



# SEWALANKA FOUNDATION

When the tsunami struck Sri Lanka on 26 December 2004, I was in a remote area of southern India with Sewalanka's Vice-Chairman. By the time we heard the news and were able to contact Sri Lanka, we found our staff had already begun mobilising resources to respond to the disaster.

In the coastal districts, Sewalanka staff members were using every asset at their immediate disposal to assist bereaved and displaced families. The Vavuniya office was collecting supplies, loading lorries, and moving in to support its neighbours in the North and East. The head office was serving as an information hub and coordinating the transport of goods to the South.

The commitment and rapid response of our staff was matched by our international partners, who immediately contacted us and pledged their support. Within days, a task force from our long-time partner Germany Agro Action (GAA) was on the ground to assist with the coordination of emergency relief. The support of our existing partners like GAA and Japanese Centre for Conflict Prevention, together with new partners like Concern International, DanChurchAid, and People in Need we were able to quickly develop district-level programs for transitioning from relief aid distributions to rehabilitation and livelihood redevelopment.

The first few weeks were extremely challenging, but there was one bright spot in the midst of all the devastation. The humanitarian response from Sri Lankan citizens and the international community was overwhelming. Volunteers from all walks of life and from all parts of the country mobilized, collected food, drinking water, and basic supplies, and organized transport to the most affected areas. For a time, conventional divides were forgotten as Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and international volunteers worked side by side to remove debris, clean wells, and deliver aid.

Now, emergency needs have been met and tsunami-affected communities have been resettled in

transitional shelters across the island. Sewalanka has now shifted its focus to a new challenge: rebuilding sustainable livelihoods in tsunami and conflict-affected communities. As we turn to the future, this special edition of the Sewalanka newsletter pauses to recognise the accomplishments of the past months.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our development partners for their ongoing support, our international friends who have committed invaluable time and resources, and the Sri Lankan Government and LTTE Administration for their coordination efforts. Finally, I would like to thank our staff, the Sewalanka family, for their dedication and energy. Many of them worked for days without sleep and for months without a day off. From district directors to drivers, they have showed enormous strength under pressure and we are proud of their contribution.

Harsha Kumara Navaratne  
Chairman

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# Building 23% of island's transitional shelter

Sewalanka Foundation is significantly contributing to rebuilding tsunami-affected communities by constructing 23% of the island's total requirement for transitional shelter; or 10,767 shelters out of the 47,137 required nationally.

It has been six months since the 26 December 2004 tsunami devastated 950 kilometres of the Sri Lankan coastline; killing nearly 40,000 people and displacing more than 500,000 in eleven districts. The sheer scale of personal and property loss across such a large geographic area has meant that the emergency relief and reconstruction phase is challenging and complex.



Sewalanka Foundation, being a national local non-government organisation, was perfectly poised to respond quickly to this disaster. Emergency relief efforts were underway within hours of the waves hitting the shores. Dry rations and

other essential items were sourced during those first weeks from community contributions and international donors.

Then existing donors and new partners enabled regular programs to be established, temporary toilets built and other essential services provided. Sewalanka District Directors worked hard in their communities to provide relief, and liaised with Head-Office staff for the needs they could not source.

Simultaneously, Sewalanka Foundation Head-Office started planning with existing development partners like German Agro Action and the Japan Centre for Conflict Prevention, and new partners like Concern Worldwide and DanChurchAid for their support to construct transitional shelter and provide other phase two items. This quick response meant that the organisation's transitional shelters program started in mid January 2005, not even one month after the disaster occurred.

## Why transitional shelter?

Sewalanka Foundation is building transitional shelters as it recognises that permanent housing will take time to build and organise. Transitional shelters enable families to move from emergency accommodation, like school buildings, tents, or make-shift plastic sheeting to more durable and stable structures until permanent housing solutions are available.

Sewalanka Foundation National Shelter Overview (as at 28 June 2005)

District	District	No. of DS /GN Divisions	Transitional Shelter			% started/ completed	Govt. total required	% of govt. total built by SLF	Donor
			Planned	Started	Completed				
East	Ampara	5/15	935	115	498	66%	10,566	9%	DanChurchAid
	Batticaloa	3/4	1,505	425	630	70%	9,905	15%	DanChurchAid
	Trincomalee	5/11	1,348	441	876	98%	4,643	29%	GAA, PIN, JCCP
South	Hambantota	3/21	1,000	151	593	74%	1,290	78%	Concem
	Matara	4/4	1,529	334	1,195	100%	2,401	64%	Concem
	Galle	5/61	1,250	177	829	80%	6,169	20%	Concem
	Kalutara/Coblenbo	6/20	1,700	241	1,342	93%	6,068	28%	Concem
North	Jaffna	2/3	350	240	110	100%	3,395	10%	German Agro Actbn
	Kilinochchi	3/4	550	13	537	100%	576	95%	German Agro Actbn
	Mullativu	1/3	600	125	475	100%	2,124	28%	German Agro Actbn
		19/146	<b>10,767</b>	2,262	7,085	87%	47,137	<b>23%</b>	

There are many benefits to transitional shelters. They are built to withstand the harsh environmental conditions; the southern and western districts are now facing monsoon, and the east is experiencing soaring heat before the monsoon starts in September.

Shelters also make available many public buildings used for emergency accommodation in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami for their original purposes; like school students returning to classes. As the shelters can be locked, greater security is provided and most importantly, they give families a base in which to restart their livelihoods.

As Ms. Jo de Silva, UNHCR Senior Shelter Coordinator states, "It [transitional shelter] is not a destination but a stepping stone on the route to durable housing and is intended to provide protection from the environment, security, privacy and allow people to re-establish their livelihoods, re-build communities and carry out day-to-day household tasks."

### Building shelters to meet diverse cultural and geographical conditions

As Sri Lanka is a cultural and geographically diverse island, Sewalanka Foundation is working with local government to ensure that designs are culturally sensitive and using locally available materials. The result is variation in design from region to region; for example in Galle, Sewalanka is building half brick and half wooden walls, aluminium roofs and concrete floors, whilst in Mullaitivu, the walls are all brick and the roofs are cadjan.

What is common across all districts is that the transitional shelter meets the requirement of the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA). Each structure is a minimum of 200sq metres, at least 6-8 feet in height and has adequate water and sanitation. In addition to working with NHDA, Sewalanka Foundation is working with District Government Agents to identify land for construction, and to identify families to move from emergency to transitional shelter.

### Social mobilisation in the transitional shelter phase

Considering Sewalanka Foundation is primarily a development organisation with the capacity to undertake emergency and relief interventions. A unique component of our approach in transitional shelter has been to incorporate development principles into programs for families moving to transitional shelter.

Sewalanka has 12 years experience in social

mobilisation and organisationally we believe it is important that the communities are empowered in the transitional shelter phase to implement their own development activities. To achieve this, Sewalanka has:

- strengthened existing community-based-organisations (CBOs) for those resettled on permanent land, or
- established Community Action Groups (CAG) for those living in transitional shelters on semi-permanent land.

As per normal social mobilisation practices, institutional development support is provided through a comprehensive training program including financial management, leadership development, conflict resolution, etc. The communities then in turn elect their own executive committees, and these societies are the main liaison point for Sewalanka. These strengthened community groups will become instrumental in the future livelihood rebuilding and development programs.

### Moving forward

Sewalanka Foundation is committed to assisting the families they have built shelter for in the next phase of the relief process. Initial assessments for livelihood rebuilding and development programs have been finalised, training started and in some districts programs with beneficiaries has begun.

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- >> Family outside their home in the Dondra Rural Hospital Shelter Project
  - >> Shelter built in Trincomalee
- Opposite page  
Mother and Child in front of the home in the Thalmarunda shelter project



## A holistic approach to tsunami recovery

The destruction caused by the 26 December Asian Tsunami was widespread causing loss of life, infrastructure, livelihood and economic assets. On the southern and western coastline of Sri Lanka the impact is huge as the coastal communities are highly populated with those working in the tourism industry or vulnerable groups like poor fishermen living close to the shore in simple houses and shelters.

In the period immediately following the tsunami, Sewalanka Foundation mobilised its staff to offer initial support and basic necessities such as food and water to tsunami victims. Clearing of debris to prevent and contain the spread of disease was also one of the initial goals of the organisation.

By the first week of January, Concern World Wide began to carry out an initial assessment with Sewalanka and government stakeholders to determine future requirements. From this point the two organisations have worked out a comprehensive post-tsunami recovery program entitled Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation and Livelihood Re-establishment Project (RRLRP) to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and affected individuals and families within the western and southern districts.

