



Photography by Michael Baranovic

### Introduction

I have recently returned from three months in Sri Lanka, and most of that time in Mannar. Andrea de Silva arrived before me and spent a total of four and a half months volunteering for Diaspora Lanka! While there, we were joined by Daya Bhagwandas and my sister for ten days. It was my sister's first visit back to Sri Lanka in 47 years. They all made a valuable contribution in their own unique way.

Recurring visits have enabled me to build much deeper levels of trust with residents, leaders and officials and this has opened doors to opportunities that I could not have imagined even twelve months ago. More significant engagement has also thrown us into the deep end as we become more aware of the deep complexities inherent in any issue or venture. So ... no glib and easy solutions; instead a journey with people in Sri Lanka to find constructive ways forward.

Below is a snapshot of what we got up to these past few months. Please take the time to appreciate the breadth and depth of our work as we, as members of the diaspora, sincerely endeavour to play a constructive role at this time in Sri Lanka's history.

## **Diaspora Lanka's Programs**

### **1. Livelihood support**

- **Women: village backbone**
- **Road to reconciliation**
- **Village level rice mills**

### **2. Business development**

- **IT Platform**
- **Computers for Mannar**
- **Mannar Chamber capacity building**

### **3. Urban planning**

- **Results based management**
- **Mannar town plan**
- **Mannarin Marumalarchi 2022**
- **Local government capacity building**
- **Animal welfare**

### **4. Systems advocacy**

- **Common ground: land negotiations**
- **Community advocacy**

### **5. Social cohesion**

- **Growing interaction: communal harmony**
- **Mannar peace brigade**
- **Sports sponsorship**



**If you would like to support our work financially, please refer to page 17**

## 1. Livelihood support

**Women: Village Backbone** – Diaspora Lanka and LEADS are delivering a women's livelihood program through micro business development in Manthai West Division. It targets returned internally displaced persons (IDPs) across three villages where relations between Catholics, Muslims and Hindus are strained. Startup grants will be given to triads of women who will support each other in enterprise development. Funds will be rotated so each woman in turn will be able to start their own business. Training and other support inputs will be provided along the way.

### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Renegotiated the contract with LEADS to address project-related issues
- Worked through communication issues between LEADS' Colombo office (site for project administration), Trinco office (base for Project Coordinator), Mannar Office (base for project implementation staff) and Diaspora Lanka (in Oz)
- Negotiated a revised 3 month implementation plan
- Conducted successful workshops for women from the three villages identifying and correcting developmental issues in babies and young children through neuro-education programs run by Daya Bhagwandas.

### Next steps

- Conduct women's workshop on *Introduction to livelihood entrepreneurship*
- Select 45 women across the villages of Theanudayan, Kandal, Pappamottai for project trial
- Conduct household livelihood surveys
- Form business triads (3 women) and nominate who will be the first loan recipient
- Commence business planning.



### How you can help

- Assist with the cost of the project for the next 6 months - \$4,140 (Rs 538,000)  
Total cost of project is \$7,740 (Rs 1,029,505); \$3,600 was raised through a Hopper Night fundraiser, leaving a shortfall of \$4,140.
- Contribute any ideas about how we can raise these funds.



**Road to Reconciliation** - as an entry level project, Diaspora Lanka provided funds to construct a tarred road that connects the three villages of Theanudayan, Kandal and Pappamottai, and is a joint partnership between Diaspora Lanka, LEADS, the Government (Pradeshiya Sabah) and the villagers who contribute their labour.

**Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka**

- Due to changes in bi-laws, the initially planned gravel road had to now be a tarred road, increasing considerably the cost of the project
- The clearing of jungle was undertaken by Rural Development Society (RDS) and Women’s Rural Development Society (WRDS) members
- Hydration and flattening of road foundation ready for gravel and tarring was carried out
- Gravel and cement were delivered and unloaded at the site and a culvert was constructed
- The biggest challenge was attracting sufficient community labour on a continuous basis, given the villagers’ need to undertake work to earn an income; however, the RDS and WRDS members have contributed greatly to the progress so far
- The Pradeshiya Sabha has provided technical advice as well as materials including Hume pipes for the roadway.

