



# SEWALANKA FOUNDATION

## Newsletter

Edition # 12, JULY 2006

### Universal Birth Registration

Sewalanka Foundation is working in partnership with Plan International and the Department of Births, Deaths and Marriages to promote the rights of all children to an identity through birth registration.

According to a report commissioned by Plan International, there are approximately one million individuals without birth certificates in Sri Lanka.

While international statistics place Sri Lanka high up on the list for numbers of individuals registered\*, Sewalanka and Plan have identified a number of vulnerable groups within the country where the rate of birth registration is particularly low.

These groups include internally displaced people, estate workers, street families/children, gypsies, rodies (groups of people who make clay pots and utensils for a living), veddahs (indigenous communities) and refugee returnees.

The six-month pilot project (part of an international campaign led by Plan based on a decree issued by the United Nations) began in January 2006. Six districts were chosen for the project; Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Ratnapura, Badulla and Moneragala; areas where large populations of the target groups are based.

To ensure a coordinated approach, 24 staff members (four officers and one coordinator per district) were employed and provided with comprehensive training. Training not only included the practicalities of project implementation, but provided techniques to identify human rights

...cont pg 7



### Organizational Restructuring

Sewalanka Foundation's workload, geographical coverage, and staff have been expanding rapidly over the past few years. With this growth has come new opportunities as well as a number of new challenges.

In order to address these challenges and ensure the sustainability and quality of its services, Sewalanka enlisted MDF South Asia, a consultancy group offering management support services to development organizations, to facilitate an organizational self-assessment and restructuring process.

This initiative was supported by two of Sewalanka's major development partners: German Agro Action and Concern Worldwide.

Together with MDF, Sewalanka coordinated a series of five regional workshops to identify and prioritize organizational issues affecting Sewalanka's effective-

ness and accountability. The following key concerns emerged.

First, although Sewalanka's decentralized structure was seen as one of the organization's core strengths, there was concern that in the face of rapid expansion it was contributing to communication and coordination problems, procedural inconsistencies, and confusion about the division of roles and responsibilities between headquarters and the district teams.

Second, there was a recognized need for more formalized Human Resource Management procedures including

...cont pg 16

Empowering plantation communities .....	2
Back to business for Galle traders .....	4
Bio-diversity studies in Sinharaja .....	5
Solid houses for tsunami-affected .....	6
Handicrafts training for CBOs .....	7

Supporting resettlement in the north .....	8
Integrated approach has impact .....	9
Mangrove rehabilitation activities .....	10
Post-tsunami fisheries activities .....	11
News, events and training .....	12,15

" While we do work closely with communities, it is important that we are empowering them to develop their own futures."



>> Top: Alternative income generation opportunities have arisen through savings and credit programs;

>> Middle: The VGK Communication Centre trainer juggles her time between students and customers;

>> Bottom: Mrs Sivapackiyam closely monitors the progress of each of the area's projects.

## Empowering plantation communities

Dickoya is a village perched high up in the central hill country near Hatton. Located in the middle of eight tea plantations, the village's small businesses, school and hospital provide important services to over 500 plantation workers and their families.

It is early morning in Dickoya and already workers can be seen hard at work in nearby estates, picking leaves and tending to crops. Both men and women, the workers have a long day ahead of them; work until midday, home for lunch and then back into the hot sun for the afternoon. It is tough work, the days are long and there is little respite, with most people working six days a week, some often seven.

Like most weekday mornings, Sewalanka's Communication Centre (located on the main street of Bathford Bazaar, a small town in Dickoya) is already full. Each of the three computers is occupied by at least one young person and the centre's coordinator is busily moving between the computer users and a stream of customers requiring photocopying services.

Established in 2004 as the only facility of its type in the area, the communication centre was developed to provide telephone, email, photocopy, print, cd writing and fax facilities to the local community. The centre was also established to give the area's youth the opportunity to develop their computer skills through organised training sessions.

The service began with four students at the end of 2004 and currently caters to 20. Since its inception, over 60 students have attended classes at the centre. Funded by the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA), the centre has become an established facility for the local community and is growing rapidly.

"In the plantation area, many people don't know about computers and they certainly don't believe that they will ever have the opportunity to learn about them. We wanted to change this," says District Director Mrs S. Sivapackiyam.

"There are young people throughout these communities with skills that are not being developed. The ability is there but nothing has been done about it due to the lack of opportunities available.

"That's why the communication centre has been so popular; it gives kids an opportunity to channel their creative energy and provides students with skills that will most certainly increase their employment prospects. It gives people options," she says.

Sri Lanka's plantation communities have long been identified as one of the country's primary vulnerable groups. With a number of isolating factors including language barrier (the number of Sinhala or English speakers is low among the Indian Tamil population), low literacy rates and few official representational bodies, these communities face constant challenges and opportunities are generally limited.

"Previously if people wanted to study computers, they would have to do it outside the estate community in Hatton. This study means paying bus fares and devoting much time to the courses; things that can be a problem for many families. The idea of the centre is to bring the computers into the estates and make it as easy as possible for young people to have that access," Mrs Sivapackiyam says.

"Not only are they familiarising themselves with the computer equipment and software programs, they are also able to learn about the world through the internet," she says.

Fathima Mary has been a student at the Bathford Bazaar centre for the past six months. At 21 years old, she has spent the past four years looking for work since she completed her O-Levels in 2001.

“Every day I would pick my younger brother up from his school, passing by the centre on the way. One day I inquired about the training programs and decided to enrol in a computer course,” Fathima says.

“I have two friends who are also now completing courses. One of my friends travels 18kms by bus to get here. When I told her what I was doing she decided to come with me to visit and she has been coming here ever since.”

“Before this I didn’t know anything about computers. Now with the confidence I have in my skills, I can mention the course when I apply for a job. Hopefully I can find a job where I can use computers,” she says.

The (six month) courses currently offered at the centre include training in Microsoft Office, graphic design packages and an introductory computer course for children. A fee is attached to each course, with discounts for unemployed students. These fees and the revenue generated through the communication services are used to cover the centre’s running costs.

“The aim of the project is that within three years the centre will be self-sustainable. We are already well on the way to achieving this,” Mrs Sivapackiyam says.

