



World Vision and John Keells in partnership for development in the North

World Vision Lanka and John Keells Foundation recently launched a partnership to enhance and rehabilitate the livelihoods of communities in Northern Sri Lanka. Through the partnership, several development interventions such as livelihoods assistance programmes and provision of water and sanitation facilities for schools will be implemented in selected villages within the Mullaitivu district.

John Keells Foundation (JKF) is the Corporate Social Responsibility entity of the John Keells Group. One of its focus areas is community and livelihood development under which Village Adoption is a key initiative aimed at poverty alleviation at village level through partnership with relevant stakeholders.

Two villages in the Mullaitivu district - Iranapalai and Puthumathalan, were selected for the first phase of the project. Selected farmers of fisher societies were provided with fish nets and tools while members of Women's Rural Development Societies were assisted to start up a savings scheme and provided with bicycles.

To mark the completion of these activities, a handover ceremony was held earlier in Iranapalai. Speaking on behalf of John Keells Foundation, Ms. Carmeline Jayasuriya, Head of CSR said, "We have been able to engage with the relevant stakeholders in planning preliminary development activities in the two villages, thanks to the collaborative efforts of World Vision, Government Officials, security forces, and community based organizations. We look forward to working closely with all stakeholders in planning and implementing future activities."

The first phase of the project which includes construction of permanent double unit toilets for the two schools in the selected villages and cleaning and renovation of community wells in Puthumathalan have already been completed and handed over to the community.

Commenting on the collaboration WVL National Director Suresh Bartlett said, "This is an important collaboration as we intentionally look to partner with corporates in development. We believe the synergies that this creates will help us maximize opportunities and bring about greater innovation in delivering sustainable development outcomes for the people of Sri Lanka".

EDITORIAL

Rebuilding together in partnership

When the 26-year old war ended, Sri Lanka's greatest challenge was to ensure the speedy return of all displaced persons to their own homes and assist these communities as they began to rebuild their shattered lives once again.

World Vision strongly believes that the rebuilding of the country is everybody's responsibility and to this end we have been always looking out for like-minded organisations who would like to partner with us in supporting these conflict affected communities.

Our cover story is about our partnership with John Keells who are working together with us to support affected communities in the North.

Elsewhere in this edition we share the story of celebrity actress and singer Vivian Chow who stayed one night in the house of a member of the community to get a better understanding of life in the rural communities of our country.

On this page we record the publication of a book on Gender and water, sanitation and hygiene which marked the fruition of a long planned advocacy initiative. Despite impressive human development indicators, Sri Lanka still needs to improve on its rating for the Gender Empowerment Index which reflects the low presence of women in government or engaged in professional or skilled work.

Women's views, interests and needs should shape development plans to support progress towards more equal relations between women & men, boys and girls. Their active participation in all stages of the programme management cycle is essential.

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RIWASH project launches handbook to promote sensitization on gender equality



The Rural Integrated Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (RIWASH) project funded by AUSAID has been implemented in the Nuwara Eliya District since 2010. Under the project, selected communities living on the tea plantations are provided clean drinking water and sanitation facilities. Addressing gender inequality is also one of the key targets of RIWASH within which several awareness and sensitization programs are conducted.

In line with these objectives, a handbook titled "Gender and Water" was launched in September in Nuwara Eliya. Present at the launch were officials of the local Government authority, Divisional Secretary of Nuwara Eliya, MOH officials, and the Zonal Education Director. Also present were Management of Watawala Plantations PLC, WV Lanka and the RIWASH project. The book was reviewed by Ms. Prema Gamage, Consultant Gender Specialist.

The handbook seeks to explain the concept of gender in simple language and why it is important in a water and sanitation (WATSAN) context, particularly in the plantations. The stereotypical roles imposed on men and women by society, issues of gender inequality and how it can be proactively addressed through education, skills training and sensitization are included in the content. Two contextualized posters conveying key messages from the handbook were also launched at the event.



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Sri Lanka – Korea Global Citizens Youth Camp



Every child irrespective of the child's parent's or guardian's race, color, gender, creed or other status has a right to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Understanding the importance of promoting Child Rights the Bibile Area Development Programme (ADP) with the support of its funding country South Korea initiated a collaborative action to increase the awareness of Child Rights among the community, and also to ensure survival, development, protection and participation of children in such programmes. As a result, 11 Korean students who are activists from the Child Rights Center in Gongwan Province, South Korea participated in the Sri Lanka - Korea Global Citizens Youth Camp.

A total of 65 students from Bibile together with the visiting students actively engaged in a two day Youth Camp which was held in Passara, Badulla during which an intensive training and awareness program on Child Rights, Child Protection and Child Abuse was conducted by the Korean Staff.

