



Courage and hope – Powerpoints for Midula

Midula (16) sits in her wheelchair in front of her computer, keenly observing the work of her little student who is creating some colourful slides. Midula then prompts her student to click on the correct menu.

Eight years ago, life was completely different for Midula, who lives in the remote village of Naruvilikulam in Mannar in Northern Sri Lanka. Born with a curved spinal cord, she was not able to sit up or raise her head. However, Midula's mother was determined to give her daughter as normal a life as possible, despite their hardships. "My elder daughters and I taught Midula to read and write while she was lying down because she could not attend school," said Midula's mother.

The advent of World Vision into the area changed her life forever. Midula was sponsored by World Vision. However, when her parents were advised that surgery to straighten and strengthen her spinal cord could improve her condition, they knew the cost was far more than they could bear.

"It was at this time that World Vision came to our aid and offered to bear the entire cost of the surgery." The critical surgery was performed when Midula was 8. Slowly, she was able to sit up in a chair and for the first time could keep her

head raised. Now, she can even stand up and walk a few steps with help.

When the Mannar ADP set up a Child Society, Midula then 13 years old, was quick to join with her friends. The difficulties of travelling however, meant that Midula stopped participating, although she badly wanted to continue.

Her lively presence was sorely missed at the meetings. To the dynamic young members of the Child Society, the answer was simple. If Midula could not come to attend the meetings - they would take the meetings to Midula! Since then, all meetings have been held at her home.

When World Vision organized a computer class nearby, Midula also participated, showing a liking for PowerPoint, Excel and Word. The computer was gifted to her and Midula now gives lessons. "I give lessons to adults in the morning and to children in the evening," she explains. She charges a nominal fee of 10 rupees per lesson. "Sometimes, I use the money from my classes to pay the electricity bill," says Midula, smiling proudly.

She is now the President of the Child Society. "We have planned many activities this year" says a visibly excited Midula.

EDITORIAL

Creating a space for special children

The poignant story of Midula's amazing talents and determination is a worthwhile reminder to all of us of the need to have a special focus on those with special needs. As we now begin to discuss post 2015 development goals it would be good to keep children like Midula in mind that all barriers to inclusion are removed so that those with special needs will enjoy their rights in full measure.

Our story of Ae Ri Chung, the ambassador of love demonstrates the depth of affection she has for her sponsored children – all 261 of them spread around the world – her passion is an inspiration for all those who work with children.

Alcoholism remains a concern in the country – especially in the plantation sector where consumption rates are alarmingly high – as is the incidence of alcohol related violence and abuse. As recorded in this edition, our advocacy efforts in combating alcoholism has had encouraging success in Nuwara Eliya one of the most impoverished districts in the hill country.

Our corporate partnerships continue to flourish and this time we feature the collaborative efforts of two leading banks – HSBC and Standard Chartered – in Kalpitiya and Neluwa.

Access to clean water and sanitary toilet facilities are things we often take for granted but until World Vision began its RIWASH programme most communities in the hill capital lacked these basic facilities as Yogeshwari recounts her move from a city life of luxury to the estate where her husband worked.

The Editorial Team

Dion Schoorman
Hasanthi Jayamaha
Jayaweera Kohombange
Nadeesha Rajakaruna
Neomal Weerakoon
Niroshini Fernando
Yoga Perera

comments: editor_kathika@wvi.org

“We don’t just give, we invest”

World Vision Brand Campaign for wellbeing of children



Marketing and communications teams of World Vision Australia recently visited World Vision Lanka to gather resources for their novel and innovative brand campaign with a new message to their public - “We don’t just give, we invest”.

“It’s the essence of the campaign, and a message that we need the Australian Public to hear. It encapsulates the fundamental difference that is World Vision – there is more to us than they think,” says Carol Lee the leader of the campaign team.

