



SEWALANKA FOUNDATION

Relief to rehabilitation and development

The Sewalanka Foundation Mannar District Office is working alongside the community and with international donors, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and other local organisations to meet the communities' changing needs.

This year has seen a significant transition for Mannar District Office, from undertaking relief and emergency rehabilitation projects to focusing on implementing sustainable development programs. Ms Annet Royce, Mannar District Director explains, "My office concentrates on a few communities really well, we make a commitment to a village and then take an integrated approach to development. Often we will work with different donors to meet the evolving needs of a community from providing emergency relief for resettling villages, to infrastructure rehabilitation and finally to long term activities for community development".

Ms Royce articulates a common approach to development in a post-conflict society. As fighting subsides and communities return, basic needs must be met – like the provision of food, water and shelter – before training or income generation activities can start.

Working together

Since the cease-fire, internally displaced families (IDPs) are returning to their lands, only to experience extreme hardships. Buildings and homes are destroyed, irrigation facilities are often dysfunctional, roads impassable, large-scale unemployment prevalent and a lack of adequate health care facilities.

Thiruketheswaram village, Manthai Division in the high security zone is an example of different donors and Sewalanka Mannar office working together to meet development needs. In mid 2004, the German

Government's Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) provided temporary shelter, cooking utensils, agricultural tools and chili and vegetable seeds for twelve families to resettle. Twenty families were granted permission to return but the army has permitted only twelve due to the close proximity of Mannar's largest army base.

When asked, most families say that they are happy to have returned to their original lands as they spent most of the conflict living with relatives or friends in Mannar Town. After initial infrastructure needs were met by BMZ, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) provided funds for training, income generation activities, community-based-organisation (CBO) strengthening, pre-school building construction, roads, twenty toilets and water supply. GoSL has provided monthly dry rations and also a bus service frequents the village.

This community continues to face physical hardship as there is no water available. Water is brought in for drinking purposes and farmers continue to wait for the monsoon season so they can restart their home

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gardens and cultivating chillies. In addition, the community faces psychological hardship as the experiences of conflict have not faded and the strong army presence and surrounding mine fields serve as a constant reminder of war and the possible resumption of conflict.

Obstacles to development

“Some communities want to stay at the rehabilitation stage and are unable to shift to the development stage due to too many uncertainties in their lives. They are concerned about the weather and lack of water but more importantly they are concerned about the resumption of war. They are uncertain about investing their limited capital for infrastructure or investing time into cultivation if they may not see the next harvest.” as Mr Newman Peries, Coordinator explains.

Sewalanka can not create certainty; however it does recognise the need to address psychosocial issues. Also the district office includes social mobilisation as a key component of every project. That is enabling civil society participation in all project development and

implementation through the strengthening of new or existing CBOs.

Mr. Rejeevan, Field Officer says “People are depressed, so if we go straight from



Top Potting Agriculture Exhibition Day
 << Making sure a whole community's involved through Village Mapping exercises in Musali Division

Mannar Project Partners

Mannar District would like to thank Government Departments and Agents, NGO consortium, and the following project partners for a successful 2004:

	<i>Villages Families</i>	
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	8	359
NECORD	1	105
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)	5 Div.	700
Helvetas	10	693
German Agro Action (GAA)	12	591
UNICEF	50	2000

undertaking a Participatory Rural Assessment to project implementation without proper capacity building, then people are not in the mood to help us. We have to visit the families, organise effective societies and listen to their problems and needs.”

Ms Royce further elaborates, “We spend the time to undertake strong social mobilisation, sometimes taking years to see real improvements, if we don't do this component correctly then there is no human development only infrastructure development.”

Options available

Sewalanka Mannar Office is also taking this opportunity of peace to support programs that look at “tertiary level” development projects; projects that meet additional needs after basic ones are met.

From 20-23 April 2004, the Mannar Office and other local NGOs financially supported the “Potting Agricultural Exhibition” organised by the Mannar Department of Agriculture that showcased different plants suitable for farming in Mannar. This event is the beginning of a larger project planned for Mannar that focuses on sustainable forms of agriculture; a personal passion of the District Director and vitally important for this dry-zone district.

In addition, Sewalanka was supported by UNICEF in August to implement a project to create awareness on children's rights for rural development societies, preschool teachers, Grama Niladharies, alternative care centre staff and NGO front line workers in Mannar. The project will run a Train the Trainer workshop and then a series of workshops for more than 2,320 community members on a child's right to education, to live with parents free from violence and to be protected from child labour.