**For more information, contact Mrs S. Sivapackiyam on 05123243 or email [vgkhatton@sltnet.lk](mailto:vgkhatton@sltnet.lk)** ■

---

## A passion for the plantation sector

Mrs S. Sivapackiyam has lived in Bathford Bazaar, Dickoya from birth. Since 1994, she has worked with Sewalanka Foundation as a district director and board member committed to developing programs and projects for plantation communities in the nearby tea estates.

Spending her days working between the district office in Nuwara Eliya and the Sewalanka Communication Centre which she established across the road from her home, Mrs Sivapackiyam’s passion for improving the opportunities and activities available to her fellow community members is impressive.

Mrs Sivapackiyam currently divides her time between coordinating four programs; a Sewalanka savings and credit program, a Provincial Council-funded water and sanitation program, the area’s Plan Universal Birth Registration project and the Communication Centre.

The driving force behind each of the programs, Mrs Sivapackiyam says that her inspiration comes from seeing rural communities grow and develop.

“I want to see the development of our local communities. Many estate workers only have one circle to their life; they

wake, they pluck tea in the morning, they eat lunch, pluck tea in the evening, cook, eat and sleep, ready for the next day of the same thing,” Mrs Sivapackiyam says.

“I want to assist them in changing this if they so choose; to ensure that there are activities and opportunities available to them that take into account leisure, education and health. But most importantly, to ensure that they are given the opportunity to take part in important decision making that affects them, particularly for women and families.”

Mrs Sivapackiyam points out that one of the biggest difficulties facing estate workers is their inability to communicate outside of their communities.

“Many of the estate workers cannot speak Sinhala, yet 90% of government offices deal only in Sinhala. This is a big problem - these families are increasingly cut off from the broader community,” she says.

“Before we started working with some of these communities, there were people who didn’t know how to withdraw money – they were unable to fill in the deposit slip and were forced to ask others for help. There is also the problem of people travelling on buses in cities being unable to read destination boards and timetables as they are not translated into Tamil.

“I want to change situations like these; to empower these individuals and communities and this is exactly what we are doing through our training and awareness programs,” she says.

As with all Sewalanka programs and projects, this empowerment begins with group formation. Mrs Sivapackiyam says the main focus for Sewalanka’s work has been bringing people together into groups and then empowering these groups through the provision of skills training, assistance with financial sustainability and awareness campaigns.

“Our focus is on ensuring that projects are supporting open communication between government officers, plantation employers and estate staff. The group formation allows planters more confidence to approach their employers regarding the welfare of their communities.”

She is currently in the process of establishing two model communities in the area.

“We are creating a model division; assisting them to develop savings and credit facilities, income generation activities outside of estate work, cultural and sports activities and an environment program. We will then develop exchange programs with neighbouring plantations and gradually spread the benefits of these types of programs throughout the area,” she says.

Mrs Sivapackiyam says that the overall aim of the concept is to gradually improve quality of life while at the same time reduce Sewalanka’s input and presence.

“The goal is to create model CBOs that can act on their own, developing their own programs for improving their situation. While we do work closely with communities, it is important that we are empowering them to develop their own futures.” ■

" The staff helped us to organise ourselves into a group and once this was done, provided grants and some business training which helped us to re-build our businesses."



>> Top: A temporary location for businesses belonging to the Sewalanka Enterprise Development Society;

>> Middle: A member of the Street Traders Sewa Society;

>> Bottom: Students from Weddagala Maha Vidyalaya South study water samples.

## Back to business for traders in Galle

The bus station in Galle is abuzz with street traders hawking their wares to passing pedestrians. A commercial centre for small business owners, the area provides the base for many established family businesses; from grocery stall holders to shoemakers and locksmiths.

Going by the hustle and bustle, it is hard to believe that only 18 months ago this area was devastated by the tsunami waves that surged up the channel located next to the area's famous fort. Fortunately many of the area's local traders were observing the full moon holiday with their families, however stalls were destroyed and much stock was lost.

Since mid 2005, Sewalanka Foundation's Galle office has been working with small business owners in the Galle area as they set about re-developing their livelihoods.

By bringing traders together into societies, field officers have worked to ensure groups are provided with loans and grants and training opportunities that will support the re-building process.

The Sewalanka Enterprise Development Society and Street Traders Sewa Society are two examples of this social mobilization approach.

The Sewalanka Enterprise Development Society consists of 29 business owners from the Galle fairground. Relocated by the Government to temporary facilities tucked away off a busy street in Galle, the society has been operating since June 2005.

Society members meet monthly to discuss their previous month's business progress, to share their plans for the coming month and to discuss ways in which they can work together to improve the precinct's business. Every three months meetings are also held with Sewalanka staff to identify issues, to raise ideas and to discuss the general progress of the group.

"We had heard about Sewalanka from the work they were doing in the area before the tsunami. After we lost our businesses, a couple of us decided to go to their office to ask if they could help us. The staff helped us to organise ourselves into a group and once this was done, provided grants and some business training which helped us to re-build our businesses," the Society's Chairman said.

"Previously we were not working together. Now we all put money into the society, with every member contributing Rs.25 per month. This money allows us to support each other by providing loans to members. We also share ideas and work together to improve our general situation," he said.

The Street Traders Sewa Society members are scattered around the central areas of Galle, some near the bus station and some just around the corner in busy Wakwella Road. The Society's 15 members have been meeting weekly since June 2005.

"Although my stall wasn't destroyed by the tsunami, I have had to shift around the corner as there wasn't much room left after everyone had re-established themselves. I decided to become a member of the Society because it meant that I could get a loan to improve my business," one Society member said.

I was provided with a grant of Rs.25,000 from Sewalanka. Previously I was purchasing my goods on loan from other traders so I was able to pay off my loan with the grant. Now I can purchase goods directly from Colombo which is much cheaper. Being a member of the Society means that I am paying a lower interest rate and have the support of other traders in the area," she said.

## A study of nature for students in Sinharaja

Staff and students at Weddagala Maha Vidyalaya South in Kalawana, a small area bordering Sinharaja Rain Forest, seem to be particularly excited about their local environment.

Lined up in the school's courtyard, the students are eager to demonstrate their ability to analyse plant and water species using one of the school's new microscopes.

