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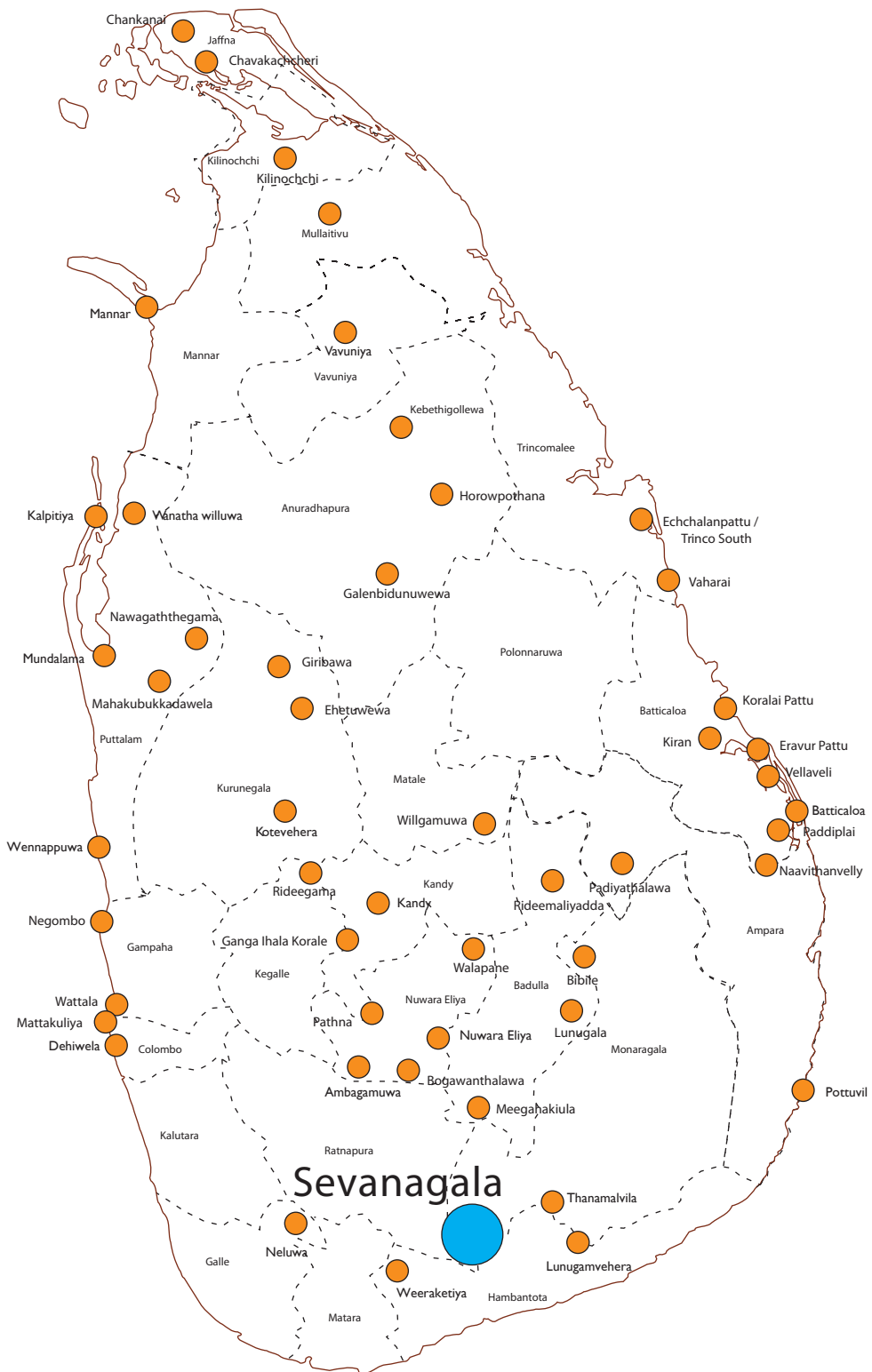
Begun

Completed

1997 - 2012

Sevanagala

Growing together



Sevanagala

Located in the dry zone of the Monaragala District in the South East of Sri Lanka, Sevanagala is home to an agriculture community who constantly wrestled with the weather for their living. Cultivation depended on rainwater and tank irrigation but severe dry spells especially between May and September played havoc on their livelihoods forcing them to search for low paying work to feed their families.

Water was the greatest need in the community with only 15% of the household having access to clean water. Most families and children spent a large amount of time fetching water for drinking, walking several kilometers a day. People had very little awareness on health and nutrition too. Spending on health meant compromising on their meals. Around 30% had no sanitary toilets.

Trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty education was not a priority for them. Only 4% completed school and below 1% pursued higher education. Many children stopped schooling during harvest times when they had to help their parents in the fields or stay at home to look after the younger siblings. Most school dropouts joined the labour force to assist their families economy.

With the support of sponsors from Korea and Singapore, World Vision initiated its Area Development Programme (ADP) in Sevanagala in 1997. The programme had a special focus on Education, Health and Nutrition, Economic Development, Civil Society Development and Child Protection. As the Sevanagala Team began to work shoulder to shoulder with the poorest of the poor, the community walked through their brokenness into a new hope.