The future

Of course, with 1,146 families still residing in the six welfare centres in Mannar the need for emergency rehabilitation has not diminished. Instead, by working with a variety of project partners, through building the capacity of Mannar NGOs and by looking at projects that meet more than basic needs, Sewalanka Mannar District Office is prepared for the future – a landscape at the moment that includes relief, rehabilitation and sustainable development.

For further information on Mannar District activities please contact Ms Annet Royce, District Director on 0)23 223 2702 or sewaman@sltnet.lk. *The Focus on Mannar was written by Sewalanka's Communication Unit as part of a new District Focus for each newsletter.* ■

Integrating Psychosocial into Development

Sewalanka Foundation Mannar District Office knows through practical experience that psychosocial work goes hand in hand with development; this is demonstrated through their experience in Oliathoduwai Village.

The Oliathoduwai community were displaced many times during the conflict, and prior to their resettlement in Oliathoduwai, many took shelter at one of the six welfare centres located in Mannar.

Dislocation, including protracted stays at these centres, saw deteriorations in education, cultural and social values, paving the way toward widespread social problems such as alcohol and drug addiction, depression and abuse of women and children.

In 2003 those families still in the welfare centres volunteered to return to their homes in Oliathoduwai along with an additional 40 “non local” families. Donor agencies assisted in the relocation process. UNHCR provided technical support and much needed materials like cement and cadjans for construction of vital facilities such as drinking water wells and temporary shelters, community hall and school.

At this time Sewalanka Mannar Office, with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), began working in Oliathoduwai. Sewalanka was able to reinforce the basic needs of these people through sinking two wells, constructing 70 toilets, rehabilitating inner roads and providing relevant job-oriented training, as well as a micro-finance facility. At present a preschool is under construction, enterprise development and job training is underway, a small loans scheme is in place, and training on the strengthening of CBOs is being undertaken.

Psychosocial programme

More than just providing material assistance, Sewalanka identified psychosocial problems as a result of displacement that needed to be addressed.

Therefore, Sewalanka with the assistance of Helvetas, launched the Psychosocial Program. Specially trained officers meet villagers individually and informally through “befriending”, they conduct awareness workshops and seminars on issues including women, children and alcohol, and host special events.

According to Mannar District Director Annet Royce, development plans and psychosocial programmes have shared interests and therefore Sewalanka finds it easy to implement these simultaneously. “When we first entered Oliathoduwai, we found it to be full of social problems. Alcoholism, violence against women and children, laziness, neglect of common facilities such as wells and poor basic hygiene were commonplace. A community with so many problems cannot easily be mobilised, and a poorly mobilised community will not effectively develop”.

The developmental benefits

Through combining a psychosocial and development approach, psychosocial concerns are addressed in a way that meets Sewalanka development objectives. Annet cites the successful one-year completion of the DRC project in Oliathoduwai as a clear indicator of achievement in this approach. Within one year the DRC project has almost been completed – as the result of local involvement. Locals contributed unskilled labour in well construction, and 50 families are currently involved in savings and credit components with all showing progress and meeting repayments.

“This is a great achievement, people are working together for the development of their community. It would not have been possible if we did not have a psychosocial project in this area to challenge the ‘welfare mentality’”, she said.

While it gives staff pleasure to see that villagers here are more enthusiastic and happier now than earlier, all agree that there is much more to be done to address psychosocial needs.

Mannar and Vavuniya are the two Districts in which Sewalanka has a targeted psychosocial programme.

For further information contact Annet Royce, District Director on 0)23 223 2702 or sewaman@sltnet.lk ■

>> Sewalanka volunteer in Oliathoduwai believes befriending is the most important part of her job, in order to build trust.



A Living from the Land

SRI LANKA IS famed worldwide for its glorious tropical climate, rich cultures and fertile soils. Yet today many small farmers struggle to make a living. As in most developing countries, policy-makers are under pressure to encourage their domestic agricultural sectors to become export-focused, and if a few farmers disappear through inefficiency, then this is the price of progress. But look closely, and you'll find local organisations working with farmers to develop sustainable forms of agriculture that are highly productive and diverse, and instructive to us all. One such local organisation is the Sewalanka Foundation.

Sewalanka is working in the north with more than 4,000 farmers organised in to several hundred self-help groups. This is region where the civil war caused deep disruption for two decades, and where, since the 2002 cease-fire, rural people are showing that they can create alternative futures for their communities. Head north for an hour from the ancient city of Anuradhapura, centre of a 1,200-year-old Buddhist dynasty, and you'll come to Vavuniya, a small town supported by some of the best examples of sustainable farming.