“We don’t just give a hand out, but we invest. We invest in the communities that we partner with - with the expectation that we will break the cycle of poverty,” she says, “We invest our time, resources, energy and expertise to prevent poverty, at its source. We’re investing for long term sustainability - enabling children, people and communities to stand on their own and investing for future generations to come. We also invest locally with our advocacy work. It’s about our holistic approach to development.”

The team visited families who are supported by the REMIND (Reconciliation through Mental health In Northern Districts) Project in Kilinochchi and the beneficiary communities of the Rural Integrated Water and Sanitation Hygiene (RIWASH) Project in Nuwara Eliya gathering their stories of transformation.

The campaign’s goal is to achieve the wellbeing of 20 million children by 2021 engaging 1 million supporters.



Help us to keep them smiling...

At World Vision we are passionate about the well being of children and ensuring them life in all its fullness.

If you are interested in learning more about our work or would like to join us in partnership in any of our programmes please email,

dion_schoorman@wvi.org

Ae-Ri Chung: An ambassador of love



For little Shanthini (6) she became a hopscotch mate who would play with her even in the hot sun; for Amuthan (10) who had lost his fingers in an UXO (unexploded ordnance) explosion, she gave encouragement to study hard and go for his dreams; For Vijitha she was a friend who held her as she cried over the pain of losing three daughters in the war; for Pushparani she gave her listening ear as she shared about the struggles after resettlement.

Ae-Ri Chung, a much loved actress of Korea became an ambassador of love to the resettled families in Mullaitivu, North Sri Lanka as she took time to meet them during her recent visit with World Vision Korea. Though the visit was squeezed in between her busy shooting schedule, Ae-Ri took time to talk to children and families and listen to their struggles. She met with children who were injured in UXO explosions and families who had lost loved ones during the war.

“I felt so loved and cared for,” says Pushparani, “And she travelled all that distance across the seas to listen to us and to spend time with us.” Ae-Ri shared her tears as she talked about her struggles in making a life without her husband for her, her five-year-old daughter and another baby on the way.

Ae-Ri also visited a World Vision initiated mental health drawing therapy programme for children who were affected by the war and a preschool feeding programme for children under five.

“World Vision is like a big mommy,” says the actress who has been working closely with World Vision since 2004.

“I like World Vision because it has long years of experience in transformational development and works in the most rural areas, partnering with the poorest of the poor so that they participate in the development and become empowered,” says Ae-Ri, “I feel I’m more a World Vision staff than an actress now.”

Ae-Ri is now popular more for her compassionate work and has inspired many in her field to support in caring for the vulnerable and the poorest of the poor around the world. Every year she visits poor communities in countries where World Vision serves, advocating for their needs. World Vision’s goodwill ambassador is also a sponsor mother to 261 children spread across in 70 countries.



“I pray for each one of them everyday,” she says, “Some of them don’t have the basic needs of food and water. While I hope that these needs are met, my bigger vision for them is that they would grow in character so that they would become ambassadors of positive change in their communities and in the society at large so that they would carry on the transformation we’ve begun.”

“I hope to bring them all together into one place for my 60th birthday,” says the 53-year-old actress, “I want to help them understand that under the care of one sponsor mother, they are all brothers and sisters though they live in different countries.”

Advocacy delivers community from addiction



Alcoholism was the biggest issue for the estate community in Lipakelle Division in Nuwara Eliya. With no other source of entertainment, people found comfort in drinking after work. By night its effects manifested in domestic violence and abuse.

“Mostly it was men who were addicted,” says Sagaya Mary, a community member, “We women didn’t drink because we had no time to drink. We are on a constant work routine from morning to evening. Cooking cleaning, plucking tea and returning home in the evening to cook and clean again.”

“The age for consumption of alcohol had become dangerously young,” says Ansar another community member, “By the age of 15-16, children became addicted to alcohol. It is mainly because from a very young age they are exposed to their fathers’ drinking habits and are often used in getting a soda or a bite for the drink. For the children it had become too common.”