Today, they are on a steady journey out of poverty, moving from strength to strength. They still battle the weather but with new agriculture methods and techniques. A variety of income generation activities have opened new avenues stabilizing their income. Massive water projects have made clean water available at home for almost every family even through the driest seasons. Literacy levels have been uplifted and every child gets through school while many pursue higher education. Small groups have knitted the previously scattered families to help each other in their growth and journey. Youth discover new skills through vocational training and find new avenue away from the path of daily labour their parents were forced to follow. Children with special needs receive special care and acceptance too.

Both the old and the young have discovered talents and leadership within themselves. New leaders are born through the child societies which has already instilled positive changes in their communities.

Message from the National Director



Suresh Bartlett
National Director
World Vision Lanka

Today is a special day for both World Vision and the people of Sevanagala as it marks the closure of our Area Development Programme (ADP) and the end of a long and enriching journey together.

This long term (15 years) development programme is unique to World Vision, whereby the poorest and the most disadvantaged communities are empowered and transformed. Children are always at the heart of our work - we focus on children because they are the best indicator of a community's social health. When children are fed, sheltered, schooled, protected, valued, and loved, a community thrives.

We have reached the end of a successful journey of transformation and development over the last 15 years. Since 1997, in partnership with the community, World Vision has conducted a range of initiatives in the key sectors of Education, Health & Nutrition, Water & Sanitation, and Economic Development in Sevanagala.

Today, as we prepare to leave Sevanagala, we do so with the satisfaction that we leave behind an empowered community with enhanced capacities. Most families now have access to clean drinking water, children are now back in school and enjoying better health and nutrition. Children have a space for their talents and voice and families have better housing and sustainable livelihoods.

The improvements in health and nutrition and sanitation have been especially encouraging. There are significant improvements in the overall nutritional status of children in the underweight, stunted and wasted categories. Additionally, access to clean drinking water has risen from 25% to 88% and households with sanitary toilets increased from 36.5% to 82%.

A range of new income generating activities has brought a new stability to most households whose income levels have increased appreciably. Families have benefited from initiatives in animal husbandry and now have their own cattle, goats or chickens which provide nutritious milk and eggs for the children and an increased income.

It is our fervent hope that the empowered communities in Sevanagala will take ownership for their continued development and be able to sustain the progress made to date. The success of our programme in Sevanagala was due to the support we received from all our stakeholders including Government Ministries, The Local Provincial Councils, Divisional Secretaries, Government Agents, our sponsors, donors from Korea and Singapore, our partners and the communities themselves. Our sincere thanks go out to all of them.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the dedicated efforts of our staff that have faithfully served the communities in Sevanagala over the years and helped to bring about the significant transformation we see today.

Suresh Bartlett

National Director
World Vision Lanka

Message from the Group Director - Operations



Jude Perera

Acting Group Director
Operations

I am pleased to send this message on the occasion of the closure of our Area Development Programme (ADP) in Sevanagala.

Sevanagala was identified as one of the poorest and least developed areas in Sri Lanka and it was due to this reason that World Vision decided to work in the region.

World Vision began its work in Sevanagala in 1997 and over the last 15 years we have had the privilege to partner with the communities to pursue a shared goal of better livelihood, health and education for the men, women and children of the Sevanagala ADP.

Together with the communities we have engaged in projects focusing on education, health and nutrition, economic development and water and sanitation – sectors identified by the community as priority areas for improvement.

We believe it is the community that provides leadership and is the ultimate driving force behind sustainable development and it is World Vision's role to work alongside them in partnership to help these communities realize their shared dreams.

The overall student attendance at school has increased appreciably and the creation of 33 child societies has presented children the opportunity to learn about self governance, leadership and the power of their unified voice in addressing social issues.

In the health sector World Vision partnered with the Ministry of Health to provide health awareness on water borne diseases, dengue and general awareness of good health and hygiene practices and community access to government facilities. Most households now have access to a source of clean water and this alone has reduced the prevalence of water borne disease

On behalf of World Vision Lanka, I wish to express our sincere thanks to Divisional Secretary and staff, MOH and staff, Director of Education, School Principals and their staff and all our many stakeholders whose support has helped improve the lives of the children and their communities in Sevanagala.

Message from the ADP Manager



Sumith C. Liyanage
ADP Manager - Sevanagala

Today World Vision is going to leave Sevanagala after a journey of 15 years. Having worked with the Sevanagala community, we say good bye to them, while giving them the responsibility of continuing the development which has been achieved over the years.

We are pleased to note the significant changes that have occurred in the lives of the children and the families in the community. The children and their families of the community walked miles to fetch water for their living. At present almost all the families have access to water at their door step. Parents are able to provide health facilities and support for the education of their children with their own income.

Several initiatives through our economic development project has enabled many families to increase their monthly income so that they were able to provide facilities for their children to receive better education and healthcare.

The child societies have been very popular and have enabled children to blossom and discover their hidden talents and skills in leadership and some are now receiving higher education.

During our journey in Sevanagala we have developed the Community Based organisations (CBO's) and their structures to enable them to sustain the development already initiated.

