

**PILOT PROJECT REPORT  
WOMEN HEADED HOUSEHOLDS (WHH)  
IN  
CHANKANAI DIVISION**



**Background**

Sri Lanka is struggling to recover from three decades of war and at the same time, efforts at various levels are being focused to prevent future wars. The basic family unit needs to be strong towards this and due to high proportion of male deaths, disappearances and disabilities during the war, women in these families are facing the need to take over responsibility to lead the family. This requires serious restructure of basic family units at all levels so family values do not deteriorate due to male leadership being less visible.

Northern Province of Sri Lanka is strongly driven by the essence of Thesawalamai Customary Law. Majority citizens of Northern Province would naturally feel the rights and wrongs of their actions through Thesawalamai. Most of them would not be able to express their thoughts by consciously constructing them through Thesawalamai but they would know the essence of it through experience. This internal wisdom and natural transformation by identifying with the connection between cause and effect through the self is the special value of customary laws in communities that are driven strongly by faith. Given that as per our traditional structures and paths, mothers have developed more as feelers and fathers more as thinkers – recovery and sustainable progress need to come from within, in women headed families.

Mothers who do not complete their position duties, are likely to be distracted by benefits that are likely to come more quickly through the position of Head of Household and breadwinner rather than homemaker. Like with reverse discrimination, reverse role playing is a strong indicator of stagnation, tending towards backward movement. Women who take on the role of men would tend to neglect their own positions as mothers. On the other hand, where the woman completes her role as mother she would naturally feel ownership in the whole family and therefore be comfortable to serve and support the family through any position. This is the value of institutions and their structured positions. Hence the CEO and the Cleaner have equal/common share once they complete their position duties successfully and take the essence of that work into ownership and governance.

One who does her/his duty is a self-governing person. When we govern ourselves in our respective positions we contribute naturally to self-governance of the whole. The Council of NGOs has taken on the role of such a governance body. It needs to facilitate rather than Administer. Likewise a mother who has completed her position duties.

Those mothers who are yet to complete their position duties but are clever and active, tend to get distracted by more exciting positions especially those that indicate greater economic prosperity. Under such conditions, more is produced laterally, than better. This excessive lateral production is accelerated by easy handouts to 'show' quick economic outcomes, including in the case of some staff involved in the projects who may be more income driven than service driven. Such outcomes would not be sustained over the long-haul. Towards preventing such weaknesses – it is important to consciously structure the administrative and management positions of service providers firmly at all levels of the operation.

In terms of primary level beneficiaries, the tendency to get rather than earn, is confirmed by the survey outcomes – according to which majority claim that their income meets only 25% of their needs. How the primary level participants read the question and how they responded would vary as per the social strata of the group. In this instance the 'group' includes women who conducted the survey as well as those who interpreted the survey results. Likewise, how the same level of economic assistance is used by beneficiaries would vary as per their inner wisdom in managing their families. Employment of women to do the primary level work is an advantage in that it is easier for a woman to read another woman's mind than for a man to read a woman. At the higher levels – these diversities are lost consciousness of and hence we think in common at governance level.

Identifying with this is crucial in relation to women's rights and responsibilities as opposed to men's rights and responsibilities. Hence the importance of basic knowledge of Thesawalamai in relation to family structures in Northern Province. We have the need to preserve our natural diversity while developing commonness at the higher and wider levels.

Laws help us regulate our thoughts and think together. Practice of common laws and principles lead to harmony in the environment. Facilitating the woman to appreciate her natural leadership role in family and achieving sustainable progress without damaging the leadership of men (especially sons) in that family is a huge challenge that we the People of Northern Sri Lanka face.

The Council of Non Governmental Organizations (CNGOs) has undertaken from Diakonia, a pilot project to contribute towards identification of the current needs of families that have effectively lost male leadership, including due to the war. This report is as a result of that undertaking.

#### **A. Research Methodology**

A focus group within the Council of Non Governmental Organizations and beyond, was vested with the responsibility to conduct a Survey within Chankanai Division and produce a Report with suggested solutions. This project is expected to be a pilot project to be shared widely as a model.

Survey outcomes are expected to be studied through this Report, by the Executive Committee of the Council and thereafter shared with wider members of the Council and beyond with other partners and investors/stakeholders.

