



SEWALANKA FOUNDATION

Responding to the landslides and floods

The floods and landslides created by the May monsoon rains left about 175,000 people in various parts of Sri Lanka destitute. Many lost all their physical and financial assets. Most of all, they were deprived of very basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Sewa Lanka Foundation (SLF), responded immediately by addressing the urgent needs of communities affected by the floods and landslides. 7340 families directly benefited from SLF dry ration packages delivered to the most isolated communities in Ratnapura and Matara.

Urgent Food Parcels to Ratnapura

Kalawana D.S division in Ratnapura district was the first village assisted by SLF. On the 20th May at midnight SLF reached the Divisional Ssecretary's office in Kalawana with two lorry loads of dry rations. They had to spend the night on the roadside with the intention of reaching the most remote and isolated villages affected by the floods and landslides as soon as possible. In the morning the lorries full of goods, accompanied by few other vehicles consisting of staff members, travelled to Wewalanguna. In the early hours of the 21st they began looking for community members help to package and distribute goods. After a few attempts they came across the retired school Principal from Wewelkandura, who took the initiative to gather as many villages as he could for this endeavour.

The Community work with SLF to reach those most isolated and affected

The target was to pack more than 6000 parcels of rice, flour, dhal and sugar and finally to bundle these into 1000 family packages. The packing process was soon on its

way with the supervision of the retired principal of Wewelkandura Maha Vidyalaya, the president of Grama Sanwardhana Society and Principal of Wewelkandura Maha Vidyalaya. They took the lead to mobilise the villagers- the young, the elderly and the school children.

The process was made easier with the arrival of seven Army Personnel of the Ratnapura camp, who then led the villages to achieve the task in just three hours. The parcels were distributed to Gangalagamuwa, Hapugoda, Ambagaskada, Pelawatte, Koswatte, Kukulegama, Kukulegama North, Jathuwangoda, Wewagama, Wewelkandura and Panapola in the DS Division of Kalawana. The total dry rations distributed was: 5000Kgs of Rice; 5000 Kgs of Flour; 2000 Kgs of Dhal; 1000 Kgs of Sugar and 1000 packets of full cream milk powder. Due to the floods and landslides, most of the rations had to be carried by hand to the affected villages taking alternative paths.

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humanitarian assistance projects in the Wannu

The most striking fact of this intervention was the leading role played by the community of a village affected by landslides to assist other villagers that were more isolated and could not be reached. A true sense of participation and solidarity in the hour of need were the most exemplary and very satisfying memories that SLF carried back.

Assisting Matara

After this experience SLF took another step forward to assist those affected in the Kotapola division, in the Matara district. This process was made much easier, due to existing SLF projects in the area (Sinharaja buffer zone program). A packet of dry rations consisting of rice, sugar, dhal, a packet of full cream milk powder and a tin of canned fish was distributed to 1340 families during the 25th-28th. Tanipita villagers helped SLF staff in packaging the goods and Sinharaja Conservation committees (community based societies formed by SLF) of Kiriwalgama, Kiriwaldola, Higurahena, Mederipitya, Dobagoda and Viharahena took the initiative of identifying the most affected communities and distributing the dry rations among them. The clearance of Lankagama Road in Kolenvenigama is also being assisted by Sewalanka Foundation.



Community Soladarity in Kalawana: The army, school children and the community at large gather to package food rations for those most affected and isolated by the floods

This assistance was made possible with the support of the Royal Danish Embassy, New Delhi. Sewalanka acknowledge and appreciate their immediate response to our request to assist the flood and landslides affected communities.

Sewa Lanka Foundation, with the support of the Pradeshiya Saba, the Forest Ministry and Mahawali Ministry are currently helping the Sinharaja buffer zone villages with clearing road blocks and rehabilitating the damaged roads of Kalawana and Deniyaya areas. Sewa Lanka has also agreed to rehabilitate the road leading to the Sinharaja Rainforest. ■

Sewa Lanka Foundation has initiated a further two humanitarian assistance projects in the Wannu, with the objective of ensuring that the basic needs of recently returned and returning communities are met. These projects are to be implemented in partnership with German Agro Action. The first project has been funded by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) marking the second Sewalanka project that ECHO has supported for the resettlement of the Returnee communities to the Wannu.