We can speak of many changes and stories with lot of words but there is no substitute to seeing the changes and experiencing the life changing stories of the community first hand.

This is only a beginning of Transformational Development. We believe the empowered community we leave behind will continue this process with the help of the village leaders and local Authorities.

I wish to thank the children, their families and the communities of Sevanagala for their unstinted cooperation and willing support in all our endeavours and I wish them all the very best as they continue on their journey as an empowered community ready to face the challenges of the future.



Building skills – brick by brick

From a very young age Lakshan was fascinated with the construction of buildings. His uncle was a mason and young Lakshan used to tag along with his uncle during weekends and school holidays, to watch him build houses, marvelling as the structures came up brick by brick. For Lakshan, these sites were the place of learning - more than his school.

Soon he began to help out in little chores and even received a small payment for unskilled labour. "I enjoyed masonry but was unskilled. When World Vision invited us youth for a vocational training programme that included a course in masonry, I was very happy," says Lakshan (18).

The six-month course provided them valuable knowledge and training, in every aspect of masonry and building - from the foundation right to the roof top.

"My favourite part is building walls brick by brick," he says, "Completing the course we also had the chance to assist World Vision in building a house for a vulnerable family."

Having completed the course few months ago, Lakshan has already begun trying out his knowledge and skills at home.

The young builder has completed building his room and a new additional room. A spacious kitchen for his mother is already in the process of being completed.

"He even makes and bakes the brick at home and I help him," says his mother, "We are very grateful to World Vision for this training."

Many of the youth from his area who cannot pursue higher education join the unskilled labour force on very low wages to support their families. Lakshan's father remains an unskilled labourer quarrying stones for a living and his brother too works in a cement factory as an unskilled labourer.

"Because of the training programme we wouldn't have to fall into that situation," says Lakshan, "even if we go as a helper, we get a good pay because we are skilled now."

While supporting his family, Lakshan wants to build a house of his own and is currently working towards becoming a part of the team of masons working for the new international airport that is coming up in Hambantota in Southern Sri Lanka.



Staying a farmer all year round

Like most farmers in the Sevanagala area, Chandrasena used to engage in 'chena' (slash and burn) cultivation. Depending solely on the North-East monsoon rains (November – January) they would cultivate crops for a mere month or two.

Similarly, this year too, the harsh weather patterns set in, known as the brown time of the year for Sevanagala when the sun burns the grass, the trees and the leaves to crispy brown. This arid time is not suitable for cultivation and usually farmers go looking for daily labour to feed their families. But now it doesn't matter anymore. They have experience and knowledge to cultivate all year round.

World Vision's Integrated Farming and Sustainable Agriculture (IFSA) Project assists small and medium scale agriculture farmers, especially in the dry zones to establish sustainable integrated farming systems on their homestead. When the Project was implemented in Sevanagala, Chandrasena was among over 300 farmers who participated.

Participants received trainings in water and soil conservation, rain water harvesting, perennial crop establishment, marketing, animal husbandry and compost making. "Rain water harvesting made a big difference here," says the farmer, "It is the rainwater harvesting well that helps me keep my garden green. The well is full even in the driest times."

"Learning to cultivate coconut was a highlight for all of us," he says, "No one could cultivate coconut in this dry soil but the Programme taught us how to. It is a bonus because we use every part of the coconut tree for different things and it gives a good income too."

Chandrasena receives a good income from his cultivation throughout the year. There's 1 ½ acre home-garden around the house, another 1 ½ acres of paddy and a new addition of over 2000 plants.

"Home gardening is the most popular now especially because it ensures food security at home," he says, "There were times we wouldn't even grow a chilli plant in our gardens. But today even when you see a small patch of soil you want to put it to use to grow a plant. Every farmer cultivates all year round in this area now."

"I don't go looking for daily work anymore to support my children," he smiles proudly. His income has enabled his son to complete his school education and enter university, while his daughter will complete her Advanced Level next year.

Chandrasena also gives leadership to 32 new farmers in his area sharing the knowledge he received from the Project and in helping them to switch to new methods of cultivation.



Access to markets boosts fortunes

Armed with new agriculture knowledge and methods through the Integrated Farming and Sustainable Agriculture Project, farmers in Sevanagala began to garner a bountiful crop every month. Their baskets were filled daily with vegetables.

One of the key components of the project is establishing marketing networks. However, a good marketer was needed. Jayalath volunteered to be the marketer for the 20 farmers in his village.

“When the Project gave us training in marketing and marketing techniques I was very interested. But this was something totally new to me and initially I was worried if I would get a good income and if I should just stick to being a farmer,” he says.

Eight volunteers from different villages came together to form a marketing committee and they received an initial loan to start their marketing enterprise. World Vision connected them with Cargills - one of the largest super-market chains in Sri Lanka.

“There’s a lot of risk in marketing because you don’t have a big profit all the time,” says Jayalath, “so some of the marketers in our group became inactive. But I learnt that if you don’t give up, it returns to you later when the harvest is bountiful.”