**Next steps**

- 350m internal road construction is set to be completed by August 15th 2012.



**How you can help**

- Consider meeting a \$ 2,966 (Rs 335,200) shortfall in the cost of road construction (from a total of \$ 6,865 (Rs 775,702)).

**Village Level Rice Mills** - to 'value add' to local paddy cultivation, Diaspora Lanka is currently undertaking a local feasibility study on the introduction of Korean rice milling, polishing and de-stoning machines which will convert paddy to rice locally and hence assist the primary producers to financially benefit from their labour. Currently paddy is sent outside the district for milling and is then resold at high prices.

**Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka**

- Received a costed proposal from an unemployed Muslim gentleman to assist the family establish a rice milling enterprise
- Visited the family in Manthai West (a newly resettled majority Muslim area) to discuss the proposal and the feasibility of establishing this demonstration model on a part donation/part loan basis. Also discussed was the need for this to be a demonstration project to encourage other villages to establish their own. Also, for 10% of the profits to go to our women’s development initiative in Manthai West
- Discussed this initiative with the HNB Bank Manager who introduced us to a businessman who had commenced a similar operation in another part of Mannar District.
- Assessed this operating rice milling business and was able to establish a more realistic start-up cost for the operation.

**Next steps**

- Diaspora Lanka steering committee in Mannar to decide whether to pursue this project at a total cost of approximately \$7,690 (Rs 1,000,000).



**How you can help**

- Consider the provision of a business loan for this enterprise
- Consider taking this up as a personal project through forming a small support group which would raise funds for this livelihood initiative and keep in touch with people 'on the ground' regarding its ongoing development.



## 2. Business development

**IT Platform** - 25 war-affected young people in their early to mid-twenties have completed 4 months of ICT training. Thirteen have been selected to commence a business which will assist to computerize Mannar whose development stalled as a result of the 30 year war. The business outlet is up and running and the project is in the 'business trial' stage. Diaspora Lanka assists with financial support, sourcing business and technical mentors and training.



### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Reconnected with the 25 youngsters, monitored their development, distributed presents
- Planned the process of transition from 'training' to 'trial business' phases for IT Platform
- IT Platform youngsters completed their final exams and prepared for selection interviews
- IT Platform outlet was officially opened and marked the end of USAid's funding program
- Twelve youngsters were chosen for 4 business areas: computer advisory service, accounting, graphics/website development and computer repairs; with Kamal as Manager
- Negotiated for Shamini Fonseka from Colombo (IT Business Administrator) to conduct a day long business development workshop
- Diaspora Lanka financed office furniture, training programs and operational expenses
- Worked with the Mannar Chamber of Commerce (auspice of the USAid funded project) to negotiate the next phase of their business relationship
- Diaspora Lanka negotiates a 9 month financial package to support the fledgling business (3 months @ 100% of operational costs, 3 months @ 75% of costs, 3 months @ 50%).

### Next steps

- Participate in monthly skype sessions to monitor progress
- Write up a formal MOU between IT Platform and the Mannar Chamber of Commerce
- Identify mentors for the various aspects of the IT operation
- Organise a fundraising event for IT Platform.



### How you can help

- Financially contribute toward the \$9, 230 (Rs 1,200,000) needed to support IT Platform's business set up phase of 9 months
- Take this on as a personal project to support the IT Platform initiative in the following ways – financially and as business and IT mentors.

**Computers for Mannar** – ANZ Bank and Rotary International are assisting Diaspora Lanka to source second hand flat screen computers for groups in Mannar including war widows, youth entrepreneurs, low caste young people and the Urban Council.

**Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka**

- Rotary agreed to cover shipping costs of the computers to Sri Lanka
- Organised the first 20 computers from ANZ Bank (thanks to Diarne Kreltszheim)
- Responded to Rotary’s request for a letter of assurance from a Sri Lankan official that the goods would attract no or low customs’ fees
- Negotiated a high level agreement for low custom’s fees (thanks to Richard de Zoysa in Colombo). Richard also arranged for the President’s son to personally deliver the computers to Mannar
- Placed shipment on hold until a further 20 computers from ANZ were negotiated.

**Next steps**

- Test and tag computers, repackage, complete shipping forms and dispatch.



**How you can help**

- Help us identify other companies or agencies that could provide second-hand flat screened computers or recent laptops that could be included in this or future shipments.

**Chamber Capacity Building** - Diaspora Lanka is assisting the Mannar Chamber of Commerce to respond to the business and training challenges of their membership across diverse sectors (commerce, primary production, industry) through financial contribution toward staff salaries and program planning assistance.

**Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka**

- Met with the Board on two occasions to discuss Diaspora Lanka’s future support of the Chamber in the light of our adverse evaluation in December 2011 of the CEO’s performance in the previous twelve months of the agreement
- The Board has yet to make a final decision on the CEO’s ultimate fate.

**Next steps**

- Renegotiate with the Board after the fate of the CEO is decided



**How you can help** - no assistance needed at this stage.

### 3. Urban planning

**Mannarin Marumalarchi 2022** (the re-blossoming of Mannar) – late last year, Diaspora Lanka and the Urban Council Mannar (UC) instigated a community visioning program to identify a people-centred plan for Mannar City for the next ten years. Based on the major themes that emerged from the MM22 consultations, eight subcommittees were established to implement the plan (town planning, environment, eco-tourism, business development, education, community programs, women's development and finance).

#### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Grace Pathmaraj (DL's newest recruit), James Jesuthasan (UC Vice Chair) and Andrea de Silva (DL volunteer) organised a public presentation in the town hall at which all 8 subcommittees reported on their work



#### How you can help

- Read the executive summary report of the community visioning program - <http://diasporalanka.wordpress.com/2012/01/03/mannarin-marumalarchi-2022-lets-get-the-mannar-show-on-the-road/>
- Help support one of the 8 subcommittees through providing expertise in the following areas - town planning, environment, eco-tourism, business development, education, community programs, women's development and finance
- Help develop a proposal to the Netherlands Government seeking financial support for the renovation of the Mannar Dutch Fort.

**Results Based Management** – to achieve their ten year vision for Mannar, residents involved in the MM22 community visioning program continued to meet and prepare themselves for the Results Based Management (RBM) workshops which were conducted by Visakha Tillekeratne, a Colombo-based consultant for the World Bank. Each committee was required to develop a more strategic 'blueprint' of activities to reach their desired goals.

#### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Convened meetings of most of the committees to clarify the purpose of their group, identify outcomes, decide upon indicators and plan activities
- Organised two day-long workshops for participants to discuss and write up their plans
- Assessed the level of assistance needed for each committee. It has been 8 months since the MM2022 program. While some of the committees are powering away, a few need a deal of support. People here are used to donor handouts so some are feeling frustrated over Diaspora Lanka's non-compliance with the charity model. Instead we are trying to



'kick start' their initiative in a more essential way. Many get it while others struggle. This mindset change will take time.

### Next steps

- Each activity of the plan to be costed and promoted to attract funding and support
- Each committee to continue to work on one small and time-limited project to get things (and their confidence) up and rolling.



### How you can help

- Provide expertise (knowledge transfers) and/or mentoring support in any of the following areas - town planning, environment, eco-tourism, business development, education, community programs, women's development and fundraising.

**Mannar Town Plan** - Diaspora Lanka (DL) is working closely with the Urban Council Mannar (UC), Urban Development Authority (UDA) and the National Physical Planning Department (NPPD) to develop a community responsive new town plan which will serve the people of Mannar well into the future and incorporate significant government plans for this urban precinct.

### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Convened a steering committee comprising officials, technical officers and residents to plan the workshops
- Accompanied UDA staff on a field visit to proposed projects sites in Mannar
- Organised a public meeting with the UC at which the UDA presented their draft town plan
- Organised 5 workshops which provided feedback to the UDA on their draft plan. It incorporated the views of local residents and technical officers on future growth corridors, drainage, traffic and transport, town centre development and zoning issues
- Held several meetings in Colombo with the UDA and the NPPD regarding opportunities to input into the town planning process and possible future collaborations
- Compiled a report with the NPPD documenting workshop feedback for action by the UDA.

### Next steps

- Seek to establish a formal working relationship between Urban Council Mannar, UDA, NPPD and Diaspora Lanka regarding the town plan
- Undertake a detailed survey of land use, ownership, households and GPS plotting
- Source 16 A Level graduates to be trained by UDA as Survey Assistants to undertake detailed surveys over a 15 day period
- Oversee the development of a database information management system for the UC
- Convene a private public partnership group to develop urban design guidelines for Mannar

- Source funds to employ a town planner for the Mannar UC for a three year term
- Meet with interested urban planners in Melbourne to gauge type and level of support.



### How you can help

- Contribute advice/expertise in urban design, architecture, drainage, garbage disposal and recycling, local government information systems
- Adopt the 'employ a town planner' fundraising initiative
- Contribute toward the cost of 16 survey assistants for 15 days - \$2,000 (Rs260,000).

**Local Government Capacity Building** - Diaspora Lanka works closely with the Mannar Urban Council (UC) on a range of projects. As this is a recently elected council after decades of absence, DL is committed to assisting the UC develop into a responsive, people-centred municipality. Currently DL is assisting the Council to instigate statutory Committees of Council to incorporate resident input into the plans and programs of the UC.

### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Met with the Chair and Council Members to discuss the proposed Mannarin Marumalarchi program and activities, strategies for the new town plan and the animal welfare project
- Arranged for the UDA to conduct training for the Members (councillors) and staff of the UC to better understand their regulatory powers and hence address illegal construction, encroachment and flagrant usurping of council bi-laws. It is gratifying to see the UC already taking action as a result of the training. They arranged a telecast on Sun TV informing residents of the need for council approval for the construction of buildings and parapet walls and that failure to comply would result in legal action
- Residents have started to apply and many have asked assistance in completing applications. The UC has also informed all departments and community based organisations of this in writing.

### Next steps

- Contribute five second hand computers to the UC
- Ask IT Platform to network the computers once they arrive.



## How you can help

- Consider volunteer professional expertise for a 2 week, one month, three month or more 'knowledge transfer' in the following areas: urban planning, environmental health, water management, solid waste management, drainage works, parkland development and tourism.

**Animal Welfare Project** - Diaspora Lanka is seeking to bring the large feral and abandoned donkey population found in urban and rural areas back to health and prominence through working closely with Worldwide Veterinary Services, Animal SOS and the Urban Council through developing a welfare and management plan for the donkeys. Recently, Diaspora Lanka facilitated the sterilization of 500 stray dogs through the expert services of Tsunami Animal-People Alliance (TAPA).

### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Met with members of Dogstar who were keen to partner us in this donkey welfare project
- Wrote and submitted an application to the Worldwide Veterinary Services (WVS) seeking their assistance in developing a management plan for the feral donkeys.

### Next steps

- Follow up with Worldwide Veterinary Services in the UK, Animal SOS in India and Dogstar and TAPA in Sri Lanka regarding a plan and timetable.



## How you can help

- A financial contribution towards project expenses (food and accommodation for volunteer vets, sterilisation equipment and supplies).



## 4. Systems advocacy

**Common ground: land negotiations** – Muslims are returning to Mannar District after being displaced in 1990, and they want the return of their land and property or proper compensation. 'Land' is now a highly contested issue with multiple deeds for the same plot, lack of infrastructure support in areas where jungles have overtaken once thriving settlements and legal documents have gone missing or been destroyed.

### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Met with a group of men from the resettled Muslim village of Periyamadhu and listened to their issues concerning contested land
- I was approached to assist with the conflict between the Tamil fishermen from Joseph Vaz Nagar (originally from Vidattaltivu) and the Muslim village of Uppukulam and to liaise with the Divisional Secretary concerning their displacement and the need for land
- I spoke with Shreen Saroor, Mannar Women's Development Federation regarding initial steps to address the issue of land
- I spoke with the Divisional secretary and the Army Commander whose shared response to allegations of 'land grabs' by the military shed more light on the political nature and complexity of the issue.

### Next steps

- Explore options to address land issues with Shreen Saroor from MWDF.



### How you can help

- Help to identify retired land officers from Mannar District to assist in verifying land ownership.

**Community advocacy** – upon invitation, Diaspora Lanka advocates on behalf of different community groups to local, provincial and central government agencies in order to influence effective information sharing, equal access to services and resources or sort out a conflict. This has involved many meetings and conversations with officials and community leaders in Mannar and in Colombo.

## Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

Meetings held with:

- Brigade Commander Maitri Dias re ex LTTE cadres and land disputes
- Dr Rayappu Joseph, Bishop of Mannar, re Tamil/Muslim conflict, public demonstration against Minister which attracted 6,700 and land disputes
- Mr Thajudeen, Additional Secretary Ministry of Industry & Commerce, re Muslim/Tamil conflicts and alleged unfair distribution of public service positions in the North
- Mr Ashraff, Director Private Enterprise, Ministry of Economic Development, re Tamil/Muslim conflicts and home stay initiative
- Rev Sosai, Vicar General Mannar Diocese, re Tamil/Muslim conflicts, alleged unfair government land distribution and relief and settlement support for returnees
- Mrs Stanley de Mel, Divisional Secretary, re Tamil/Muslim conflicts, land disputes, incidents of violence, specific cases of alleged injustice
- Professor Rajiva Wijesinha, Minister for Reconciliation re land disputes, alleged 'land grabs' and draft reconciliation policy
- First term politicians re Diaspora Lanka strategy and program
- Fishermen from Joseph vaz Nagar re loss of fishing grounds
- Four ex LTTE cadres re their lives post rehabilitation.



## 5. Social cohesion

**Growing Interaction** – As a consequence of the 30 year civil war between Government Forces and the Tamil Tigers, another conflict, between Tamil and Muslim, has emerged and threatens to undermine the growth and development of Mannar. Community tensions over previous Muslim displacement, significant land issues and perceived political favouritism threaten to undermine the development of a vulnerable community recovering from war. Officials too are concerned about the alarming increase in interethnic conflict.

### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Dedicated much time to investigating the extent of Tamil/Muslim tensions. Daya Bhagwandas, Initiative of Change and DL members engaged with Muslim and Tamil groups to better understand the nature of the conflict
- Conducted a focus group with Muslim women and men in Puthukudiyiruppu; some from this village were involved in a violent clash with Tamils over a national-qualifying bicycle race. Arrests were made and court trials are imminent
- Spoke to Catholic and Muslim leaders as well as government officials regarding this issue
- Spoke with the Imam and Pastor from Nigeria regarding visiting Mannar and Sri Lanka.

### Next steps

- Firm up the informal collaboration between the North East Interfaith Forum for Reconciliation (NEIFR), Cordoba Foundation UK, Mannar Women's Development Federation (MWDF), Initiatives of Change (Australia) and Diaspora Lanka
- Identify and meet with former Mannar Muslims now living in Melbourne
- Negotiate to bring the Imam and Pastor to Mannar for peace building training programs.



### How you can help

- Contribute funds for honorariums and travel expenses (approx. \$6,000) associated with bringing the Imam and Pastor team to Sri Lanka.

**Mannar Peace Brigade** – the next generation is the key to achieving a durable peace in Sri Lanka. Diaspora Lanka is supporting the formation of a group of young people as peace makers and trend setters for a new way of relating. This group of aspiring leaders will be instrumental in bringing greater levels of understanding and compassion to the vexed issues that face this district.



### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Organised three meetings of the Peace Brigade at which the first challenging task was reflecting over our own inner feelings of prejudice and discord
- Organised a meeting with Catholic and Muslim religious leaders to raise concerns held by members of the Peace Brigade about the deepening conflicts between the two groups
- Organised a team building day - a bus trip, lunch cooking competition, games, reflective exercises and a swim for Peace Brigade members!

### Next steps

- Consolidate the group and its purpose
- Identify and create greater awareness of local conflicts and ways to minimise trouble
- Increase trust and cooperation among Peace Brigade members
- Address maligned gossip or divisive propoganda though Peace Brigade action.



### How you can help

- Adopt this group and support them by keeping in contact through email and skype
- Assist the group to develop more effective peace building skills.

**Mannar Premier League** - after a successful 2011 series, this hardball cricket tournament will bring together eight local teams and a district team from Killinochchi to fight it out over 40 games. In a place where there is little entertainment for young people, cricket is proving to be promising grounds for reconciliation through recreational sport. Diaspora Lanka assists the inspired organisers with attracting sponsors and gaining official recognition for the MPL.

### Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Secured sponsorship funds for the Mannar Premier League (MPL) through diaspora and 'in country' networks and assisted with correspondence to various organisations
- Attempted to attract a cricket official to attend the opening match but was unsuccessful
- Invited by the Star Eagle Sports Club to advise them on how to avoid the breaking out of fights between teams at the end of games
- Invited to speak to the captains of all the 8 cricket teams prior to the MPL about having a vision for cricket that went beyond village loyalties and to think in terms of representing Mannar, then representing the North, then nationally as a means of avoiding village 'face saving' tactics through violence
- Witnessed a historical win by the Star Eagles against a Jaffna team and then 'shouted' the team to a celebratory dinner
- Presented a prize to the player who scored the most number of sixes in the first of the MPL matches.

### Next steps

- Encourage organisers to start to plan early for MPL 2013
- Identify the sticking point to having a Sri Lankan Cricket Board recognised team from Mannar
- Invite celebrities for opening and closing matches at least 12 months in advance.



### How you can help

- Work through one's cricket networks to identify strategies to gain Sri Lankan Cricket Board endorsement of the Mannar Premier League and for a Mannar team.

Jeremy Liyanage  
**Director, Diaspora Lanka**

## to support our work ...

Please use one of two ways to financially contribute to our projects...

### 1. Simple donation by bank transfer

**Account name:** Diaspora Lanka Ltd

**Bank:** Commonwealth Bank

**BSB:** 063 010

**Account no:** 1183 7067

**Reference:** your name

After the transfer, email Stanley Stork (Treasurer) at [stanleystork@optusnet.com.au](mailto:stanleystork@optusnet.com.au) informing him of the donation, your name and postal address and a receipt will be posted to you.

**Cheques** can be made payable to **Diaspora Lanka Ltd** and posted to **PO Box 577, Preston VIC 3072 Australia**

### 2. For a tax receipt

Send donation via bank transfer to Noonga Reconciliation Group Inc, a charitable institution and our partner organisation in Brisbane:

**Bank transfer:** Bendigo Bank

**Bank BSB:** 633 000

**Account No:** 126052588

**Reference:** Diaspora Lanka

After the transfer, email Nigel Sloss (Treasurer) at [donate@diasporalanka.org](mailto:donate@diasporalanka.org) informing him of the donation, your name and address and a **tax deductible receipt** can be posted to you.

**Cheques** can be made payable to **Noonga Reconciliation Group Mannar Project** and posted to **60 Pilliga St, Virginia Qld 4014**





## Our Vision

A unified Sri Lankan diaspora, with its supporters, working for peace and prosperity in Sri Lanka.

## Our Mission

Diaspora Lanka actively works for diaspora unity in Australia as well as rebuilding efforts in regional Sri Lanka through human and economic development, urban planning, advocacy and reconciliation.