Inside, the school's Principal, Mr Preymasinghe, proudly displays the students' recent homework assignments; an assortment of delicately stenciled images of leaves that the students have found around their homes. These drawings will form the basis for the first semester of their studies; learning about different species of local flora, Mr Preymasinghe explains.

Although not a formal component of the current school curriculum, the studies form part of a new bio-monitoring program developed by Sewalanka Foundation and funded by HSBC.

Committed to preserving this UNESCO World Heritage forest environment, Sewalanka staff have worked with community members, the forestry department and local conservation organisations to develop a curriculum that will create awareness and promote the importance of the natural environment to young inhabitants of the area. It has also been designed to develop scientific methods that will test and monitor the environment – an important function that will form the basis for future preservation activities.

"In the 1960s and 70s a common attitude regarding the fringe areas of the Sinharaja Rain Forest was that communities should be removed from the area to prevent encroachment. Fortunately this was not undertaken as the social impacts would have been huge," Sewalanka Foundation Field Director - South, Mr Ajith Tennakoon said.

"Studies since have shown that by including communities in awareness campaigns, planning and decision making, we can more effectively preserve not only the environment, but the culture of the area as well," he said.

"We were keen to introduce the bio-monitoring program for two main reasons. Firstly to assist rural schools where historically students have had little exposure to science subjects due to a shortage of specialized teachers (it is difficult to find teachers willing to work in an environment where resources are limited and the location is so remote) and resources. And secondly because it increases the students' awareness of their environment and the need to protect it," Mr Tennakoon said.

Weddagala South is one of three schools in the area participating in the pilot program. There are 65 students between the ages of 14-16 years at the school who have elected to take part. Added to this are almost 200 students from nearby schools in Panapola and Potupitiya; making a total of 350 students.

These figures are particularly impressive when one considers that field excursions are held outside of school hours. Classes are not compulsory, but as Weddagala South's Science Teacher and course coordinator Mr RPG Wasantha Kumara reports, "the students are very interested in the classes and are regularly participating. We already have many other students who are keen to get involved."

"As it is an extra-curricular activity, the teaching methods we use are not conventional. We are using a new approach that includes activities like singing and playing to encourage learning and to assist us in maintaining the students' concentration," he said.

Each school has one coordinator responsible for the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum was designed by local NGO, Rescue Rainforest International (RRI) and extensive training was provided to coordinators. Ongoing support and on-the-job training is provided by RRI through monthly support visits to each school.

Sewalanka's Project Coordinator for the program, Mr Tharanga Lakmal Pussegoda, visits the sites regularly with the students and reports that a wide range of topics are being covered both theoretically and practically.

"The main components of the curriculum involve studies of soil, water, bird movement, farming of land, the behaviour of the forest, plant species, and throughout it all; record keeping," Mr Pussegoda said.

"The curriculum has also been designed to challenge students by raising issues such as if there is destruction occurring in particular areas of the forest, what measures can be taken to prevent this?"

Students visit the field regularly in groups of 15-25 and discuss their findings during theoretical lessons. Sewalanka has provided resources to all schools, including microscopes, beakers and water testing tape measures, which are used both in the field and during theory lessons.

Findings of the studies will be presented by students at community displays every six months. The final data will be shared with relevant organisations and bodies including universities and the forestry department.

Based upon the success of the program, Sewalanka will attempt to extend the program into the Deniyaya region on the southern side of the rainforest.

**For more information contact Mr Ajith Tennakoon, Regional Coordinator, SOUTH on 091 223 3441 or email [silfgalle@sltnet.lk](mailto:silfgalle@sltnet.lk) ■**

“...we are creating a new model village which involves many facets like road construction, social mobilisation, construction, livelihood programs...”



>> Top: Community meetings played a big part in the process for establishing permanent homes in Pottuvil;

>> Middle: The inflatable framework is established and the first house begins to take shape;

>> Bottom: Community members work with Mr Kusters during a handicrafts workshop.

## Solid houses for Sewalanka beneficiaries

Sewalanka Foundation and Solid House Foundation from The Netherlands have started a partnership to implement sustainable housing projects for needy communities in Sri Lanka.

The partnership was formalised under the title Solid House Foundation Lanka, with a board of directors consisting of both Sewalanka Foundation and Solid House Foundation staff.

The partnership's first permanent housing project - a new settlement for one tsunami and war-affected Tamil community - is currently underway at Inspector Eatham, Pottuvil, Ampara District. The project is an integration of social mobilization and the construction of homes, community facilities and infrastructure. The new settlement is expected to consist of about 100 houses, a community centre, a pre-school, a clinic, playground, shops, roads, wells and water storage tanks.

Sewalanka Foundation will undertake social mobilization activities and Solid House Foundation will provide technical assistance and funding. Community participation at all stages of the process has been crucial to the project; from community meetings, Participatory Rural Assessments (PRA) and Participatory Needs Assessments (PNA), to shramadana activities (the community working for the benefit of the community) including land clearance, excavation and other on-site jobs. Beneficiaries will also be involved in building their own homes.

“After implementing many short projects following the tsunami, it's nice to work on this long term project which consists of not only houses but also community development. We are not working with an existing community as usual, but we are creating a new model village which involves many facets like road construction, social mobilization, construction, livelihood programs etc,” Sewalanka Project coordinator Mr Nithiraja said.

The houses being built are round dome-shaped buildings. The dome shape ensures a solid structure that is more resistant to natural disaster (hurricanes, floods and earthquakes) than traditional building designs.

All homes and community buildings are built by local workers using materials readily available in Sri Lanka. The shuttering for each building is established using an inflatable framework which has proven a simple, fast and cost-effective building method. Based on the resources required, this building process makes it possible to build up to three times as many houses compared to conventional housing construction.

Each house will measure nine metres in diameter and six and 12 metre diameter domes will be used for community or commercial purposes.

Realising that the concept of dome-shaped houses would be difficult for any community to grasp, staff used pictures, drawings and associations with temples, to illustrate the designs. Staff have reported that as the houses begin to take shape, community members are getting a better idea of what they will actually look like and as such, are getting more enthusiastic about the unconventional shape.

Solid House Foundation Lanka plans to continue developing and implementing sustainable housing projects with communities in other parts of the country.