Ms. Sheena McCann, Concern's Country Director explains, "Working through a Sri Lankan organisation has meant that we have had much more of an impact right from the beginning. Sewalanka have been able to use their knowledge and experience to generate a more effective response, whether it is access to land for building temporary housing or identifying the needs of tsunami-affected people."

After the initial emergency situation was overcome and basic provisions had reached affected families to a certain level, the most vital issue throughout these districts was the loss of shelter as the displaced families were living in the open in an extremely insecure situation. The need to supply them with transitional shelters was urgent. Within the Southern and Western regions approximately 40,000 homes were partially or totally damaged.

After a series of discussions with key government stakeholders and other agencies, 6,000 highly vulnerable families were identified as needing immediate help. These at-risk families included:

women-headed households, families with physically challenged persons, families who have lost everything, families with a higher number of small children and families who have not yet received any assistance from other sources.

In fact, Sewalanka recognised the need for quick provision of transitional shelter to reduce the stress levels upon already traumatized families living in emergency accommodation. Ms. McCann, explains: "With the tsunami, people lost so much in terms of lives and destruction of their houses and belongings. The transitional shelters provide families with privacy, a sense of security and ownership. It is a stabilising asset so that they can start living their lives again."

As at the end of June, the RRLRP has completed or started 89% of the 5,479 planned transitional shelters in Hambantota, Matara, Galle, Kalutara and Colombo. Therefore the relief phase of the project is almost complete and a large number of the target families have been provided with shelter, dry food rations, water, latrines, showers, kitchen utensils, school uniforms and household furniture (see chart).

### More than just shelter

Also, the coastal infrastructure systems, including roads and railways, power, communications, water supply, sanitation facilities and fishing ports have all been extremely damaged or destroyed. So, apart from the above, the project has also taken initiatives to rebuild important services like pre-schools, schools, clinics, community centres, cooperative buildings for fishing communities, market places and other social and economic infrastructure to help all those who are tsunami-affected.

The RRLRP in conjunction with the CBOs are conducting public health awareness seminars. Training workshops and information sessions have taken place throughout the entire region to improve community knowledge on issues of sexual reproductive health and the spread of communicable diseases and sexually transmitted infections. Further workshops on Child Rights will also be held.

One of the special aspects of the project has been its ability to reduce the trauma on affected families through the quick construction of transitional shelters.

Sewalanka Foundation has also throughout these regions implemented psychosocial programs to assist affected families find methods of coping with their immense losses.

### Starting the long journey to livelihood recovery

Helping tsunami-affected families rebuild their lives and return to normality as soon as possible is the main goal of the projects in the Southern and Western region. In conjunction with the construction initiatives taking place, RRLRP is working to re-establish sustainable livelihoods. To ensure communities regain and maintain control over their lives, project implementation has relied heavily upon community input.



Throughout these regions RRLRP has facilitated Community Action Planning (CAP) exercises to allow

From Top Sewalanka beneficiaries in Kalutara receive household items << Transitional Preschool built by Sewalanka in Telaraba, Matara << Transitional Shelters at Payagala North, Kalutara



individuals and families to identify their livelihood needs to ensure that they do not become dependent upon external assistance. Under this initiative the following projects have been identified for funding and support:

- provision of fishing nets and boats
- construction of fishing community centres
- provision of diving kits for youth
- support for income generation identified by enterprising women
- provision of training for men and women on enterprise development
- assisting youth to enhance their skills in computer usage, batik making, driving, diving, sewing, fish processing, welding, and fibre works
- rebuilding of numerous coir factories

The RRLRP has also initiated a process of strengthening or establishing community-based organisations (CBOs) within each project site. These CBOs will ultimately be responsible for steering and managing all livelihood re-establishment activities supported by the project. As families living in transitional shelter sites become increasingly socially cohesive they are recommencing livelihood activities.

The partnership of the Sewalanka and Concern is working successfully in the Western and Southern districts to implement a holistic approach to the challenges tsunami affected families face. ■

### "We would like to thank..."

"...Sewalanka and Concern. My family were land owners by the beach here... the tsunami destroyed our house and we are no longer entitled to live there because our land is within the 100m buffer zone. After the tsunami, we were all living under a tarpaulin, no walls just a tarpaulin to cover us. All the adults, children and people who were sick were all living in the same place. It was very bad for us to lose everything and then have the children and elderly live like that. Thank you for your

help, now we have nice wooden houses and facilities. Many of the men here were fishermen and their boats and nets have been destroyed. I know that you are helping us to get some boats and nets so that we can begin work again. All the children above 5 are back in school now and things are returning to normal." A family in Hikkaduwa. ■

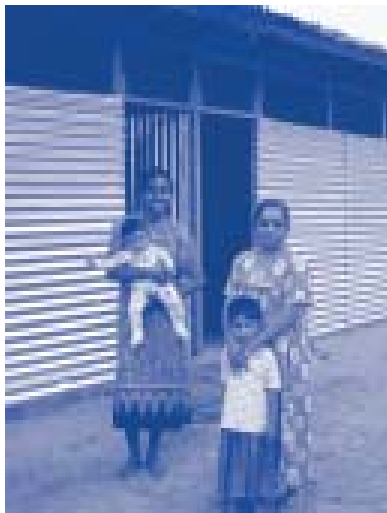
> For further information on the Southern and Western Program please contact Mr. Tapan Barman on 011) 2545 362-5 or [sewa@slt.net.lk](mailto:sewa@slt.net.lk)

# Rebuilding Lives in Ampara District

Ampara District in the Eastern Province was severely affected; over 8,000 people were killed, more than 120,000 were displaced and more than 30,000 houses were destroyed by the tsunami.

Sewalanka Foundation Ampara immediately began working in several areas along the coast of Ampara from the very highly populated Kalmunai in the north of the district to Arugam Bay and Panama in the south. After the first few days, we had established a relief distribution system based around six focal points in Kalmunai, Nintavur, Thirukovil, Komari, Ullai and Panama.

During the first month, Sewalanka's first priority was to provide dry rations and emergency non-food items to over 5000 families across the district - those who had lost their homes and belongings. New partners like DanChurchAid and existing partners such as Swiss Contact and Oxfam GB, provided support for this immediate relief action.



Top Transitional shelter at Kali Kovil site, Kalmanai Ampara  
>> Transitional toilets in Kalmunai, Ampara  
>> DCA representative talks with Nintavur community living in a school



To coordinate relief distribution and organize other programs like activities for children, our volunteers and coordinators lived and worked in the Temporary Accommodation Centres (TACs). The nature of TACs varied from schools and other public buildings to open air camps some, accommodating up to 7,000 people.

At the same time Sewalanka Foundation Ampara began to shift its focus and plan for short-term solutions to the problems facing displaced people. The number of people living in TAC's began to decline as people moved to relatives' houses, but a large number of between 20,000 and 40,000 families still required transitional shelter.

Sewalanka Foundation began the construction of transitional shelters in January with the support of funds from DanChurchAid. From the start, our program worked very closely with government agencies involved in the reconstruction effort; transitional shelter designs were based on the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) guidelines. These housing designs varied depending on the different requirements of people and land availability in different parts of the district. Overall Sewalanka Foundation has built or started 613 shelters by the end of June and plans to complete a further 322 by August 2005.

Families moving into these shelters were relieved to be getting away from the difficult conditions they faced living in overcrowded TACs. One woman from Nintavur living in a TAC in a local primary school said

"We are tired of living here. We have been here for three months now and there is not enough space for the 65 families living here. There is no place to wash or to cook and we are not getting enough relief items any more. Security is a big problem too - we do not feel safe buying any new items with the money provided by government because we have nowhere safe to store things."

Transitional Shelters have given people the opportunity to start focusing on rebuilding their lives after the uncertainty and insecurity of camps. A common opinion after families had relocated to the shelters is that people now felt confident in starting to rebuild their

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# Batticaloa responding to changing needs

As the reality of the tsunami began to unfold in the days immediately after the disaster, staff in Sewalanka Foundation's Batticaloa Office responded quickly and as a team to pack and distribute dry rations to affected families.

Working around the clock, all staff - our District Director, Project Coordinators, Field Officers and administrative staff - put in a collective effort to pack and distribute the essential food items such as rice, dahl, flour, sugar, tea, and tinned fish.

"At that time it was difficult to find labour for packing, so all staff helped by agreeing to do this service. Whilst the work was difficult and labour intensive, the staff felt they were providing an essential service. If the office had not worked cohesively, then the immediate packaging and distribution of the items would have been impossible," explained District Director Mr. G. Nagarajan.