This project will assist 997 families in five villages in the Vavuniya Division of the Wannu and 703 families in six villages of Pallai in the Killinochchi District. This humanitarian assistance project has begun the preliminary work of planning. Government Agents, Divisional secretaries and other coordinating bodies will be consulted throughout the implementation of the project.

The project will initially provide basic needs such as shelter, water and kitchen utensils to families. Secondly the project will provide agricultural inputs and tool sets to enable households to restart agricultural production to ensure food security and to increase the purchasing power of the beneficiaries.

In the Division of Vavuniya, 51 wells damaged during the years of conflict will be rehabilitated to provide drinking water needs and six selected tanks will be rehabilitated. This will enable farmers to cultivate the paddy lands under these tanks in the coming Maha season.

For similar benefits, 36 wells and 10 ponds will be rehabilitated in the Pallai area. The returnees will be assisted for chili cultivation and supported for the production of perennial crops in the Killinochchi area.

As is the case with all Sewalanka projects, Social Mobilisation will play a key role in implementation and in ensuring sustainability. Small groups will be formed which will eventually transform into larger Community Based Organizations (CBO's). Training and support to the CBO's will enable communities to rebuild their villages with their own contribution and participation.

Sewalanka appreciate the continued cooperation of ECHO and German Agro Action in supporting Sewalanka with the resettlement of Returning families to the Wannu. ■

Peace Conference in Vavuniya

A Peace Conference titled, 'The role of civil society in the peace process' was held in Vavuniya from 7th to 9th March 2003 as a collaborative initiative of three non-governmental organizations: Sewa Lanka Foundation (SLF); the National Peace Council (NPC); and Japan Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP). More than 80 civil society representatives from the Northeast and South participated in this conference to discuss the role of civil society in the peace process and to devise a work plan to increase civil society participation. This conference was the first of its kind held in Vavuniya, which is recognised as a bridge point of North and South.

Involving Civil Society in the Peace Process

The present peace process currently taking place between the Government and the LTTE is largely confined to these two parties. There exists little opportunity for other parties and the civil society to participate in and/or contribute towards decisions made by the Government and the LTTE. The lack of recognition and participation of other parties and civil society in the ongoing peace process only gives rise to resentment and suspicion amongst the people of Sri Lanka. Broader social concerns fail to be represented in a process that is presently confined to the Government and LTTE.

It is imperative that civil society becomes involved in the peace process to ensure that the decisions regarding the future of Sri Lanka are balanced and well-informed. It is in light of this concern SLF, NPC and JCCP bonded together to accomplish the following three objectives:

- 1) To enable civil society representatives from the Northeast and South to interact with one another in order to present their views, concerns and aspirations collectively.
- 2) To identify important issues regarding the peace process that need further discussion and to formulate a workplan.
- 3) To establish working groups to address humanitarian and human rights, development, and sustainable peace issues.

“ It is imperative that civil society becomes involved in the peace process to ensure that the decisions regarding the future of Sri Lanka are balanced and well-informed. ”

Resolution

During the three day conference, participants expressed their appreciation of the political vision and courage demonstrated by the leadership of the government and the LTTE and of the facilitation provided by the Norwegian government. The participants also appreciated the concern of the international community for the restoration of peace in Sri Lanka and their support for the peace process. At the same time, the participants expressed their anxieties and concerns on the current peace process such as the slow implementation of basic humanitarian measures, human rights protections to improve the lives of the war-affected people, the exclusion of women from decision-making within the peace process, the absence of a bipartisan approach between the government and main opposition party and the continuing detention of prisoners without charges and without trial.