“Children had even begun to save up money their mothers give to buy groceries to purchase alcohol by lessening the quantities of the items,” he says.

“When World Vision formed the CBO (Community Based Organisation) here and we received training in leadership and learnt how we can participate in building

our community, our first thoughts were that we need to unite to fight against alcoholism,” says Sri Kanth a community leader.

The group of community leaders and members brought the issue to the notice of their estate management and requested an awareness programme on alcoholism for the community.

“The Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC) did awareness programmes for our community,” says Rama Krishnan a community leader, “The management also put a rule that anyone who sells alcohol in the community would lose their job in the estate.”

“Because hardly any men traveled out of the community to buy alcohol, stopping the selling of alcohol within the community helped a lot in reducing the number of people consuming alcohol. Yet we encountered a lot of opposition both from those who sold and those who consumed. Sellers sometimes even gave alcohol free to keep their customers,” he says.

The CBO has placed two members in each barrack (15 line rooms) to be on alert on alcohol and domestic violence. “Our biggest supporters in this effort were women and children,” says Sri Kanth, “children and youth groups did awareness programmes through street drama. It took about a year to get everyone out of this issue and we still continue to monitor so that it would not return in the future.”

Seeing the success of their effort three more CBOs in the surrounding communities began similar initiatives. Their communities are also alcohol-free now.

“Our plan is to continue to see an all-time alcohol-free community,” says Sri Kanth, “Now we are working on eradicating smoking.”



As part of the Bar Reef conservation project between HSBC and World Vision Lanka (WVL), a beach cleaning campaign was held at Kandakudawa, Kalpitiya. Over 250 persons comprising of school children, teachers and the staff of HSBC and WVL participated, removing about 3 tons of garbage from the beach. Simultaneously, a poster competition was conducted amongst 60 children from 8 schools in the Kalpitiya district. The best drawings will be displayed on billboards in the Kalpitiya area to raise awareness on coastal conservation.



Staff of Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) participated in a volunteer day at Warukandeniya Primary School in Neluwa. SCB has joined World Vision Lanka in a partnership to improve the lives of children in Neluwa.

As part of this initiative, SCB staff cleaned and repaired the school. The students too received school bags, shoes and stationery. An eye clinic was also held at the premises for the children and their parents.



Over 1200 children from Wennappuwa had the opportunity to celebrate their birthdays with an entire day of fun and entertainment organized by WVL. The programme, which included all children, featured performances by the Child Society members and renowned stage artists. The events of the day centered around three child wellbeing aspirations (CWBA) which were health, education and protection. In line with these aspirations, art and essay competitions were organized for the children in collaboration with the Zonal Department of Education. There were also educational display stalls and street dramas promoting the CWBAs and the development of life skills. A magic show kept the participants thoroughly entertained and it was a day filled with the joyful laughter of little children who had a day dedicated for them.

RIWASH: From despair to hope

Yogeshwary (33) weaves her way amongst the tea bushes, her fingers gentle but quick as she picks the tea leaves. It is hard to imagine that this petite woman can carry a heavy basket of tea all day and still have the energy to tend to her five young children.

She wasn't always a tea plucker. As a young girl, Yogeshwary lived in Matale. Marriage to Ramu Sivakumar brought her to Nuwara Eliya in the central province of Sri Lanka. The lush green tea mountains were like a scene from a picture postcard and Yogeshwary felt that her new life would be good.

As she settled into married life on the plantation where her husband lived, Yogeshwary soon realized that the beauty of the surrounding area hid the hardships of the estate workers. "Families were packed into rows of tiny houses," explains Yogeshwary. "The houses did not have their own toilets or water."

Unit toilets were built far from their homes and the women would not venture there at night. "There was no electricity and I was always scared to walk to the toilets in the pitch dark," says Yogeshwary. "It was very cold, yet we women had to bathe in the night because the bathing area was open," she continues.

