

From: "Lakshmi de Zoysa"
Date: February 21, 2008
To: Bhante Gunaratana
Cc: "Mallika Samaranayake"

Our Day in Maladeniya, Conducting the Participatory Wealth and Wellbeing Ranking

The Trustees of the Sri Henepola Gunaratana Scholarship Trust (SHGST) decided to select students for scholarships with funds which had been collected and donated to Bhante Gunaratana by his Dāyakayas at the Bhāvanā Society, together with a few additional donations from Sri Lanka. The Trustees decided to use the “*Participatory Wealth and Well-being Ranking*” methodology in order to select the poorest in a particular area. The Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), where Mrs. Mallika Samaranayake is Chairperson, specializes in this method. The Board chose Maladeniya Village to select the students, where the proposed Computer centre will also be located. Therefore, the Trustees spoke to Ven. Wimalajothi, the Head Monk of “Sri Wijayarama Poyamalu Vihara” of Maladeniya, and sought his help for this task.

Ven. Wimalajothi handed over the Householders list obtained from the Village Headman of the area, to the Trustees. This list included all the families of the two Grama Niladhari Divisions (GNDs) in the Maladeniya area. The Trustees invited about 90 people to participate in the “Participatory Assessment Process” (PAP), in order to identify the poorest in the area. Since there are two GNDs in the area, they had to select 30 people from each area. And there were about 530 families in both GNDs. A random sample of 90 was selected for the Wealth and Well-being Ranking exercise from the householder’s list. Ms. Mallika Samaranayake sent letters to the 90 selected people and asked them to participate in the event on the 1st December 2007. She sent a list of names of people who got selected to Ven. Wimalajothi, as well.

On the 1st of December 2007, Ms. Mallika Samaranayake, Ms. Lakshmi de Zoysa, the Administrative Assistant Shanika Colonne traveled from Colombo to Maladeniya. Four employees from Ms. Mallika Samaranayake’s office including Mr. Tissa Samaranayake, Ms. Padmini Mutucumarana, Mr. D. B. Rambodagedera and Mr. Thishan Lakmal accompanied them in this trip to help in the work. They arrived at the Maladeniya Temple around 10.00 a.m., and most of the invited people were already present in the hall of the Maladeniya Temple. The Trustees met with Ven. Wimalajothi and the two Grama Niladaris (GN) of the area, Mr. D. M. A. W. R. Dassanayake and Mr. P. M. M. Jayasinghe, from Maladeniya and Kahapathwala respectively, were introduced to the Trustees by Ven. Wimalajothi. As most of the people who were invited had turned up at the temple by then, the Trustees decided to start the work.

Ven. Wimalajothi, the Trustees, the two GNs got together with the people at the main hall of the Maladeniya Temple. First the crowd observed The Five Precepts. After that Ven. Wimalajothi introduced the Trustees and members of Ms. Mallika Samaranayake’s office to the people. Then Ms. Mallika Samaranayake addressed the gathering. First, she created awareness about the SHGST. She stated that the SHGST

has 9 Trustees and Bhante Gunaratana who is living in the United States and is the Mahanayke Thera there of the Bhāvanā Society and the Forest Meditation Retreat in West Virginia, hoped to help his villages. She stated that we came to do a wealth and well-being ranking of the Malandeniya area households. She explained how they have been selected for today's event. She explained that Ven. Wimalajothi gave the Trustees, the household list which was given to him by the GNs of the area. She further explained as to how the heads of every 8th household or every 3rd household, for example, were selected to get a random sample for this task. Ms. Mallika Samaranayake thanked the people for responding to the letters. In her speech, she also noted that we hope to establish a "Computer Learning Centre" at the Malandeniya Temple. After she concluded her speech, the work began.

As the first step, people were asked how they identify the poorest among them and for what reasons. Ms. Mutucumarana wrote the answers on a Chart on the wall. The answers were as follows. They are families:

- with disabled people
- affected by sickness
- with no permanent income
- Unemployed people
- Labourers who work for daily wages
- who don't have their own land and work in other people's land on share-cropping basis.
- with no land, neither "highland" nor "lowland"
- without permanent houses / living in other people's homes / living in Kajan huts / thatched houses
- who cannot afford to educate their children
- where circumstances make it difficult for children to study and drop out from school
- Women headed families
- with children living with the father or caretakers having lost the mother
- uneducated families
- with a large number of dependants
- with people above 60 years of age

Then people were asked as to whom they describe as average income category and the answers were follows. They are families:

- who have Three-wheelers
- who have mobile phones
- who have push bicycles or motor cycles
- with half-built or incomplete houses
- courageous hard working people who don't wait for charity or handouts
- doing micro enterprises / mini business / traders
- doing jobs with small salaries (i.e. garment factory workers, coir workers)
- with members who have gone abroad for employment (i.e. Middle East)
- who have half built houses
- who have 1/4 - 1 acre of high land, which is suitable for building a house

- who have no lowlands / paddy land, and who therefore cannot cultivate their own crops but must work on other's land and share the produce

People who are subject to these conditions were identified by the people as very poor people. Then people were asked as to whom they describe as people with the highest standard of living or rich. The following were the answers. They are families:

- with permanent jobs
- who do business / medium or large scale trading
- who have a high income
- who have mobile phones
- who have permanent houses, up-stair houses
- who have vehicles such as cars, jeeps, lorries, tractors
- who can afford to send their children to good schools
- owning more than 15 acres highland and lowland / paddy land more than 1-3 acres

The general perceptions of poor, middle and rich were recorded in the above manner, as identified by the participants.

The next step was to divide the people belonging to each area, from the people who were present, to groups.