## Responding to our beneficiaries' needs

Before the tsunami Sewalanka Batticaloa had a close working relationship with both marine and lagoon Fisheries Cooperative Societies (FCS), as a result many of these societies turned to our office for support in its aftermath. As elsewhere, fishermen were the worst affected, many had either lost family members or friends, homes, and income as they were unable to catch fish due to the loss of fishing equipment.

"Even those with fishing equipment couldn't sell the fish they caught as there was no market due to fear of disease. This lack of income meant they could only wait for some support from the NGOs and government; which was difficult to find immediately after the tsunami", says Mr. Nagarajan. For three months, Sewalanka Foundation supported 1,200 FCS members and their families in twelve Divisional Secretary Divisions, through provision of dry rations once a month.

In addition, as a more coordinated approach began to take shape in Batticaloa District between NGOs and government, Sewalanka Foundation's main partner, DanChurch Aid, came on board. Working together, dry ration/relief packs were provided to 2,250 families for a 6-month period in our target villages - Palamunai

(Arayampathy DS), Kottaikallar (Kaluwanchikudy DS) and Poochankery (Vaharai DS). Kitchen packs were also provided to 2,250 families; including mosquito nets, bed mats, plastic buckets and tubs, water jugs, silver plates, halogen lamps, and saucepans.

Now, six months after the tsunami, Sewalanka Foundation Batticaloa is winding up the emergency relief phase.

## Meeting housing needs after the tsunami

"For families, having a transitional shelter, their own home, is one more step towards normalcy" says Project Coordinator, Mr. Jathees Kumar.

Following the destruction of so many homes, shelter became a new priority area for Sewalanka Foundation Batticaloa - and an important component in our tsunami relief and rehabilitation efforts. Sewalanka Foundation Batticaloa is responsible for the provision of transitional shelters for families in four villages (see table), supported by our partner DanChurch Aid (DCA).

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Top  
Transitional shelter in Palamunai  
<< Batticaloa staff distribute sanitary pads to camps  
<< Community planning meeting before shelter is built in Vaharai



# Optimistic outlook for the North

Sewalanka Foundation in the North is confident about the success of its reconstruction work. In partnership with German Agro Action (GAA), Sewalanka has started or finished all the 1,500 transitional shelters pledged. Also recent approval was granted by the authorities to rebuild six villages.

Sewalanka and GAA responded quickly to the emergency situation in Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. In addition to building 1,500 transitional shelters, Sewalanka has over the last six months, provided dry rations to 10,842 families, kitchen utensils to 8,500 families, cleaned 100 public wells, provided 350 water tanks (capacity 1,000 litres) and built 14 km of internal roads, 1,450 toilets and 5 community centres.

Sewalanka’s northern regional director, Mr Revathan commented that, “every day of the last six months there has been challenges. Although the most rewarding aspect of my position has been the quick completion of transitional shelters and the way partners, staff and volunteers worked together to complete work that would normally take one to two years within six months; there were many sleepless nights.”

### Transitional Shelter: finding an appropriate solution

In the North, like other parts of the island, tents were suggested at one point as being a viable transitional shelter solution. However, as Mr Revathan explains, “It was just too hot within the tents. Once the idea was raised within relief community, I went and sat in a tent for a couple of hours with some of our beneficiaries during the heat of the day. Quickly, I realised that this was not going to be a suitable option. I’m really proud that Sewalanka initiated the construction of transitional shelters in the North.”

The shelters being built in Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi are made from materials locally sourced and culturally appropriate. They

have cement floors, half clay brick and half cadjan walls with cadjan ceilings. Again, Sewalanka Foundation is following the standards set by the National Housing Development Authority.

At the time transitional shelter was built, Sewalanka Foundation found that the price of goods quickly rose; for example the cost of cadjan rose from Rs.20 to Rs.26 per sheet. However, Mr Revathan is quick to point out that out of disaster also comes benefits, “Soon it became apparent that new suppliers were emerging as entrepreneurial individuals started to make clay bricks and other necessary items.”



>> Family in Jaffna sit outside their transitional shelter **Opposite Page** Transitional shelters and toilets in Mullaitivu

D istrict	D S D ivision	G N D ivision	V illage	No. of F am ilies	P emanent H ouses	I nfrastructure
Jaffna	Vadam arachchi	Point Pedro	Supem adam	210	130	Basic
			Kottady	210	80	Basic
	Vadam arachchi East	Marathenkemy North	131	131	Full	
			Marathenkemy Town	Town Reconstruction		Full
K ilinochchi	K alaru	K alaru	K alaru	250	100	Full
M ullaitivu	M arin epattu	S ivatai	Thihakkurai	132	132	Full
			Mathikkiam am	203	203	Full

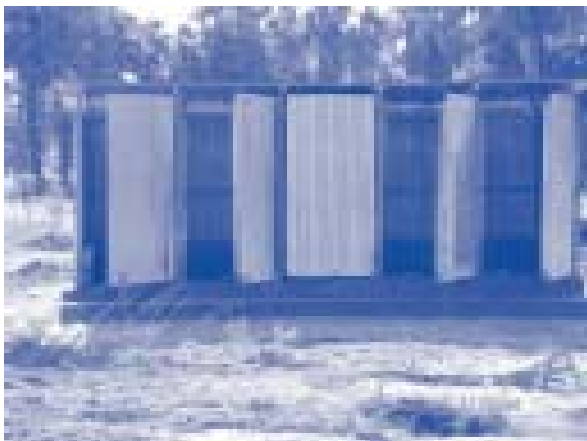
## Working together

Mr Thamiralagan, Northern Tsunami Project Director credits Sewalanka's ability to work quickly in part to the coordination of key stakeholders. "Soon after the tsunami struck and emergency relief was being implemented, a District Taskforce was formed comprising representatives from the government, the LTTE and NGO (non-government organisation) sector. The taskforce solved problems and ensured that solutions could be implemented swiftly."

"An example of the assistance provided by the Government and LTTE is that the checkpoints were



open to midnight in order to check and clear goods, this was a major help



### Full Infrastructure includes:

- Public and individual toilets
- Public and individual wells
- Drainage facilities
- Solid waste management
- Boat anchoring point
- Beacon light
- Fishermen rest-house
- Safety room
- Auction shed
- Preschool
- Children's park
- Primary health centre
- Multi-purpose hall
- Village playground
- Bus-stand
- CBO societies strengthening
- Solar panel
- Internal road access
- Fisheries an agriculture road
- Street light
- Small market and shopping complex
- Cooperative shop

to ensure that relief items were delivered to those that needed them when they needed them."

## Permanent Shelter

This cooperation has extended to permanent shelter as Mr. Dirk Altweck, GAA Project Manager, explains, "It is particularly encouraging that the LTTE in the North is working closely with government authorities".

Sewalanka and GAA have been granted approval to start planning and construction to rebuild six villages (details are below in the graph). The reconstruction will not only include permanent houses but the construction of wells, toilets and drainage facilities to rebuilding shops, preschools and primary health care centres (please refer to the box for a complete list).

In addition, an exciting component of this program will be the strengthening of civil societies. For example in Jaffna, twelve community based organisations will be strengthened including training in financial management, leadership skills, conflict resolution, etc.

## Equity balance

A unique component of the Northern work is that the development program for conflict affected communities progresses at the same rate as the work for tsunami affected communities. Mr Revathan explained, "Sewalanka North is ensuring that existing and new projects for conflict affected communities run in parallel to our tsunami-work and they are given equal priority and importance". This fine balance and equal distribution of aid is very important in a country pursuing a peace process.

> For more information contact Mr. Thamiralagan on [tsunamisl@yahoo.com](mailto:tsunamisl@yahoo.com) or 021) 228 5082. ■

# From development to relief... and back again

Dr. Martin Baumann, the Co-Director for Sewalanka Foundation and German Agro Action's Integrated Food Security Project (IFSP), recalls his experience of dealing with the aftermath of the tsunami in Mullaitivu.

The news came at breakfast time. Within a few hours, the IFSP project in Vavuniya was turned into an emergency aid project and the project office into a market place.

As an immediate response but despite not knowing precisely the situation, project staff and their relatives donated everything they could to help the tsunami victims: clothes, kitchen utensils, household items (plastic bowls, buckets, spoons, etc.) and dry food rations such as lentils, rice, flour. These items were organised into household packages and the day after the tsunami, the project lorry was loaded and headed for Mullaitivu.

The IFSP project management had selected Mullaitivu for assistance as it was adjacent to the project area in Vavuniya North and logistics could be managed through the Nedunkerny project office. In addition, Mullaitivu is in the LTTE high-security-zone and the IFSP staff have a successful history of working in this area.

