

History of World Environmental Day Celebration of Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)

Centre for Environmental Justice aims to bring justice to all. Even with a small action. Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) is one of the most pioneer environmental organizations in the country. Throughout the last years, CEJ has given training on Environmental Impact Assessments, conducted projects related to forests, chemicals, water and etc. and research related to kidney diseases, chemicals, and forests. CEJ has also taken legal actions for many environmental and health issues in the country such as Wilpaththu court case, Rathupaswala court case, and so on.

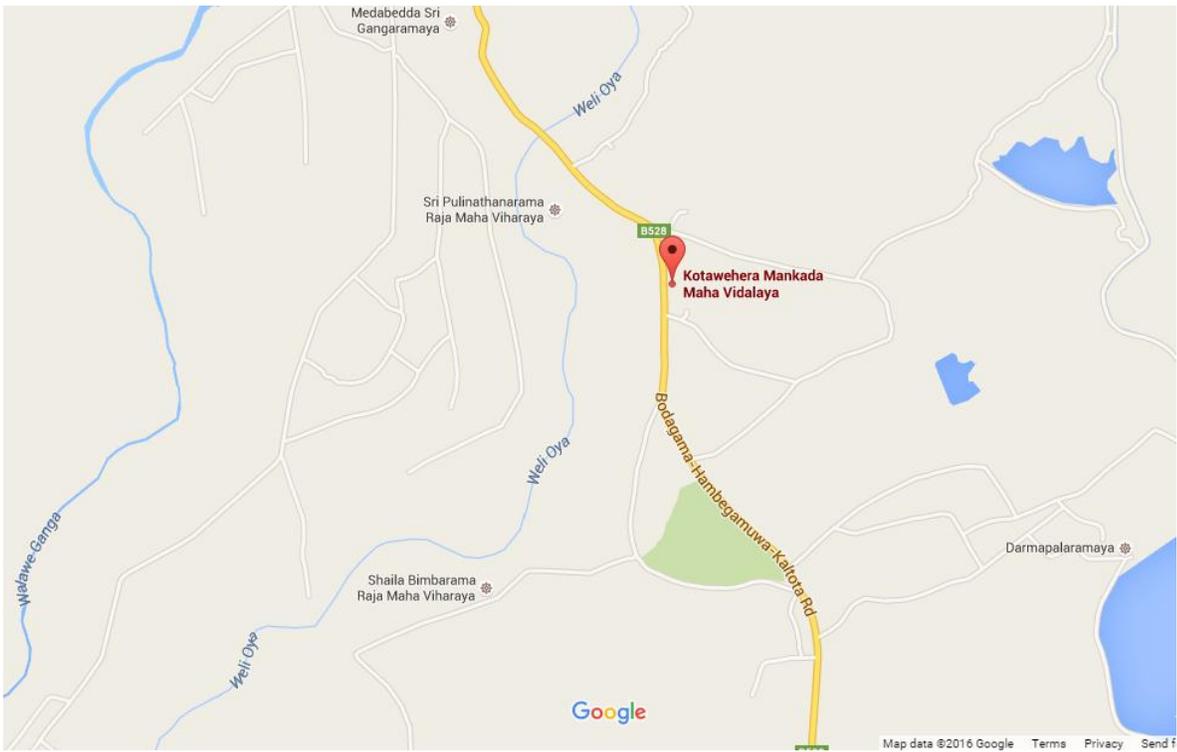
Most of the projects that we have conducted related to forests are community projects which enable rural community to come into the decision making table. Plus, during our projects, CEJ also tries to fill up the information gap between CEJ and the communities. Although there are televisions, radios, printed media, and other media for communication, according to our experience, people get more information and knowledge through face-to-face discussions and awareness programs. Most of the time, these meetings are like knowledge sharing meetings.

Further, we extended our meetings to leadership programs, trainings, and events. Among all the events that we organize, Celebration of World Environmental Day takes a special place. Focusing on the theme, in which United Nations propose, each year, CEJ organizes a World Environment Day (WED) celebration in different districts. Earlier, we have conducted world environment day celebration in Matara (2005), Kegalle (2007), Bibila (2010), Dehiattakandiya (2011), Hungama Ambalantota (2012) and Devundara (2013).