This would be followed by an interactive workshop to which all active participants are expected to contribute.

It is expected that each participant would derive her/his own value through this project, in addition to delivering as per the official role of the participant. The latter would contribute towards a common structure to be used by the Council and by other stakeholders/partners, including the information providers, the Government and donor agencies. The former would be naturally shared by the respective individuals in their home environments. To this extent the service provider also derives value simultaneously.

## **B. The Structure of the Group**

### **(i) Governance & Ownership**

The top layer of the group is made up of self-governors who share their strength naturally and /or through structured approach, including with those who have humanitarian need. They usually form the leadership layer and would be thus honoured in a reliable distribution of status. This layer represents the soul of the group and is made up of every natural 'owner' . One who willingly participates in the survey with the purpose of benefiting the whole is part of the governance group. On the other hand one who is in the management section without commitment to the whole – is a beneficiary and is not a service provider.

Given that majority participants are driven more by faith than by structured knowledge – an academic specialising in spiritual studies at the University of Jaffna has been included in the governance section.

### **(ii) The Strategic Structure**

The middle layer that connects the bottom and the top - is the mind of the group. Most active parts of the Council and its associates are within this group. The primary responsibility of this section is to develop appropriate structures that reflect the connection between the top and the bottom. Towards this, positions are structured above the humanitarian need level and below the self-governance level. Within this area, outcomes are measured on merit basis and requirements of each position are stipulated as position duties. The structure of family units would be a subset of this section – as if it were a model.

#### **(a) Top Down:**

As per the initial plans of the CNGOs the data collection and analysis team included the following:

- INS & GD Executive Director - Head of the team
- Divisional Secretary of Chankanai DS Divison
- Women Development Officer of Chankanai DS Division
- An Academic Person with economics background
- Another active NGO representative active in the Division
- Samurthi Officer

(b) Bottom Up:

On the other side of this team are the Survey participants who are mostly from bottommost social layer and they provided the basic information – taken as ‘facts’ unless / until known otherwise. Information is fact when at least one of the participants contributes through the wisdom of true experience. This need not necessarily be the bottom-line participant/least active contributor but could be from the top layer/s with stronger intellectual investment in the core issue. The bottom-line participants are the parallels of ‘voters’ in a democratic governance system. This layer drives the ‘form’ / ‘body’ of the suggested solutions – not necessarily by what has been said by them but more by what has been gleaned through the interaction, as being a true need. This need itself may not be the need of the bottom-line participant but rather the need of the service provider to develop its side of the service. Where such is the case – success of the project is known through the identification of the real need of the beneficiary for ongoing living as an extension of their current life rather than starting a new path. Towards this, it is important not to upset the current structures in relation to social positions through quick handouts to the better / clever presenters. Life must go on as usual after our project.

A proportion within this layer, do have humanitarian need. In this instance, humanitarian need is taken as one that requires government assistance to raise the basic economic level of the citizen to be in par with the national minimum. This level is identified with, through the last two sections of the survey. The second last question is ‘other requests’ by the bottom-line participant. The last section is for the observations of the Survey Officer. The dignity of the whole group is affected by the minimum standard of the bottom-line section and needs assessed through these two sections are to be consolidated and categorised as priority one.

Ideally all resources made available to beneficiaries above the level of humanitarian need, need to be facilities accessible on Equal Opportunity basis rather than handouts / donations as per the thinking of the donors.

Usually, members of the bottommost layers would tend not to include others in their thinking but would tend to express their desires and needs as per their own thinking based on their Truth as well as hearsay especially in relation to what they could expect from aid agencies including the government. Their Truth becomes the natural driving force and it would naturally merge vertically with the Energy of the service providers and spread laterally with other genuine folks with needs at their social level. At that level therefore, service providers would need to eliminate desires and assess humanitarian needs only as per the

Truth. The humanitarian need is best channelled through local government authorities rather than central government administrators.

Chairman of the Valikamam West Pradeshiya Sabha, has also been included in the focus group, as the Sabha is made up of elected members and therefore has faith-based influence with their communities at all levels.