### Assistance provided by the project

After the first inspection of the tsunami affected area around Mullaitivu, nine field officers and eight mobilisers from IFSP were seconded to work in the affected area. They provided logistical assistance and prepared for what would become a continuous convoy of lorries carrying supplies from Vavuniya to Mullaitivu. These staff also registered affected people in Mullaitivu and Marathankerny and prepared distribution lists for emergency goods. Logistically, the project provided one lorry and two pick-up trucks.

Also, IFSP provided suitable drinking water as 1000 litre water tanks were purchased and distributed to tsunami relief camps. Water was sourced from surrounding non-affected wells and IFSP supported the testing of 19 key water wells to ensure they were clean.

The project assisted two vans of medical items and eight doctors to travel from Colombo to Mullaitivu. The IFSP team also assisted in the construction of 107

houses in Selavathai to cater to the immediate needs.

The IFSP team also delivered on-the-spot information to Germany and a direct hotline was installed for press and radio station interviews. Photo and journalistic documentation was prepared in response to the requests from Germany.

### Coming back to development work

After six weeks of working in an emergency context, it became apparent that other mechanisms were in place to assume these responsibilities. IFSP staff helped establish the Northern Tsunami Response Office in Kilinochchi and a taskforce had come from Germany to work with Sewalanka to establish their coordinated Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation programs.

Gradually, the IFSP resumed focus in its target communities, the 5,000 internally displaced persons (IDP) from the conflict area. What became apparent from my experience was that with good motivated project staff, it is possible

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Top IFSP truck is being unloaded in Mullaitivu >> Items are distributed by GAA and Sewalanka



## Working to rebuild the bunds

In Jaffna, the tsunami not only destroyed thousands of boats but it also destroyed the ancient anchoring points and coastal bund system that is part of the essential fishing infrastructure.

Sewalanka Foundation Jaffna had identified in close consultation with the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Divisional Secretariat and Fishermen's Federations and Societies, that the clearing and rebuilding of these bunds was necessary for fishermen to be able to restart their livelihoods.

A bund is a natural coastal barrier, reinforced through man-made efforts with rocks; it protects fishermen and their equipment from the deep sea. There are 25 anchoring entry points along the 14 km barrier between Point Pedro and Thondamanaru; they were all destroyed or damaged in the tsunami.

"In terms of livelihood redevelopment, if the entry points and barriers are not fixed when the fishermen have their equipment then they will not be able to access the sea." Explains Ms. Lakshi Abeyasekara, Sewalanka Director of Special Projects.



Therefore with the assistance of

Top Bulldozer from the South brought to Jaffna  
 << Fishermen in Point Pedro undertake the labour intensive work to rebuild the boat anchoring points



German Agro Action, Sewalanka Foundation funded work-crews of up to 60 manual labourers to start the rebuilding process. Considering the heavy nature of the work, Sewalanka Foundation also arranged for a bulldozer that can work in water to be transported from Colombo. This machine can only work six to seven hours per day; so it takes between seven and fourteen days to complete one anchor entry point.

This time-intensive project started in February 2005 and is expected to be completed by September 2005.

### Communities working together

One unique component of this project is that most of the work is being undertaken in the High Security Zone of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. This means that in order for approval to be sought and work undertaken, community members, local Government Agents and the Security Forces have to meet regularly to discuss the projects progress and work out any difficulties.

The project also required the support of the LTTE as the heavy machinery had to travel from Colombo by land through the LTTE controlled areas.

As one fisherman explains, "We are grateful that this project has started, whilst we are waiting for new boats or the old ones to be repaired, it gives an opportunity to work for some income."

> For further information, please contact Ms. Lakshi Abeyasekara on 024) 222 1354 or [sewavav@slt.net.lk](mailto:sewavav@slt.net.lk) ■

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*IFSP provides assistance, continued from page 11*

to give a flexible response to emergency situations.

The IFSP started in October 2003, and is implemented by Sewalanka Foundation and German Agro Action. It works with 52 villages in the worst conflict affected areas of the Wanni to improve food security and basic infrastructure for resettling people. The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

> Further information on [www.sewalanka.org](http://www.sewalanka.org) ■

# Clowning around: psychosocial

**Organising a training program for Sewalanka Foundation relief and rehabilitation staff on basic circus and performance techniques may seem a little strange in the context of the tsunami destruction.**

However, when working with communities affected by trauma the psychosocial dimensions of the disaster are a key priority - and circus training is a way to provide techniques for light-hearted relief.

“Sewalanka are trying to make communities happy, and lifting their spirits through light entertainment can be very therapeutic,” says Sewalanka’s newly appointed Psychosocial Southern Coordinator, Mr. Prasad Jayasinghe.

So when the international circus performing and training team - *Funny How* - offered to visit Sewalanka’s Hambantota and Galle Office, the psychosocial team quickly responded. A workshop in basic circus and performance techniques was delivered to the psychosocial focal points in each of these districts, as well as for general field staff. Also three performances were organised in Sewalanka camps, with thousands of people coming to watch the merriment.

**Post-tsunami programme**

Sewalanka expanded its existing core psychosocial program from conflicted affected communities to incorporate those affected by the tsunami. The new

program examines the social dimensions of the disaster; stress, depression and trauma, and social ills such as violence, drug and alcohol abuse.

Activities have taken place in all tsunami-affected districts and are supported principally by *Helvetas*, *IOM* and *Concern*. These included:

- Monthly trainings (until Dec 05) to Sewalanka field staff, and staff of external organisations in each district (North/ East - from May; South - from July)
- Appointment of one focal person and one volunteer per district
- Identification of psychosocial networks and referral points in each district
- Targeted psychosocial interventions in each district, including formation/strengthening of youth groups in Sewalanka camps (south); organisation of cultural events; co-facilitation of community psychosocial coordination meetings (Kalutara)

**Trainings completed**

- Training-of-trainers (TOT) workshop by National Council for Mental Health in Sinhala in Colombo, and by Shanthiham in Tamil in Jaffna
- Two training programs (Batticaloa and Matara) by Meth Methura Foundation to demonstrate techniques to cope with trauma.
- *Funny How*, TOT in introductory Circus Skills and Performance Techniques in Galle and Hambantota, total 58 participants.

**Planned trainings**

- Two-day Post-Tsunami Trauma Counselling Workshop by Chartered Management Institute UK, Sri Lanka Branch with the Management Club, three participants in Batticaloa.
- Workshop on “Psychosocial work in the Tamil Language” for two participants from Mannar and Vavuniya by the Psychosocial Support Programme.

> For more information on tsunami-related or core psychosocial programs see [www.sewalanka.org](http://www.sewalanka.org) or contact Ms. Tamara Curtis on [sewaweu@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewaweu@sri.lanka.net) ■

**Sewalanka Foundation**  
Core and tsunami-related psychosocial programs



## Focusing on Gender

Gender sensitivity is an important aspect in Sewalanka Foundation's relief and rehabilitation activities. As a result, Sewalanka is addressing nationally the following gender-related issues:

- Increase in one-parent households due to the death of husband or wife; resulting in a financial and emotional strain on families
- Protection issues for women and children in the camps, as there were cases of sexual harassment, rape, violence, and kidnapping of children
- Special needs for women in terms of water and sanitation facilities, as well as establishing new livelihood opportunities if the primary income-earner has passed away.
- Legal assistance for women to ensure their land rights are recognised and they have adequate access to justice
- Women within communities must be adequately represented and given the opportunity to express their opinion on all aspects of the reconstruction process.

### Supporting Widows in Kinniya

Responsive to women's increased vulnerabilities; Sewalanka Foundation Trincomalee has initiated a project in Kinniya targeting 37 Muslim women who lost their husbands in the tsunami. In addition to loss of family members, these women lost their property, possessions, personal assets and their means of livelihood. Each widow has the responsibility of caring for between four and seven children.

In accordance with their religious custom, all widows were required to stay secluded within the local mosque for a period of four months and 10 days from the date of their husband's death. This grieving period has result in many women being unable to access support from local or international agencies.



<< Train the Trainer program in the East

As these widows need special attention, Sewalanka Trincomalee is providing assistance to meet their immediate needs and create new livelihood opportunities. This assistance is funded by Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in USA (UUSC).

### Training and gender-audit in the east

In the east, a Train-the-Trainer (TOT) program was conducted for identified focal persons to in turn train senior management, administration staff and field officers in four districts: Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara and Monaragala. The practical training focuses on mainstreaming gender concerns by recognising existing practices of gender sensitivity, and training staff in new issues or unrecognised issues related to gender.