We walk first across the farm of the Jayawardne family, abandoned since the conflict started. Now they have cleared two and half hectares of scrub, and planted a complex mix of perennials and vegetables. The papaya and banana shade the chillies, onions and aubergines, and the twenty-five cattle provide manure for the soil. The family have a shop in the village, and are proud that farmers' groups are brought from all over the country to see what can be achieved. They say, "During the war, we didn't know whether we'd ever be able to start life again, and yet we've now achieve so much." Their spirit of cooperation is generous. "It's important for us to work in groups. If we only develop ourselves, there will still be problems in the village. Our plan is to get everyone in the village working together." In this way, small farmers can act like large farmers, and sell to traders on their own terms.

A FEW KILOMETERS away, Patrick Jeyabalan's family have effected another remarkable transformation. They look on their one-and-a-half-hectare farm just two years ago, and have already paid off the loan. At that time,

only one crop was grown – not an unsuccessful piece of land, but certainly not a very productive one. As we walk around the farm, bending beneath the bananas and hanging fruit, stepping over carefully staked vegetables, listening to the cries and calls of distant animals, we count thirty-eight types of crop. Here there are lime, lemon, coconut and guava; over there gourd, string bean, tomato, chilli, capsicum, onion and cabbage. There are groundnut and green gram, and manioc, sweet potato and maize for staples. Around the house are herbs and medicinal plants, and an enormous compost heap. Every corner of the farm is growing some-thing useful. Who says small farmers are inefficient and unproductive?

What is also significant is that we are in Sri Lankan's dry zone. Here farming is tough – but these farmers are showing that ingenuity, hard work and cooperation can transform the land. They can do this with low-cost and locally available methods, and their soils are improving. The diversity of crops is good for their diets and for pest control, and also helps with year-round marketing. These farmers are telling us that efficiency in farming does not have to be achieved through monocultures and ever-increasing farm sizes. More importantly, they are showing us that having people on the land is a good thing.

Reprinted with kind permission from Resurgence (issue no. 224 May/June 2005) www.resurgence.org. Jules Pretty is Professor of Environment and Society at the University of Essex. ■

>> Irrigation channels and intercropping have transformed Jeyabalan's



IFSP tackles agricultural issues head on

Villagers returning to the conflict affected areas of Sri Lanka are rebuilding their lives through agricultural developments. It is a slow process as farmers repair their lands, rebuild infrastructure, regain tools and relearn their trade but necessary if they are going to acquire a sustainable source of food and income.

The Wannai area – the DS Division of Vavuniya North and the Northern part of the Vavuniya DS Division – reflects the social, economic and psychological damage inflicted during the conflict between the Sri Lankan Security Forces and the LTTE prior to the 2002 cease-fire agreement.

However, since the cease-fire, internally displaced families (IDPs) are returning to their lands. During resettlement they experienced extreme hardships as buildings and homes are destroyed, irrigation facilities are often dysfunctional, roads impassable, large-scale unemployment prevalent and a lack of adequate health care facilities.

The Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP) is targeting 50 villages in the worst conflict affected areas of the Wannai. It utilises a strong social mobilisation approach to empower communities to determine their own development priorities through participatory rural appraisals (PRA); that is active grassroots research aimed to determine problems and engage the community.

Agricultural assistance needed!

Agricultural assistance, in particular management of crop production systems and water management, was highlighted in the PRAs as a major priority for agricultural activities of IDPs.

Therefore, Sewalanka's Agricultural Division developed a Training of Trainer (TOT) course for IFSP field staff and social mobilisers, held from 31 Aug – 2 Sept 2004 at the Department of Agriculture Training Centre, Vavuniya. The course was approved by the Vavuniya Provincial Department of Agriculture and Department of Animal Health and Production. The Vavuniya Subject Matter Specialist and the Agricultural Instructors also attended the training course; bringing the total number of participants to 30 people.

Sustainable farming approach to repair the lands

The course provided practical content delivered by

local resource persons to address the specific needs of farmers whom have been displaced for years. The course updated farmers on sustainable technologies and refreshed their indigenous farming knowledge.

Many topics were covered in the intensive workshop, a complete course outline can be provided. Some of these included land and water management, particularly important considering the Wannai is in the dry zone and involved soil and water conservation, water harvesting, organic matter management and utilising wind breaks and shade for crop growth. In addition, composting and its benefits, soil nutrition management were also covered and focusing on the effects of organic versus non-organic fertilisers, integrated plant nutrition systems and the nutritional value of soil types.

