



SEWALANKA FOUNDATION

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Newsletter



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CBO gets innovative with natural batik



Up > Beautiful hand dyed materials and finished clothing.

Kalamulla Community Batiks is a community run business that creates unique items using environmentally friendly methods, new designs and locally sourced materials. While the spouted dipper technique has been traditionally linked with batik making, the ‘flower village’ uses paintbrushes as an innovative technique, and applies its own unique patterns that take

themes from everyday life such as nature, flowers, folklore, people and animals.

A ‘Flower Village’ is a strong Community Based Organisation (CBO) that has the potential to advise community organisations in neighbouring areas and inspire a new generation of young leaders. With support from the Norwegian Embassy, Sewalanka started a competitive grant fund

to invest in innovative community driven projects by CBOs across the country.

In 2009 Pragathi Sahayogitha, a CBO in Kalamulla, Kalutara, received comprehensive batik training and a grant of Rs. 250,000 (US\$ 2,000) from Sewalanka’s Flower Village Programme’s competitive grant fund. The CBO soon formed Kalamulla Community Batiks and began to explore their own styles. Members of the CBO attended national and regional level flower village programmes where they met other strong CBOs and were able to share their experiences.

“After attending the programme we shared the information with our CBO members and wrote a business proposal which included a detailed implementation plan and a budget. The proposal was reviewed by Sewalanka and the grant was approved”, says Ms. Devika Silva, president of the “Pragathi Sahayogitha” CBO. “With the approved grant we bought machinery and raw materials. We produced a range of batik products such as scarves, blouses, t-shirts, tablecloths, bed sheets and curtains. With this range of products, our CBO soon became widely popular in Kalamulla and outside the Kalutara area. Twenty-four batik makers are working with our CBO and this number is constantly rising as orders keep flooding in, while local youths are now keen to join our CBO”, Devika Siva noted.

Before the Flower Village Programme Ms. Sunethra Nandani relied solely on the income of her husband which was just sufficient to keep them above the bread line (below Rs. 10,000/month). Now she earns a further Rs. 5,000 a month from designing batik patterns. “Our batik patterns are new and different. I prefer designs that go beyond the normal standards and exhibit the dynamic, open and natural traits of our area’s identity. Our members’ finances have improved with the orders we are getting from tourist shops,” she pointed out.

A small percentage of their income goes to the CBO fund. The group plans to start a batik gallery in Panadura town where they can reach more local customers and tourists. “Our focus is to help and motivate the development of batik entrepreneurs that have power to influence and capability to supply high quality products that can compete with other batik products on the market”, Sunethra Nandani added. The training carried out by Sewalanka also taught the groups how to use local natural ingredients to colour batiks as an

alternative to using chemicals. The Pragathi Sahayogitha innovative methods can be taken as a model example of how industries in other regions can create stunning batiks without using chemicals that harm the environment.

Down > *The material is stretched out on to a wooden frame where the freehand designs is drawn with hot wax. Dye is applied by hand, allowing for fine detail and a mix of colours.*



Sewa Finance Assists Micro-Enterprise to Grow



Left > *Ms. Dulani used her first loan to expand her business.*

Salaried or wage-paying jobs are scarce in many rural parts of eastern Sri Lanka. Most citizens earn their living through self employment, creating and operating small and medium size enterprises (SME). Sewalanka's sister organisation Sewa Finance provides financial services and supports SMEs to increase productivity and grow into businesses.

“We fulfil the investment needs of micro-entrepreneurs in the low income sector throughout the district, by providing low-income families with small loans to invest in their micro-enterprises. We motivate CBO members and support them to create their own jobs, increase their income, build assets, and increase their family's well-being”, says Mr. Jayantha Bandara, Credit Manger of Sewa Finance in Trincomalee.

Sewa Finance Trincomalee started its credit scheme of lending to strong CBOs in 2006. The team is currently working with 37 CBOs including those in the fishing community, agro farmers and micro-entrepreneurs. So far they have disbursed and recovered over Rs. 152 million in loans with a recovery rate of 97%, and over the past four years many CBOs have made significant impact on their villages and the loan recipients have been able to improve their businesses, homes and lives.