"Sewalanka is an organisation that is sensitive to the needs and issues of both women and men in our relief and development work. What this training provides is an opportunity to recognise and formalise our existing practices and provides practical tools for trainers and senior staff conducting gender training", explains Ms. Kaushalya Navaratne, Women's Empowerment Unit.

A second training will be conducted for staff in undertaking a formal gender audit of the administrative, management and project activities to determine any gender bias. This audit will then form the basis of discussion around our current Draft Sewalanka Foundation Gender Policy. These initiatives are also supported by UUSC.

### Training in the south

During May 2005, Sewalanka and Concern recognised the specific needs of women post-tsunami and conducted a series of gender training workshops for 30 field staff and volunteers in the Southern and Western districts to create awareness and ensure these needs are met. The overall aims of the workshops were to ensure gender is mainstreamed into project design and women are mobilized to be active participants within the development process.

> For more information contact Kaushalya Navaratne on [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net) and 011) 254 5462-5. ■

# Friends joining forces with Sewalanka

During the first six months after the tsunami devastated Sri Lanka, Sewalanka Foundation is working with international friends and communities to raise over Rs.20 million in support for micro-projects identified by District Directors.

Breakfast time at Vipulanantha School is 8.30am and children are laughing while dipping their huge chunks of bread into freshly cooked bowls of dhal. This is just like any other school day in Batticaloa, eastern Sri Lanka. But for these kids having breakfast at school is only a new initiative made possible through the Sewalanka Foundation Appeals Fund.

Residents here were severely affected by the 26 December tsunami. Within this school alone 56 students were killed, and at least 90% of families were displaced. Sewalanka Foundation Batticaloa Office was quick to recognise the need for a school feeding program in this badly affected area - to both provide nutritious meals for children, and to relieve the burden on families.

“At the start of this program it was estimated that up to 75% of the children here were living in the welfare camps, with 25% having already resettled. Breakfast time in the camps is about 9.30am to 10am, and school starts at 7.30 am. This means that the children were not getting the chance to eat breakfast”, says Mr Nagarajan, Sewalanka Batticaloa District Director. The program will run for until December.

### From emergency needs...

The Sewalanka Foundation Appeals Fund started on Monday 27 December 2004; the day after the tsunami devastated the 950km of the Sri Lanka coastline. During the first month, the money raised was instrumental in purchasing and/or transporting emergency items to the worst-affected areas. Sewalanka was well-placed to know and respond quickly to the needs of affected communities. Our network of district offices ensured that requests for items were faxed as soon as they became apparent.

For example, donations to the Appeals Fund paid for the transportation of emergency sanitation items for ladies in the eastern districts; the transportation of water donated by SriLankan Airlines to the East; the fund

purchased bed-sheets for those displaced and seeking refuge in Monaragala; a generator was purchased for an emergency medical camp in Galle; and emergency food packages were organised for families in Jaffna.

### ...to micro-projects

However, as international partners came on board and project proposals and funding was finalised, the purpose of the Appeals Fund has shifted to fund gap-projects, these are small-scale projects that are identified in the community that fall outside major funding agreements.

“After the tsunami, there is so much need, it is great to be able to have a fund where we can direct proposals for support - these are small-scale responsive initiatives that make a real difference within the local community”. explains Mr. Nagarajan.

These projects are then matched to funds raised overseas. “Using the web as a tool, we have been able to reach out to make community to community connections. Individuals and groups overseas have responded extremely positively as they can follow the project’s progress and outcomes; adding the human element to fund-raising,” explains Penny Boddington, Communication Advisor.

### Support globally

So from the camps of Batticaloa where projects are sourced, to Bollywood



- >> Children receive equipment in Kalutara through the appeals fund
- >> The school breakfast feeding program in Batticaloa



movie nights in Melbourne where funds are raised, “Friends of Sewalanka” are doing their best for the relief efforts.

As Kellie Watson, a former volunteer with her partner Lee Ward at Sewalanka, explains, “During our volunteer experience in Sri Lanka we made many friends, especially in the East when we worked on an environmental conservation project. Having heard of the tsunami, like many other people globally, we felt helpless. Although luckily, we were able to get active and help communities directly through the Appeal Fund.”

Overall, Sewalanka Foundation has groups of friends in the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Italy and Japan to name a few countries working to raise funds for specific needs.

> Projects are being sourced through a strong network of District Directors and field staff and further information can be found at [www.sewalanka.org](http://www.sewalanka.org). ■

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### Sewalanka USA: a new beginning

In March 2004, Sewalanka Foundation began developing a relationship with the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. Their International Business Development program has a strong emphasis on social responsibility, sustainability, and international development.

Anne Edwards, a Haas alumni, has played a key role in establishing this partnership. Anne has also been coordinating the registration of Sewalanka USA and the establishment of a donations webpage. Her commitment first started when she visited Sri Lanka in early January after the tsunami.

Sewalanka USA’s official mission is to generate funding through the Appeals Initiative for Sewalanka projects, facilitate US volunteer opportunities and exchange ideas.

Recently, Anne spent six weeks in Sri Lanka working with the Sewalanka Board, the Livelihood Development Unit, and the district offices to establish Sewalanka USA’s basis. She compiled case studies and an operating plan to fundraise for Sewalanka activities in the USA. The case-studies focus both on tsunami-affected communities and Sewalanka’s ongoing development activities. For example, a micro-enterprise development project in the conflicted-affected North, environmental conservation for a beach community in the South and home-gardens in the plantation sector.

Already several volunteers that have previously worked with Sewalanka are enlisted to promote Sewalanka USA.

> For more information contact Mr. Harsha Kumara Navaratne, Chairman on 011) 2545 362 - 5 or [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net). ■

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### Batticaloa: Tsunami efforts, continued from page 7

Similar to the national situation, in the initial stages people were living in TACs, such as schools and on mosque sites, some in shared living quarters, many others in tents with two to three families using each tent. What is different in Batticaloa (compared to say Ampara), is that many more people here lived beyond the government’s declared 200m Buffer Zone. Consequently land is more readily available for transitional shelters and Sewalanka Foundation has been able to build shelters on people’s own land.

“Before, in Palamunai a Muslim village 10 km south of Batticaloa town, it was not possible for the men and women to all live together in one tent; so men were separated from their families. Now they are very happy as families can be reunited, as each family is provided an individual shelter. They like the design of the shelter and now can cook privately for their families. Although there are still many problems, people are satisfied with the shelter solutions provided in the meantime”, says Mr. Kumar.

Sewalanka Foundation Batticaloa is complying with the guidelines for transitional shelters established by the National Housing Development Authority. Mr. Kumar explained that, “Many people were living in tents for a long time, which was not good for their health. During the day it was too hot to spend time inside the tents. For our shelter design we are using cadjan (woven coconut leaf) as opposed to tin sheet for roofing - tin sheets just gets too hot during the day. We are using tin sheet walls as to minimise the fire hazard”.

### What now?

Like Sewalanka Foundation offices elsewhere in the country, the Batticaloa Office has started the initial planning and assessments necessary for the Livelihood Reconstruction and Long-term Development Phase. In some areas these programs have now started. Sewalanka Foundation Batticaloa is also working to address the psychosocial needs of affected communities.

> For more information contact Mr. G. Nagarajan, District Director, 065) 222 4778 or [sewabatt@sltnet.lk](mailto:sewabatt@sltnet.lk) ■

# Giving children hope

Sewalanka Foundation's Mannar Office has partnered with Save the Children in Sri Lanka to create a better environment for children's development in ten target villages in Musali Division Mannar. This project is unique as it enables children to be facilitators for development within their own community.

The residents of Musali Division were severely affected during the conflict; many fled their homes to nearby Puttulam or became refugees in India. However, since the cease-fire communities are slowly returning to their original lands; many still face severe hardship. The ten villages in which Sewalanka is working - five Muslim and five Christian or Hindu Tamil - are extremely isolated; the roads are poor and there is no electricity.

Children have also greatly suffered, many were born in their families displaced locations and did not have access to regular education. As a result when they have returned to Musali Division they have found great difficulty in returning to school.

*Musali Division.* The program involved the input of all staff including those trained in development and psychosocial.

The program aims to simultaneously build the capacity of eight children's clubs and provide some basic infrastructure. The project will also build awareness of children's rights amongst parents, religious leaders and government and school officials.

## Children's Clubs

Sewalanka staff worked with key community leaders to identify children-in-need; those in schools and those who had left formal education. Then eight clubs were formed, one from each focal village, targeting 600 children.

