



Unveiling of the plaque to commemorate the event

Pure drinking water – a gift for communities of Elgin

The Elgin community water supply scheme of the Rural Integrated Water supply, Sanitation & Hygiene (RIWASH-2) project funded by AusAid was recently declared open by Hon. Robyn Mudie – Her Excellency the High Commissioner of Australia to Sri Lanka.

“Improving public health is one of the ten development goals of AusAid. We recognize the importance of water for the estate community, especially to the women and hope this project will make their lives a little easier. I am also delighted to see so many children gathered here today as the children are the most beneficial of this project,” said the High Commissioner.

“World Vision is all about the children of Sri Lanka and it is a privilege to work with the people of this community. The CEO of Watawala Plantations and its management have been extremely supportive and they have been equal partners in this project. Thank you to Aus Aid and the people of Australia who have generously given towards this cause to enrich the lives of the people of Elgin estate,” said Suresh Bartlett, World Vision

Lanka’s National Director in gratitude to all those who were involved in the success of the project.

The certificate signifying the handing over of the project to the community was presented by Hon. Robyn Mudie to Dr. Dan Seevaratnam – CEO of the Watawala Plantations and the latter in a very spontaneous and heart-warming gesture brought along with him some children from the community to accept the certificate – acknowledging that children truly are the deserving beneficiaries.

“I was always reluctant to work with any NGO because all of them want high visibility and look for projects by the roadside with easy access – I wanted people willing to work in the backwoods of our estates with isolated poor communities. I came to realize that World Vision is one such organization. They engage in programmes from grass root level and apply a bottom up approach. Indeed World Vision has been a partner in progress in the success of Watawala Plantation Company,” said Dr. Seevaratnam.

EDITORIAL

Keeping children at the centre of our work

Children are always at the heart of our work and this fact was poignantly illustrated when a group of children were brought together to accept the official handing over of a community project.

The Elgin Estate water project will ensure that the children and their communities will have a supply of safe drinking water at their doorsteps and reduce their susceptibility to water borne disease.

Featured in this edition is an unique exchange programme for children from the North and the South of Sri Lanka to understand each other and begin the first phase in helping to reconcile communities that have lived for decades in mistrust of each other.

The story of Pavithran and his family who have resettled in Kilinochchi and are steadily rebuilding their lives with support from World Vision is one of many success stories that we have witnessed in the former conflict affected areas.

Following the recent increase of incidents of child abuse in the country it is heartening to note the very positive actions taken by the State authorities. The setting up of special Care centers in Bogawanthalawa is a step in the right direction and it is hoped that more such centers will be established around the country.

World Vision hopes to launch a national campaign next month against child abuse and the need for improved protection of children and safeguarding their rights.

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WVL marks Global Week of Action with specially branded bus



In most countries many organizations use vehicle bumper or windscreen stickers to display their messaging to the public. WV Lanka chose to break that trend and do things slightly differently – they painted the whole bus!

In an innovative move, WVL used bus branding as a tool to raise awareness among the wider public. A bus used for public transport was specially painted with the Global Week of Action (GWA) theme “Count me in – I want children to survive 5” and is running in the city attracting wide publicity. It is planned to paint around 100 buses which will run in all districts in the country.

WVL used the GWA week to launch a special national advocacy campaign in association with the Ministry of Health on the theme ‘**Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby**’ which aims to address ‘Low Birth Weight’ rates which is a serious concern in Sri Lanka.

The programme which will run for a year will focus on educating pregnant women on the need for proper nutrition during their pregnancy to ensure their babies have the optimum nutrients to grow within the womb.

The programme was launched in Nuwara Eliya which is one of the most impoverished districts in the plantation sectors of the country.



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,

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Exchange programme brings unique healing experience for children



The members of World Vision's Child Society in Giribawa were looking forward to their December holiday. They were making a trip to Mannar, a place they had never visited and yet amidst the excitement there was an unspoken nervousness. What the predominantly Sinhala people of Giribawa knew about the community in Mannar was not much, except that they were on the 'other side' during the conflict.

In Mannar, the feeling was one of trepidation. The children and their families were about to host total strangers from Giribawa for three days. It seemed like a long time to be spending with people about whom there were so many negative perceptions. Then there was the issue of language. How will the Tamil speaking hosts communicate with the Sinhala speaking visitors?

In mid-December, 41 children from the Child Society in Giribawa stepped off the bus at Vanchiyakulam in Mannar. Waiting for them with welcoming smiles and handmade garlands were the host children and their families. That first greeting, those first steps taken towards each other, was a simple act of trust between children that could pave the way for reconciliation in a country devastated by three decades of conflict.