The desires expressed would need to be consciously regulated to identify key areas of motivation to work actively – especially for the younger generation. This area ideally needs to be managed by partnership between Divisional Secretariat and NGOs such as INS GD actively working in the field. The Divisional Secretariat would focus on the Administrative aspect of this structure and the NGOs on the Business/ Economic aspects.

### (iii) The Process

The project is divided into the stages:

1. Formation of Focus Group
2. Conduct of Survey
3. Preparation of Preliminary Report
4. Interactive Workshop based on the Report and how it is interpreted by various participants
5. Consolidated Report setting out the pathway of the Proposed Actions
6. Sharing with wider community and receiving ongoing feedback

Discussions through the workshop – when managed effectively, would help merger of the minds of the Government representatives in the team with private sector NGOs and wider social justice organisations towards expansion and wholesomeness.

### **C. Research findings and analysis**

The Survey was the main primary level activity through which direct information was gathered to identify with the needs of the primary level participants. Such needs are categorised as follows:

1. Economic
2. Human Resource
3. Ownership

Taking the group as a whole, Service Providers and Service Receivers / Beneficiaries would complete each other. That's when that group as a whole would become self-sufficient. Majority participants providing base information have stated that their level of financial sufficiency is around 25%. The question is as to how they currently manage to make ends meet ? Majority participants at this level demonstrated a clear lack of vision as to their future.

The task ahead at this level is to eliminate desire based expectations and identify with the core needs – through a combination of the expressions of the participants and the quiet assessment of the service provider through her/his own genuine connection with the beneficiary as if the latter is a part of her/himself. Hasty calculations based on the information provided by the primary level

participants as is – would be misleading and leave idle immovable assets or wastage of movable assets.

More importantly – the opportunity to connect at the higher human level and to develop our human resources would not be recognized when projects are closed at economic level.

Ideally at planning stage itself we need to outline the expected outcomes as follows:

1. Economic outcomes
2. Human Resource outcomes
3. Ownership values

Contributions from various sections of the focus group are expected to be included towards formulating the key performance indicators of each category.

Our Research methodology was/is driven by our discovery that work produces values categorized mainly as :

- Money & Physical level pleasures
- People (Status + Goodwill)
- Ownership

Ownership is the highest value of our work. Money and People help us get there. When we stay within the boundaries of our ownership work, we deliver natural solutions.

When we feel ownership we become the issue and hence are able to feel the real problems and opportunities within the whole. Within one whole – there are equal opportunities to the problems- The rest do not belong in that whole. Hence where it is necessary to show and use outcomes/solutions, it is important to complete the picture at that level by adding and/or removing problems or opportunities. Hence Devolution of Power through which lower level outcomes could be shown, used and owned.

It was found that at village level due to lack of structured devolution from the layers above, there was often conflict between the managers and the managed. Most villagers tended to be driven by ‘physical custody’ rather than by intellectual ownership. Hence power continues to be controlled through physical custody – as in the saying ‘Possession is nine tenths ownership.’

This has special significance in women headed families, where a mother tends to ‘**possess**’ and control rather than feel and influence naturally. The parallel of that in society is controlled rule by ‘keeping’ the **voter** close to the politician – by hook or by crook. At Administrative level it is expressed by showing **rules** made on the run on the basis of personal thinking of the administrator without roots to common law and principles. Many donations are idling due to this possession based hoarding. Most villagers are not able to think beyond their local circles. Women’s circles in Sri Lanka tend to be smaller than men’s and hence women headed families and institutions have the risk of ‘hoarding’ by excessive receipts, production and possession at the level they are comfortable with.

The solution is lateral spread so we learn from other women beyond our families first followed by women from the district, province, other parts of the nation and beyond. Where donor agencies beyond our national borders are more committed to this kind of lateral sharing, we may bypass the intermediary to become global. Where a good proportion of women from a village emigrated and function independently and

inclusively they become the natural sources towards such globalization. Conscious efforts by aid agencies to help each village harness this natural source – would go a long way towards achieving this connection.

Once we realize complete ownership through a particular environment, we would feel ownership of that issue in any environment. It's like a person realizing God through a particular religion being able to feel God in any spiritual environment. Hence the importance of Projects under the system of democracy. Projects when completed become the models through which we feel the whole program without having to wait for the completion of the program. .