These concerns were recorded in the form of a resolution and were released to the media so that civil society's voice would be heard in promoting the peace process. The resolutions will also inform the Sewalanka Peace programs and workshops to be conducted in Vavuniya, Kurenagala, Ampara and Colombo June-August. ■

Vavuniya and Mannar:

Psychosocial project

Following the success of the 2002 psychosocial pilot project, *Helvetas Sri Lanka* continued its partnership with Sewalanka Foundation to develop the project further in 2003. The project continues to be implemented in twenty villages in Vavuniya and has been extended to ten villages in the Mannar District.

Along with eight newly appointed field assistants, twelve Psychosocial field assistants, who worked as volunteers during the pilot project, are now employed full time by the project. The 2003 project has also issued all field assistants with bicycles to support them in their fieldwork. The field assistants work at a grassroots level, providing befriending support through regular house visits within their own communities.

Linking Psychosocial Activities to development projects

The link between the psychosocial project and development field officers has been further solidified during 2003. Mr. Newton, District Director of SLF Vavuniya, emphasises the importance of linking development projects with psychosocial activities due to the immense stress people have endured during the conflict. "Wherever possible Development field officers should also be involved in psychosocial training in order to ensure that development activities always consider a projects' effect on individuals and the community from a mental health perspective".

Psychosocial Training in 2003

Whilst maintaining some elements of the 'Pansori' methodology that was used during the pilot project, the 2003 training concentrates more towards counseling and problem solving methodologies combined with traditional Sri Lankan methods of support such as temple visits and the use of family networks and relaxation. A two week training program held in Jaffna in



Training Workshop: included problem solving and counselling methodologies with traditional Sri Lankan methods of support

May, was supported by 'Shanthium' a local NGO, who provided a variety of experienced resource persons to teach psychosocial topics in the Tamil medium. The training curriculum included: Identifying and managing psychosocial problems; Understanding the relief system (benefits and methods of relaxation; group work; the benefits of family support); Women at the psychological, family and social levels; Psychosocial problems and Alcohol; and Psychosocial Issues and the effect on Children. The curriculum was complemented by Field visits to a Mental Health Hospital, Health Center, Counseling Center, Widows Society, Child protection Center, Family Counseling Center, and Alcohol Treatment Centre.

These field visits provided Sewalanka staff with a valuable opportunity to build links with psychosocial professionals, observe them at work and to talk to some of the service users. Such links with other psychosocial support services are important given that the Vavuniya psychosocial team predominantly work individually in the field.

Ms Aruntha, a Sewalanka Psychosocial Field Officer, explains that the training program assisted participants in extending their analysis and diagnosis skills. "Now we are able to identify problems more clearly. Before we could see people had problems but at times we couldn't identify whether they had a major mental health problem or were suffering from stress. But with this training we have links with a lot of professional people working in this area and we have developed our knowledge." ■



SLF Psychosocial staff receive bicycles to assist them in visiting families in the field

SLF & UNHCR Partnership

Sewalanka initially became an implementing partner to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1994. Since this time, the partnership has continued to implement Micro Projects for resettling communities in areas controlled by the government and for internally displaced communities in areas not within the total control of the Government. This year the Sewalanka/UNHCR partnership is assisting 1200 families who have just returned to their villages in the Wannu and Vavuniya .

The Sewalanka/UNHCR Project Manager, Mr Thamil Alagan, explains that these projects play an important role in helping returnee families to re-establish their lives. "This support is vital for returnees who need to completely re-build their lives so they can gain economic and social independence. If you can imagine the situation of most families who arrive back to a completely destroyed home, with no nearby water supply, no income and no money or resources to begin agriculture production... The support provides some basic essentials to assist families to begin again".

The 2003 UNHCR funded projects comprise the areas of sanitation, shelter, water and crop production and cover 10 villages in the Ammivaithan, Katkulam and Olumadu G.S Divisions in the Vavuniya and Mannar Districts. In the project areas in the Katkulam and Olumadu Districts bordering the Wannu, communities were displaced for 19 years. The Sewalanka/UNHCR partnership is constructing open dug wells, and renovating individual wells in order to provide drinking water and enable agricultural production. The project will also provide shelter and toilets as well as income generation assistance to some families.