Although language was expected to be a barrier to the success of this exchange programme, it never became so. Nilashan who hosted Amila from Giribawa said, "My family and I spoke to Amila using lots of body language and facial expressions.

Speaking in broken Tamil and Sinhala and trying to mime was so much fun and we all had so many unforgettable, hilarious moments. Still, we were able to understand each other and these three days were like a grand celebration not only in my house, but also in my entire village."

On the last day, the children had the opportunity to get together around a campfire, where they entertained each other with song and dance, and enjoyed a time of simple friendship, fun and joy.

Before departing for Giribawa and leaving his new friend Nilashan, Amila reflected, "I always saw Tamil people as bad people, as enemies and terrorists. But after this visit, I know that I was wrong and they are good people." For Nilashan too, the program has been a revelation. "I never thought that Sinhala people can show us love. I thought that they were bad people with envy in their hearts, always discriminating against Tamil people. I too was wrong and had pre-judged them without knowing them." Three days may seem too short a time for three decades of fear and mistrust to be healed. Yet, this is indeed what took place during this programme. The transformation will continue in April when it is the turn of the children from Mannar to visit Giribawa.



A simple step forward in trust, village by village is what World Vision hopes to facilitate with its Peace-building programme. Beginning with the children who are the future for a new era in Sri Lanka, World Vision has every hope that true reconciliation and transformation is indeed possible.

Social Care Center provides essential service for Bogawantalawa

World Vision's Bogawantalawa ADP and the Divisional Secretariat, Ambagamuwa recently launched a Divisional Social Care Service Center in Campion Estate, Bogawantalawa.



Ambagamuwa is one of the largest AGA Divisions in Sri Lanka with an estimated population of 260,000 within 67 Grama Niladari Divisions. From Bogawantalawa, it takes about two and a half hours to travel to the AGA office which is located at Ginigathena. The difficulties of travelling and lack of staff means that the Government officer's visits are rare and the community therefore has limited opportunities to get their issues addressed.

The Social Care Service Center therefore provides a much needed service for the area. It functions in Bogawantalawa every Thursday. The Government Agent (GA) will visit the center once a month and every fortnight the Assistant GA will be present to sign documents. Around 35,000 people from five GN divisions will benefit from this center.

The center is located on Campion Estate and the estate management has provided its fullest support for the establishment of the center. Since about forty percent of children in this area do not possess birth certificates, the ADP hopes to address this issue through the center.

According to information from the Central Provincial Social Service and Child Probation Ministry and the AGA office, the Nuwara Eliya District has the highest number of cases of child abuse within the Norwood / Bogawantalawa area reporting the most number of incidents. Therefore, with the AGA there will also be present officers from the Child Probation, Social Services, Women's Affairs, and a child and women's care officer of the Bogawantalawa Police to address such cases of abuse.

There will be a Registrar for issues concerning Birth Certificates and the Grama Niladari's of five GN's will be present at the field office at Campion Estate Preschool.



The World Vision Bogawantalawa ADP has initiated several programmes to address child abuse together with the AGA office and local police. The ADP has also facilitated the provision of Identity Cards for senior citizens.

Medical cards have been obtained along with medical assistance for five disabled persons. Forty dropouts have also been sent back to school through the interventions of the ADP.

Samsung joins World Vision to enhance IT knowledge in Bibile



An Information Communication Technology Centre built with the support of Samsung Korea was handed over to World Vision Lanka recently.

Located within the Bibile Area Development Programme, the project is an initiative of World Vision Korea together with World Vision Lanka. The Center comprising of 30 computers with the latest technology and an e-library with modern facilities, serves to enhance the IT skills of the children in the Bibile DS division.

A team of 10 officials from Samsung Korea led by Kim Yung Bom, the Representative from World Vision Korea were present for the handing-over ceremony. The CEO of Samsung Sri Lanka, Hyunki Chang also attended the event. Built at a cost of Rupees 16 million, the center is an initiative of the Samsung Korea CSR project titled "Hope for Children".

Samsung Sri Lanka also donated some valuable IT equipment and books. In a show of solidarity with their Sri Lankan counterparts, the Samsung team engaged in volunteer work at the Center, helping children with computer lessons.

The main objective in establishing this ICT Centre is to train 8000 children in IT skills within 12 years. The IT courses will be conducted by the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) and students will be able to obtain an internationally recognized certificate on completion of the course.