Ownership helps us absorb as our own, weaknesses in our environment, and hence we do not 'see' them but feel them intuitively. Hence subjective support for family, community and nation. The lesser the benefits and opportunities we derive from the activity, the greater the experience.

When a parent with high credit with the outside world, absorbs the weaknesses of the child the world would see only one family through the parent. If the parent does not have substance to support that high credit / status, then society starts seeing the child as an individual and not as so and so's child. It is therefore important for the parent to do 'internal' work – largely through the faith media, to keep the child under the family umbrella. Likewise, countries participating in the United Nations' agenda to eliminate all forms of unjust discrimination. Subjective discrimination beyond the limits of our faith in the other lead to abuse of power through unjust discrimination.

We are all born with sovereignty. Hence they say that we all have god within us. One therefore does not have subjective authority over another except when one includes the other as part of oneself – as in family. Until we become family, we need to relate through our respective positions. Hence where one lacks this power of inclusiveness / ownership – one needs to consciously use the system of Democracy driven by objectively measurable outcomes so that we would treat each other with respect of 'outsiders'.

In marriage and immigration, this process of absorbing others weaknesses is more difficult especially in environments that promote Equal Opportunity principles and therefore promote transparency. In both instances one needs to consciously use the objective system where one knows that one has reached one's maximum level of inclusiveness / ownership.

Educating our women in this regard would help prevent / reduce internal conflict.

### **Two routes to ownership – through paths bounded by Time and Space**

The two routes to ownership which is the ultimate value of all our work, are:

1) **Lateral** collective path of going with majority through observation of physical outcomes and therefore through many forms – each one standing alone and speaking for itself – in a lateral spread. In this path time is lost consciousness of and only the current outcomes are recognized. This is the political path in democracy. In this political path what happened is given greater importance than why it happened. There are no rights and wrongs to this one but when majority votes are faith based the path leads us naturally and leads to automatic passive harmony.

2) **Vertical** Individual path through direct experience, intellectual analysis and faith in those who have had the experience before oneself. This is time based. The form through which we see the issue is the form that is at the top (leader's form), of a vertically stacked memory. This is the judicial path. The government formed through majority vote delegates its power to those in Administrative positions at the higher level and this system functions through the process of rights and wrongs. The **vertical** hierarchical process through which one is appointed on merit basis gives the occupier of the highest position in that institution at that time and place, the authority to represent the whole institution/community for that purpose defined by the position.

Once we reach our goal of ownership, we would be comfortable with either path. They actually merge as Energy at each common milestone and then separate to merge ultimately at the goal where we are free of all money and status limits and become the issue. Once we become the issue we comfortably structure the environment by finding matching opportunities to equal the problems that are identified. That's called Peace at breakeven level. Working towards reaching this level for the issue is the responsibility of the Governing Council. The role of Global Government ends there. People within those demarcations must then seek and find their individual and group balances by underpinning their unexpressed common beliefs to their expressed common values. In many countries driven by faith, the absence of unexpressed common belief in the valuation often leads to ineffective solutions that fail quickly.

It is important that at each milestone, we lose consciousness of the benefits earned so far, but take forward only the net value of our work as ownership. Benefits carried outside the environments of the custodians of benefits become heavy baggage. Ownership work helps us participate fully in any environment – as part of the environment. It's work we do for ourselves – to derive value for our own satisfaction which would naturally communicate to all those who have faith in us.

Setting these milestones and restructuring our thoughts to fit the higher path is important to allocate status in relation to the issue – so investors at various levels could participate as per their identity with the outcomes produced. Those who come closest to the goal of gender/racial equality or human / national commonness need to be recognized as those of highest status. When this is not done, custodians of power often block the path to this goal, due to low priority status being allocated to this issue. Many wars including the one in Sri Lanka, would have been prevented if these milestones had been defined and status duly allocated to help prioritize access to common resources. Towards this, all work towards the goal of gender/racial equality or human / national commonness must be brought into conscious merit based assessment.