Ms Maheshwary, from the Kathkulam Division, is a young widow raising three children. Her family is receiving shelter and income generation support from the project. She says, "I am just really grateful that I know I will be able to look after my family now. There was a lot of uncertainty when we returned."

In the Ammivaithan Division bordering the Mannar District, the community were displaced in 1987 and the majority were forced to live in refugee Camps. Last year, when the community re-



The UNHCR/SLF partnership: providing much needed sanitation facilities in the North.

turned, they were faced with difficulties including only one drinking water well for the entire village. The UNHCR / Sewalanka project is providing the village with one tube well and a common well. Individual wells are also being renovated. The president of the village, Mr. K Pakiyathan, says that the project has been important for the community. "We have all seen a lot of suffering from the war but we feel that good times have returned and we are fortunate that your organisation is working with us to improve the state of our village". ■

2003 Sewalanka/UNHCR Project Activities

1. **Construction of 03 Open Dug Wells**
2. **Construction of 74 Toilets**
3. **Renovation of 32 Agrowells**
4. **CEFE entrepreneur training program**
5. **Environmental Awareness Programs**
6. **Supply of Paddy Inputs for 130 families**
7. **Construction and Renovation of 14 Tube Wells**
8. **Supply of Temporary Shelter for 100 families**

working with women

in the North and East

A Sewalanka World Bank funded project will assist over 3,000 women in the North and East to achieve greater social and economic participation in rebuilding their war damaged communities. The three year project will begin in June.

Primarily, the project will provide grant assistance to supplement women's investments in small agriculture, fisheries and livestock as well as promote non-farm micro-enterprises among women. Social mobilization will play a key role in the project with gender awareness programs targeting the entire community. Participatory methods will be employed in small self help group formation, conducting group meetings, group decision making and in planning and implementation of all project activities. A key aim of the social mobilisation process will be to ensure that Women's Societies assume greater responsibilities in social and economic activities at the community level.

As is the experience of all civil conflicts, women are disproportionately affected by war. Many women in the North and East have been widowed and displaced. Harassment by military personnel, forcible recruitment of children by the LTTE, restrictions on mobility and the constant threat of gunfire and bombings have traumatised women throughout the conflict period. For those women displaced from their homes, poor health, maternity care and sanitation in refugee camps and resettlements have been the norm.

Although accurate figures are not available to assess the poverty levels in the northeast, some isolated baseline surveys carried out in villages bordering the north east suggest that nearly 50% of the population in the north east could be below the poverty line. Women bear a greater part of the impact of that poverty. Fewer employment opportunities available for women coupled with restricted mobility under war conditions makes them more susceptible to seasonal fluctuations of mostly agriculture based income and employment opportunities.

Traditionally, women's involvement in economic activities in the northeast has remained very low even during pre-conflict times. In 1981, only the Jaffna district has shown a higher proportion (34%) of women among the economically active population (compared with 59% for men). In all other districts in the northeast, the proportion of the economically active female population was between 8- 17% (65-74% for men). In 1996, the ratio of economically active population in Jaffna fell to 21% whilst the employment rate rose 6% for men.

Even in the current post conflict situation the ability for women to become socially and economically active is marginal due to cultural barriers and inadequate access to information, training, land and capital.

With the current peace making agreement between the Government and the LTTE, normalcy is developing rapidly in the war-ravaged northeast. Many government, donor, NGO and private sector initiatives are being planned and some are already in place that are aimed to rebuild the war damaged northeast. Since women remain adversely affected and marginalised due to the protracted war situation coupled with traditional and cultural barriers, the need to provide space and opportunities for women to participate in the rebuilding of their shattered society and economy is of paramount importance. The evidence available with several women led development initiatives in other parts of the country shows that women play an important role in uplifting the household economy, particularly among the very poor and the disadvantaged segments of the society. Therefore, it is vital that such experiences are incorporated into development interventions during the current post conflict situation in the northeast.