Financial farm management was also discussed including identifying new markets and opportunities for income generation and budgeting.

Problems highlighted

During the workshop key problems experienced by farmers and conveyed to field staff were explored. The participants divided into three groups for discussion; lowland paddy cultivation, upland fruits cultivation and other field crops. Each group determined 13 or more key issues for their farmer segment and identified appropriate solutions. A problem and solution overview is available and is being utilised for further training and project planning.

Interestingly, each group suggested the construction of a market information centre at Nedunkerny, the undertaking of proper soil management and efficient fertilisers, and the development of demonstration plots, farmer field exposure visits and consistent monitoring for mid-planting correction. Each farmers segment developed their own action plans.

For more information concerning the course outline and the problems and solutions matrix, please contact Dr. Weerakoon at Sewalanka Head Office. IFSP is Sewalanka and German Agro Action project, supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), for more information contact Ms Lakshi Abeyasekara, Director Special Projects on +94 (0)24 222 1354 or sewavav@sltnet.lk ■

After the floods the work continues

Sewalanka Foundation continues to rebuild lives affected by the May 2003 monsoon rains in Southern Sri Lankan; that left over 100 people dead and approximately 175,000 people destitute.

At the time of the floods, Sewalanka Foundation with the support of the Royal Danish Embassy, New Delhi and working alongside the army, school children and other community members, mobilised quickly to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the floods and landslides. Overall, 7,340 families directly benefited from Sewalanka's dry ration packages delivered to the most isolated communities in Ratnapura and Matara. The national and international media also garnished much needed support and were vital in ensuring that emergency relief was provided.

However, over one year has passed and the public's interest in the long-term effects of the floods and landslides has diminished. This is particularly sad as the community and surrounding environment continue to be adversely affected by inadequate primary health care services, water systems, education, housing, infrastructure and opportunities to earn an income.

As a result, Sewalanka started work in June 2004 with the Japanese Government through their Sri Lankan Embassy on the *Restoration of Basic Facilities affected by Floods/Landslides in Matara Project*. The project aims to restore basic services to those affected by this natural disaster and includes:

- Pre-school cum community centre construction, primary school renovation including a library, laboratory, teachers quarters and toilet facilities, and repairing a foot bridge in Mederipitiya
- Reconstruction of Kiriwalagama's crossway bridge
- Reconstruction of Kriweldola's vehicular bridge
- Reconstruction of Weligepitiyawatta and Aluthgedara's suspension bridges

A community approach

The community has reacted well to *Restoration of Basic Facilities affected by Floods/Landslides in Matara Project* as it is providing much needed basic infrastructure and as Sewalanka has an established level of trust due to the humanitarian relief provided immediately after the disaster.

Sewalanka continues to build upon this trust by working with the community in a participatory manner. The project coordinator has selected four village leaders, whose main tasks so far has been to organise community meetings, coordinate project officers and technical officers, and network with other key stakeholders.

The community leaders and Sewalanka organised three meetings with each of the target villages to raise awareness about the project and seek community input in the implementation plan. The meetings were attended by over 400 community members from the local community and private and government sectors. The main feedback provided was to construct the bridges over the Gin-Ganga River before the rainy season in October and November starts.

Each village has adopted a different approach to provide labour contributions to the project. The Kiriwalagama (Crossways Bridge) community has formed five labour groups each incorporating 15 to 25 members who take it in turns to share their labour with site construction work. This community has also contributed more than one thousand human labour hours demonstrating their great support and dedication to the project.

Sewalanka Foundation aims to have the project completed by March 2005. For further information please contact Mr. Ajith Teenakoon, Sewalanka's Sinharaja Projects Coordinator at Head Office on +94 011) 254 5362 - 5 or sewahq@sri.lanka.net ■



Top Women and children working on the Kiriwalagama crossway bridge >> Community and skilled tradesmen working together to lay the foundations for Kiriwalagama's crossway bridge



Women learning through example

Women's Project participants from Trincomalee and Jaffna, embarked recently on a field exposure visit to Hambantota, for many this adventure was the first time they have left their respective Districts.

The two field study visits took place last quarter in July and September, with a total of 95 beneficiaries of the World Bank funded *Social and Economic Empowerment of Women in the North and East of Sri Lanka Project (WEP)* participating in the 3 day-programmes. The participants from Trincomalee were Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim from Peramaduwa – Kanthale DS, Nagar . The participants from Jaffna were Tamil women from Kytes and Allarai – Sinnamadhhu.