"The children were the architects, proprietors and managers of these clubs. They were allowed to act independently and freely in decision making, organising and maintaining their organisations. This method has created an environment to nurture the children's leadership and ensure that they feel respected. The remarkable feature of this project is the enthusiasm of parents to monitor the activities of their children and the role each child plays in the growth of those clubs." Explains Ms. Annet Royce, District Director

Sewalanka field staff working with each club ensure that meetings are held regularly and the capacity of the clubs are strengthened through training.

## Basic infrastructure

The children are taught to identify their own needs. Three children's clubs in Arripu Division identified that the one school in Arripu that they all attended needed a water pump for drinking water. As a result and as part of the project a water pump has been installed that provides access to clean drinking water for 560 children. Children's play equipment has also been provided for all schools.

In tandem to this program, Sewalanka Foundation Mannar has also implemented infrastructure programs in some of the target villages previously. For example, three years ago Sewalanka supported by UNHCR constructed a permanent school building complete with furniture in Arripu. Last year in Savarierpuram,



It is within this context that Sewalanka Foundation Mannar devised the *Integrated child development project in war affected areas in*



TOP Children in the Children's Club play  
<< The water pump handed over to the Principal of Arripu school  
<< Sewalanka staff conducting child rights and parental care awareness program



Sewalanka with the support of BMZ provided water tanks, water bowsers, a multi-purpose building and implemented women empowerment skills training program. Sewalanka Mannar is committed to finding the partners to match the ongoing needs of the community.

### **Rights of Children awareness programs**

Another key component of the program is to create awareness amongst children, teachers and the community on the rights of children and the parental responsibility, the negative impacts of drug and alcohol abuse and basic psychology. Nine programs have been conducted in eight of the selected focal villages, and more are planned.

“The community has been quite responsive to this training as it clearly explains the affects of living in a conflict area upon a family and their relationships” says Ms. Annet.

### **Social mobilisation**

As part of the project Sewalanka Foundation has recruited volunteers from the focal villages to work alongside our team of experienced social mobilisers. The team are specialised in psychosocial issues and befriend village people to earn their trust and respect. The team pays frequent home visits to encourage their parents to promote child rights to live free from abuse. As part of this process they work with families who require counselling and provide referrals to the necessary services.

### **Whole community involved**

The government officials have dedicated themselves to work together with community-based organisations (CBOs) such as Rural Development Society, Women’s Rural Development Society and Parent-Teacher Association, and religious leaders with the view of co-operation and communication.

Ultimately this project aims to achieve child development and active psychosocial counselling for those mentally affected in this war devastated area. As Ms. Annet explains, “The parents are suffering from stress of twenty years of intense conflict. This can not help but have an affect on their children, who suffer from a sense of hopelessness. The project aims to provide a positive experience in children’s lives and subsequently for their families.”

The one year program started in April 2005 and will be completed in April 2006.

> For further information contact Ms. Annet Royce on 023) 223 2702 or [slfman@slt.net.lk](mailto:slfman@slt.net.lk) ■

## **SLF Mannar Launches Psychosocial Forum**

Sewalanka Foundation Mannar has shown its leadership in the psychosocial sector when it started the Mannar Psychosocial Forum. The first meeting was held in May 2005 and members of local NGOs, religious groups, and government officers attended.

In collaboration with the Mental Health Unit, Sewalanka established the Forum to encourage discussion, and to strengthen the organisations that cater to the needs of people who need psychosocial counselling and support in Mannar District. The forum is supported by UNICEF.

“In Mannar there are organisations working on psychosocial activities but without close coordination. To avoid overlap and improve the quality of service, the Forum provides an opportunity for members to meet, discuss and monitor activities” says Mannar District Director, Ms. Annet Royce.

> For further information contact Ms. Annet Royce on 023) 223 2702 or [slfman@slt.net.lk](mailto:slfman@slt.net.lk) ■

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### *Ampara: Tsunami efforts, continued from page 6*

lives and livelihoods. Previously, while living in the TACs, many men in particular were anxious when leaving their families alone as they went out during the day to find work. Now they feel more secure and there is a sense of stability returning to their lives.

The next step for Sewalanka Foundation’s program is to actively support these individuals to generate income and to be able to identify and address their own needs. In all resettlement or relocation sites, Sewalanka Foundation’s staff are working to support community members to form small community based organisations (CBOs), which will hold regular meetings to discuss problems facing community members and to identify the communities’ most important needs. This system is based on Sewalanka Foundation’s long term objective of strengthening communities’ capacity for self-development through social mobilisation.

Sewalanka Foundation has already begun providing livelihood assistance to tsunami-affected communities across the district. Overall, the livelihood development strategy is working through Fishermen’s Cooperative Societies to provide fishermen with replacement engines, nets and boats and strengthen the capacity of three district-wide fishermen’s Unions.

> For more information contact: Mr Deepal Chandrathilake, District Director on 063) 222 4757 or [sewaamp@slt.net.lk](mailto:sewaamp@slt.net.lk). ■

# A youth program for the environment

On May 30 2005, Sewalanka Foundation launched a new partnership with HSBC to implement the Sinharaja Forest Youth Bio-monitoring Program. The program is a creative and integrated approach to monitoring soil and water quality, the use of resources, and the biodiversity within Sinharaja World Heritage Rainforest.

Current tea cultivation practices in the Sinharaja buffer zone threaten both the forest and the future of agricultural production in the area. The clearing of steep and fragile slopes for expanding tea lands has led to topsoil exposure, heavy erosion, and a loss of soil fertility. There are already signs that the change in vegetation patterns is affecting rainfall patterns and water flow.

Many tea producers in the Sinharaja buffer zone are using several times the amount of chemical fertilizers recommended and the use of herbicide is extensive. Overuse of agro-chemicals affects long-term soil fertility and contaminates the water supply. Village streams are

milky brown with eroded topsoil and the herbicides and fertilizers washed off the surrounding slopes.

A systemetised biological resource assessment and monitoring program is critical to ensuring the environmental sustainability of economic activities in



<< Sewalanka's Chairman makes presentation at the launch  
<< Tea Plantations bordering Sinharaja World Heritage Rainforest

the buffer zone. As workable models from others countries have demonstrated, a monitoring program can be effectively implemented through the development of a hands-on school science program, where local school children can collect samples, monitor vegetation growth, conduct population surveys and record and analyse data. Such programs allow school children the opportunity to become more aware of their environmental resources and more active and enthusiastic in conservation activities, in addition to acquiring the basic mathematical and language skills and knowledge in biology, chemistry and geology which are all part of a school's fundamental curriculum.

The Sinharaja Forest Youth Bio-monitoring Program works with local children in four schools near the Kalawana entrance to the forest. Sewalanka will facilitate curriculum design, provide teacher training and basic equipment and coordinate the program.

Mr David J H Griffiths, CEO, HSBC explains, "HSBC is delighted to join Sewalanka Foundation in this project. Awareness and understanding of our environmental responsibilities is the first step towards protecting the present and future of our country." HSBC staff will also join with students in undertaking some of the testing.

The Youth Bio-monitoring Program will also complement ongoing conservation activities undertaken by Sewalanka in the Sinharaja buffer zone. The program will be connected with a youth art program where art students can participate in the creation and design of the community exhibitions and information fairs.

"This program targets a new generation of children, their families and HSBC staff on the importance of environmental preservation. Sewalanka's experience and international experience demonstrates that working through and with children in fun activities creates a life-long respect and appreciation of the environment." Stated, Mr Harsha Kumara Navaratne, chairman, Sewalanka Foundation.

Sewalanka Foundation works in close consultation with the Kalawana and Deniyaya Forest Department in implementing all its programs in the buffer-zone.

> For further information contact Mr. Ajith Tennakoon on 011) 2545 362 - 5 or [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net). ■

## A holiday with a difference

Normand Courtemanche, an experienced traveller and environmentalist from Canada, was Sewalanka Foundation's first Solar Sister volunteer in Sri Lanka. He recounts his experience of an unforgettable holiday installing a solar power system for a school in Kudawa; a remote village bordering Sri Lanka's only rainforest.

I was looking for a different type of holiday and way of meeting people that would integrate my values and interests. After searching on the internet, I found the volunteer Solar Sisters program; it was initiated in Nepal by the Himalayan Light Foundation and had recently expanded to Sri Lanka through a partnership with Sewalanka. The program provides solar systems for schools, clinics and other community buildings in remote areas not connected to the power grid.

The Kudawa Village School had already been identified as needing such an installation. This school with nine total rooms was electrified by kerosene; and over six litres of kerosene are used each month. The accumulated expense and health risks of kerosene have significant impact on the community and the environment.