The ADP also organized an awareness walk on the importance of Child Rights.

All campers as well as 350 children from 24 GN divisions in Bibile participated in this event. Ajith Perera – Zonal Director of WVL, President of the Pradeshiya Sabha, Pediatrician of the Bibile Hospital and the Additional Divisional Secretary was among the invitees who participated in the walk.

“This event is a new experience for the people in Bibile and we thank Korea and WVL for taking this initiative to conduct such events in our areas of work”, the President of the Pradeshiya Sabha said at the commencement of the walk.

Signatures from the general public pledging their support against Child Rights discrimination and the protection of the Rights of the Child was obtained during the procession.

The establishment of a Child Rights Protection Committee comprising of children from Korea and the Bibile ADP was a significant achievement. The children gave an oath to be activists in protecting and promoting Child Rights and were awarded a certificate of participation at the conclusion of the youth camp.



Regardless of language barriers and cultural differences the participants built strong friendships with one another being true examples of agents of change in the community.

The ADP hopes to send Child Rights activists from Bibile to Korea as the next step in this process.

Celebrity Vivian spends night with community family



It was a very special day for the Paragoda community in Ridigama. Both young and old alike gathered in the little 'junction' waiting for the visitors from Hong Kong. Their village hardly received visitors. Although surrounded with breathtaking beauty, the lack of proper roads, electricity and basic facilities kept visitors away.

The Hong Kong celebrity popular actress and singer Vivian Chow and CEO of World Vision Hong Kong Kevin Chiu and their crew were all surprised to see a whole village waiting for them and greeting them with smiling faces. A group of little children dressed in traditional costumes welcomed them.

From there the visitors trekked 30 minutes uphill through vegetation and over the rocks to reach the homes in the village. The Paragoda families lived scattered on the slope of a mountain that marks the boundary between Kandy and Kurunegala. Adults and children walk over two hours every day to get to school or to a shop or to the hospital.

Vivian visited families in the community talking to them and taking time to experience their day-to-day life and hardships. She also spent the night and slept over at the home of a poorest of the poor family.

Samanthi couldn't believe that such an important person wanted to stay the night with her and her family.

"I have no words to express how I feel," said Samanthi with tears of joy rolling out of her eyes "I feel so honoured. Not even our relations visit our home because it is too poor and small."

Vivian spent the evening listening and learning about Samanthi's struggles, helping her prepare dinner and playing with her three children.

"This is my first time to stay overnight with a poor family" says Vivian, "It reminded me of my childhood. I lived in a wooden house built on a hill side before I entered primary school. Whenever there were typhoons, our house would be shaking fiercely. I talked with the family till very late."

Vivian also selected a new child to be sponsored by her. She met his family, gave him a haircut, learnt new words in his language and shared a meal.

The team visited returned families in Mullaitivu, North Sri Lanka as well.



"The situation I saw was shocking. Many children have lost their parents in the war and many are still living in extreme poverty," Vivian says, "Whenever I see people who can't afford even the very basic stuff, it challenges me. It makes me look into the needs of people, humble myself and review my responsibilities towards others."

The team also visited a nutrition awareness programme and a school feeding programme in Mullaitivu supported by World Vision Hong Kong. World Vision Hong Kong CEO Kevin Chiu commended the field staff saying, "You are the ones who transform the lives of the communities we serve in. You are the true heroes of World Vision."

WVL marks World Breastfeeding Week 2013

World Breastfeeding Week was celebrated around the world from 1- 7 August 2013, with the theme “Breastfeeding Support – Close to Mothers.” World Vision Lanka organized several events throughout the week to highlight the importance of breastfeeding and adequate nutrition for women and children. Members of the community, government officials and stakeholders participated in these events. Here are a few highlights of the celebrations.



A nutrition rally and food demonstration was held in Koralaipattu. The event was a collaboration between WVL and the Ministry of Health, Department of Education and Mothers Groups.

The objective of the programme was to raise awareness amongst pregnant and lactating mothers on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and correct food preparation.



World Breastfeeding Week was celebrated in Colombo with a walk which commenced at the Castle Street Hospital for Women. Before the walk, a street drama was performed to convey the importance of breastfeeding. Participants then proceeded to the Lady Ridgeway Hospital where a seminar on nutrition and breastfeeding was conducted, presided over by Dr. Chandradasa, National Nutrition Coordinator.



In Bogowantalawa, WVL organized several activities in 6 plantations with the support of the Ministry of Health and the estate management. A refrigerator was provided to the crèches in these plantations in order to enable mothers to safely store their breast milk, so that their babies will have adequate nutrition even while they work in the tea fields. This initiative was to encourage exclusive breastfeeding amongst the lactating mothers in the plantations. Nutrition awareness programmes were also conducted.