“Our loans are designed to reach the working poor. Our beneficiaries, 90% of whom are women, have shown a significant improvement to their finances. We work closely with our clients and support them build their businesses so they can earn more and become a part of their village's development. In addition to loans, we train them on basic day-to-day management of

small business, financial record-keeping, networking, and identifying practical marketing opportunities”, says Jayantha Bandara.

Ms. T. Sathyadevi, an active member of Kovil Adi Village Development Society, used her microfinance loan to expand her ornamental plants business. With an initial loan of Rs. 30,000 (US\$ 250) she was able to expand her business and start a small stall. “I have been able to employ another person and my income has increased as neighbouring villagers come to my stall to buy plants. With my income and a second loan of Rs. 50,000 (US\$ 430) from Sewa Finance I was able to start another plant stall in the Anuradhapura town centre. Now I'm happy and optimistic about my future”, says Sathyadevi.

Ms. W. Padmawathi, a member of 'Dilena Tharu Women's Society' of Kanthale had a dream of starting her own business and helping her family to overcome their prevailing economic problems. Padmawathi and other CBO members attended a fourteen-day comprehensive training session facilitated by Sewalanka on the production of leather goods. She saw a business opportunity for leather products in her small village of Kanthale. Padmawathi's business idea was first discussed with her CBO and then with the Trincomalee Sewa Finance team. Together they developed a business plan and she received an initial loan of Rs. 25,000 (\$220) to start her leather shoe business. "With the financial support of Sewa Finance and

training I received from Sewalanka, I was able to buy leather, glue, thread and tools to start my business. I make quality leather shoes for children and youth. With my income, I have paid back my initial loan and I'm investing Rs. 40,000 (US\$ 350) in the second round to start my own stall in the village centre', says Padmawathi.

Ms. Sathyadevi and Ms. Padmawathi are just two successful entrepreneurs among many others who were encouraged by Sewa Finance Trincomalee to contribute to their village's development while creating a sustainable future for themselves and their families.

Below > Sewa Finance, Trincomalee has disbursed over RS. 125 million (US\$ 1 million) in loans to CBOs.



Cover Story: A new playground for Thiriyai school

Thiriyaya is a small village off the fishing coast of Trincomalee at the northern tip of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The inhabitants of the remote village are victims of the 33-year civil war, abandonment and extreme poverty. The village was devastated by the Asian tsunami and some families resettled in other villages afraid of another tsunami.

Thiriyai Tamil Maha Vidyalayas is a school well known in the area. It was constructed in 1947, but closed in 1985 due to the war. It reopened in 1987 and closed again in 1990 due to widespread security reasons at the time. Due to the cease-fire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, the school started full operations in 2003. Today the school has 180 students, 10 permanent staff and 2 volunteers. One year after the end of the conflict a new school playground was constructed with the support of Sewalanka Foundation.

When the trucks arrived with the first load of soil to fill the ground the workers were greeted with beautiful smiles from overjoyed children. Parents, teachers and volunteers helped as much as they could. This was a very special event for them and they were clearly very excited. "We're overjoyed and very excited because the kids have never had a playground to play in. I want to personally thank all the generous people that made donations and



Above: The children were so excited because they have had nothing for so many years.

believed that this could become a reality. My heartfelt thanks go out to the Sewalanka Foundation, the British School of Paris and many volunteers that helped make this playground a reality. We couldn't have done this without your love and support" said Mr. Soundarajah, the school principle.

Eight year old Darshan said "I like the playground because I get to play in it. My friends and I also enjoyed watching the equipment being installed". Sewalanka project coordinator, Ashanthi Edirisinghe, expressed how it felt seeing how happy the children were playing in their new playground.