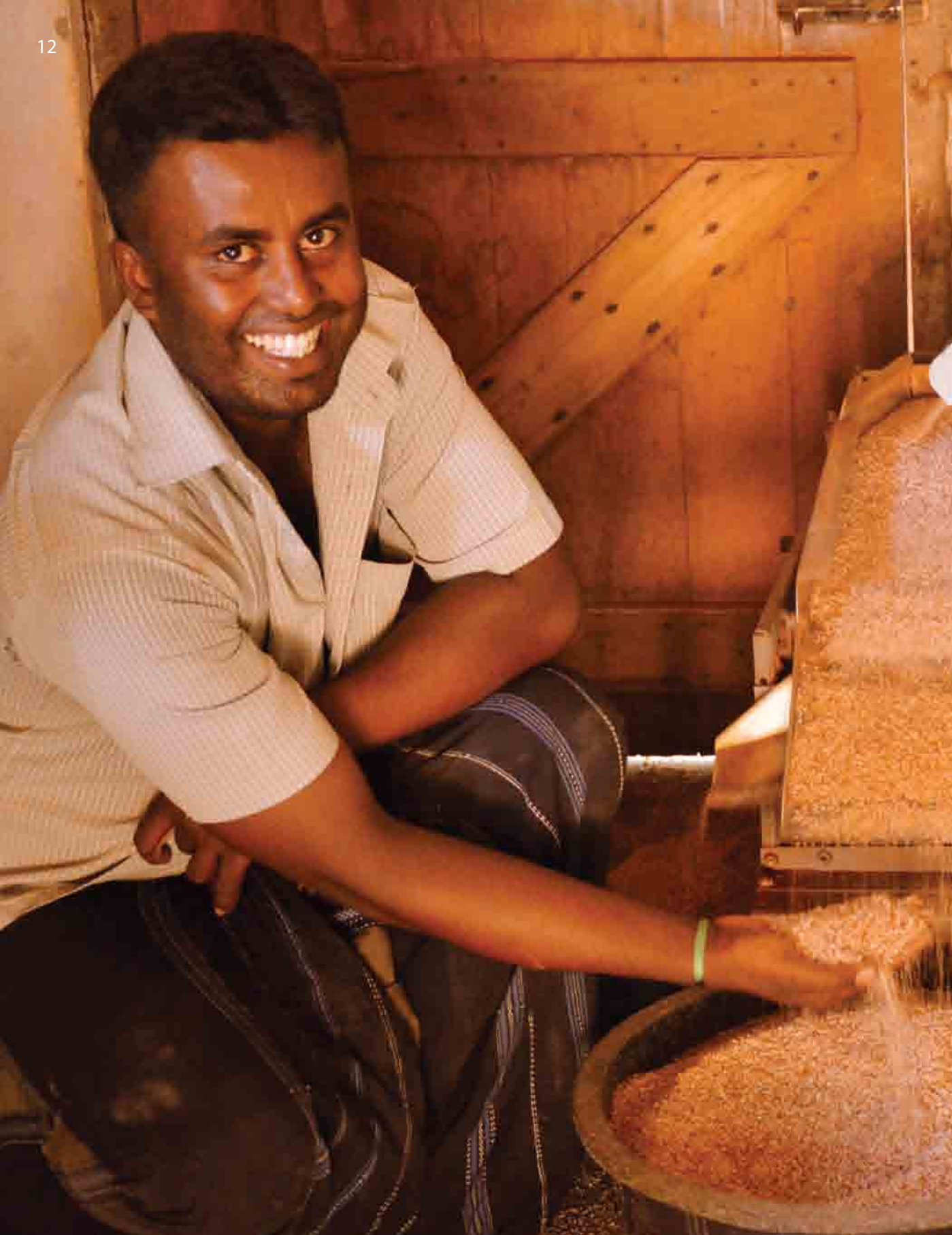
“There was a time when other marketers came to our villages in their lorries and bought our produce. But when the farmers realised they came only when the prices were high and abandoned them when the prices dropped they began to send their vegetables to me because I would not abandon them,” he says.

A lorry loaded with over 1000 kg of vegetables leaves for Colombo every evening from his collection point and even farmers from other surrounding villages have begun to give their crop to him. “I started collecting vegetables on a bicycle but now I have managed to buy a tractor,” smiles Jayalath.

In order to reduce the wastage of vegetables, Jayalath also gives training to farmers about times to pick the vegetables and proper packing methods. He provides vegetables to an additional three shops in Colombo now. “I’ve received a good income from this and I managed to complete my house and even buy a motor bike for my elder son,” he says.

He still does farming but just enough to sustain his family. “World Vision’s guidance is the strength and the wind beneath my wings,” Jayalath says.





Small group loan strengthens entrepreneurship

Shakthi, (Meaning: Strength) is the name of a small group of four friends who have banded together to save jointly and engage in investments to strengthen their income.

“When World Vision introduced us to the small group concept, we thought we would make the small group together,” says Asanka, “We had never thought of having savings together before but World Vision taught us.”

As the funds grew, through their savings the group used to make loan to its members at a 2% interest. “When we learnt that World Vision was distributing rice mills to active small groups through our village development societies at a low rate, we utilised our funds to obtain a rice mill,” says Asanka.

