

Colombo, December 2010

Dear all,

Greetings from Sri Lanka! First of all thank you for your continued support of Shining Life Children's Trust. It is extremely rewarding seeing the change and impact that SLCT's projects achieve in Sri Lanka. A little can go a long way here and your contributions make a real difference to communities.



It feels strange not being in the UK for the lead up to Christmas – I am still yet to hear one Christmas carol or see a Christmas tree and the tropical weather is in stark contrast to the wet and windy conditions I am used to back home on the Isle of Man. The change is quite pleasant. Although I have to admit, we have been experiencing some unseasonal weather with Sri Lanka experiencing the highest level of rainfall in one day since 1992.

Our new six-month project in the Kandy District has begun with an in-depth report into some of the problems faced by children in the area. At a recent meeting a local principal approached us to thank WDC and SLCT for starting to work in the area due to the problems the community faces. The Women's Development Centre (WDC) have started to liaise with local stakeholders and government officials. WDC will then begin awareness programmes such as counselling sessions and family nutrition programmes. Over the next few months WDC will also start introducing income generation programmes to increase the incomes of local women. I have been extremely impressed with WDC's work and commitment to empowering rural communities and improving the lives and opportunities of children.

Our work with the Human Development Foundation (HDF) in Galewala is also progressing well. HDF have begun the micro-finance aspect of the project including a Women's Society Trip to a successfully running micro-finance project in Matale. Here the women observed a meeting of the local organisation who have been successfully running local community loans for over 15 years. HDF have also started providing local women with sewing machines using a credit scheme. This, combined with the Women's Societies established by HDF and SLCT and the Women's Societies Trip, has empowered local women in the community. Income-generation programmes such as the dress-making classes have proven so popular that we have put on extra programmes for the community. On a recent field visit to a pre-school in the area I was petitioned by a dozen women from neighbouring villages requesting SLCT work in their villages as they have seen the success of the project.

Our project on the Rahuntagoda Tea Estate in Rikiligaskada with Hanguranketha Children Care and Women's Foundation (HCCWF) is now entering its final stages. HCCWF recently ran a Youth Camp lasting two days encompassing all of the villages that we work in. This was the first opportunity many of the children had had to spend time away from their homes and with children their own age. At the Youth Camp, children of different communities, religions and ethnicities were encouraged to interact with one another to help break down community barriers. Several of their children described the weekend as the most enjoyable weekend of their lives and they have already asked if they can arrange an annual camp. The Youth Camp also enabled HCCWF to run various workshops and awareness programmes to address problems such as alcoholism and domestic abuse, which is often prevalent in tea estate communities.

I have been extremely impressed by the work of our local partners and their continued commitment they show to community and child development. Again, thank you for your continued support of SLCT's work and I hope that you all have a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

John