The courses will be available at a discount and World Vision will also be providing Scholarships for the children. With the support of World Vision Korea the Bibile Area Development Programme plans to upgrade this ICT Centre to a fully functional Vocational Training Institute in order to enable qualified youth to enter the job market.

When hope blooms again...



It is school holidays for Pavithran (7) but the little boy cannot be separated from his school books. Every morning he spends time studying and learning with a teacher – a university student – who helps him revise lessons and be prepared for the new school year.

Watching him study is a dream come true for Subhashini (25) his mother. Nothing makes her happier than to see him with his books. “My favourite subject is math,” Pavithran smiles shyly as he turns page after page covered with sums he has completed.

Growing up at the heart of war, education was not a choice for children in Kilinochchi; survival was. As the war became intense education slipped further away from them into a blurry dream. “Schooling was interrupted all the time,” says Subhashini who was in school at that time, “We all had a thirst to study and just like other children we had dreams. I wanted to become a Math teacher.”

Even with roofs damaged by shelling and bullet-holes in the walls children went to school whenever possible until the schools were too damaged to function or had to house displaced families. But there was also another reason why children in Kilinochchi stopped schooling.

They had to get married to avoid recruitment into the armed group. Subhashini (then 16) made the same choice. Subhashini could never imagine Pavithran or any child in her village would ever know education for she didn't know if anyone would survive the brutal war. But her family survived and many others did too. Though they were broken and traumatized, they returned ‘home’ to rebuild their lives right from the beginning.

World Vision together with other organizations and the government supported their return and assisted them through the resettlement and rehabilitation, catering to their immediate needs.

“World Vision provided us with goats to support livelihood recovery and I trust I will be able to get a stable income from it,” she said.

Today, the young mother of two is hopeful once again. “My only dream is to see my children have a good education and be able to achieve their dreams. Education is becoming expensive for us and it will become more difficult to afford when my two-year old also starts with preschool. I am hopeful World Vision would support my children's education,” she beams.

“I feel very proud and happy when I go through my son's school books,” smiles Subhashini, “I can see that he excels in Math. That was my favourite subject too.”

Helping children return to school was a priority for World Vision and immediate action was taken to renovate and rebuild their damaged school buildings providing them a safe place to study once again.

While World Vision's work in Kilinochchi is moving from relief mode to an Area Rehabilitation Programme, there will be a lot more work to help children continue schooling and catch up on the studies they missed.

Hopefully Pavithran and his brother or any child in Kilinochchi will never have a reason to give up schooling.

Media team from Taiwan gets first-hand experience of WVL projects



World Vision Taiwan together with two media partners from broadcasting companies in Taiwan recently concluded a visit to WVL projects. The purpose of the visit was to capture several impact stories from the ADPs to be broadcast on CTV (Chinese TeleVision) as well as to gather child greeting videos for WV Taiwan's sponsorship campaign.

The team, first visited the St. Nicholas School in the Negombo ADP. Here, they had the opportunity to meet with the school principal and find out about how World Vision assistance has helped to provide quality education to the students.

“World Vision followed a systematic approach in uplifting education in this area,” says Piyal Perera the Principal of St. Nicholas’ School, “The first step was to bring each and every child back to school, providing them with everything they needed for schooling including uniforms, socks and shoes and school supplies. Children became eager to come to school.”

“The next step was keeping them in school. For this, the organisation supported the schools with the necessary physical resources such as school buildings, libraries and furniture,” he added.

The day ended with a visit to Akila – a 23 year old boy who is being assisted through the WV special therapy programme.

Akila impressed the visitors with his determination to succeed in his ekel broom production business.

In Negombo, the team also visited the mangrove project. Mangroves have proved to be one of the most effective safeguards in the event of storm winds, cyclones and tsunamis. The plants' interlocking roots stop river-borne sediments from coursing out to sea, and their trunks and branches serve as a palisade that diminishes the erosive power of waves.

The project is a success as the mangroves have now grown and spread to a wide area of the lake and is well maintained by the fresh water fishing community of the area.



Of further interest was the solid waste management project. Here, the team were able to speak with government health officials from whom they learned about the impact the project has had on the community. To gain more insight into the work of the ADP, a visit to the WV assisted physiotherapy clinic was also facilitated.

The members of the Child Society gave the visitors a cheerful welcome. The younger members of the society were engrossed in creating a mural of their handprints on which were written little messages for their sponsors.

The team then proceeded to the flood-affected area of Wattala, where they waded through the flood waters to meet the community.



Let's **Protect**

Our **Children** so They Can Walk **Freely**