Thinking of her former home in Matale, Yogeshwary felt that she had now descended into hell. "I lived a luxurious life before marriage because my home had clean water and a toilet," she explains. "The toilets we had to use here were filthy. There was no clean drinking water and we all walked for about fifteen minutes to collect water from one place. Most of the time the water was muddy."

When the Rural Integrated Water Sanitation and Hygiene (RIWASH) project commenced four years ago, Yogeshwary and others in her community were filled with hope. Clean water and sanitation facilities were provided for each house. "We don't have to worry about walking in the dark anymore," says Yogeshwary beaming. "I have a toilet for my home now, and clean drinking water."



The RIWASH project also provided a drainage and sewage system. "Our children used to play in the dirty water flowing from the blocked drains. I would visit the doctor all the time as one or other of my five children was always ill," recollected Yogeshwary, her eyes welling with tears.

The communities were given awareness on correct hygiene practices and also responsibility for keeping their sanitation facilities and surroundings clean. Each household pays for the amount of water consumed and the money is given to the community based organization (CBO) which was set up to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Yogeshwary was appointed the current treasurer of the CBO to which she belongs. "I learnt a lot through this role. Before, we didn't know how to get things done. The RIWASH project provided us with knowledge of the Government agencies. Now we can get our issues addressed on our own," she explains.

Yogeshwary now has a slightly better view of the place in which she lives. "It's not so bad anymore," she says, laughing. On a serious note she continues. "The greatest thing is that we all got clean water and a toilet. I feel better about myself and my family."

Holding on to a dream



Indika (21) had just one goal – to enter medical college and fulfill his dream of becoming a doctor. So he studied throughout the night by lamplight, the strain on his eyes a minor inconvenience as far as Indika was concerned.

Sometimes though, his mind would wander. He would think about his mother and father, how hard they worked to educate him and his two younger brothers. “I wanted to make something of myself, not just for me, but mostly for my parents,” explains Indika. His parents, both daily labourers working in the fields of Thanamalvila, struggled to make sure their three sons all went to school regularly. “They had so many difficulties but they always encouraged us to study,” says Indika, softly. “Our parents told us that education was the key to a better life.”

Still, it was far easier to dream. Having to walk more than a kilometer and a half to school and back, the lack of electricity and the financial hardships, sometimes made Indika despair that he might never attain his goal.

At the age of ten, Indika was supported by World Vision and suddenly the future began to look bright again. “It was a huge relief for my parents, especially since at the time, my mother had taken ill and was unable to work,” says Indika. “My educational needs were taken care of and all I had to do was study hard,” he continues. Indika’s two younger brothers too were supported by World Vision.

Indika studied Science and fared very well at the Ordinary Level examination. He enjoyed his studies and was a diligent student and it was with every confidence that he faced the Advanced Level examination – the final test for selection to University. “I didn’t obtain enough marks to enter University,” says Indika, disappointment clouding his face at the memory. “But I wasn’t ready to give up so I studied and repeated the examination the following year.”