### **Why do we need Gender / Racial Equality?**

Democracy with objectively measurable outcome based assessments uses space based boundaries before time based boundaries. The main feature of Democracy is Equal status for all those who are not covered by specific merit based assessment. When we are at equal height, counting for collective power becomes easy. In a near perfect democracy, there would be no subjective assessment whatsoever. This however would come at the cost of vertical progress based on intellectual mental assessment. Subjective assessment is Mental assessment which when based on intellectual analysis contributes to substance growth and when based on common experience and hence customary habits and culture – contributes to maintenance of past values – good as well as bad and hence the 'structure' of the old systems. When new form is given by those who add substance to a greater level than the value of the above maintainers – the old form and their maintainers are overridden with the new subjective assessors.

Subjective assessment is part of institutional/family life and would continue to exist so long as we desire and/or need status. Needs based subjective assessment is a human right, because rights are for people and not for inanimate property. This 'needs' factor contributes to the health of the issue when it remains subjective. It's the wisdom channel in strong families.

Desire based status contains and assessment carry high risk of unjust discrimination factor. This part must be consciously separated and be required to be strictly on the basis of Objective outcomes and measures. In summary – needs based assessment needs to be subjective and desire based assessment needs to be objective.

The best relationship through which a commoner could relate to the values of Equality is marriage. Through marriage we desire to see each other as 'equals' to enjoy the benefits of marriage immediately – without needing to be assessed on the basis of our respective past. Dowry or Bride -Price as per the respective cultures was given to bring the side seen to be lower, to the equal level. Once parents and other family elders stop

being able to blindly influence young ones, it is important for the young ones to have their own independent life – and this is achieved largely through marriage – which through creation of children confirms the Natural Equality of opposite forms combining to create wholesome new. Marriage is the closest example of the need for partnerships between opposite looking people to become wholesome (global), sustain themselves and carry forward the essence of their work into the future. With the benefit of marriage we see faults in us through the mirror of our Equal spouse – eye to eye. This is space based learning and leads to becoming wholesome and hence ownership and creation.

With those who are connected to us by birth, we have the tendency to cover up consciously or subconsciously. Hence marriages within biological circles limit us to time based learning. Often when our own young ones 'show' those qualities as young adults it's too late to correct ourselves to derive higher values to support our life. Hence the need to spread laterally beyond space boundaries. In terms of Women Headed Households – this is often promoted through women's associations spreading beyond the local area.

### **Subjective Path of the Hierarchical system**

Time & Space are the limiting boundaries through which we give 'form' to our feelings and thoughts. Subjective system is based largely on time and Objective system is based largely on space. When we have common experiences through one family, institution, race, caste, nation etc, through a subject, our memory of that experience tends to be in 'one form' common to that group. Hence under the vertical system, objectively measurable outcomes are not produced at the individual level, lower in the hierarchy. The values of individuals in that group are received by the leader and remembered through the leader's form by future generations. Any 'form' given at the lower levels blocks this path in the mind of the person producing and the person seeing. Due process therefore is a strong part of the subjective system. Anyone who produces independent outcomes / judgments of rights and wrongs at the process stage are therefore acting in breach of this one final outcome system. Subjective path is the accelerated learning path. Through faith as the foundation – we connect to the essence of the work of the Subject and travel with the subject to produce one outcome.

In terms of Women Leadership – groups that are used to Male Leadership would tend to reject female leadership – especially where majority in a group are men and/or favour male leadership. Under such circumstances it would be good to focus on women leadership largely in areas where majority heads of households are women. In the alternative, educational seminars and workshops could be conducted to carry on with male leadership mentally, whilst using the female leader at the highest level to keep within our position as males and not intrude into female territory and therefore into those positions held by women.

The subjective path is the path through which we share Energies with the senior taking responsibility and the junior feeling grateful. When this is achieved - it becomes the express pathway to common ownership.

### **Objective Assessment of the Democratic system**

Under this system, it's important to consciously recognize when we are not able to start off with faith but have our own independent and different form in mind at the point of commencement. Unless therefore we are separated from the leading subject from that point onwards, we are likely to have conflicts or feel suppressed and depressed. Hence the need for the Objective system through which the whole outcome is divided into two (male and female heads of families; Operational and Administrative heads of Institutions and government and opposition; Executive and Judiciary) with each one producing their own form of outcome independent of the other to produce common value to reflect the common policy that both started off with, but in diverse form – as in woman and man.