“We knew the four of us could get a good income from it because every family cultivates paddy in our village,” he says.

The mill was situated in a little store-room in front of Asanka’s home.

All the paddy cultivated in the neighbourhood found its way to the mill and it became an important location in the area.

“There are five other mills too in the area but we built a good connection with our community and it was easier to get clients. We started the business at 50 cents less (per kilo) than the other places. The machine we received also removes stones and separated broken seeds so it was an added advantage.”

Enhancing their steadily growing income with a further loan from the rice mill, the group purchased an additional mill for grinding chilli. They continued their acquisition spree by purchasing a flour mill.

The four members now take turns to work in the mill and receive a daily wage of Rs 500/- for their services. As the work load gets heavy during the Sinhala New Year period, they plan to buy a bigger mill soon so that they would have more capacity and speed to handle bulk orders.





Child Societies – growing together

Among the mischievous dancing eyes in the gathering are faces laced with seriousness and focus. The Malsith Child Society meets once a month; boys and girls from as little as six years to lively fifteen year olds. From the laughter and the cackling chaos, it's plain to see that the children have found in this gathering a platform to interact, share ideas and have fun in the process.

The Malsith Child Society was formed in 2003 when World Vision began its Area Development Programme in Sevanagala. Most of its members have received leadership training through World Vision. There are about 20 active members while more join in when special events are arranged. The Group organizes programmes every month which include camps, rallying the troops together to clean up a public area or to celebrate a local festival. They also get their parents to participate and pitch in.

The Society also has their very own library which was gifted to them by World Vision. They themselves contribute to expanding the collection of reading material by the donation of one book by each member on their birthday.

"There are all sorts of books in the library and we can borrow them once a week," says an enthusiastic member who added that the society helped them develop knowledge and through working together builds friendship and fellowship.

Today there are 24 child societies in Sevanagala moulding nearly 1000 children to be responsible leaders in their own communities.



New Hospital – a boon to children

The Sevanagala Divisional Hospital is a second home for little Sithumini (5). She spends a few days every month in the children's ward for nebulising. An attack of Malaria when she was small has resulted in this little girl suffering from frequent wheezing bouts for which her mother rushes her to the closest hospital. "This is very convenient. Otherwise I would have to take her to Embilipitiya (12 km away)" she says.

Situated in close proximity to several densely populated areas, the Hospital caters to over 60,000 people and is accessed by people from neighbouring divisions as well.

"But the hospital lacked many facilities to cater to the medical needs of the people," says Dr. Chaminda Withana, "It is only after World Vision began to work in this area that the hospital facilities improved."

There was no children's ward before and children had to share the same ward as the adults. In an innovative move, World Vision renovated an old disused storeroom and changed it into a colourful children's ward with ten beds.

"There was no place for outpatients to sit and I remember how mothers used to carry their children and stay under trees – avoiding the hot sun and occasional rain too - waiting for their turn. There was hardly space for the doctor too. He treated patients in a small room behind the main building," said Dr Withana.

All that has changed now: The hospital has a new building with a large waiting area for the patients, equipped with toilets and a more spacious room for the doctor.

"World Vision has also gifted the hospital with medical equipment and necessary furniture as well," says the doctor, "The nebuliser is very useful as many children suffer from wheezing in this area. Because of the generator we received we are able to treat them even if there's a power failure."

An intercom system installed in the hospital helps doctors to be informed when a patient needs urgent medical attention. "It makes our work a lot more efficient and easy. Otherwise staff have to come looking for us to give the message," he says.

The hospital has 30 staff including four doctors. "We have enough facilities now to cater to the patients," says Dr. Chaminda.

Among its many health initiatives in Sevanagala, World Vision has conducted mobile medical clinics for children, health awareness programmes and has assisted the Medical Office of Health with knowledge and equipment needed to serve the community more effectively.



Education for every child

The Bandaranayake School began as a junior school accommodating children from grade one through grade 11. All the children from the surrounding villages attended school until they had to drop out to help their parents in cultivating the fields or to look after their younger siblings at home.

While some dropped out because their parents couldn't afford books and other stationery needed for the school year, others because they felt they couldn't study. There were very few who completed the first eleven years and proceeded to a new school for higher studies.

"One of the biggest things World Vision did for our school is help increase the attendance of children," says Roshan, Deputy Principal of Bandaranayake School, "Every poor child received enough books and other stationery they needed for the school year from World Vision. It helped children stay in school and brought back to school many children who had dropped out. They even received school bags, shoes and uniforms."

All of the 15 schools within the Sevanagala programme area experienced significant increase in school attendance - but getting the children back to school alone was not enough - they needed extra support to ensure they received a good education.

In order to improve the over-all education level of the children in Sevanagala, World Vision initiated many programmes to strengthen pre-school, primary and secondary education.

Study assistance classes were provided for students sitting for important exams. In coordination with the Zonal Education Office special classes were also conducted in every school to help improve literacy and awareness programmes on the value of education. These workshops were conducted for teachers, students and parents.

Some schools received newly constructed buildings to create more space in classrooms, while others received new sports and aesthetic equipment to improve the talents of the students. The sanitary facilities in all the schools were also improved.