The field visit aimed for participants to gain firsthand experience of the work completed by the Hambantota Women's Development Federation and the Janashakthi Bank; the partner project, being implemented in the South.

Participants learnt from the achievements, weaknesses, problems, strengths and successes of the project so far completed in the south. This included discussions at the Women's Federation Society Centre, a field visit to the Janashakthi Bank built through the women's efforts; and with meeting with small groups, community-based-organisations and successful entrepreneurs.

Ms Ganga Dissanayake, Sewalanka Women's Coordinator, explained the benefits of the field exposure visit: "We have given many training programmes, but these women don't have practical experience, or examples to draw upon. Many people from Hambantota were the poorest, they had no businesses, they had no money for personal savings or

for their agricultural development. Now they have money, savings, and successful small businesses. These are strong women. It is a good experience for the Trincomalee and Jaffna women to meet these people, as they will soon start the same or similar activities. Now they have good knowledge."

The visit also enabled participants to visit to Kataragama, Kirivehera, Murugan Kovil and the Mosque for devotions and to receive blessings.

World Bank and NDB visit Projects

Representatives from the WEP donor body, the World Bank, and its executing partner, the National Development Bank (NDB) made a special visit to project sites in the Trincomalee region on 13-14 August 2004 to meet project beneficiaries, and to see the project progress firsthand.

Project participants in the three Trincomalee villages of Alim Nagar, Thangapuram and Peramaduwa gave a special welcome to Ms Sriyani Hulugalle and Ms Malathi Rathnayake from the World Bank, and Mr A.L. Somaratne, Mr R.D. Abeywardena and Mr S Dorenegoda from NDB, along with Sewalanka Women's Empowerment Unit staff.

In Peramaduwa village, 10 beneficiaries were pleased to accept the first loan instalment on behalf of their community-based-organisation, presented by the delegates, which will be used for initiating and strengthening their income generating activities. One lady had already built her home-based bakery in anticipation! A second cheque was presented to Sewalanka to initiate well construction in the village of Thangapuram. At present construction of five wells are underway in both Thangapuram and Peramaduwa villages.

This was the first time the delegates have visited the Trincomalee project sites. In February this year they visited the project sites of Jaffna. The participants appreciated the support from the donors and their active participation in the project.

For further information please contact Ms K. Nawaratne, Director – Women's Empowerment Unit on sewaweu@sri.lanka.net or 0)11 2545362-5. ■



<<
Thangapuram
CBO members
give a warm
welcome to
World Bank
and NDB
delegates

From Civil Conflict to Civil Society

Peace Boat, Sewalanka partner, made Sri Lanka the fourth port of call this June, with 100 of its passengers visiting the Puttulam Village of Eluwan Kulam, in their journey to promote peace, human rights, equal and sustainable development and respect for the environment.

Peace Boat is a Japan-based international non-governmental and non-profit organisation that works to promote peace, human rights, equal and sustainable development and respect for the environment. Peace Boat carries out its main activities through a chartered passenger ship that travels the world on peace voyages.

Marking their 46th voyage, Eluwan Kulam on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka, was an important location for the international visitors. It is one of many villages Sewalanka is helping to recover after being caught in the cross fire of the civil war. Villagers shared their history with Peace Boat passengers, explaining how ten years ago 3,000 villagers, a mix of Muslims and Sinhalese, lived together farming the land along the coastal jungles. But after it became a base of several hundred soldiers in the village, it quickly became a prime target in the conflict. Peace Boat participants visiting the village learned the resulting fighting was so fierce that migrating birds began avoiding the area and the majority of the residents fled.

The soldiers are now gone and former residents have begun to return to their village. The refugees, though, were hampered by some of the more than 1,000,000 landmines buried during the civil war. Now, five years after the end of heavy fighting near Eluwan Kulam, 1,000 villagers have trickled back.

Although the remaining mines are largely in the jungle, villagers still struggle to make a living, said Ajith

Tennakoon, Agricultural Advisor for Sewalanka. Standing next to the shell of a building pocked with bullet-holes, a new school and community center offer hope to the village. "They need some assistance, but I think that within two years they will be self-sustaining," Tennakoon said.

Some of that assistance came from Peace Boat volunteers who collected stationary and other materials in Japan to help students in Eluwan Kulam. Welcoming the gift, a community leader recalled how Sri Lanka supported Japan at the San Francisco Treaty talks, just after the atomic bombs had been dropped. Highlighting their shared experience of indiscriminate destruction and suffering, he expressed hope that they would form a long-lasting bond between the two people.