In Trinco South, a new center was opened to provide counseling for pregnant and lactating mothers as well as mothers with young children. There was also a nutrition rally and demonstration to raise awareness on correct food preparation. The programmes were conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Eachilampathu. Health volunteers and staff will continue going door to door as part of the awareness programme.

Striving to be a responsible global citizen



WV Taiwan's Global Citizenship Volunteering and Learning trip brought 17 teenage girl students together with their teachers and WV Taiwan staff to Sri Lanka to experience first-hand the daily lives of the people we serve.

The team first visited the Wattala ADP where they were given a warm welcome by the students of St. Anne's Girls School with traditional dance performances. Later the students together with the local children had the opportunity of volunteering their services in a beach cleaning project, learning the importance of a clean and child friendly environment for the community.

Another such initiative was the dengue awareness campaign. The village PHI also gave of his time in educating the team on dengue fever and its effects on the community. Taking to heart the information they received from the PHI, colourful awareness raising posters were designed by the Taiwan students themselves and walking from door to door displaying their messages and interacting with the community their campaign was complete.

Learning sessions were included in the programme to help the students understand teen issues in the communities as well as the global issues that affect them. This gave the opportunity for local children representing the Wattala and Negombo ADPs to interact more with the visitors and make it a more meaningful learning forum.

The highlight of the trip was the time spent with the sponsored families in Wattala and income generation activities in Negombo. The Taiwan team had a special experience interacting more closely with the selected families sharing their stories, hopes and dreams and preparing a fellowship lunch together with them. For the students it was exciting trying their hand at scraping coconut in the traditional method, fetching water in buckets, wading through flood waters to reach the homes. They also gave back a bit of their culture through song and dance bringing such joy to the families they met.

"The women of these communities are so strong and it's amazing to hear how they have overcome their hardships. They are truly an inspiration to us," said Cindy the Taiwan team leader.

Fishing in the lagoon, candle making, dress making, dry fish making, grinding spices and anthurium cultivation are new trades the students learnt during their visit to the Negombo ADP. It was not only a fun filled days' work but also an experience to understand the hard work people of poor communities have to go through to earn their daily living.



The time of learning, volunteering, sharing, fun and laughter came to an end as it was time for them to return home taking back fond memories.

"This is not the end neither is it good bye. This is only the beginning for us to a journey to be channels of hope for the less fortunate." Cindy continued giving an assurance that they would be sharing their stories and experiences with their friends, families and community to make a difference in the lives of whom they meet.

Gift of cow transforms Karunawathie's life



Karunawathi (42) and her husband struggled to provide for their three children. They owned no land and their poverty and vulnerability were exploited by owners of large cultivation lands.

“They gave us their land to cultivate and since these were mostly over grown with shrubs and bushes we had to clear it ourselves. We had to bear all the expenses from clearing the land to harvesting. The harvest was ours but it barely gave any profit after all that we spent in preparing the land,” says Karunawathi.

“In slash and burn cultivation the profit comes in the second year. Because the land is already cleared, it saves time and money for the farmer. But the owners would not give us the land for the second year. They cultivate it themselves. No landowner gives a once cleared land. So we go in search of new land that needs clearing and fall into the same vicious cycle,” she says. “It was a struggle,” says Karunawathi, “Everyday we worried about ways to provide for our children. Sometimes we cut firewood and sold a bundle for 20 rupees (15 cents) to give them one meal. But we never wanted to stop their schooling.”

“After World Vision began work in our village and my children received sponsorship a big burden was lifted off our shoulders. We didn’t have to worry about their schooling anymore. They received sufficient school supplies every year,” she smiles.

“Then we received a milking cow under the animal husbandry programme. It was a great blessing on our economic situation. We have named her Raththi. It is because of this gift we are able to stand on our feet now,” she says.

Through its economic development programme World Vision has distributed milking cows to the poorest of the poor families in Padhiyathalawa to support them with a home-based income. Every family is requested to gift the first female calf to another needy family in order to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

Today Karunawathi has two cows and four male and female calves. She has already gifted the first female calf from Raththi to a needy family. World Vision also linked them with Milco – a government-owned company with a wide network of milk collection, production and sales centres.

“With the income we receive, we were able to build a new safe house for our family. We used to live in a small thatched house that was the size of a play house. Because we have a stable income at home, my husband is able to go out for work and he is working in a government cultivation land now. He comes home once a month and I am able to manage the things at home with Raththi’s help,” she smiles, “I’m not only able to take care of my children, but I’m even able to save for their future.”



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