

JOURNEY TO SRI LANKA

■ CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS

CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION

Humans are social by nature. We need each other. Like the early disciples, we are called to come together and grow as a community—whether in our classroom, workplace or family.

ENCOUNTER CHRISTYAN

Christyan DhathCroos is from a farming village in Sri Lanka, but he spent half of his life in India. He and his family fled there during Sri Lanka's civil war. He was only 14 years old when they left. When he returned to his homeland 16 years later, Christyan was 30, and the family farm was in shambles. He and his father found their fields covered in trees and filled with rocks. With a wife and family to provide for, Christyan needed help.

For a refugee, returning home after so many years can be challenging. That's why CRS is helping Christyan and others like him rebuild their lives. That means helping to clear overgrown sections of farmland and ensuring those farms have access to water. Christyan is now growing rice, pumpkin and peanuts. Because of the assistance from CRS, Christyan can give his family things he never had.

Things like education. Because his family was always fleeing violence during the war, Christyan never completed school. "I want to make sure my three children are educated," he says. "That's my dream. No one in our family has finished their education, but I know my children will."

Christyan's dream is coming true. With the profits from the family's farm, Christyan can send his 4-year-old son, Godwin, to a private Catholic preschool. It's worth the money to Christyan to help Godwin achieve his dream of becoming a scientist.

Christyan isn't just teaching his family that they can achieve their dreams with the help of a good education—he's also making sure they understand the importance of helping others. "When we had nothing, CRS came and helped us, and now we have what we need. We should help others too."



Photo by Jeff Heit for CRS

SHARE THE JOURNEY

If refugees are able to return home, they often must rebuild what has been destroyed of their lives. That's why they need support to begin again.

FACTS TO CONSIDER

Population: 22,409,381

Size: 65,610 square miles; slightly larger than West Virginia

- As Sri Lanka continues to recover from a decades-long civil war and the devastating effects of recurrent natural disasters, including the 2004 tsunami, CRS has focused on rebuilding and helping those displaced after the war.
- CRS' Puthiya Vidiyal, or "New Dawn" project, supports safe and dignified lives for families who have returned to Sri Lanka after living in camps in Tamil Nadu, India, by strengthening agriculture livelihoods, training in employable skills, reducing violence and obtaining civil documents.
- Through Caritas, CRS sponsors the National Peace Program, designed to bring people together from across ethnic and religious divides to ease tensions that were the roots of the civil war.



For downloadable photos, visit crsricebowl.org/photos and watch a video about Christyan at crsricebowl.org/stories.