**For more information please contact Mr Lal Fernando on 0814921924 or at [fernandolal@yahoo.co.in](mailto:fernandolal@yahoo.co.in), or MrTomas Viguurs at [tomas.viguurs@solidhouse.nl](mailto:tomas.viguurs@solidhouse.nl).** ■

## Handicrafts training for CBOs

“Hello and welcome. Today we will be making teddy bears.”

And so began the first session of a two-day handicrafts training course for five women from Galle, Gampaha and Karunegala communities.

Based on a design created by Dutch designer, Mr Guus Kusters, the prototype teddy bear (with accessories) was developed to provide communities with a marketable product to sell locally and for potential export.

“We wanted to assist in making a product that was internationally understandable; that required the least amount of materials (this allows communities to cut out costly middle men); and a product that remains identifiable to Sri Lanka,” Mr Kusters said.

“We chose the checked cloth for the teddy bears because it is instantly recognizable as a Sri Lankan pattern; material that you would readily see being sold here in towns and villages.”

Experienced sewers, the five women took on the challenge with gusto.

“During the off season everything closes down and it is a good opportunity for us to learn designs for new products and then teach others in our communities,” one participant from Unawatuna said.

“I am a member of a women’s CBO with 371 members. We will definitely take the patterns and training techniques that we have learned back to our groups,” she said.

The teddy bear is one of a number of products designed by Mr Kusters and fellow Dutch designer, Mr Maartin Kolk. The two volunteers spent three and a half months working with Sewalanka staff and local CBO groups across the country on projects involving local materials.

Mr Kolk said one of the most positive things about the experience was working together with community groups; sharing ideas and techniques that would result in innovative products.

“In Gampaha we worked together with CBO members to come up with ideas that would develop their pottery products. These communities already have a very strong understanding about the process and the products,” Mr Kolk said.

“It wasn’t about changing the process and making more work for communities. In the end we simply adapted one tool and by applying this during the process, the end product came out looking really unique.”

Mr Kusters added: “The challenge for us was; how can we do this without making it about people sitting in a factory production line? We wanted to assist CBOs to re-establish profitable livelihood activities whilst remaining in their own homes and communities.”

And it seems to be working. Already one community has managed to establish a market for painted terracotta pots with Swedish homewares giant IKEA, whilst numerous others are busy using newly developed skills to train fellow CBO members.

**For more information, contact Mr Chaminda Perera, SEDCO Marketing Manager, on 071 418 7789 or at [sewahq@sltnet.lk](mailto:sewahq@sltnet.lk)** ■

...cont. from page 1

violations and strategies to prevent ongoing abuses.

To ensure that communities remained active in the project design and implementation, Sewalanka staff developed community action groups by meeting with communities in the project locations.

Participants included community opinion leaders/decision makers; Grama Niladari, welfare officers, religious leaders, CBO representatives, etc.

Action groups took on the responsibility of preparing lists of individuals requiring registration in each community (383 villages were selected across the districts). In many cases this was done by group members travelling from home to home and village to village enquiring about individual registrations. The lists generated from this process were then provided to Sewalanka staff and awareness meetings for ‘unregistered’ individuals were established.

In total, 34,079 individuals (men, women and children) took part in the awareness meetings. The meetings provided participants with a better understanding of the concept of birth registration and the importance and benefits derived from completing the process. UBR field officers and coordinators in each district provided practical advice and examples for filling in the forms, in some cases using symbols and illustrations to ensure that every member of the group understood the process.

Following the sessions, Sewalanka field officers worked full time to assist community members as they collated the required documentation for birth certificates. Sixty mobile registration events have been planned in consultation with the government stakeholders and community action groups, at which certificates will be distributed and assistance provided to those who do not possess the documentation required for successful registration.

At the time of print, 80% of applications had been completed and submitted for processing.

**For more information, contact Mr Nalaka Weerasuriya, National Project Coordinator on 011 254 5362 or at [sewahq@sltnet.lk](mailto:sewahq@sltnet.lk)** ■

\*Plan/ETC Lanka; ‘A study on the status of birth registration and registration of persons in Sri Lanka (including the most vulnerable groups, as well as post-tsunami estimates of the current situation)’, March 2005.

'At the time, the cadjan roofing on the shelters had begun to decay and monsoon seasons were becoming a serious problem for shelter occupants.'



- >> Top: Sewalanka and German Agro Action staff with recipients of upgraded and new semi-permanent shelters.
- >> Middle: Sewalanka staff hand over a tractor to CBO members in Mannar;
- >> Bottom: CEFÉ training has provided participants with ideas and skills to develop alternative income opportunities.

## Supporting resettlement in Mannar and Vavuniya

Since the Ceasefire Agreement in 2002, conflict affected internally displaced families who were forced to spend long periods of time in welfare centres, or overcrowded in relative's homes, have been returning to their villages.

Sewalanka has been working in partnership with German Agro Action to address the basic needs of these returnees, in cooperation with European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and the German Government. Sewalanka has continued to provide assistance over the years to support resettlement.

Continuing this process in September 2005, Sewalanka Foundation and GAA launched a program to support the relocation/resettlement and rehabilitation of 2178 families in both Mannar and Vavuniya Districts. Funded by ECHO, the project was completed at the end of May 2006.

The primary basis of the project was social mobilisation; self help groups were formed or revived among community members and these groups were then strengthened and empowered through training by Sewalanka staff members. In total 155 new self help groups were formed across the two districts and 55 pre-existing groups were revived.

Based on discussions between self help groups, government officials, Sewalanka and GAA staff, providing semi-permanent houses for returnees and upgrading the simple temporary shelters built in 2002 and 2003 were identified as priorities. At the time, the cadjan roofing on the shelters had begun to decay and monsoon seasons were becoming a serious problem for shelter occupants.

By May 2006, 523 temporary shelters had been upgraded with half cement brick walls and newly thatched roofs and a further 1019 semi-permanent houses had been constructed for families living in welfare centres or with relatives. The latter 1019 houses were built on land owned by individuals or on quarter acre plots of land provided to families by the government.

Committed to ensuring the sustainable development of these communities, a number of rehabilitation activities were undertaken in newly established villages.