The International Women's Mission to the North East of Sri Lanka stated, "as displaced people, as refugees, as survivors of military offensives, landmine injuries and sexual violence, as mothers and girls, and as soldiers and combatants, women experience conflict differently from men... Yet women have had very little influence over the decision-making processes that deter-



Non-farm Small enterprises will be promoted and women entrepreneurs assisted with investments and training

mine the course of conflict and they continue to have little influence over peace processes”.

The main objective of the Sewalanka Women’s socio economic empowerment project is to sustainably enhance the role of women at the household and the community level in the social and economic rebuilding of the war affected northeast. This role enhancement will take place in three major areas – (i) idea generation and decision making (ii) representation and voicing, and (iii) access and control of resources.

The Sewalanka project will be implemented in ten villages in the districts of Vavuniya; Jaffna ;and Trincomalee. These three districts, although comprised predominately of Tamils, have different social, cultural and economic settings. For example, Vavuniya district has a relatively higher population of Sinhalese (23%) concentrated mostly in the southern part of the district, 29% of the population in Trincomalee comprises of Muslims while Jaffna district has a predominantly Tamil population (99%).

The approximate number of families who will benefit from the project is 3321 with at least one woman in each family targeted to participate in project activities. ■

Project Components

- i) Baseline survey reports for all ten villages
- ii) Training of 600 women to start up agricultural and non-agricultural income generating activities.
- iii) Skill training for 500 women on technologies relevant to improve the productivity of agricultural, non-farm and household activities
- iv) Training of 200 small group women leaders on saving and credit management
- v) Training of women officials of 50 CBOs in book keeping and loan revolving fund management
- vi) Training of 300 prospective women entrepreneurs on micro- and small enterprise management.
- vii) Provide farm inputs for 500 women to start agricultural activities
- viii) Provide seed capital to 200 women to start non-farm micro-enterprises
- ix) Construction and renovation of 80 agro-wells in the target villages
- x) Construction of 50 drinking water wells in the target villages
- xi) Renovation of village market place in eight target villages
- xii) Publication of 2000 brochures depicting achievements and lessons learnt from the project
- xiii) Preparing a video documentary portraying the achievements and lessons learnt from the project.

EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

Psycho Social Workshop

Sewalanka conducted a two week psychosocial training program 14th-30th May. 23 staff from Vavuniya Pyschosocial program attended the workshop. The training combined counselling and problem solving methodologies with traditional Sri Lankan methods of support such as Temple visits, using family networks and relaxation treatments.

SLF Assists German Government Emergency Team

On the 25th May, Sewalanka assisted an emergency team from the German federal Agency for Technical Relief, Bonn. The team assisted in water purification of drinking wells in flood affected areas.

German Journalists to visit North

In June, two journalists will visit Sewalanka/German Agro Action projects in conflict affected areas of Vavuniya and the Wannu to report on the situation of Women. They will be writing a series of articles for German Agro Action whose 1993 theme focus is , "Women in Conflict".

GAA Documentary in the North

In June, German Agro Action's Annual fundraising and awareness documentary will be filmed for the first time in Sri Lanka. Renoun German singer, Claudia Jung, will visit

GAA/Sewalanka projects in the Wannu and Vavuniya where a documentary will be produced for screening later in Germany.

Peace Building Workshops

Sewalanka will be conducting three Regional Peace Building workshops in Vavuniya, Kurenagala and Ampara in June and July for religious and community leaders and a National Workshop in Colombo in August. The four workshops have been supported by funding from UNHCR.

The workshops aim to promote coexistence between and among different ethnic groups, religious groups, IDPs, returnees and host communities whilst promoting religious leaders and civil society's participation in the ongoing conflict resolution process at the grassroots level.



Sewalanka staff open the new Sewalanka Office in March with chanting and prayer.

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