## Our Objectives

- **Rebuilding:** To forge a constructive role for the diaspora in post-conflict Sri Lanka
- **Reconciliation:** To nurture a durable peace both in Sri Lanka and in diaspora countries
- **Governance:** To act as a credible link between the diaspora and communities in Sri Lanka
- **Outreach:** To collaborate with global diaspora networks committed to a better Sri Lanka.

## Our Principles

- **Open hearted** – a global and united diaspora, demonstrating their heart connection to Sri Lanka by working for the peace and prosperity of the country
- **Reconciled** – an acknowledgement of the collective pain, dispossession and trauma caused by past conflicts and a commitment to journeying together
- **Cohesive** – the right of every Sri Lankan citizen, regardless of ethnicity, culture or religion, to enjoy equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the social, cultural and economic life of the nation.

## Our Approach

- **Constructive** - as Tamil, Muslim, Burgher and Sinhala people we play a positive role in post-conflict Sri Lanka recognising that all parties, including diaspora members and elected representatives, are part of the solution
- **Place-based** - coordinated, area-based, multi-stakeholder approach to uplifting districts through harnessing skills, experiences and resources of the private, public and voluntary sectors
- **Relationally interlinked** - recognising that the trajectories of people both in Sri Lanka and in diaspora communities are inextricably linked, that what we do here directly impacts what happens there
- **Actively involved** - that 'hands on' participation through local projects, knowledge transfers, exposure visits and reconciliation initiatives will nurture closer ties
- **Critically informed** - that proper analysis leads to a deeper understanding and truth, discouraging black and white understandings of complex issues.

## Our Program

1. **Livelihood support**
2. **Business development**
3. **Urban planning**
4. **Systems advocacy**
5. **Community cohesion**

## Our Modus Operandii

- We seek to reframe the notion of a negative and singular-ethnic understanding of diaspora into an inclusive multi-ethnic and constructively oriented entity which models the change we want to see both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.
- We attempt to understand the big picture of where a community is at currently, its past and where it wishes to position itself for the future. This helps us gain a strategic awareness and direction for any course of action we may pursue, knowing it is grounded in local knowledge gained through resident focus groups, interviews with NGOs, government officials, business owners and religious and community leaders, as well as government and private sector plans
- We adopt a place management approach which seeks to achieve territorial wellbeing and not just the privileging of discreet entities eg an orphanage or school. It is a coordinated, area-based, multi-stakeholder approach to improving locations and harnessing the skills, experiences and resources of those in the private, public and voluntary sectors
- We endeavour to engage the context through a 'there are no enemies' perspective and hence regard everyone as potentially part of the solution, seeking to confront issues not personalities
- We acknowledge and strengthen already existing local groups and structures and partner with these in various activities in order to avoid duplication, misunderstanding and arrogance
- We capacity build based on an understanding that we are all learners in this process and are all having our capacities enhanced. This is achieved through winning people's confidence and trust, identifying the micro issues and processes which require attention, offering personal support or providing links to outside assistance to address need
- We establish close, robust and enduring relationships with people on the ground, achieved through regular face to face contact, skype calls, email correspondence and joining with them in extracurricular activities eg outings, boating expeditions or cricket matches
- We present a 'not cashed up' appearance (this being the reality) backed by a simple lifestyle approach, modelling a different way of engagement, placing maximum emphasis on local initiative and not dependency on external handouts. Our funds are used primarily to 'kick start' initiative
- We act as facilitators and function in the background without a desire for public recognition; we want to have influence and effect without leaving a visible footprint, striving to leave 'ego' at the door

**Get involved in Sri Lanka:** development projects, business advice, exposure visits, knowledge transfers, negotiation, skills development

**Get involved in Oz:** dialogue discussions, research, fundraising, media, conferences, committee roles (advocacy, PR, finance, web, admin, strategic planning)

**Contact:** Jeremy Liyanage, Director **Mobile:** 0403 694 132 **Email:** jeremy.liyanage@gmail.com

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