This year, to join the race to make the world a better place, CEJ organizes its 7th World Environmental Day in Kotaveheramankada, Thanamalwila in Monaragala District.

World Environmental Day Celebration contains exhibitions, different types of competitions among schools, Educational exhibition stalls, food and craft stalls, and lectures and presentations related to various topics for school students, youth groups and communities. This exhibition will continue for 2 days at Kotaweheramankada school ground. We are expecting more than 7000 people and 3000 school children will participate this event. Normally stalls are exhibit by Wildlife department, forest department, Central Environmental Authority, other government institutions, and environmental friendly companies, Environmental based organizations, Stalls to display traditional values, community groups, school students, youth societies as well as CEJ exhibition center. In 2016 we are expecting 70 stalls and several other activities are continuing.

Project and Project Location



World Environmental Day Celebration will be conducted on 5th and 6th June, 2016 at Kotaveheramankada, Moneragala. Kotaveheramankada/WeliOya is a village of downstream in Bogahapallassa/Soragune forest catchment area.

During this WED activities we would like to educate school children and communities about environmental friendly behaviors and also to increase their sensitivity towards environment. Because most of the villagers are enrolled in farming activities, we would also like to promote better agricultural practices with eco-friendly pesticides and fertilizers and the minimum or no use of agro chemicals. This will give a chance for students to explore their world with a green eye as we will conduct different lectures on various topics to increase their knowledge. For instance, people are gradually moving away from traditional medicines, so CEJ will have lectures and education sessions from traditional doctors in the area to promote aryuvedic medicine among young people.



WeliOya area is depending on agriculture but to sustain their economy, there should be some other income generating sources for them. Thus, CEJ would arrange few trainings on 5th and 6th June during the celebration to community members and also make some links between villages and the organizations, which give agricultural and craft trainings like Govijana Seva department, VIDHATA centre etc.

Addition to that, Kidney issue has also become a prominent health issue in the area. This project aims to bring different resource people to this event to talk about kidney issues, how to purify water at home, and how to identify kidney issue in the early stage and so on.



The program will be held at Kotaweheramankada Maha Vidyalaya. Divisional Secretary of Thanamalwila and Grama Niladaris from different GN divisions will be supporting this program as the program will enhance the knowledge of their communities by filling the information gap and supporting communities to overcome their financial and health challenges.

WED Objectives in 2016

- To conduct an exhibition with different educational and awareness programs and increase the knowledge of various topics related to education, environment, and health.
- To conduct art, essay, and debate competitions among the students from different schools in Thanamalwila DS division and share their skills among the students.
- Nature walk
- Street drama with march
- Introducing few of the self employment training and small scale environmentally friendly projects to the people in Thanamalwila DS division
- To raise awareness related to climate change, forest issues, and Bogahapallassa forest reservoir
- To build relationship among people, Forest Department Officers, and other government officers to fill information gap related to forest and environmental issues.
- To enhance community cooperation aiming to build mutual relationship among people to protect the forest area around them.
- Conduct the 2 days environmental camp for youth.

2016 Environmental Day Celebration

The theme of this year Environmental Day is to make a better world. To be a part of making a better world, CEJ contributes to awareness and knowledge sharing since we believe it would create a mutual understanding to protect Mother of Nature. Providing trainings and sustainable livelihood opportunities will also play a crucial role. Thus, there will be different stalls, which can influence people to develop their financial condition with different modes such as value addition to their products, handicrafts using different non-timber forest products. And, there will be at least a stall to provide them with information related to self-employment. Moreover, we are sure that the people who have already started making these products would definitely use this exhibition to make a market for their products.

Through this year's celebration, we aim to improve the knowledge of communities on various topics related to environment, chemicals, forests, and so on. Apart from education, this place creates a market for different small-scale businessmen from this area to sell their environmental friendly goods. As a result, this will motivate other people to also enroll in self-employment.

Human elephant conflicts are another huge issue, which we identified through a research. So, we also look forward to focus on this area during the event this year.

Each year, people reaching different villages, districts, provinces indicate the success of our program by giving their comments. So, this year also we expect around 15000 people for this event.

Because CEJ closely work with Forest Department for one of the forest projects, this year we will get the maximum support from Forest Department and other government institution for this special celebration.