that they need to overcome this situation by planning to live happily in the future.

❖ **House and Goat**

Through this exercise the participants understood that though they encounter many obstacles they have to strive to reach their goal

❖ **Travelling in a bus**

Through this they learnt that they needed keen observation, in community we need unity, working in collaboration, the attitude that we need others,

❖ **The grouping of the group into 3 groups**

Through this game they expressed that they were made to reflect differently and that to accomplish their duties and obligations with responsibility and after analyzing it.

- ❖ A plain sheet of paper was taken, then the first person who received the sheet of paper and had to write whatever came to their mind immediately and then pass the paper to the next person, this continues till all have written their thoughts on the sheet of paper. In the end they gave a title and wrote a poem using the words on the paper. AWAITING..... (Translated into English by Regina Ramalingam and attached)
- ❖ A quality of leadership was also discussed by eliciting qualities from the participants themselves.

- ❖ Passing the cap of a pen from feet to feet: To gain victory we need patience and tranquility to achieve success were shared by the participants.
- ❖ A role play was enacted by the groups depicting their present situation of meeting the respective authorities to fulfill their needs and it portrayed their status after war and where they want to go from here. The lessons learnt were:
 - When there is a problem, speak with the person concerned and find the solution immediately.
 - Prudence is necessary for this.
 - As a group seek the solution to the problem
 - By giving and taking nothing is lost.

❖ **Crossing the River**

The outcome from the game Crossing the river before the bridge is broken are:

- Before attempting anything it is good to take time to reflect and act.
- Respect the ideas of all and the leader has to take the final decision.
- To act immediately on matters that needs immediate action.
- Whatever obstacle may confront our lives; we must bravely face them and surmount them. These points were shared by the members of the group.



The day came to a close with an evaluation. At the end they expressed that this was their first experience of such group activity and that they are happy to have experienced this group interactivity. They also expressed that it was the first time that they experienced and came to know the meaning of their name, ‘who I am’ and also discovered the good qualities in them.

- One shared that it was the first time that she had the opportunity to forget her sorrow and to pass the day without thinking about pain and sadness.



Some more sharing:

- I want to achieve great things so I must forget the past sad experiences and live looking forward to better times in life.
- I have to come out of myself and look forward to a brighter time.
- When we work in unison with others, we get the strength to overcome the sad past.
- There is nothing that is impossible but if we strive we can achieve anything is the lesson we learnt, are some more opinions shared.

The sessions seem interesting and are enjoyed well by the participants. The participants seem impatient to wait until the next sessions.



Group Photo of Beneficiaries

Outcome/Challenges

- Since the houses are located far and wide, house visits were very challenging, yet met the youth in groups with the support of the Village Authority (Grama Sevaka-GS)
- The expectation of the youth is to get livelihood support in the form of grant, loan, kinds, employment etc. yet accepted the objective of the project to find inner peace within and peace with others and now we find that they are enjoying the sessions.
- Since most of them are going for coolie work, attendance is poor if it is the harvesting or other season. We can only meet them on Sundays which again is a challenge to us. Punctuality is a big challenge to conduct programmes and especially to conduct sessions in full for lack of time.
- More girls/women participants than the youth
- Interested in developing their personality
- Happy that the project is not religious bound and also they feel that we are different from the NGOs who were more delivery oriented than creating awareness among them.
- It's obvious that many families are below the poverty line and are suffering the consequences of the war still. Most of them are hurt physically and psychologically. They do not like to remember/look at their past.
- Co-operation, listening to each other, willing to share, becoming determined to face their problems are gradually seen to be developing among the youth these past 03/04 months after the project intervention.

✚ Capacity Building and Counseling is already in progress and would be shared in the next report.

The cooperation and team work by the Team is much appreciated. Travelling to the project areas is much constrained but with the support of the unit leadership team, it was made possible.

**Sr. Labora Mary Croos,
Project Coordinator.**