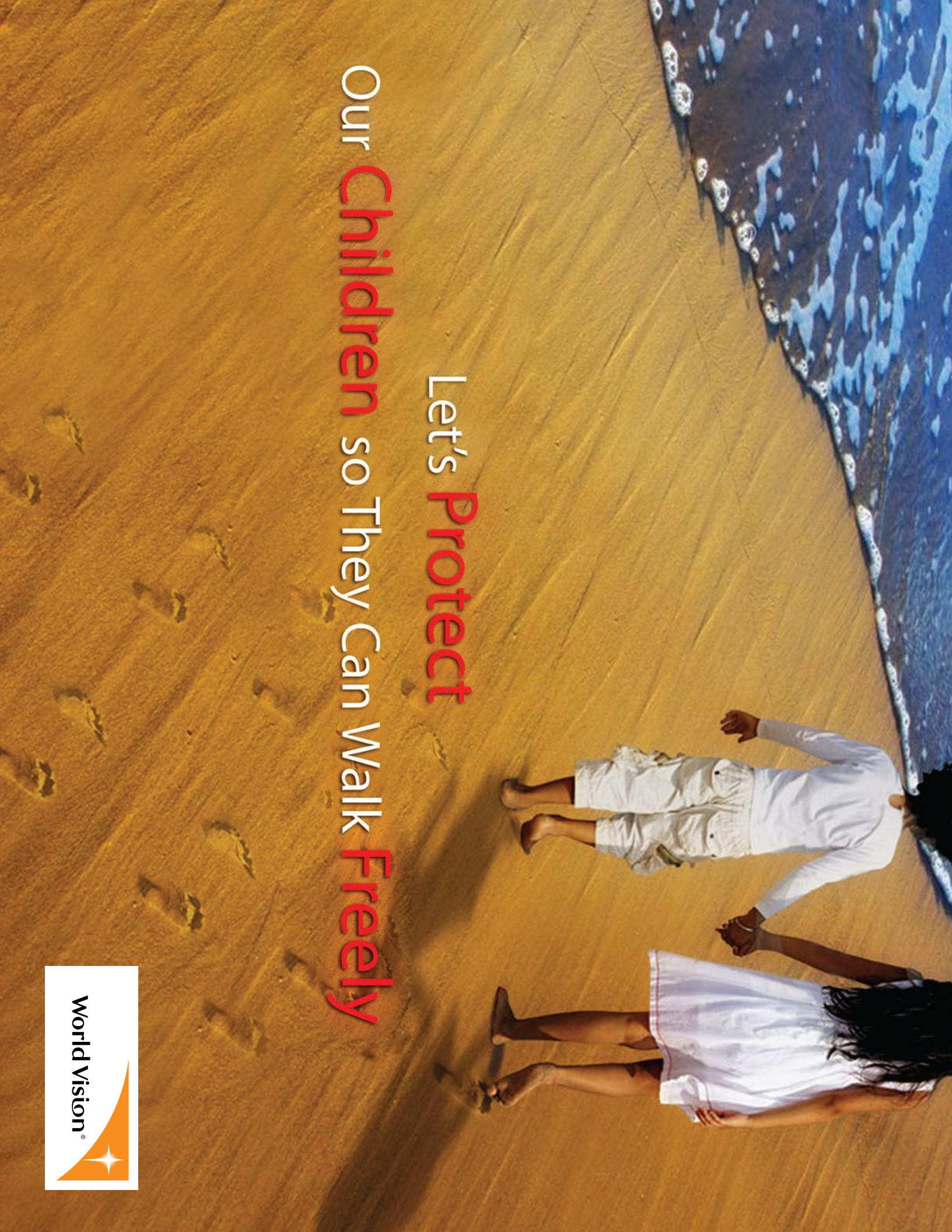
His determination paid off, and when the results were released, Indika found that he had obtained enough marks to study medicine at the University. “I have never been so happy or excited,” says a smiling Indika. “I still don’t know to which university I will be selected, but I am ready to face the challenges of hard work for the next few years.”

Indika’s mother is happy and proud about her son’s achievement, but she also feels relieved. “When I think of how hard it was to educate our children, I feel really sad about the difficulties we all went through,” says Sriyalatha, 42. “but because of the support my sons received for their studies, they can take themselves out of this circumstance and have a better life than we did,” she continues, tears welling in her eyes.



Her younger sons too are of the same tenacious spirit. One is facing the Advanced Level examination this year in the mathematics stream and the youngest wants to pursue a career in IT.

Indika’s dreams are big, but he can never forget his roots. “I think it’s important that qualified people serve their birthplace at some point in their lives.” The determination shows on his face. “When I become a Doctor, I want to come back to my village and work. I want to help my community.”



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