The civil war didn't only effect farmers in rural parts of Sri Lanka, as Peace Boat participants witnessed at a refugee camp an hour away from Eluwan Kulam. Tennakoon recounted how only 15 years before, the residents of this camp were well-off people from the northern city of Jaffna – doctors, lawyers and professors. One day, they were told to leave their houses and all their valuables within two hours. Only allowed to take 500 rupees (about five US dollars) they walked more than 100 kilometers over three days to reach the salt plain near the ocean they now call home.

"They were chased here, they had to leave their houses, property, education and businesses behind," Tennakoon said. "The government still sees this place as temporary, so that's why they won't try to fully help them," he said. Working as salt farmers or in small industry, Tennakoon says most of them will probably live out the rest of their life in the refugee camp. "Some want to go back, but others never want to go back because they lost everything."

While the Peace Boat has left Sri Lanka, the impact of the visit has not been lost on its passengers, and greater linkages between the two organisations are on the horizon.

For further information on Sewalanka peace initiatives, contact Sewalanka's Chairman on sewahq@sri.lanka.net or +94 (0)11 2545 362-5 and information on Peace Boat see www.peaceboat.com. *This article first appeared on the Peace Boat website and has been reproduced here with a few changes.* ■



<< Mr Ajith Tennakoon with peace boat delegates and local village

Civil societies working for peace

People's Forums in the North and East

With the support of the government and the LTTE, Sewalanka Foundation is working with our strong grass-roots networks and partnering with the Foundation for Co-Existence to talk PEACE.

This project aims to create a space for people in border communities to meet and discuss the issues that concern them. At the same time, the project will offer training in debate and democratic process, capacity-building activities, and the opportunity to communicate grassroots problems and ideas to local and national stakeholders.

The People's Forums will take place in three clusters straddling district lines: one at the junction of Mannar, Anuradhapura, and Vavuniya; one including Trincomalee, Anuradhapura, and Vavuniya; and one on the border of Ampara and Monaragala. These border areas are crucial in maintaining peace and stability, and open discussion among mixed communities will help support a peace process that, up until now, has been largely driven by national political figures.

The North and East project is part of a national initiative. The South, West and central provinces are being coordinated by other key non-governmental organisations. The national initiative is planned for three years culminating annually in a national annual conference. The national project is an extension of Peace Forum's coordinated by Sarvodaya, National Peace Council and the Anti-War Front prior to the elections.

Talking peace with the LTTE

Sewalanka Foundation's Chairman, Mr. Harsha Navaratne was part of a delegation that visited Kilinochchi on 6 August 2004 to meet with Mr. S.P Tamilselvan Head of the LTTE Political Wing.

The delegation represented a cross section of civil society in the south comprised of Buddhist clergy, catholic priests, trade union representatives and media. Together they briefed Mr. Tamilselvan on their commitment to strengthen the civil society and support the peace process. Each representative explained at length the various steps taken in their fields to bring about unity and understanding among the different races and religions in this island.

Mr. Navaratne believed the meeting to be an important opportunity, he explains "Not often can leaders from the South talk directly with the key actors in the peace process, it is fundamental for the views of all people to be expressed at a meeting like this if the peace process is going to move forward".

Responding to the focal point raised by the visitors as to what the impediments are in taking forward the peace process, Mr. Tamilselvan said that the upholding of the Cease Fire Agreement and taking steps to restore normalcy to the war devastated Northeast region are the most important and urgent steps to be taken to remove the impediments. The Tamil people, Mr. Tamilselvan said, are very much disappointed that they have not become beneficiaries of the peace dividends. Normalcy for them, he said, is restoring their rights to go back to their homes, engage in their professions like agriculture and fishing in their natural habitats.

Civil Society Initiative

Sewalanka Foundation has joined forces with the Foundation for Co-Existence to mobilise civil societies and increase the strength of their collective voice in national peace and development decision-making.

Civil society that includes non-government organisations, professional organisations, clergy, trade unions, and community-based organisations have for the most part been marginalised in the peace process dominated by high-level politicians.

Moreover, civil society organisations in Sri Lanka have tended to be fragmented and ineffectual in influencing economic or trade decisions, a situation that reduces the accountability and transparency of the democratic process.

This Civil Society Initiative seeks to bring together civil society actors from all over the island into a consortium which will provide a strong platform for expressing their positions on the peace process and other important national issues. The consortium will also provide capacity-building and cross-fertilisation opportunities among the organisations.

