



For immediate release

Canadians see new hope in Sri Lanka

Ottawa, February 25, 2011 -- Ten Canadian Co-operators have embarked on a Sri Lankan journey of discovery.

The 10, from co-operatives and credit unions across Canada, are mid-way through a study mission organized by the Canadian Co-operative Association and the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada. Already they have seen how Sri Lanka's credit union system, the SANASA Movement, has strengthened communities and transformed lives, and they are learning how CCA and CDF have been partners in that work for more than two decades.

In recent years Sri Lanka's international media coverage has been dominated by tragedy - the Tsunami of December 2004 which killed tens of thousands and a vicious and protracted civil war which caused widespread death and displacement over 25 years. The Canadian travelers are seeing a Sri Lanka that is very much at odds with that dismal past. The civil war has been over for more than a year, and stability is returning to the affected areas. The Tsunami is far from forgotten, yet coastal communities have rebuilt and life is moving on.

The participants are sharing their thoughts and experiences through an on-line blog. Nancy Cooper of Salmon Arm Savings and Credit Union in BC had these thoughts on the third and fourth days of the mission:

It is 2:30 am and I'm awake because my mind is full of everything we have seen here in Sri Lanka. I am so impressed by what has been accomplished by CCA and their partners, the SANASA Federation and Development Bank. In the last two days we visited 2 SANASA primary societies (credit unions) and one District Union. We are currently staying at the SANASA College campus.

The societies greeted us with warmth and appreciation for the Canadian contribution to SANASA and their communities. We saw that loans provided by the societies make a real difference to the standard of living of the members. In addition to offering savings and loans, they obviously put their members first by providing insurance schemes to cover funeral costs, a loan interest-free for 10 months, and an annual get-together for members. They have a pre-school and have recently opened a library as well. They don't just fund the needs of their members, but they fill the needs of members and their community.

To read more, go to <http://www.journeyoutofpoverty2011.blogspot.com/> or follow the link from CCA's web site www.coopscanada.coop

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The Canadian Co-operative Association is a national association for co-operatives in Canada, representing more than nine million co-operative and credit union members across the country. CCA members come from many sectors of the economy, including finance, insurance, agri-food and supply, wholesale and retail, housing, health and the service sector. CCA provides leadership to promote, develop, and unite co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world.

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