"The special classes for students who were slow in learning was very valuable and enabled students to catch up their lessons in the regular class," says Roshan.

Today the Bandaranayake School has classes up to the Advanced Level and has been selected by the government to receive new facilities that will enhance the education of children.

Weaving income from waste

Making innovative articles out of banana trunk waste has become a favourite past time for Chinthha (28) and Samantha (21). They make handbags, pouches, table mats and holders with this new skill that they have discovered.

"This area is full of banana cultivation and we are never short of material," smiles Chilnthha.

On a request by the Divulana Village Foundation, World Vision organised, a training programme on manufacturing banana trunk products for 20 female youth in the area.

"None of us were employed before the training and we were just staying at home," says Chilnthana, "But now we are occupied in something we enjoy doing and get an income too. For the initial preparation of fibre – peeling, cleaning and dying, we work in pairs and come together as a group in the community hall to weave the bags and mats and other different products."

"It is nice working together," says Samantha, "We get to chat but we also get to watch and learn from each other and try new techniques and designs ourselves."

With an aim to serve their village more effectively, the 12 small groups initiated by World Vision in Divulana came together and formed the Divulana Village Foundation. The Foundation has a loan programme and a rice mill that provides for a good income to carry out further development work in the village. They plan their activities on a monthly basis and also give direction to the Child Society in the village.

"Usually boys find work somewhere but the girls remain at home," says a leader from the Foundation, "we have further organised more training for them together with the Mahaweli Development Authority and they already had a 5-day workshop for them."

"Currently the girls sell the products in our nearby towns, but the Mahaweli Authority has promised to network them to bigger markets soon," she says.

The Banana trunk products are one of the best initiatives they've done for the unemployed female youth in their village.





New found prosperity through dairy farming

Kumaradasa has a way with animals; whenever an animal he rears beholds him, it cries out; his youngest daughter is firmly convinced that their milking cow Chooti even complains to him about them when he returns home from work.

Kumaradasa received Chooti from World Vision in 2005. During that period he was a daily laborer where earning a daily wage was a struggle. His wife had to work in the paddy fields to supplement the family income and help provide for their five children. In the latter years an ailment in his legs prevented him from manual work altogether.

Today, he is a veteran dairy farmer and owner of a herd of six cows and three bulls. He also looks after 27 other cattle for a cattle owner. He together with other villagers were beneficiaries of not only dairy cows but also training on animal husbandry provided by World Vision.

He is able to collect close to seven litres of milk daily, which he then takes to a milk collecting centre nearby.

His children have the privilege of drinking a fresh cup of pure cow's milk daily and sometimes his wife makes curd for the family.

"There were no dairy farmers in our village until World Vision's animal husbandry programme," says Kumaradasa, "World Vision networked us with the MILCO company and now we have a collecting centre in our village. They collect about 100 litres from us everyday."

MILCO also provides these dairy farmers with many other benefits that include the supply of school books for their children every year and even scholarships.

Along with the source of income granted to him by World Vision, Kumaradasa's family also benefits from the child sponsorship programme.

Through its animal husbandry project World Vision has created over 100 dairy farmers in Sevanagala. The first-born female calf of each cow given is donated to a similarly needy person so that the cycle of employment generation is guaranteed and continues amidst the poorer communities.



Teaching with a purpose

The Bhuddi Pre-school is abuzz with the giggles and chatter of children; asking questions, making colourful handcrafts and learning. It has been a centre of learning in Sevanagala for over 15 years.

Sagarika Dilrukshi, the headmistress, recalls how it was then and what it is now after World Vision gifted it with a new building, furniture and a playground.

“In the beginning, for many years, the school mostly served as a place for parents to leave their children and go to work. What the little ones learnt was only song and dance and other ad hoc work. World Vision gave us teacher training that standardized all aspects of what the school afforded. Now all activities and lessons taught are pre-planned for the year, week and day and done with a purpose,” says Sagarika.



“We are also trained in handling children with a lot of love even when they fight,” says Nanda, another pre-school teacher, “Every child who enters our pre-school leave it changed as a better child in both education and values.”

Proper nutrition too is addressed through a system where a parent takes up the responsibility of preparing nutritional meals for all the children on a certain day.

Nutritional programmes that create awareness about the types of food that is best for children have been conducted for parents and a health inspector meets with the children every month to check their height and weight.

The 24 preschools have also established a Preschool Teachers’ Association that is networked with the Divisional Secretariat in the area.

The beauty of skills training

Sunethra has slowed down her busy working schedule. With a baby on the way she sews mainly in preparation for the big day. "My business is my own. I have the freedom to work how I want to and when I want to; that's the best thing about it," she says happily.

Completing school, Sunethra didn't qualify for university and the young girl was at home when she had the opportunity to join a group of youth that received training on dress-making and beauty culture through a Vocational Training Diploma Programme conducted by World Vision.

Six years have passed, and she is now the proud owner of the only shop in her area to cater to dress-making and bridal dressing needs.

"We had a machine at home. I used to sew from the time I was 15 and have destroyed quite a few garments in the learning process," she admits sheepishly. "I used to keep cutting out pieces of paper and sew them till I got it right. The training from World Vision taught me how to properly take measurements and cut out the cloth and the end product finally came out well."