Malandeniya area has two GNDs

- Malandeniya
- Kahapathwala

Pitiyakanda Watta belongs to Malandeniya area and Nottingham Watta belongs to the Kahapathwala area.

There were no participants present from the Pitiyakanda Watta and Nottingham Watta. When we inquired, we found that they had been unable to come because they were all working on the estates, and they had not been able to send the spouse or another family representative because in most cases, each family has at least 2 or more members employed by the estate. Since such families were too wealthy to have qualified for scholarships anyway, this did not affect the integrity of our work, at all.

There were 9 from Kahapathwala and 25 from Malandeniya present at the event. Therefore, the 34 persons were divided into 3 main groups.

- 1) Malandeniya I : People between Household Nos. 289-421
- 2) Malandeniya II : People between Household Nos. 421-564
- 3) Kahapathwala : People between Household Nos. 247-552

Each of these main groups was then subdivided into 3 sub-groups, group 1, 2 & 3.

The participants who belonged to sub-group 1, of each main group were given 3 categories to rank the households: -

- Poor

- Average
- Rich

People who belong to sub-group 2 of each main group were given 4 categories to rank the households: -

- Very poor
- Poor
- Average
- Rich

The people who belong to sub-group 3 of each main group were given 5 categories to rank the households: -

- Very Poor
- Poor
- Average
- Above Average
- Rich

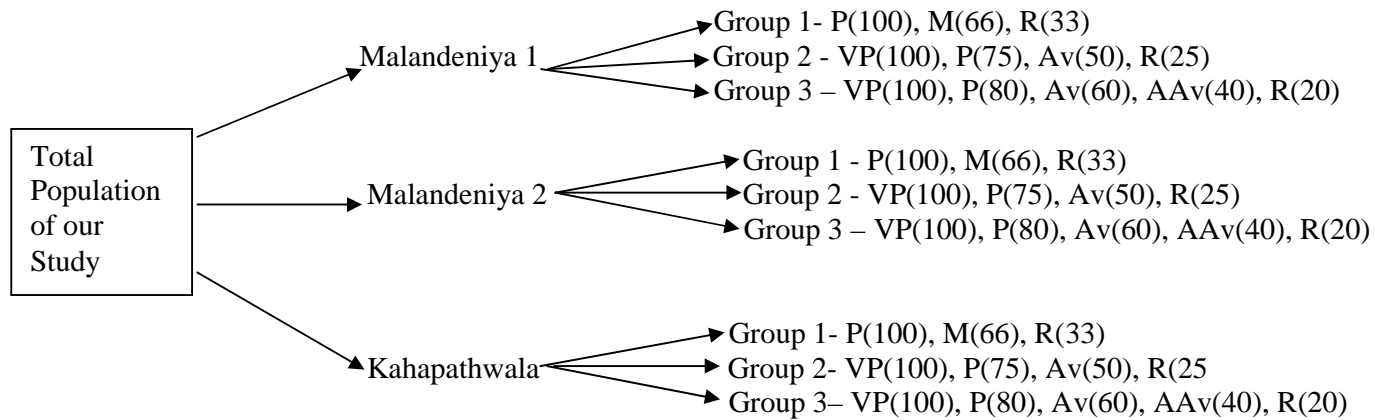
After that, each sub-group was given a whole set of cards, with names of people who belonged to their village. They were asked to put these cards in to the above given categories, according to their personal knowledge of the socio-economic status of the families in their village. They were asked to mark the families with children who are attending school and to write the number of school-going children in the family and the number of members in the family on the cards with the people's names. Please see Figure I.

Figure I: Format of a Completed Householder Card

Give the total Number of family Members		Put a (X) to indicate whether there are school-going children
	House-holder's name and electoral Identification number – Given in advance	
		Indicate the number of school-going Children

See Figure II for the categories of how the groups were asked to evaluate each household.

Figure 2: Group Evaluation Categories Used For Ranking



Categories of Wealth and Wellbeing

VP = Very Poor
 P = Poor
 Av = Average
 AAv = Above Average
 R = Rich

While this process was happening, the people, the GNs and the Trustees were served with snacks and refreshments which were enjoyed with great gusto.

The people were asked to arrange the cards in the ascending order of their Household Numbers, within each category. This took a few hours.

Thereafter Ms. Mallika Samaranayake spoke to the crowd and thanked them for participating in the work. She also stated that this wealth and wellbeing ranking could be very useful in any other work regarding the village, as well. After that she kindly asked at least one person from each group to stay until the next steps of the process were over and allowed the others to go home.

Ms. Lakshmi De Zoysa also spoke to the people and thanked on behalf of the SHGST.

By this time, lunch was prepared in the Temple. Therefore, the Trustees and the remaining people had lunch.

After having lunch, the Trustees and other people started the next step of the process.

Each of the categories in each group were given a value by dividing 100 by the number of categories (e.g. VP, P, A, R = 4 categories. Therefore $100/4 = 25$), and assigning this value to the categories in descending order. (E.g. VP=100 marks, P=75, A=50, R=25)

This way:

Group 1:- P=100, A=66, R=33

Group 2:- VP=100, P=75, A=50, R=25

Group 3:- VP=100, P=80, A=60, AA=40, R=20

Since each household was evaluated by three independent groups, we could then calculate the average wealth and wellbeing value assigned to each household, with minimum discrimination.

All the above ratings were put on charts on the wall for everyone to see and the people fully agreed to the final ranking.

Everyone was given tea while working, and it was about 7.00 p.m. when the whole process was over. After it was over, the remaining people went to their homes and the Trustees came back to Colombo taking all the charts with them.

With this “participatory assessment method”, the Trustees were able to get an accurate understanding of the socio-economic status of each family and select the most deserving among them to be given scholarships. The final results cannot be disputed as all the work was done transparently, by the villagers themselves.