Outcomes that do not confirm the common policy are discarded and the net outcome from the two side outputs is produced as the common value. The side that contributes more than 50% of the outcome is the leader – as through majority vote. There are no rights and wrongs calculated as per the subjects or processes

that led to the production of the outcomes until known through the outcome that they are in breach of fundamental principles. Only final checks are done as to whether they fit the original common policy. The outcomes are not enforced but stand on their own rights and are left to be used by all investors. Users would make their own judgments and choose the outcome that they best identify with. Hence someone who has been 'failed' locally may be passed with high distinction by an outsider. When that happens – that person naturally moves to the side that passed the person with high distinction. These are forces that strengthen the group naturally. Any blocks to this path would be undemocratic and would be unjust if the block was influenced subjectively without faith – consciously or subconsciously.

Space based limits help produce objectively measurable outcomes which are stored in our memory. When we walk into a group where majority have similar form to ourselves, we naturally feel empowered / motivated to participate/work. Hence majority vote decisions sit naturally with such groups and are easy to work. This is the preferred path for local / domestic decisions. Hence election of politicians through the voting system. These grow laterally, the highest level being the level of the leader. This is also the path of the mother in traditional families and hence so long as the family remains local – this leadership which is similar to leadership of elected politicians – would work in harmony with itself and its environment.

It is important that such women leaders are not 'appointed' to administrative positions that connect the group to wider world. It is even more important that conscious merit based assessment is made where such a woman leader is of junior caste. The adverse effects of this could be observed in parts of Chankanai Division where the survey activity was conducted.

If the leader does not seek to partner others outside the group, the group's diversity/globalization is limited. That would be like marrying within the family. Hence immigration/marriage partnerships which are cross cultural need to be at equal level so as not to kill diversity.

#### **Direct Experience based Belief**

Belief through direct experience is the path of the independent. The independent person does not believe anything without having had the experience. Such a person would have transcended money and status desires. One who follows such a person with faith is also independent to the extent of that faith.

Sometimes there is unexpected and unplanned pain for which there is no benefit possible – (for example unexpected loss of a life) or for which one is not able to or does not attribute a visible outside reason. Acceptance of that pain and loss without taking revenge through direct action, converts that pain and/or loss into belief. It needs faith to accept and when accepted it strengthens belief in Natural Powers. When the compensation for that pain is expected from another source and/or from the same source at another time – there is belief in the subject, including oneself..

When such costs/losses are pooled in common without expectations of return at a later time and/or source(person) it is a contribution to ownership of the whole. Hence we become that. Hence the Hindu principle of universality - "Tat TvamAsi / 'Thou Art That'."

#### **D. Development of Solution**

##### **Past, Present and Future**

The primary section represents our future as in the younger generation. The body of the solution needs to be as per primary section. Hence the solution needs to be interpreted in the language understood by the primary information providers and the young adults in those families.

The Past: The discoveries of one generation become the starting point for the next generation. These discoveries by our generation need to be structured as laws, theories and common institutional values. Where the existing laws, theories and institutional values are strong and functional, our discoveries would go towards confirming and strengthening them and to give them contemporary forms. This tends to happen when the current generation actively practiced their inherited common values.

The Eternal Present: The spirit of the solution is from the governors at all levels. They Energize the group and where self- governance is stronger at the bottom than at the top – service providers need to become facilities rather than administrations. Each one of us would contribute to this layer to varying degrees. It's the ownership layer and like the Present has no visible form. Governance, like the Present connects our inherited values (past) to the values we hand over to our next generation (future). Those who are attached to their past tend to stagnate and this has the risk of depression – seen eventually through economic depression. Those who live through tomorrows that never come – tend to live in imaginary worlds and hallucinate. Those who live in the present on the platform of their past would carry strong Energy that is shared naturally with their current environments. They would show least economic stagnation or hoarding.

The mind of the solution – is a combination of the past and the future. This is made up of the current observations made by all layers from various angles plus the essence of previous experience (wisdom) residing as inner memory of the participants. Latter is the foundation on which the current observations are received. When the Spirit is strong and deep, the solution will develop from within – as in self-realisation.

Where service providers are more active than service receivers – firm administrative structures need to be in place. Where the commitment of distant service providers is greater than the commitment of those within the local area – Administration needs to be more democratic and outcome based as in projects.