### Agricultural development

Self help groups were provided with agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilizer) and perennial and cash crops to assist with the cultivation of previously unfarmed paddy lands. An average income of Rs.10,000 per month was earned from the paddy crops, and seeds required for consumption and for sowing the following season were retained. Three minor tanks were brought to operational condition, which assisted the extra cultivation of paddy land.

### Water and Sanitation

The basic need of water was addressed with the rehabilitation and construction of drinking water wells. Twelve new wells were constructed and 22 wells were rehabilitated for drinking water purposes. Training and the distribution of information were also undertaken to educate and create an awareness about water management techniques and hygiene habits.

In spite of the increased security problems, the project was implemented without any major interruptions. District government agents are hopeful that plans for closing down welfare centres and continuing with full resettlement, will be achieved within the year.

**For more information, please contact Ms Lakshi Abeysekara, Regional Coordinator North on 024 222 1354 or at [sewavav@sitnet.lk](mailto:sewavav@sitnet.lk).** ■

## Integrated approach has impact

The 'Poverty reduction and socioeconomic development of rural communities resettled in former conflict areas in Northern Sri Lanka' project was started in 2003.

Funded by the European Union and German Agro Action, the project saw Sewalanka staff working with approximately 6500 families in 92 villages in conflict-affected areas of Vavuniya, Mannar and Anaradhapura districts. The project encompassed the construction of basic infrastructure, social mobilization and improving the economic resources of resettled communities.

The project was completed in December 2005 (although Sewalanka staff continue to work with community groups in an advisory capacity). Six months on, 60% of the community-based organisations (CBOs) established during the project continue to function on their own and the average monthly income of the communities has increased by 335%.

The following are a number of activities undertaken by communities to improve resettlement opportunities.

### Marketing:

Three farmer's companies were formed and fixed prices for village agricultural produce were set. The companies keep their own books and records and take responsibility for their member shares and for income and expenditure.

Local farmers were trained in improved crop cultivation (including rotational cultivation).

Agricultural volunteers were elected in each village to identify challenges facing local farmers and ensure that these challenges were addressed by farmer's companies.

CBO nominated members were provided with marketing training. Thirteen marketing exposure trainings were conducted with 432 CBO members.

### Women Development:

Awareness campaigns and educational activities were undertaken in villages to promote the rights of women, women's leadership, the role of women in social services and development projects and the issue of violence committed against women.

Women's leadership organizations were formed in the project villages as a result of these campaigns.

An assessment study in 2005 revealed that education of women has increased between 2003 and 2005 and that CBO membership by women has increased to 42%.

### Support of self-entrepreneurs

Enterprise development training was provided to community members and some grants were provided to develop income generation activities according to business plans. These grants were provided through the CEFÉ Entrepreneurs Network Organisation (CEENO) developed as part of the project.

### Business Development Services:

Three large buildings were constructed to store the agricultural produce of neighbouring villages.

A training hall was constructed to hold training programs and seminars for community members. These programs have included monitoring and evaluation, environmental conservation, marketing, financial management and gender training.

### Environment:

Awareness campaigns and workshops were held to educate communities on a variety of topics; water management, the use of natural manure, dangers encountered by use of plastic items, health and hygienic awareness and the importance of good nutrition for children.

**For more information, please contact Mr T. Subaskaran, District Director Vavuniya, on 024 222 0490 or at [sewavav@slt.net.lk](mailto:sewavav@slt.net.lk).** ■

## Fisheries activities post-tsunami

'When the tsunami hit, the water which surged in from the coast...destabilised and uprooted thousands of mangrove trees; exposing banks and destroying lagoon habitats.'



>> Top: Mangroves damaged by the tsunami;

>> Middle: Boats funded by Norwegian Embassy in Sri Lanka are unpacked upon arrival in Ampara;

>> Bottom: Replacement boats await distribution to fishing CBOs in Ampara.

With the destruction of homes, lives and livelihoods as a result of a natural disaster, it is often easy to overlook the impact these events have on our natural environment.

When the tsunami hit the east coast of Sri Lanka in December 2004, the lagoons which lie along the coastal belt were flooded with sea water which washed away the sand bars, beaches and estuary banks and exposed the mangroves to the high energy sea.

For the mangrove plants, this meant a major disruption to the fragile environment within which the trees exist. In Sri Lanka the majority of mangroves are found in systems where a brackish water environment exists. A brackish water system is one that receives input from both fresh and marine sources, bringing the salt level up past that which can be tolerated by fresh water species and down below the level needed for growth of marine organisms.

When the tsunami hit, the water which surged in from the coast threw out this natural balance and the erosion of soil and sand that occurred destabilised and uprooted thousands of mangrove trees, exposing banks and destroying lagoon habitats.

Almost 18 months on, visible signs of damage are still apparent, with broken dead trees lining the banks of some lagoons and reports from fishermen of dramatically reduced quantities of fish being pulled from each area.

Sewalanka staff have been working to rehabilitate mangrove areas on the east coast since 2003 by raising awareness and establishing mangrove nursery areas to support replanting.

Although these nursery areas were, for the most part, destroyed by the tsunami, local communities have been keen to restart the projects. One of the original nurseries is already doing so well that the local community can now supply mangrove seeds and seedlings to other nurseries in the eastern province, as well as continuing to re-establish their own mangrove forests.

Sewalanka is also undertaking a second major mangrove-related project aimed at developing 'shelter belts' of thick vegetation. These belts protect coastal communities from the effects of future waves and the ever present risk of sea level rise. The project will involve replanting coastal vegetation lost during the tsunami, in a number of habitats; from lagoon mangrove and coastal forest, to mature sand dune scrub and forest areas.

This project will later be expanded to other areas of carefully selected coastline around the island and will include both tsunami-affected and unaffected coastlines.

Staff in Batticaloa district are also running several mangrove restoration projects in partnership with a number of organisations. The small-scale projects are currently focusing on the district's large areas of shoreline which have the potential to be re-forested with mangrove; primarily in the main Batticaloa lagoon system.

After these initial small scale projects have been successfully completed, the replanting program will hopefully be expanded to the rest of the originally forested lagoon areas.

**For more information contact Mr Francis Binney, Fisheries Advisor, on 077 352 4409 or at [sewahq@slt.net.lk](mailto:sewahq@slt.net.lk)** ■

## The benefits of mangrove forests

Mangrove forests are one of the key components of the tropical coastal ecosystem alongside coral reefs and sea-grass beds. They are a key tropical environ which make up the border between land and sea, protecting the coastline from the force of the tides, as well as catching the sediment.