"It was something that really touched my heart. The children were so excited because they have had nothing for so many years. When I spoke to their Principle and teachers I learnt the hardships the children had gone through, I was amazed by their high spirits. I later spoke to the children themselves and asked them what they needed. Their needs ranged from meals, basic clothing and school stationary to school transport, construction of classrooms, and a school playground. It was our responsibility to help raise the amount we did for the construction of the playground, we now need to continue this support by raising the funds for

their other needs".

Since 2005 the funds have been mobilised and facilitated through an annual fundraiser in aid of Sri Lankan children by the British School of Paris. Today the children of the Thiriyai Tamil Maha Vidyalaya have a new playground that will last for many more years to come.

Thank you to all those that have made contributions to make this playground a reality! If you wish to donate funds to the children of Thiriyai Tamil Maha Vidyalaya with some of the basic things they need please contact Sewalanka's Communications Unit at communications@sewalanka.org.



Sewalanka Farm: Kalutara

Located in the rich, fertile valley of Kalu Ganga, Sewalanka Kalutara Farm specialises in the production quality seeds, seedlings and native shrubs. The climate is dry and mild, thus ideal for the production of quality, vigorous, well-rooted seedlings. The farm's seed bank consists of 7 different traditional paddy and 14 local yam varieties and the vegetable plot is full of green vegetables such as ladies fingers, spinach, chili and brinjals. The wholesale and retail nursery produces and sells cinnamon, pepper and ericanut seedlings primarily for the Minor Export Crops Department.

Farmers who are interested in cultivating these varieties are

taught specialist techniques such as organic manuring and natural pest control methods. At the end of the season farmers return one and half the quantity of seeds they borrowed from the seed bank, interested farmers from farmer groups are given these additional seeds, creating a revolving fund.

“Our seed bank specialises in identifying important traditional seed varieties and orienting the agricultural community towards conserving and cultivating them” says Ms. Chamari Lakmali, Programme Coordinator of Sewalanka Kalutara.

A fundamental element of the programme is to create

awareness among youths, students and school teachers. For instance students are asked to collect information on indigenous varieties of seeds and seedlings grown in their area, collect samples of these varieties and then present and display their work. These sessions illustrate the importance of the diversity of traditional varieties of seeds and seedlings.

Below: So far eight organic farmers' groups have been established. These groups have members who come together in a common effort of organic farming and indigenous seeds conservation.





Farmer groups are also encouraged and so far eight organic farmers' groups have been established that share a common interest in organic farming and indigenous seed conservation. The next step Sewalanka want to support is networking these groups so they can share information and experiences as well as exchange seeds. "We want the farmers to eventually take over the management of the farm" Chamari said.

"We pride ourselves on delivering top quality seedlings to both the government and private sector" says Chamari. The money earned selling them goes towards covering the farm's expenses. The Farm Manager Mr. Amila

Sampath expressed how it is not all about growing and weeding: the farm also offers educational opportunities, learning about food consumption, the morality of food production, and the importance of locally produced meals.

The Sewalanka Kalutara farm could serve as a model for other farming communities. They encourage inspection of their seeds and seedling stocks, and each and every visitor will have a personalised tour of their dedicated work.

To find out more, please feel free to contact the Kalutara team at kalutara@sewalanka.org.

Above: The seeds are individually inspected to ensure the highest standard before they reach the customer.

Nippon Foundation visits war - torn northern districts

In May 2010, Sewalanka hosted a delegation from the Nippon Foundation. The group included the Chairman of the foundation, Mr. Yohie Sasakawa, and a group of journalists representing various Japanese newspapers and media networks. The team visited the northern war-torn districts of the country to witness the progress of ongoing rehabilitation and resettlement efforts undertaken by the Sri Lankan government and other stakeholders.

The Nippon Foundation is one of Japan's leading non-governmental organisations, funding projects in several developing countries, focusing on social welfare, public health and education, and is one of Sewalanka's oldest partners. Over the years the Nippon Foundation has been working with Sewalanka to provide emergency relief assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Eastern and Northern Provinces of the country. Sewalanka and the communities they work with gave a warm welcome to the delegation on their visit to the north. There, Mr. Yohie Sasakawa and the media crew attended an inter-religious gathering organised by Sewalanka which included all four of Sri Lanka's religions, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Venerable Niyangoda Vijithasiri Anu Nayake Thero of the Malwatta Maha Vihara, Kandy was also among the religious leaders who attended the programme.