Now this project was for me! All the elements were there: contribution to education and sustainable development in a nice village bordering a forest renowned for its astounding variety of wildlife and the opportunity to explore the forest individually and in the company of the village residents.

After arriving in Sri Lanka, I was met by Mr. Lal Fernando from Sewalanka Foundation. The first day of the project was a basic course in solar systems at a company in Colombo. In the afternoon I departed with all equipment and material to Sewalanka's regional office, about 5 km from Kudawa Village.

The office, which is surrounded by tea plantations and luxurious vegetation, was to be my hotel for a few days until I moved to Sunil's house, a park guide. Sunil's warm-hearted family welcomed me and his home was surrounded by lush vegetation, rice paddies, tea plantations and breathtaking scenery. I can still hear the birds and all the forest noises.

The following day, arriving at the school in a Tuk-Tuk, I was greeted with dancing and a music reception given by the children dressed in colourful suits. It was quite

comforting to see a primary school in such a beautiful and quiet surrounding. Meeting the school staff was enjoyable around a delicious table full of fresh food.

Numerous lunch breaks during my stay in the village, was a discovery of Singhalese home cooked cuisine; which is diverse, fresh and good for the stomach; absolutely delicious. Not to mention an abundance of fresh fruits, some unknown to me. The Kudawa village residents are agrarian by tradition, with the cultivation of tea serving as the primary source of livelihood.

Two days, with two technicians and a helping hand from the village community and school staff was all that was needed to complete the installation of a solar system consisting of eight energy saving lamps, a 50W solar module with battery pack, voltage regulator, breakers, plugs and switches. The system will allow use of a radio cassette, computer and other audiovisual.

Given that Kudawa Village is the entry point to Sinharaja World Heritage Forest Reserve. A walk through this tall forest, full of animal sounds, with butterflies of all colours and forms flying around us was fascinating.

The rewarding test came before departure: lighting the school for the event of the "festival of lights". A community celebration by the children full of colourful dances, theatre, songs and music. This was followed by a scrumptious feast. Souvenirs of a lifetime.

The ten day program is approximately US\$1,700 and includes a hotel stay on arrival, site seeing, basic training in Solar Systems, all solar equipment and ongoing maintenance, all ground transportation, stay and food in the village.

Overall, I found this project allowed a meaningful contact with people from another culture, while at the same time contributing in a sustainable way to the community.

> For further information contact Mr. Lal Fernando on [femandolal@yahoo.co.in](mailto:femandolal@yahoo.co.in)

>> Volunteer installs Solar System into school in Kulawa



# Developing Community-Based Tourism

Sewalanka supported the visit by the award-winning organisation, The Responsible Ecological Social Tours (REST) to promote community-based tourism and develop Sewalanka’s community-managed tourism program.

Community-based tourism builds the capacity of local communities to design, plan and manage tourism that supports local culture and knowledge and ensures the equitable distribution of tourism benefits whilst supporting sustainable natural resource use and management.

The REST delegation visited from 11-21 July. Their program started with a one-day workshop in Colombo that brought together participants from other NGOs, tour companies, hotels and the Tourist Board to explore the experience of community-based tourism in Thailand and discussed the potential opportunities in Sri Lanka.

After the workshop, REST conducted a series of workshops with community groups in three potential sites identified by Sewalanka for community-based tourism development; Unawatuna, Kalawana and Panama. A key feature of the workshop was participants discussing the special cultural and natural features of their communities and the local skills and knowledge possessed by community members. These included traditional activities such as making coir rope, cinnamon production and traditional farming. Some residents in each of the three communities were also interested in hosting home stays. The potential

negative impacts of tourism were also discussed.

REST will make recommendations on how Sewalanka can develop programs in the three selected

communities and provide continuing support through Train-the-Trainer workshops to Sewalanka staff.

### How to move forward? A unique working group

The formation of the *Sri Lankan Community Based Tourism Working Group* was an outcome of the Colombo workshop. The working group has twenty-two members including representatives from NGOs, tour companies, hotels and the Tourist Board. Its aim is to develop a united strategy for developing community-based tourism in Sri Lanka and to win support of the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourist Board for this strategy.

The group’s next steps will be to develop a joint strategic and implementation plan, identify geographical areas after discussions with the community for starting community-based tourism initiatives, organise awareness, participatory planning and training programs in identified communities and form marketing linkages between communities, tour operators and hotel travel desks.

> For more information contact Ms. Amanda Kiessel on 011) 254 5362 - 5 or [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net). ■

### Tourism initiatives in the East restarted

In July, Sewalanka Foundation in conjunction with the respective fishermen cooperative societies restarted the Eco-tour in Pottuvil Lagoon and the Sea Safari in Arugam Bay which were destroyed by the tsunami.

The Eco-tours was gaining in momentum, with 200 tours being conducted in the year leading up to the tsunami. The tour conducted by local fishermen supports a mangrove reforestation project; to replant mangroves destroyed by the conflict. In July, the fishermen have rebuilt the education hut and are rebuilding the nursery.

The Sea Safari is run on the popular tourist beach, Arugam Bay. All proceeds from the tours are divided amongst the guide and the local fishermen society. The project aims to bridge the gap, and reduce tensions, between fishermen, tourists and hoteliers.

> For more information contact Dr. Steve Creech on [oddfish@slt.net.lk](mailto:oddfish@slt.net.lk). ■



<< The REST team conducts a workshop in Arugam Bay.  
<< The new ticket design for the Pottuvil Eco Tour that restarted in July

### Documentary: The role of women

During May 2005, Sewalanka Foundation undertook filming in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Vavuniya (North) and Hambantota for a documentary on the *Empowerment of Women*. The documentary is being produced as part of the 'Social and Economic Empowerment of Women in the North and East of Sri Lanka Project'.

The Director and Producer, Ms. Heshani Edward and her crew interviewed key beneficiaries on the impact of this project in their lives, their experience of the conflict and tsunami; as well as their thoughts on women's role in society.

As Devagee Govindhasami, a Sewalanka Foundation Field Officer working in Vavuniya (North) explains, "Before the war women in this village were at home. They looked after the children and were doing the household work. But after the war, lots of women have lost their husbands and sons who were earning. They were pushed to a situation where they had to earn for their living. They have come out of the traditional shell."



The documentary will be completed by September and will be shown in project villages and on national television.

<< Project beneficiaries from Mullaitivu attend an exposure visit to Kataragama

### World Bank Mission

Sewalanka Foundation hosted on 26 July 2005 a delegation from the World Bank, funding body for the Women's Social and Economic Empowerment Project in the North and East of Sri Lanka. The meeting was the first progress reporting meeting after the tsunami, so a key area of discussion was the project extension into tsunami affected villages. The delegation included, Ms. Shideh Hadian, South Asian Region, from the Washington Office and Ms. Sriyani Hulugalle from the World Bank Colombo Office. As well as Mr. R.D. Abeywardena and Mr. S Dorenegoda from National Development Bank.

The 'Social and Economic Empowerment of Women in the North and East of Sri Lanka Project' is a World Bank

initiative through the Japanese Social Development Fund, executed by the National Development Bank and implemented by Sewalanka Foundation. The project operates in nine conflict-affected villages in Jaffna, Vavuniya, and Trincomalee. Recently it expanded to two tsunami-affected villages in Jaffna. The project is over a three-year period and aims to enhance woman's sustainable participation in social and economic activities both at the domestic and community levels.

> For more information contact Ms. Kaushalaya Naveratne on 011) 254 5362 - 5 or [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net). ■

### International Women's Day

Sewalanka Foundation Ampara office hosted a celebration for International Women's Day on the 6 March 2005. About 50 women, men and children from Mahaoya attended the event themed around domestic violence and the treatment of women within the home.

Mr. Deepal Chandrathilake, District Director opened the day with a well-received speech urging everyone not only to remember the importance of women one day per year but to celebrate women in the way we treat our sisters, mothers, daughters, friends and colleagues everyday of the year.

This speech was followed by some Kandyan dancing and a play concerning domestic violence conducted by a local boy's school. The key presentations were by the Ampara Human Rights Commission representative and Ms. Shanti from Oxfam. The whole celebration was organized by Ms. Inoka, Sewalanka Ampara Gender Coordinator, supported by Oxfam.

> For more information contact Ampara Office on 063) 222 4757 or [sewaamp@sltnet.lk](mailto:sewaamp@sltnet.lk) ■



>> Ms. Inoka, Sewalanka Ampara Gender Coordinator

## Strong communities to prevent fires

Sewalanka Foundation is committed to ensuring that the transitional shelter camps are safe and secure. In May 2005, Sewalanka Galle office provided training for fire prevention, fire-fighting and damage control for all families living in shelters they had built.

