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## Conflict transformation through Nucleus Entrepreneur Exchange

The Nucleus Entrepreneur Foundation (NEF) has entered into an agreement with the GTZ Facilitating Local Initiatives for Conflict Transformation (FLICT) project to implement a program geared to deliberately and pro actively promote cross regional exchanges between entrepreneur groups in the Ampara district with those from the rest of the country especially the central region.

Many cross visits have taken place and entrepreneurs from both regions have benefited from the interchange of experiences while also establishing business linkages that would be advantageous to them in the long run.

The highlight of this exchange program *Together Toward Business Progress* took place on 16 November 2008 in Kandy. Over 260 entrepreneurs including 150 from the Eastern province participate in a one day program conducted by renowned Personality Training Specialist and Master Trainer Mind Muscle Vibration Therapy and NLP Dr Kuma Iddamallena. The objective was to strengthen the entrepreneurs to do business leveraging and synergizing with others and to encourage the different communities to work in harmony and live in peace.



*Together Towards Business Progress*

The Topics covered included:

- Conflict Transformation
- Networking and Synergising for Business Success
- Concept of leveraging for expanding the business



*Entrepreneurs from 5 provinces participated*

- Thinking out of the box
- Paradigm shift in attitudes & behaviour
- Distinguishing between leader & boss
- Understanding the ultimate focus of every religion and showing that harmony can bring all the results they want irrespective of cast, race or religion.
- Creating an awareness about the present financial crisis of the world
- Strengthening the business leaders to face the present financial challenges of the country

The Nucleus philosophy is based upon the main tenet of exchange between entrepreneurs and the benefits of working in a group. The networking and relationship building opportunity afforded to them through joint Nucleus activities will empower these SMEs to continue to strengthen the linkages introduced through the activities undertaken jointly.

It is encouraging to see these entrepreneurs taking the initiative, investing funds, being creative in finding means and ways of undertaking development activities and participating regularly and actively in their Nucleus groups despite the limitations placed upon them by the ongoing conflict. In addition to the everyday problems faced by entrepreneurs such as lack of access to credit, lack of technology and access to technology, lack of skilled labour, lack of know how on financial management, high costs of inputs and working capital these entrepreneurs have to deal with the conflict and security situation further impairing their ability to overcome these obstacles. An open invitation was issued to the beneficiaries of all partners who have completed or have ongoing projects with NEF, an additional advantage if being part of the Nucleus Network.

### **Nucleus Entrepreneur Exchange brings printers from 3 provinces together**

17 printers of the printers Nucleus from Ampara district undertook a study tour to Kandy. They participated at a program on costing for the printing industry conducted by an expert in the field. On the second day they visited printing workshops in Kandy and participated in a networking session with printers from the Kandy and Badulla Nucleus groups. They were also joined by The Sri Lanka Association of Printers represented by its president Mr Dinesh Kulathunga, the vice president, secretary and other board members.



*Printers learn from each other*

The impact of the this exchange program was evident even as early as during the visit where one printer from the Badulla Nucleus agreed to visit his counterparts in the east the following week to repair his machines. A printer from Ampara said of the visit:

*I saved Rs 45,000/- by participating in this trip, I wanted to order some paper and didn't because I was coming on the trip. Today I heard from the representatives of the National Association that paper prices have reduced by Rs. 500/- a ream. We will never forget this experience, we have learnt a lot of new things which we will go back and implement in our enterprises.*

NEF wishes to thank Mr Kulathunga owner of Digital Teleprint Kandy, Mr Sandun Gamage of Excel Graphics and Mr Sulaiman of Zidney Printers for sharing their expertise and experience with others. These Nucleus entrepreneurs have shown that creative entrepreneurs can survive in a competitive market. Exchanging ideas, learning from one another and fostering common interest between same sector entrepreneur groups can be mutually rewarding and profitable. Nucleus entrepreneurs agree that they benefit from this collective bargaining power.

### **NEF South organises enterprise promotion event**

An event was organised for the beauticians, dressmakers, photographers and other entrepreneurs engaged in wedding services to promote their talent in the local market. One participating beautician said *'This is the first time we got the opportunity to display our talents in this manner to attract new customers'* The Team in the South are gearing up for more events and activities in the coming year.

### **Looking back at 2008...**

The last year saw us executing many different projects on SME promotion including:

- The entrepreneurship skills development project for Plan Sri Lanka
- The Entrepreneur Challenge workshops for the Asia Foundation
- The Entrepreneur Exchange program for GTZ FLICT
- Web based information solutions for Assisted Voluntary Returnees for IOM
- Developing the cashew sector in Mannar for IOM
- Livelihood & Social Development Program for Tsunami affected beneficiaries for Spanish Red Cross

NEF strongly believes in following a holistic approach to enterprise development. We are constantly experimenting and attempting to create innovative solutions for sustainable enterprise development through developing mutually rewarding partnerships. We offer our partners:

- **Sustainability** - to support and engage your beneficiaries once project support is concluded
- **Continuity** - to implement collective activities aimed at further developing the enterprises of beneficiaries
- **Dissemination** - to disseminate tools introduced and implemented by your project
- **Networking** - to make use of networking and lobbying strength generated by the group bargaining power
- **Cooperation** - to avoid duplication of activities among projects
- **Professionalism** - we offer professional service delivery including developing, executing, monitoring and reporting on SME promotion and livelihood development programs.

We thank all our partners for the confidence placed on us in entrusting their programs. We have always strived to and will continue to maintain the professionalism that has become a hallmark of NEF. We look forward to doing more good work in 2009. *With Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year!*

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