Where the commitment of local area service providers is greater than the commitment of those outside the local area – Administration needs to be more subjective and program based to bring minds together rather than showing specific outcomes.

#### **E. Case Studies**

As part of the Survey, a couple of case studies were undertaken to enable easier connection with the above mentioned structured principles and values.

##### **1. A war widow with two children – aged 6 and 12.**

This family underwent much trauma through displacement to Vanni area. The husband was forcibly recruited by the LTTE and was later killed. The wife was unemployed at the time of death of her husband. They were a united couple and the wife misses very much the partnership of her young husband. Her parents are now very supportive and the widow is currently a field worker in Health Service. In addition, the widow undertakes tailoring assignments and other odd jobs and earns a small amount to complement her main income. Given that the widow values her husband and relates to his memory in a healthy manner, it feels as if the children

continue to have a father. Other males in the family – especially the brothers of the widow are also additional models filling this paternal role. Essential towards this, is the maintenance of the memory of the father as being a dutiful parent who took care of this family.

The widow is helped in this regard by her participation in the temple activities – through which she appreciates that those who die are able to lead us from above, provided we contribute towards releasing their spirit from worldly attachments towards merging with God. This contribution at the visible level is largely through memorial services and in the Hindu religion that this widow belongs to, it is also through the chanting of Sivapuranam. Lord Shiva is believed by Hindus to be the Lord of the mind and a mind that is steadied by Truth helps us to live through the soul. Hence the chanting of Sivapuranam especially during memorial services to honour those who have passed away. Regular participation in group prayers helps this young widow believe that she is accessing her husband's Guidance – especially in relation to her children. As a family they regularly pay their respects to their father whom they can no longer see through the body. But given that the commitment of the widow to her position as wife is strong, they are able to see their father through their insight / third eye and this empowers them from within.

The young widow is more or less economically self-sufficient and from time to time is assisted by donor agencies by providing interest free loans.

In terms of Human Resources – the widow is part of an extended family and this has been of enormous strength – quiet internal strength which is not usually found in smaller units of similar cultural background.

Where the community is made up of strongly structured families – which is usually found in the more educated higher caste sections of Tamil society – small units would tend to be self-sufficient. But in communities that are made up of loosely structured families – which is usually the case with lesser educated lower caste sections of our society - one needs extended families to be self-sufficient.

Caste based hierarchy is currently not as obvious as it used to be in Northern Sri Lanka. But in less structured areas, the need for this hierarchy continuous to be felt but without relationship to the type of work being performed. If efforts were made to structure this hierarchy through secular measures – such as hygiene, respect for seniors etc. – this would minimise the risk of reverse discrimination once the lower caste become more money rich than the higher caste living in their local area. This widow tends to be respectful of the toddy tappers in her local area, who continue to tap toddy for their living. This confirms belief in her land and its powers through traditional settlers of that area. This respect for reasonable hierarchy has helped her progress well in her career.

The way forward for this widow would be continuation of strong participation in spiritual activities which help lose consciousness of divisions due to gender, age, caste etc. This would lead to her filling the gap at the physical level – of the father's position for her children. The higher the level of our thinking the less we discriminate on the basis of subjective 'looks'.

Facilities to develop common schools of Human Values would greatly assist this category of women headed households.

## 2. A woman leading the family of husband and two young-adult children

As recognized in the Terms of Reference for this project, '*Women Headed Households in the District prevail even from pre-war era.*' Likewise we find them all over the world – even at the highest social levels. What usually happens is that when both husband and wife are living – the wife as the more attractive partner leads the husband during the initial stages of a marriage. During the middle stage – when the family is more focused

on progressing in the material world and seeks high social positions, the husband as the breadwinner and status earner leads the family. At the tertiary stage women usually take over leadership especially where the husband who tends to be older in age – experiences physical weaknesses and therefore needs the woman's leadership at the physical level.

Eventually in a balanced family the physical and mental leadership is shared more or less equally. This balance is important with families driven by visible wealth. On the other hand, where at least one spouse is a strong contributor to common values of the family – it matters not who is seen to be the leader.