Sunethra does everything from bridal dressings, bouquets and school uniforms, to sewing for her own family. Although she started off by hiring out one bridal bouquet for her customers, she now has a colourful collection made by her own hand.

"The first time I did a bridal dressing, I did it with the assurance that the photos could be digitally altered if there was any fault in the outfit," she recalls laughing, "But it turned out just fine."

With her earnings she was able to buy a new machine. "Business is good and I get a lot of orders during Sinhala New Year," she says, "I am happiest when I dress someone with something that I have made and it looks good."

The area-specific vocational training programmes conducted by World Vision empower youth to start small businesses that not only give them an independent source of income but positively impacts the community they live in. Over 200 people have taken part in different fields of training and use the knowledge gained to provide their community with professional services that were not within reach before.





From slow learner to high achiever

Pramodya's (13) dream is to complete her school education and become a doctor someday. She is studying in the eighth grade and receives good marks for all her subjects and displays an exceptional talent in dancing.

But a few years ago, Pramodya was among the large number of school going children in her area who struggled to read and write. "She found it hard to write complete letters and a full sentence," says Anusha her mother, "She was very slow in learning."

The majority of the slow-learning students in Sevanagala were quick to drop out of school when they realised they couldn't keep up with school work.

Parents thought of it as a disability they inherited from birth and did not encourage them to return to school. It was considered a common disease in the area.

"These children are not slow from birth," says Podimenike, a teacher from the Mahanaga School in Sevanagala, "They develop this condition when they miss out on school. A lot of these children miss school during harvest times and to help parents with house work. When they return to school they are way behind other students."

World Vision realised that providing books and other material they couldn't afford was insufficient to help children stay in school.

Together with the Zonal Education Office, the World Vision Area Development Programme in Sevanagala commenced a special class in every school within the area to assist slow-learning students to improve their literacy level.

The class was given a special name – *Sevana Kekulu*, to keep students from being labelled as slow-learners and was held after school with the help of a few school teachers. The main objective of the class was to help students read and write and to improve in mathematics.

"Some students didn't even know how to hold a pencil when they first came for the class," says Podimenike, "Our work was planned from day-to-day depending on how much a child absorbed. Sometimes we had to do the same lesson for three days."

"We had about twenty students in the *Sevana Kekulu* class I was in," says Pramodya, "most of the students from my regular class were in it. I learnt to make proper sentences, write faster and with clarity." The impact of the class was well received as both parents and students began to take a keen interest in school work.

The class helped Pramodya and many students like her follow regular classes without trouble and get through to higher grades. It greatly improved the overall school attendance, reducing the drop-out from 20% to just 3%.

A place of safety

Kusumawathi's (45) fervent hope and dream was to provide a good education to her daughter.

Since her husband abandoned them, she worked as a daily-paid labourer at a concrete making company to feed the girl and to buy the books she needed for school. But there were many days they stayed hungry because she couldn't get regular work.

"We lived in a small one-room mud hut that had partially collapsed," says Kusumawathi, "and being alone I used to fear for my daughter's safety. During the rainy season the water would come in and spoil all her school books and she would cry for hours. We went to sleep at my brother's place every night because the house was not safe for both of us."

"I would try to finish the school work in the evening and carry the rest of the school work to my uncle's and study under the kerosene lamp," says Ishani.

Kusumawathi did not want to compromise on her daughter's education to rebuild the collapsed mud walls of her house.

"If I tried to build a house I wouldn't be able to support my daughter so I thought we would manage to stay there until she finishes school," she says.

"After World Vision came to our village, they commenced a shelter project for the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable families. They didn't just give away houses, we had the chance to participate in building it. Friends, family, all helped us offering their labour," Kusumawathi says tears filling her eyes.

"Ishani had a safe place to study and we had a safe place to live in. I could have never built a house on my own even to this day," she says.

A sanitary toilet was constructed and clean drinking water provided in the premises of their new home. The house now has electricity too and Ishani has just completed school qualifying for university in the Arts stream.

Through its shelter project, World Vision has provided many families in Sevanagala with safe housing.





Child Leader – a voice for change

Thilini (18) loves to talk, especially in front of a big audience. Her gift has brought many leadership roles her way which in turn have helped her create a chain of positive impacts; in her school and in her community.

This young leader who wants to be a lawyer when she grows up was one of the many sponsored children from less privileged families in Sevanagala.

“They say that stage fright is one of the biggest fears that most people have but I don’t have even a bit of it and I have World Vision to thank for that,” she chats enthusiastically.

Thilini has three siblings, “We all received everything we needed for school from World Vision; from shoes to books to school uniforms. I was very small when our pictures were taken for sponsorship and I remember being excited to have mine taken,” recalls Thilini.

From being president of the Children’s Society in her area, she ventured on to being a member of her school’s student parliament, moving onto even district and regional levels. She was selected as one of the best student Parliamentarians in her Province.

During her time she took leadership in initiating a number of programmes. “One was for all students to be given a glass of nutritious green porridge everyday. I also made sure that our canteen sold only nutritious food and no sweets; which actually made me a little unpopular at school,” she announced laughing.

