

WORLD PROJECT – ENGLISH FOR EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

SRI LANKA

REPORT FROM VISIT OF CANON VAL GRIBBLE ML (GFS World Vice-President)



Award Ceremony, GFS Hall, Colombo

The proposed visit for the first graduation of two groups of young women (May 2019) was postponed because of the Easter Day bombings in Sri Lanka. It was encouraging that within three months the graduation was able to be reorganised. My main observation on my second trip to Sri Lanka was the heightened security with an armed guard always at my hotel and a new security system, similar to airports, installed at the hotel. I would envisage this is the same for the majority of hotels in Colombo. But thanks be to God that the country is rebounding and moving ahead.



GFS Hall, Colombo 1

It was only in May 2017 when I first visited Sri Lanka and the project was just a thought in people's minds and the idea of the Bishop of Colombo (The Rt Revd Dhilloraj Canagasabey) whom I met at this visit. With only two months preparation a very well documented and costed application was submitted to the July 2017 World Council and accepted. What exciting things have been done in two short years.

The precise of the project as given in the program for the Award Ceremony was

Objective: This project seeks to empower girls and women, unemployed or not suitably employed, by providing them with basic English language skills that would make them confident and competent and enhance their employment prospects.

Course Content: Spoken English, business writing, effective customer care, presentation, interviews, social ethics, telephone etiquette etc.

Course Provider: The American College of Higher Education, Dehiwela

Before the commencement of the Award Ceremony I was introduced to the members of the Star Sapphires (the newly formed junior GFS) who together with the Pink Pearls (teenage and young women) form the branches of GFS in Colombo. They formed a guard of honour for the arrival of the Bishop.



Pink Pearls and Star Sapphires

This Award Ceremony was for two batches as they are called – the first one from Colombo city and the second from Batticaloa, 7 hours away by bus (on the eastern side of Sri Lanka) 30 girls received their certificates and a gift which had been prepared from GFS Australia. It was such a well organised and impressive ceremony with the Bishop obviously very pleased with the results.

The girls also became members of GFS and I was honoured to present them with their badges.

Earlier in the year a Speech Contest was held for all who were participating in the course. The winner gave a most impressive speech in English, and particularly touched our hearts by giving testimony to her Christian faith which led her to applying to do the course. (You can listen to her speech in full if you look on my Facebook page). Already there are good examples of young women finding good employment and Jeanne had pleasure in outlining these during her speech.



Winner of Speech Contest



Project group at Galle

Next day we visited Galle, a historic port town, where another group of young women have commenced the course. And these girls were also presented with their membership badges. That afternoon we visited a sister church in Galle parish where a small faithful congregation celebrate the Eucharist on a Sunday afternoon. The Deacon working here explained how many of these young women do not have a standard of basic English to allow them to enter the project course so he

is taking English classes for all the congregation. We agreed to purchase a new computer which will belong to the project to assist him with his English classes.

On the Monday I spent a lovely few hours with members of the Executive including a delightful lunch GFS Hall. We talked about the world scene of GFS with many questions and answers. It made me realise that many GFS members around the world are not always conversant with what is happening in other GFS countries.



GFS Executive and Staff

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I visited the new GFS office opened in Dickoya, up in the beautiful hills in the tea country. The Parish church is very close and very supportive. Yet another group beginning here and again I was able to present them with their GFS membership badges. A mother and daughter – both Mothers Union leaders in the parish also accepted GFS membership. At each gathering a staff member from GFS Hall conducted a training program with activities linked to a bible study. They were great fun and thoroughly enjoyed.



Welcoming new member at Dickoya

On my last full day Jeanne and I travelled to the other diocese in Sri Lanka, Kurunegala. We spent time with the new Bishop and Jeanne was able to explain the project to him. As the project works in with much of his vision he was very interested and expanding it to his diocese and even introduced us to a member of his staff who he felt could act as Coordinator of the Project.



Meeting with Bishop Fernando

The American College of Higher Education has offices and training facilities in many different cities and areas and by contracting this organisation to run the English programs GFS is able to quickly organise new batches across many different areas.

I came away even more impressed with what is happening through this project. God has blessed GFS Sri Lanka with the awarding of this project. Because the choosing of young women to participate in the course is done through parishes, this means most of those in the courses are young Anglican women and by agreeing to become members of GFS, it is hoped that their interest will continue long after the course is completed and so grow GFS across Sri Lanka.

GFS Sri Lanka is willing to commit to extending the project well past the end date (July 2020). They are using the money so wisely and with such good accountability. We, as worldwide members need to continue to support the project and I ask you in these next 10 months to give generously to the project. The offertory at our World Day of Prayer Services (September) are expected to go to the World Project so I hope that countries will bring monies they have put aside at the WDOP celebrations to World Council next year. The project will end then as far as our financial responsibility but I know it will not end in Sri Lanka.

What has begun is bringing so much growth and acknowledgement to GFS Sri Lanka and it will continue if at all possible if we ensure funds are there for the future.

On behalf of GFS Sri Lanka I thank you for the gifts that have been received to enable this project to bring so much to young women and to GFS. I am grateful for the opportunity to visit and I have certainly been blessed by being able to observe so much of what is happening.

Thank you Sri Lanka GFS for making me so welcome and for all the interesting and fun times we had together.

(Canon) Val Gribble ML, GFS World Vice-President.