The second case study is of a family within the former category but is yet to reach that balance of equal power sharing over the whole period of their relationship. The leadership of this family from a disenfranchised group was taken over by the hard working and clever lady. Economically also, the family progressed due to the lady's efforts. This economic growth was not matched by higher structures that would sustain vertical growth to merge with higher income earners in wider society – especially those who have held higher social positions through contribution into the common value pool. The lady usually tended to 'tell' by assuming higher status due to greater money power.

As per the system of karma which majority in our group believe in, whatever we do comes back to us and the longer it takes for the return to come back, the greater the changes to the form of such return. It's on similar base to compounded interest. The lower our level of operation, the quicker the return – as in business. Due to the lady openly dominating over her husband, her son did not have proper leadership at the physical level.

The system of Thesawalamai clearly distinguishes between the role of daughters and sons. This is extended to economic level where wealth inherited by a daughter is called Seethanam (Dowry) and wealth inherited by the son is called Muthusum. The timing of handover is also different. Males are groomed to take over greater share of family responsibility to maintain the good status of a family and improve on it. It is believed that this is strongly supported by faith in male ancestors.

In families where the lady dominates openly, sons are likely to lose the motivation to follow their fathers. In turn this is likely to weaken their own investment in becoming a father and therefore head of family. Such sons tend to be disrespectful of family structures and common values and tend to enjoy pleasures through engagement with the opposite sex, without commitment to marriage and family. This has been the case with the above family resulting in separation of the son from the family, organized by the mother to avoid embarrassment with her community.

Ultimately others' opinions and assessments of us is temporary. What matters is how we assess ourselves. When a son is prematurely enthroned by the mother – the son enjoys the pleasures and then separates from the family.

The suggested solution is to continue to relate to the father through the position we develop within. A good child naturally develops a good father within. A good wife naturally develops a good husband within. Positions help us give form to this inner person we have developed through our own work and sacrifices. Hence we are never alone when we look within for support – energy support.

### **3. A woman leading the family of five due to disability suffered by the husband**

The body is like a machine and one must therefore expect various ailments to the body. There are some who accept disability as part of life whilst there are others whose minds deteriorate when they are physically ill. The mind has the ability to expand or shrink the real pleasure or pain. Men tend to have difficulty accepting disability more than women. Alcoholism is a disease that leads to accelerated deterioration of the brain. The

brain's ability to discriminate right from wrong is essential for the mind to be steady. The root of our thoughts is Truth. Truth grounds us because when Truth is manifested to the physical level – there is an equal and opposite benefit to every unit of cost. It when one side is separated from the other through time and space movements –that we are not able to see this complete picture of two equal and opposite parts. But most of us know through our experience – for example we work and we know that we would receive income for that work.

The mind of an alcoholic is not strong enough to control the body and hence the ability to cure through our Natural Energies is weakened. The problem / disease must go to the brain and the stronger the natural energy – the stronger the cure and the quicker it travels to the diseased part to heal itself.

The woman heading this household says she manages with the little that her husband gives her and that she makes up by doing odd jobs. She has borrowed money on high interest which she refers to as 'meter interest' and is continuously worried about the debt. This lady borrows from Peter to Pay Paul – and it's a never ending chain. But the elder two children who were facilitated towards high school education are currently idling at home.

Such women tend to accept alcoholism because they themselves often fail to manage with the little they have. Hence it becomes a story of the pot calling the kettle black. Women who consciously fight against their own parallel weaknesses would have the Energy to fight against alcoholism in their men. Without this the daughters are likely to resign themselves to fate and the sons are likely to follow in their fathers' footsteps.

Active sharing in managing resources would help cure both their problems.

#### **F. Conclusion**

Women become Heads of Households due to a number of diverse reasons. One solution does not fit all. But at the fundamental level – women are feelers and hence have deeper intuitive connection with their families.

Humanitarian Services are below the level of calculations and are intuition based. Diplomatic Services are beyond/above calculations. Humanitarian Services are those that satisfy the **needs** of the people being served. Diplomats are the highest providers of that service. A nation's calculated services are in the middle – as the medium through which these services flow. Humanitarian Services by any organization therefore need to be limited to the strength of its Diplomatic Service. All services between these two points need to be structured through structured positions through which one could work and contribute beyond the current occupier.

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