"We came to further strengthen ties between Sewalanka and the Nippon Foundation. We will explore further assistance to Sri Lanka within the context of reestablishment of peace after over 30 years of war had devastated the country" said Mr. Sasakawa while speaking to journalists, university students, government officials and non-government officials of the north. The crew visited a number of villages in Jaffna including Punguduthivu and Point Pedro. Fishing communities from Jaffna met with Mr. Sasakawa and Mr. Murakami, the Nippon Foundation's dry fish expert. The group also visited a camp where IDPs were waiting to be resettled.

The visitors then attended an army briefing held at Security Forces Headquarters in Kilinochchi and Palali and discussed the status of the army's post-war relief efforts.

On their way back they visited Sewalanka's Islander Training Centre where, among other things, young people from many different ethnic backgrounds learn organic farming and leadership skills. The visitors met with presidential advisor Mr. Basil Rajapakse to discuss the ongoing rehabilitation and resettlement process in the north and east as well as the government's plans for the development of the region.



Up > Nippon Foundation's chairman Mr. Yohie Sasakawa visits Vavuniya General Hospital

The delegates were pleased with the progress of the rehabilitation and recovery process made so far by the Sri Lankan Government, non government organisations and other stakeholders, and said that they want to strengthen ties between Sri Lanka and Japan in the future.



Up > *The team attended a Srilankan Army briefing held at the Security Forces Headquarters in Kilinochchi and discussed the Army's post war relief efforts.*

“Health Service Excellence Award” for Sewalanka

Sewalanka Foundation was among those who were awarded the Health Service Excellence Award for its dedicated and committed contribution to providing health care services for IDPs in refugee camps in Menikfarm, Vavuniya and Mannar.

Major General G. A. Chandrasiri of the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition presented the award.

Held for the first time, the awards ceremony recognised those that excelled in humanitarian assistance, education and the health service sectors for war victims. Governor of the Northern Province said “the quality of

humanitarian assistance was excellent and these organisations showed a passion for helping their own people, being united as one. The recipients of the award contribute to the communities they work with. We want to commend them on the difference their efforts are making”.

Sewalanka received the award for completing a semi-permanent ward in Vavuniya General Hospital, two semi-permanent wards in Mannar Hospital, three temporary clinics that treated the entire IDP population in Menik Farm.

As well as the construction of 686 toilets, promoting sound hygiene

practices and the distribution of cleaning kits in IDP camps.



Up > The centre will be teaching youths useful vocational skills that will provide them with new education and employment opportunities and a chance to break the cycle of poverty.

Sewalanka Foundation opened a new training centre for conflict affected coastal fishing communities in Gopalapuram, Trincomalee which accommodates 80 students. Sewalanka utilised funds from its long-standing partner Welthungerhilfe (WHH) to construct the vocational training centre which opened in January 2011. The communities in the Eastern Province suffered a major setback after the tsunami in 2004. WHH and Sewalanka, who proposed this project, have extensive experience in jointly implementing relief, rehabilitation and long-term

development projects among conflict affected communities.

Mr. Jayantha Bandara, Programme Coordinator of Sewalanka Trincomalee, said the new building will expand Sewalanka's youth services in the region. Without the training centre, the youths have to travel far for vocational training, "things will be better from now on".

The training centre opens is the largest non-government vocational training facility in Eastern Sri Lanka. The centre is planning to offer technical

courses in subjects such as agriculture, livestock, agro-processing, non-farm livelihoods and employment oriented vocational training such as carpentry, masonry, motor and electrical mechanics.

"This was a long cherished dream to provide technical knowhow to multiethnic coastal communities we work with in the East. The new training facility will help hundreds of students to get jobs in the public and private sector," said Jayantha Bandara.



Sewalanka Foundation

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