



# Committed to Credit Union Development

## Normunds Mizis—Project Director, WOCCU-Sri Lanka

Living and working in an unstable political climate, getting out of a country right before riots closed the airport and facing threats of being jailed for forming credit unions are just a few of the challenges that Normunds Mizis has overcome in his work to strengthen credit unions around the world. But for him, living far from his loved ones is the most difficult.

Normunds has worked in 19 countries over the last 13 years to help shape credit union systems and bring access to people where it was lacking. His wife and two children still reside in Latvia, close to family and friends but thousands of miles and a two-day plane trip away from Sri Lanka.

Despite the distance, Normunds is clearly a family man. He explained, “My work on international assignments has allowed my family to travel with me, providing my children the unique opportunity to experience other cultures. These experiences have helped them become more adept at dealing with different situations that come up in life and will contribute to them being more active members of society.” He continued, “I am committed to credit union development, and my family supports my mission.”

Before joining WOCCU, Normunds worked as the acting associate Peace Corps director for small enterprise

development in the Baltics. Prior to that, he was an officer in the Russian Air Defense Force. They were two very different jobs, but he attributes both to preparing him for international credit union development work.

He shared, “We are all just people with the same basic needs, to provide food, shelter and clothing for our families. Credit unions change people’s lives, by helping start a small business with a loan as small as \$25 or just providing them with a safe place to save. I have seen credit unions empower change in countries that have seemed to have little hope.”

Normunds most recently managed WOCCU’s successful program to establish a credit union system in Uzbekistan. He is now back in Sri Lanka for the second time to head the World Council project there. “There is much work to be done, and the people are appreciative of the help we bring,” he said.

“We have a great challenge ahead, with the Sri Lankan people still rebuilding their lives after the tsunami and living amid conflict, but we are here to work with them, one step at a time,” he added. Normunds brings a wealth of skills and experience. Both the credit unions and the people of Sri Lanka can expect to see positive changes that will affect them for years to come. ■



**Normunds Mizis takes part in a parade celebrating the re-opening of a credit union that had been destroyed by the tsunami in Sri Lanka.**