### Why we want to rehabilitate mangroves

1. Mangroves offer a habitat that is important to a variety of other life forms; fish, crustaceans, molluscs, birds and some mammals. Without the mangrove their habitat is lost and the eco system as a whole is affected.
2. Mangroves prevent soil erosion and cause soil deposition which helps to secure the land and even increase it, while at the same time avoiding soil deposition in the lagoon or out at sea.
3. Mangroves create a barrier against tsunami damage and sea level rise which is vital to protecting people's lives and land during these events.
4. Mangroves can help to provide sustainable employment through direct utilisation such as coppicing (cutting off branches without cutting down the trunk), the collection of fruit, tapping for sugar, or indirect employment through eco tours and fishing. ■



>> An extensive network of mangrove lagoons lies in the Ampara District on the east coast of Sri Lanka.

## Update on post-tsunami fisheries programs

SLF is in the final stages of three major fisheries projects which have been running in Ampara district as part of its post tsunami livelihood re-establishment program this year.

### UNDP

Sewalanka staff worked with UNDP to distribute equipment to seven marine fisheries CBOs and two lagoon based fisheries CBOs.

The project has now reached its concluding stage with all equipment distribution and capacity building programs completed in the first third of this year. Sewalanka will provide technical training to the seven marine fishing CBOs in July 2006.

### Save the Children Sri Lanka

Sewalanka's partnership with Save the Children Sri Lanka has focused on providing livelihood re-establishment opportunities to fishermen through the repair and replacement of damaged boats, nets and equipment.

The project focused on fishermen using outrigger canoes and fibreglass re-enforced plastic boats. The beneficiaries are spread over a total of 25 CBOs throughout the Ampara district.

Beneficiaries have also received bicycles for fish transport, as well as capacity building training sessions which work to strengthen individuals, as well as the CBO they belong to. Distribution began in December 2005 and was concluded in May 2006. ■

### Norwegian Embassy in Sri Lanka

Sewalanka staff have been working with the Norwegian Embassy to provide assistance to deep sea boat owners who lost their boats and equipment as a result of the tsunami.

The project aim is to supply over 52 one-day and multi-day boats, equipped with engines and net sets, to individuals and CBOs in Ampara and Batticaloa districts.

Distribution of net sets was completed in May 2006 and the distribution of the boats is scheduled for completion by the beginning of July.

A boatyard will be constructed in Kalmunai DS Division in Ampara district to ensure maintenance and repairs of the existing boats and construction of new boats.

**For more information, contact Mr. D. Chandrathilaka, Regional Director - EAST on 077-7576299, or at [sewaregional.east@gmail.com](mailto:sewaregional.east@gmail.com)** ■

## Sowing the seed for business development

A farmer's company has been established in the coastal village of Panama on the east coast of Sri Lanka. Made up of 89 farmers from four local farmer's organisations, the company is in the process of setting up a seed paddy processing unit.

To date Sewalanka has provided one tractor, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to assist the rice farmers in their initial setup phase. Training has also been provided to all members of the company to assist in the development of book keeping, organisational and management skills, as well as agricultural technical training.

The project comes as a result of discussions between farmers and Sewalanka staff regarding the area's lack of quality processed paddy seeds. Currently the only source of processed seed for the area is through the department of agriculture and with the area's demand far outweighing the supply, as well as a lack of money and resources available to set up a sustainable system of production, this avenue of supply remains limited.

Farmers hope that the production unit will overcome a number of problems including improving the poor quality of crops due to the current process of re-using seeds, ensuring a secure local seed production facility (with a target of 80,000 kg of seeds produced per season) and forming the basis for a reliable source of income for the farmers and their families.

Funded by Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), the project began in June 2005, with the initial phase completed in March 2006. Sewalanka will continue to work with farmers by providing technical and market-oriented support, as well as through savings and credit activities. There are also plans to begin a yogurt production company adjacent to the seed paddy processing unit as a result of discussions with a local women's organization.

**For more information, please contact Mr A.L. Faleel, Acting District Director Ampara, on 063 222 4757 or at [sewaamp@gmail.com](mailto:sewaamp@gmail.com) or Mr. D. Chandrathilaka, Regional Director - EAST on 077-7576299, or at [sewaregional.east@gmail.com](mailto:sewaregional.east@gmail.com).**



>> Top: Seeds produced by the Panama farmer's company;

>> Middle: Mr Murakami presents Sewalanka staff and CBO members with dried fish samples;

>> Bottom: Street performances by community groups assisted to deliver anti-smoking messages throughout the south.

## Enhancing skills for future social workers

Sewalanka Foundation is currently hosting 12 social work interns as part of an agreement with the National Institute of Social Development.

The interns will work with Sewalanka Foundation staff for a six month period in order to receive their professional diploma in social work.

Following an intense training session with Sewalanka psychosocial staff, the students are currently working in selected villages located in the districts in which they are living.

The 12 students have been selected from communities affected either by the tsunami or conflict (or both) in Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya and Trincomalee.

The students will be responsible for conducting surveys, preparing project proposals, assisting with implementation of projects, monitoring and reporting. Regular training programs will be provided by Sewalanka staff to ensure that the students continue to develop and enhance their skills. ■

## A fresh look at drying fish

A recent visit from a Nippon Skilled Volunteers Association (NISVA) volunteer has given Sewalanka staff and CBO members some food for thought when it comes to drying and transporting fish from remote coastal areas to market towns.

Visiting from Japan, Mr Murakami and his in country manager, Mr Oyaizu, travelled to a number of coastal areas in the Ampara, Batticaloa and Jaffna regions with Sewalanka staff.

The aim of the 12-day trip was to assess the potential for improvement in the fishermen's current post harvest techniques, with the goal of cutting down the percentage of fish that spoil during the process.

To illustrate the success of techniques used in Japan, Mr Murakami presented Sewalanka staff and bemused CBO members with samples of dried and semi dried fish - some up to ten days old - which he had transported from Japan.