The training explored different origins of likely fires and the ways in which communities could reduce this risk. Training was provided in how to bring fires under control to minimize damage, in particular using sand and water. Practice fire drills were an important part of the training in order to put into practice what had been learnt. Fire prevention is particularly important in these camps as the transitional shelters are made from wood and due to their close proximity, a fire could spread quickly and cause a large amount of damage.

On 19 June 2005, this training was called upon when an electrical short-circuit caused a fire in one of the transitional shelters in the Elukatiya site in Galle. Due to the training, affected families and community action group were able to respond quickly, thus minimizing property damage and human suffering. Since each shelter had been provided a bucket for sand, the action group were quickly able to identify that this was the best means to bring the fire under control.

Overall, only six flanks of wood were damaged due to the quick response. One of the best outcomes is that for the 272 residents (66 families) of this site this experience has increased their confidence to deal with problems as they arise and also demonstrated the benefits of working together as a community group.

> For further information please contact: Mr. Tapan Barman - Director, Social Development (sewa@sltnet.lk). ■

## Sewalanka participates in international micro-finance conference in Ireland

Mr. N. Newton, District Director for Sewalanka Vavuniya attended a micro-finance workshop from 14-18 March 2005 in Dublin, Ireland hosted by Concern Worldwide. The meeting brought together delegates from all over the world to discuss their successes and challenges in implementing sustainable and viable micro-finance programs. The program also discussed cross-cutting issues like gender and the affects of HIV/AIDS on

programs. Mr. Newton presented a paper on the role of micro-finance in rebuilding conflict affected communities as well as Sewalanka's plans for tsunami-affected communities. Other delegates included representatives from India, Bangladesh and Haiti. ■



>> Mr Newton (left) discusses with other participants key issues in Dublin

## Volunteers working for Sewalanka

### Nippon Skilled Volunteers Association

Sewalanka Foundation has recently formed a new partnership with the Nippon Skilled Volunteers Association. Five skilled senior volunteers from Japan will arrive in Sri Lanka in October 2005 to work for six months; three will be based at the Sewalanka Agricultural Farm in Anuradhapura and two will start their assignment teaching sewing techniques at the Moratuwa Community Centre and then move south. Mr. Udeni Dias explains, "These short-term volunteer placements are an exciting opportunity to build the skills of the youth in the communities where they'll work, sharing techniques that have proven successful in Japan."

### Australian Ambassador for Development

Ms. Olivia McIntyre joined Sewalanka Foundation in April as an AusAID funded volunteer to work on tsunami-related projects in the South. Ms. McIntyre is based in Colombo and the Kalutara offices. She has a background in development and specialises in HIV/AIDS education and awareness.

### Voluntary Service Organisation

Sewalanka Foundation was also joined in May by two VSO volunteers for two years. Dr. Shobha Singh is a Clinical Psychologist working on the Sewalanka Psychosocial Programs in the North. Traditionally these programs have focused on those affected by the conflict, however, the program expanded nationally in 2005 to cope with the affects of the tsunami on communities.

The second volunteer is Ms. Wendy van den Beld, a Management Capacity Builder working across four Sewalanka Offices in the East. Ms. Wendy is specifically focusing on building the strength of second-level management in order to more efficiently undertake their increased workload due to the tsunami.

> For further information contact Head-office on [sewahq@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sewahq@sri.lanka.net) or 011) 2545 362. ■

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### Exploring avenues for livelihood development

Sewalanka Foundation conducted a workshop from 1-2 April 2005 in Vavuniya District as part of the Livelihood Diversification and Enterprise Development (LDED) Project commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The LDED project aims to identify methods to bridge the gap between emergency and relief interventions and sustainable development activities. Specifically, identifying income generating activities for improving livelihood and food security of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Vavuniya and Trincomalee.

This workshop was phase two of the project and presented the results of a literature and information search of previous and ongoing LDED activities. Then, the workshop outcomes will be the basis of a field survey to assess farmers' preferred activities.

The workshop was attended by 50 participants including representatives from government, local and international non-government organisations and the private sector. Although the project commenced prior to the Tsunami, the participants were grateful as many of the issues discussed on how to develop and implement sustainable livelihood activities are now relevant to IDP communities and the tsunami-affected communities.

> For further information contact Mr Steve Francone at [sedco@sri.lanka.net](mailto:sedco@sri.lanka.net). ■

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### Planning with partners for the future

Sewalanka Foundation and German Agro Action (GAA) held a planning meeting from 27- 30 April 2005 in Anuradhapura.

The meeting discussed Sewalanka and GAA's past, present and future cooperation. It reviewed pre-

tsunami and post-tsunami work in terms of its project, size, content and locations. As well as assessing the division of work between GAA and Sewalanka, and related personnel responsibilities. A partnership SWAT was undertaken and future projects and strategic directions for working in the future were decided. The meeting was attended by 19 senior Sewalanka staff and 11 GAA staff; it was moderated by Dr. Lorenz Bachmann.

> For further information contact Ms. Lakshi Abeyasekara on [sewavav@sltnet.lk](mailto:sewavav@sltnet.lk) or 024) 222 1354. ■



>> Sewalanka staff at the joint planning session

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### Project Planning Matrix Training

An Introductory Workshop in Project Planning Matrixes was held for twenty-two participants from German Agro Action and Sewalanka Foundation from the 13 - 16 June 2005 in Anuradhapura.

The workshop provided training in the theory of project cycle management, and monitoring and evaluation (P&E). It used the new Aid to Uprooted People project as the basis and was conducted by Dr. Lorenz Bachmann. Topics covered included:

- steps of object oriented project planning (OOPP)
- the important management tasks of the project cycle and complimentary management tasks which are based on OOPP such as operational plans, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting
- importance and the possibilities of a qualitative output monitoring and using a PPM as a base of a monitoring plan
- techniques to critically assess the various methods of data collection, questions the extent of sample survey and data assessment.

The practical outcome of the workshop was the development of an operational plan for the Aid to Uprooted People project.

> For further information contact Ms. Lakshi Abeyasekara on [sewavav@sltnet.lk](mailto:sewavav@sltnet.lk) or 024) 222 1354. ■

### Transitional Shelter Media Briefing

Sewalanka Foundation was invited to participate at the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN) media briefing on 6 July 2005. The briefing outlined the achievements to date concerning transitional shelter and the mechanisms for moving forward. The government announced that 80% of transitional shelters were complete island-wide.

Sewalanka was represented by Mr. Tapan Barman who presented a 10 minute presentation that is available at [www.sewalanka.org](http://www.sewalanka.org). Sewalanka Foundation is completing 23% of the total island's requirement for shelter.

Other organisations that participated included UNHCR, OfERR (Ceylon) - Trincomalee and Zoa Refugee Care. ■

### Sewalanka Staff participate in peace pilgrimage

Sewalanka Foundation staff participated in the pilgrimage from Jaffna, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa down the eastern coast to the ancient Kataragama temple from the 1 - 5 July 2005. This has become an annual tradition for Sewalanka staff as they join the pilgrims for the last 120km stretch through Yala National Park. A unique aspect of our delegation on the walk is that the staff who participate are reflective of our national network of committed personnel; Sinhalese and

Tamils, Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists. ■

>> Staff from all offices on the difficult walk



### Sri Lanka Development Forum 2005

Sewalanka Foundation was one of three organisations from the non-government sector that attended the Sri Lanka Development Forum on 16 - 17 May 2005 in Kandy. The forum was convened by the Sri Lankan Government to discuss the 'Rebuilding Sri Lanka: Post-Tsunami Action Plan'.

The World Bank, IMF, Asian Development Bank and all UN Agencies, as well as the Japanese, American, British and many other Bilateral Donors also attended. ■

### Celebrating the launch of the water scheme

Sewalanka Foundation Deniyaya Office has completed the "Gravity Water Scheme" that provides piped water to 350 Tamil and Sinhala families living in the Deniyaya Sinharaja Buffer Zone. The project was undertaken in conjunction with the Deniyaya Sinharaja Conservation Committee and maintenance of the scheme will be undertaken by the community who were trained. The gravity water scheme was part of a larger project supported by USAID/Sri Lanka - Office of Transition Initiatives that rehabilitated five bridges, five access roads, one community centre and seven gravity water schemes in the Sinharaja southern buffer zone after the 2003 landslides and floods. The total target beneficiaries were 5,000 villagers. The Gravity Water Scheme was officially declared open at a ceremony hosted by Sewalanka and attended by the USAID South Asia Regional Director on Friday 8 July 2005. ■

>> Sewalanka staff member testing the gravity water tap



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