For further information, please contact Sewalanka Foundation's Chairman on +94 (0)11 2545 362-5 or sewahq@sri.lanka.net ■

Community combating garbage

Last year saw record numbers of international tourists take advantage of the peace process and visit Sri Lanka. The Unawatuna community this tourism season, from October to March, are preparing for another boom year by working together to implement environmentally friendly programs.

Sewalanka Foundation started working in Unawatuna, a small tourist town in the South of Sri Lanka, over one year ago. Namely working with a local women's society to implement a skills development that aims to improve sewing and design techniques for local garment producers and sellers.

As part of this ongoing project, locals explained to Sewalanka staff that international tourists complained about the amount of garbage left on the beach. One local woman pointed to the freshly swept beach and a pile of garbage hidden out of sight, she said "We are business women, we know that if the tourists are not happy, they will stop coming and then we can't survive. So we keep them happy by sweeping the beach each morning".

Therefore, when Sewalanka hosted two short-term American volunteers in July and August this year, an Eco-Fund was started as a means to collect spare change from foreign tourists for environmentally friendly projects. Whilst negotiating with local guesthouses to establish the fund, the momentum started to build to do something quickly about the rubbish before the next tourism season started.

A meeting was held on the 31 August facilitated by Sewalanka Foundation and attended by twelve guesthouse owners. Within a week, the guesthouse owners had gone door-to-door and spoken with forty-five businesses in Unawatuna to discuss the garbage problem and to gather support. Another meeting was held on Sunday 5 September, attended by over forty community members who formed the Unawatuna Tourism Development Association (UTDA) and pledged over Rs.70,000 for an eco-fund.

Clean Up the Beach Day

Within two weeks the newly formed association joined forces with the local community, Sewalanka Foundation, Unawatuna Lions Club and local businesses to organise

the inaugural *Clean Up the Beach Day* on 11 Sept 2004.

The day was well attended by members of the local community and children from eight different schools, six from Galle and two from Unawatuna. The children dressed in their school uniforms moved up the beach armed with tools and bags collecting every piece of rubbish in their path. As the local teacher stated, "the children are happy to come too as it provides an opportunity to protect our land and community".

Tourists were also overwhelmed by the support for the day's activities. Two tourists from the United Kingdom commented, "we have been to quite a few beaches along the South Coast but Unawatuna was definitely the best as we feel a real sense of community here and the place is much cleaner."

Lunch was provided for the school children by local businesses, the day was also supported by the Galle Education Director, Chairman Pradeshiya Saba - Habaradwa and O.C Police - Habaradwa and local media.

Community managed programs

The most significant achievement from the *Unawatuna Clean Up the Beach Day* is

TOP Local school children enjoying the Unawatuna Clean up the beach day.
>> Members of the newly formed Unawatuna Tourism Development Association join forces with local school children and Sewalanka staff.



Sewalanka staff working together

The Annual General Meeting of the Sewa Lanka Welfare Society was held on 8 August 2004 in Polonnaruwa. The Meeting aimed to rejuvenate the Society that had formed in 1998 by electing a new executive and determining future plans. The meeting elected Mr. R.M. Nimalsiri as Chairman, Mr. Aruna Rajapaksha as Secretary and Ms Chamika Kodithuwakku as Treasurer.

Since its inception, over Rs.663,000 has been collected and dispersed to staff as death and marriage donations. The society reaffirmed its constitution and reinstated its goals to provide assistance to staff dealing with family death or marriages, promote athletics, education and hobbies, and to create a micro-credit and savings program.

Since the Annual General Meeting, the society executive has met in Galle and organised a lottery to be



drawn on 7-11-2004 that will hopefully raise Rs.3 lakh. ■

<< New executive committee elected

Sinharaja English Diary

During July and August 2004, Robert Jeffers taught English in Kudawa, a Sinharaja Rainforest border village. Robert is a high school teacher from California, USA he describes his experience teaching English to children in the morning and forest guides in the evening as “both fun and productive”. In the afternoon the guides, “reviewed English grammar conventions, practiced clearer pronunciation, and studied phrases



useful for eco-tourism. Some classes were conducted inside the Sinharaja where we practiced English in the very environment the guides would be speaking with tourists... I am sad to leave such a friendly and inviting place.” ■

<< Kids taught spoken English in the morning

Unawatuna women head to the big smoke

Sewalanka Foundation Head Office hosted over twenty women from Unawatuna for a two day exposure visit to Colombo from 19-20 July 2004. The aim of the visit was to show local tailors and garment sellers the quality and types of products popular with foreign tourists. The visit also introduced the Colombo Mahragama and Pettah wholesale markets to the ladies and techniques for purchasing in bulk.