The young go-getter even introduced a system of channeling water that runs wasted from taps into the school vegetable garden. The yield was sold at a school fair and the money earned spent on repairing desks and chairs in the classes of her grade.

“There were many other children from my school who had sponsors helping them with many of their needs, especially education related. My sponsor’s name is Mary and although we have not written to each other often, I’m grateful to her for helping us through our difficult times,” says a smiling Thilini.

This is just one story of a flower blossoming in rural sun-scorched Sevanagala under the help and guidance given by child-oriented programmes conducted by World Vision. In rural parts, hidden talents of many gifted children like Thilini, remain hidden, if not for the assistance and opportunities granted.



To fetch a pail of water

Tharushi (5) has never walked 3 kms to fetch water and hopefully she will never have to. But a few years ago, for the families in her community, everyday was about toiling to find water. And there was very little of it.

“We bathed just once a week. We grew crops if it rained. You could dig a well and find only sand,” says Renuka, Tharushi’s mother.

With eight months of dry spell and hardly enough rainfall from the North East monsoons, Sevanagala suffered for generations from the scarcity of water. From the time they could walk children fetched water. In little pots at first and the vessels grew bigger with them.

“From the time I can remember I walked with my family to fetch water. Some cycled to the lake to fetch water, others walked but we all made several rounds in the morning and in the evening,” recalls Renuka (34) Tharushi’s mother,

After she got married and through her pregnancies Renuka’s husband took her by bicycle to the lake in the morning before he went for work. She would finish the laundry and walk back home in the afternoon. “People spent so much time for water there was very little time for any other work,” she says.

World Vision’s Nugegalayaya Water Project not only brought Renuka and her community water to their doorstep but also brought clean water.

“We don’t have to think about where or how we will find water anymore,” smiles Renuka, “It saves a lot of time. Our husbands can get to work on time, don’t have to rush to the lake to fetch water after a tired day, children have more time to study and play. Now we can bathe whenever we want, even in the night. My little ones bathe everyday.”

The Project is managed by the community itself and carries water to nearly 800 families in an area of 50 kms at a charge of ten rupees per usage of 1,000 litres. Though estimated at 27 million rupees the project saved nine million rupees thanks to the participation of the community. The money was used to complete another water project for a different community that struggled for water within the programme area.

The Sevanagala Area Development Programme has built five water projects and two water purification systems that gives access to clean water for nearly 2300 families at their homes.

Because you cared

Asela (8) sits with his little sister Rashmi (7) with an open book on his lap and reads. It's a part of Asela's daily activities to help his little sister in her studies and homework. This is one of the favourite moments of their mother whose only dream is to educate her four children. "One of my biggest fears was that I might not be able to give my children a proper education," she says.

To parents in Sevanagala, educating their children was just an added burden to their struggle to feed, clothe and give them shelter. "Our annual income from the crops barely covered our basic necessities and new seeds for the next cultivation season," she says.

Asela's mother knew education was a necessity if she wanted her children to have a better life when they grew up.

"I was already struggling so hard to provide for my two elder daughters to get through school. As they graduated into senior classes the cost of their education grew and I had to find additional work or skip meals to save enough money for them. I didn't know how I would manage when Asela and his little sister also starts schooling."

It was during this struggle that World Vision met Asela's family and offered to assist him and his three sisters through the Sponsorship Programme.

"I can't express in words how much it means to us to have such support," the mother says, "I no longer worry about how I can afford their school stationery. Asela and his little sister were even lucky to receive a preschool education because of World Vision."

The family has also received drinking water at home and fruit plants through the home-gardening project as a part of economic recovery.

"We have benefited a great deal through the sponsorship programme. There is an annual health check up for children and this house we have just completed was built with the support of Asela's sponsor," says the mother.

Asela is not much of a talker and he best says 'thank you' to his sponsor through his pictures. "Last time I pasted a rabbit with cotton. This time I will draw something new," he smiles.





Key Statistics

Description	Then (1997)	Now (2012)
Education:		
- School Enrolment - Primary	96.0 %	98 %
- Overall School Drop Out Rate	3.0 %	1.0 %
- Students passing GCE O'Level	5 - 10 %	37.1%
- Preschool Enrolment	72.0 %	98.0 %
- Number of Child Societies	-	33
- Children involved in Child Societies	-	425
Health & Nutrition:		
- Continued breastfeeding among 6-24 months old children	22.0 %	99.0 %
- Access to safe drinking water	25.0 %	88.0 %
- Households with water sealed toilets	36.5 %	82.4 %
- Nutrition - Underweight (0-59 months children)	51.0 %	23.6 %
- Nutrition - Stunted (0-59 months children)	22.0 %	12.8 %
- Nutrition - Wasted (0-59 months children)	32.0 %	22.3 %
- Percentage of Children immunised	93.0 %	100.0 %
- Avg time spent by nursing mothers to visit the nearest health facility	1 hour	30 minutes
Economic Development:		
- HH monthly income above Rs 3,000	28.2 %	70.0 %
- HH monthly income above Rs 10,000	22.9 %	25.0 %



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