At the completion of his visit, Mr Murakami presented his findings and ideas for quality improvement and loss reduction during an evening workshop involving Sewalanka staff members. ■

---

## World No Tobacco Day 2006

Sewalanka Foundation staff traveled over 300kms in four days to spread an anti-smoking message to towns and villages in the south of Sri Lanka.

Beginning in Hambantota on 28 May and finishing at the National Cancer Hospital in Colombo on 31 May (World No Tobacco Day), staff led a procession of local CBO members, school children, local and international NGO staff and religious groups through 30 major towns, including Matara, Galle and Kalutara.

Initiated to increase awareness of the risks associated with smoking, the procession was led by a truck carrying a giant cigarette bearing the words 'weakens every part of the body'. The cigarette was donated to the National Cancer Hospital upon completion of the event, where it will remain on display.

Over 257 local, national and international organizations participated in the event and 25,000 leaflets and information materials were distributed to communities along the way.

Anti-smoking community street dramas were performed by community groups and posters were also on display in towns and villages over the four days.

To promote 'no smoking' long after the event, four permanent 'no smoking' public areas were declared and sign-posted at bus stations in Galle, Matara, Kalutara and Hambantota.

Sewalanka wishes to thank all supporters, particularly partner organization Concern Worldwide in Sri Lanka, as well as the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition, the National Cancer Control Program, the National Cancer Hospital, Na-

tional Dangerous Drugs Control Board Galle Rehabilitation Centre (Mithsewena), Alcohol and Drugs Information Centre (ADIC), Beruwala Samurdi Social Development Foundation and Sahanaya Institute of Mental Health. The event was covered by a number of media outlets. ■

---

## NCA delegates visit Galle

Sewalanka Foundation's Galle office recently hosted four delegates from partner organization, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), during a monitoring and evaluation visit to local water and sanitation projects.

When the tsunami struck the Galle area in 2004, 90% of the drinking water wells/resources along the district's coastal belt were destroyed or contaminated by salt water.

Quick to establish temporary water tanks and sanitation facilities in transitional sites, Sewalanka staff have since been working with communities to develop permanent solutions for those rebuilding damaged homes or moving to permanent shelter.

With funding from NCA, 80 permanent toilets and 16 wells have been constructed in affected areas across the district. Implementation of this 'Access to Safe Sanitation & Drinking Water' project is taking place in three tsunami-affected areas within Galle; Habaraduwa, Hikkaduwa and Galle divisions.

Delegates reported that they were happy with the facilities and provided Sewalanka staff with some suggestions for the long term sustainability of the project. ■

---

## Peace Boat visit to Galle

Sewalanka Foundation hosted a unique visit for 25 representatives of Japanese NGO Peace Boat in April. Visiting Sewalanka's Peace Boat Community IT centers in Galle district, the representatives were treated to traditional displays of dancing and celebrations by local communities.

The centres have been functioning effectively since 2005; two centres located in transitional shelter sites and one in the general Unawatuna area.

The highlight for 11 of the 25 visitors was a homestay with local families living in the Kahawa transitional shelter site. Whilst occupying the shelters, the visitors were entertained by community performances including 'devil dances' and 'fire eating'.

One Peace Boat team member said the trip had provided him with a once in a lifetime opportunity and provided the group with a good insight into Sri Lankan culture.

Four additional Peace Boat centres have been approved for Colombo, Kalutara, Deniyaya and Hambantota sites. ■

## Expert advice from Bangladesh

Name: Masrurul Islam

Title: International Consultant for Microfinance

Location: Sewa Finance office, Nugegoda

Where have you come to Sri Lanka from?: Bangladesh

Length of time with Sewalanka: Four months

Length of time you plan to be with Sewalanka: Until July which will mark the completion of a six-month contract.

Life before Sewalanka: When he is not providing comprehensive advice and guidance to Sewalanka staff, Mr Islam works as Chief Financial Officer at Bangladesh NGO, Proshika.

Having studied chartered accounting and completed a Masters Degree in Accounting from Dhaka University, Mr Islam has been providing microfinance and financial management services for the past 20 years.

**What do you hope to achieve during your time at Sewalanka?:** My aim (and that of Sewalanka management) for this period has been to develop policies, procedures and systems for Sewa Finance and to provide mentoring services to the CEO and staff during the implementation process.

I am confident that come the time for the national rollout in July, all systems will have been established, documented and training undertaken, and Sewa Finance will be a fully operational entity.

**How do you think this will be achieved?:** My approach has always been to focus Sewa Finance's operations at the district level - to model the approach on the current structure of Sewalanka Foundation. By combining Sewalanka Foundation best practices, my own microfinance experience from Bangladesh and international microfinance best practices, we have come up with a specialised approach that will best suit the local environment.

We have just completed the first step towards achieving our objectives by publishing a 'Policies, Procedures and Formats' manual, the introduction of which has formed an instrumental element to the training programs we have implemented at district level throughout the country. These manuals will ensure a national approach to microfinance for the company and will ensure staff have the adequate resources to undertake their work.

We have also published 'Policy Guidelines for Community-Based Organisations', a document that will provide information, guidelines and formats for current and potential CBOs throughout the Island. These documents will be distributed following the national rollout of Sewa Finance in July.

**Do you have any reflections on your experience so far?:** This has been a very positive experience and I have received a great amount of support from Sewalanka's senior management. I have also received an encouraging response from district level directors and district staff who are enthusiastic about getting the process started in the communities.

As with any relief situation, I think a challenge that Sewa Finance will face is establishing a credit culture at the district and CBO level. Executing the necessary shift from relief orientation to credit orientation is always going to be a challenge, however I believe that the company is aware of this cultural shift and has considered it well during the development stages. With training (we are focusing heavily on implementing extensive training programs not only for Sewalanka staff but also for CBOs) and management support, this will not be a major obstacle in the long term. ■



>> Top: Oil lamps are lit to celebrate the opening of Sewalanka's regional office in Ampara;

>> Middle: The organic agriculture program kicks off at the Islander Centre;

>> Bottom: Concern Worldwide Country Director Sheena McCann strikes the earth at the auspicious time of 8.59am.

## Psychosocial workshop in south

Sewalanka's southern psychosocial training team met with Concern Worldwide staff in April to report psychosocial activities undertaken in 2005 and to discuss activities planned for districts in 2006.