This visit was part of a larger training program on basic dressmaking and fabric design skills for local clothes shop owners, tailors and mobile beach vendors (women selling clothes on the beach). The intermediate training program started in the new Sewalanka Unawatuna Office in June 2004. This program was funded by Sewalanka Foundation. ■

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that activities will not stop with the one-day program. The UTDA has used the money pledged to purchase 30 concrete cylinders to be used as garbage bins which were distributed over the Saturday and Sunday. Sewalanka Foundation will coordinate a school competition to paint some of the bins but all the bins will be clearly marked as the place for garbage.

The association has also employed four garbage collectors and equipped them with wheelbarrows, shovels and uniforms to carry out their work. Also they have plans to purchase a tractor for garbage removal.

As the Association President, Mr. Prishantha Dissanayake stated that, “the Tourism Development Association has formed recently with all hotel owners enthusiastic to help. This is our community and we must work with it to maintain Unawatuna as a popular tourism destination”.

The association have also become actively involved in lobbying for the correct disposal of human waste from all hotels and are in the process of discussing community water and toilet needs, especially for local tourists. The association is also actively promoting their community through a website and other tourism activities.

For further information, contact SEDCO on +94 (0)11 254 5688 or at sedco@sri.lanka.net. ■

Supporting Fishermen in the East

Sewalanka Foundation's district offices in Ampara and Batticaloa signed agreements with UNDP's Transition Programme (TP) Office in Batticaloa in October to deliver mobilisation and capacity building services to a further 14 Fishermen's Cooperative Societies in the two districts (8 in Batticaloa), under the UNDP TP's Fisheries Economic Recovery Programme (FERP). These societies bring the total number of fishermen's co-ops covered by the FERP and supported by Sewalanka Foundation in the east to 16; Sewalanka Ampara began working with two societies earlier in the year.

Sewalanka Foundation's task is to ensure that each of the sixteen Fishermen's Cooperative Societies are functional and capable of managing the micro- and meso-credit packages, totalling more than Rs 20 million, which will be released to each society under the FERP next year. Sewalanka Foundation has already begun working closely with the extension staff from the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and the Cooperative Department, which are also partners of FERP. Source funding for FERP has been provided by AusAID. ■

Moving to the outstations

Sewalanka Foundation Vavuniya District Office hosted the first Sewalanka board meeting held in an outstation on Monday 6 Sept 2004. The meeting was attended by all District Directors and Senior Staff and is part of the move by management to ensure that the organisations

administrative practices reflect its decentralised structure. Mr Harsha Navaratne, Sewalanka

Chairman congratulated Mr Newton, District Director and his staff for a well run meeting. The next board meeting will be held in Ampara in December. ■



>> Sewalanka Board members in Vavuniya for the Bimonthly Board meeting



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Who said we shouldn't listen to donkeys!

Momentum is gathering in the east for a simple and grass-roots solution to a huge problem. Due to the cessation of the conflict, many villages are now cultivating for the first time in more than 10 years. However these disused farm lands have become grazing areas for wild elephants and the villagers now cultivating their farm lands are facing increased risk of damage from elephants.

Oxfam GB, Batticaloa Office heard about this problem but also listened to a local solution. They have worked with their national network to bring two miniature donkeys from Mannar to the village of Urani, (Pottuvil DS Division) in Amparai. Villagers were convinced that the donkeys' cry would frighten elephants away and anecdotal evidence proves that it is working. The solution is so popular that Sewalanka Foundation Ampara is receiving requests to also provide donkeys to villages in which it is working. Congratulations Oxfam GB for a great solution. ■



>> Donkeys near Mannar town are being used to solve the elephant problem in the East

Plantations getting connected

Sewalanka Plantation Workers Centre in Dickoya has opened a Communication Centre in Bathford Bazaar, Dickoya on 27 September 2004. The Centre was funded by ICTA Sri Lanka. Ms Sivapackiyam, the Project Manager says, "We are excited by this project as it provides excellent facilities". The centre has computers, phones and internet access. ■



>> A young computer student learning from Centre Coordinator

Sewalanka Newsletter

Sewalanka Foundation's newsletter is now produced quarterly. To subscribe by post or email, or send comments to the Sewalanka Newsletter, contact the Sewalanka Media Department at the address provided.

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