



NEWS RELEASE

Canada provides new Women's Resource Centre for Matara

Matara – **03/03/2009** – Adding to the beauty of the southern coastal landscape, a new Women's Resource Centre was declared open on the 03rd of March 2009 in Kasiwattapura, Polhena Matara by Mr. Calvin R. Piggott, First Secretary (Development) of the Canadian High Commission. *Centring Women in Reconstruction and Governance in Sri Lanka*, is a three year project, providing CDN CAD\$968,422 to rebuild and empower the lives of women in the Tsunami affected communities in Moratuwa and Matara. The project is implemented by the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC) Canada with funding from the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

His Worship S. W. Upul Nishantha, the Mayor of Matara, handed over the keys to the Resource Centre to Ms. M. Sudharma, President of the Jaya Shakthi Forum of Kasiwattapura, highlighting women's ownership of the project and their responsibility towards its sustainability. This Resource Centre is a result of the Centering Women in Reconstruction and Governance Project (Viru Vanitha Project) implemented by the Sevanatha Urban Resource Centre, in partnership with the Matara Municipal Council, ICSC, Builders Without Borders Canada and GROOTS International, a women's networking NGO, based in India and other countries of the developing world.

Speaking at the occasion Mr. Piggott said: "This beautiful new building will serve as a safe place for the community to organize, exchange information, receive livelihood training and education and offer crucial support services. It provides an excellent working environment for women to strengthen their operational and managerial skills by responding to the community's economic and social needs." Mr. Piggott further stated that "This is a unique example of successful collaborative action of the community and the Municipal Council. This model could be replicated in other Municipal Councils to support communities to enhance their contribution to development, and the empowerment of women in the political process."

The project has achieved an improvement in governance by ensuring that women, their families and their communities have an active voice in decision making at the local government level. It has also built the capacity of local authorities to engage grassroots women and respond to their needs. The project provides livelihood training related to urban agriculture/greening, green design and solid waste management and contributes towards an improved environment. Training, education and mobilization activities are also delivered from Community Resource Centres established by the project in collaboration with local authorities.

As a result, there is increased involvement of women in community development work, and greater collaboration between the community and local government representatives. Through the establishment of development societies, there is better coordination within the communities. Furthermore, there is a distinct enhancement in access to savings and credit facilities by the recipient communities.

Other dignitaries also in attendance at the opening ceremony were Mr. C. N. Withanachchi – Municipal Commissioner of Matara, Mr. D. G. Ranjith Yasaratne – Deputy Mayor of Matara, Mr. N. B. V. Nabavi – Opposition Leader of Matara, and Dr. K. A. Jayaratne, President of Sevanatha.

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Photos:



The new Women's Resource Centre in Kasiwattapura



Mr. Calvin R. Piggott unveiling the plaque. The Honorable Mayor of Matara and other dignitaries are Also in the picture



Mr. Calvin R. Piggott handing over the keys to the Resource centre to the Honorable Mayor of Matara