Presentations were given by psychosocial focal points in each southern district; Colombo, Kalutara, Galle, Matara and Hambantota; and by the psychosocial coordinator for the southern region. The regional gender officer and HIV/AIDS health officer also gave presentations.

Activities in 2006 include:

### Psychosocial

Sensitisation awareness campaigns in workshops, Health awareness events, HIV/AIDS/STD health awareness campaigns, Befriending, Counselling and referral services.

### Gender.

Continue successful Train the Trainer programs in shelter sites. Established gender focal points to continue working with community management committees (established by Sewalanka staff) to ensure gender awareness in communities.

### HIV/AIDS

Continue educational workshops with psychosocial staff, gender officers and community groups regarding leadership, First Aid and HIV/AIDS and STD awareness.

Continue training sessions with community groups; pre-school mothers training, nutritional and sanitation awareness programs, child abuse and protection programs, drug abuse education and reproductive health education.

Assistant Country Director for Concern Worldwide Sri Lanka, Nellie Kingston commended staff; "this integrated approach you are taking regarding psychosocial, gender and health activities is inspirational. What you have done with the funding to support the hardware (housing, relief items etc) as well as your activities in livelihoods – I am highly impressed." ■

## A new regional office for Ampara

Sewalanka has celebrated an auspicious beginning to Sewalanka's first regional office in Ampara in April 2006.

Located in the centre of Ampara Town, six staff at the new office will provide support to the district offices in Batticaloa and Monaragala and seven offices in Ampara; one district and six sub-offices.

The office will be managed by Mr. D. Chandrathilaka, Regional Director – EAST. ■

## Promoting organic agriculture

An organic training program involving farmers and Sewalanka Foundation staff from across the Island was held in May at the Islander Centre in Rajanganaya, Anuradhapura.

The practical training was provided by representatives of organic agricultural organisations EarthNet Foundation from Thailand and Kudumbam from India. The training involved sessions on organic practices including bio fertilizers, Effective Microbes (EM) solutions, worm composting, organic rice cultivation practices and a variety of other topics.

As a result of the program 25 participants confirmed their commitment to practicing and promoting organic farming techniques in their local areas and formed the Islander Organic Group. A network between the group has since been developed and a newsletter updating members on the activities of fellow group members has been collated and distributed. ■

## New training facility for youth

A training facility catering for youth from tsunami-affected regions throughout the Island is under construction in Piliyandala, Colombo.

Construction on the Concern Worldwide funded facility began following an auspicious ceremony on Thursday 25 May 2006.

During the ceremony prayers were offered by members of the Buddhist clergy, milk was boiled over, an oil lamp was lit by esteemed attendees and at the auspicious time of 8.59am, the soil was struck by Concern Worldwide Country Director Ms Sheena McCann, Sewalanka Vice Chairman Mr Wasantha P Ramanayake and Mr Muditha Jayakody, the architect responsible for designing the environmentally friendly centre.

The facility is due for completion by the end of 2006. ■

## Peace program moves forward

The first of a series of participatory workshops developed to provide an introduction to peace building, reconciliation and conflict resolution concepts, was held in March.

Participants at the two-day workshop held in Vavuniya included Sewalanka staff, CBO members, religious leaders and a number of community members from various locations across the country.

The workshop was organised for the purpose of developing a strategy paper for Sewalanka regarding the organisation's role in the peace program.

"The idea of the workshop was to provide a forum for individuals both within and outside the organisation to put forward their thoughts and ideas regarding the peace process and Sewalanka's potential role in supporting this," Project Assistant Mr Abdull Ghaffar Naushad Ahamed said.

Issues discussed included linking the north and south; organizing exchange programs; conducting religious and cultural events; creating a national peace program; developing communication in both Sinhala and Tamil; and language training for communities. ■

...cont. from page 1

regular performance reviews and a clear compensation structure.

The emergence of a 'project culture' was a third concern. Participants felt that there needs to be a greater focus on program development and an organization-wide system of monitoring and evaluation that emphasizes quality and impact.

Finally, many participants expressed concern that new staff were not familiar with the organization's principles and guidelines and that the recent growth would affect Sewalanka's family feeling and organizational culture.

After these issues were identified regionally, MDF facilitated a final workshop to summarize the key points and formulate strategic recommendations that were presented to the Sewalanka Board of Directors.

Over the past several months, a number of structural changes have been made to address these issues.

A new regional Field Director role was created to support district-level program development and monitoring, improve coordination, and strengthen the impact, quality, and sustainability of Sewalanka's work in each region.

Roles and responsibilities were clarified, and a Management Committee began to meet monthly to improve coordination and address unresolved operational issues. The Committee includes the Vice Chairman Operations, Vice Chairman Programs, Field Directors, Special Projects Directors, Finance and Administration Directors, and representatives from the Chairman's section, Sewa Finance, and SEDCO.

At the headquarters level, specialized program consultants were brought under a single umbrella to improve coordination and communication and to make it easier for the districts to access national-level program services.

This Program Development Team is currently preparing an organizational handbook that will outline Sewalanka principles and program guidelines. The handbook will be distributed in Sinhala and Tamil to all staff members.

A Research and Learning Unit was also established at the national level to develop a system for monitoring and evaluation and organizational learning.

A Human Resource Director is currently being recruited to help establish transparent policies and procedures for recruitment, orientation, performance appraisals, compensation, personnel administration and human resource development. In the meantime, the Finance and Administration Divisions are meeting with regional and district teams to streamline and consolidate existing procedures.

Sewalanka is excited about these changes, and we will continue to share updates on the restructuring and strengthening process in future newsletters.

**For more information contact Amanda Kiessel, Director and Sustainable Development Advisor at [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net)** ■



### Contact Us

#### SEWALANKA FOUNDATION

Post Box No. 03 , Boralesgamuwa

P: +94 (0)11 2545 362-5

F: +94 (0)11 2545 166

E: [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net)

w: [www.sewalanka.org](http://www.sewalanka.org)

### Sewalanka Newsletter

Sewalanka Foundation's newsletter is produced quarterly. To subscribe by post or email, or to send comments regarding the newsletter, contact the Sewalanka Communication Unit at the address provided or [media@sewalanka.org](mailto:media@sewalanka.org)