

In this edition....

- ...Young people awaiting A Level results turn into land use surveyors
- ...Hiccups with the women's development project
- ...Mannar donkeys finally get some positive attention
- ...Canadians and Aussies provide some serious support



Introduction

This trip to Sri Lanka of two and a half months proved to be the most challenging yet. Many tasks that should have had momentum were stuck and even the simplest things remained obstinate. So more lessons learnt - on patience generally, sensitivity in balancing a suitable amount of cajoling and pressure with simply letting things take its course, and also flexibility through adjusting expectation to match prevailing situations. Accompanying me was Adib Behzadpour, a Diaspora Lanka volunteer from Brisbane who spent a month in Mannar assisting with a range of projects.

The political backdrop of the visit was volatile with the Government on the back foot over its divisive Divineguma Bill, the impeachment of the Chief Justice, perceived attacks on the judiciary as a whole, the resignation of the editor of the oft critical Island newspaper and a reported lack of substantive implementation of the LLRC report by Government detractors. Many boats with would-be asylum seekers continued to leave Sri Lanka and bound for Australia.

Usually I hit the ground running but the simple act of recharging my phone put a stop to that. The dodgy power point fried my mobile and took with it all my Sri Lankan contact numbers. Generally by the third day I am well connected and have arranged a host of meetings in Colombo. Alas, this was not to be. I left for Mannar less prepared. This time solid efforts were invested in fewer initiatives, getting relationships right and balancing 'functional' task-orientation with 'affective' people-centred energy. The project most progressed were the town planning and women's development projects, relationship with and capacity building of the Mannar Urban Council, our donkey welfare program and Mannar's Peace Brigade.

Please take the time to browse through the stories and visuals on what we achieved this time. Sincere thanks to the many who continue to support our humble efforts both in spirit, action and financially. Our work is not possible without you!

Diaspora Lanka's Projects

1. Livelihood support

- **Women: village backbone**
- **Village level rice mills**
- **Village aid**
- **Troubled encounters**

2. Business development

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

3. Urban planning

- **Mannarin Marumalarchi 2022**
- **Mannar town plan**
- **Animal welfare**

4. Community advocacy

- **Advocacy to government**

5. Social cohesion

- **Mannar peace brigade**
- **Diaspora and friends exposure visits**



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

1. Livelihood support

Women: Village Backbone – Diaspora Lanka is delivering a women's livelihood program through micro business development in Manthai West Division in Mannar District. It targets vulnerable women both war widows and returned internally displaced persons (IDPs) across three villages where relations between Catholics, Muslims and Hindus are strained. A women's operated rice mill will initially provide employment for six women and once established will provide a diverse range of micro businesses for many more. Training and other support inputs have been provided.

Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Through LEADS's (local NGO) workshop processes, the women identified cows, goats and chickens as their primary choice of livelihoods. However Diaspora Lanka's (DL) brief to LEADS was to help identify alternative livelihoods to the common 'cows, goats, chicken' ones currently provided by many other NGOs
- With over 50 women, LEADS and DL conducted a workshop on the realities and pitfalls of entering into livestock entrepreneurship. However the women's expectations were already fixed on these livelihoods that were beyond DL's budgetary capacity
- Attempts at significant re-negotiations with our delivery agency LEADS both in Mannar and Colombo, resulted in them withdrawing from the contract as their Mannar office no longer had staff with sufficient livelihood expertise to continue the project
- Met with 14 executive member reps from the three Women's Rural Development Societies (WRDS) of Pappamottai, Theanudayan and Kandal, and 8 men from the RDS to discuss a realistic way forward for the project that would meet genuine need
- It was decided to establish a rice milling business, convene a committee across the three villages to monitor the project and develop criteria for choosing women for the business
- Adib Behzadpour commenced writing a business plan to attract sponsorship for the mill.

Next steps

- Establish a project steering committee across the 3 villages
- Select 6 women based on criteria of vulnerability
- Use the business plan to attract financial support (\$8,200) for the project.

How you can help

- Contribute toward the cost of the project - \$8,200 (Rs 1,076,000)
- Consider supporting the women's development project as a personal project through joining a small support group to monitor the project's development, keep in touch with the women and raise funds for the project.



Women from Pappamottai, Kandal , Theanudiyan



Korean-build rice mill and polisher

Reflections

In a two hour conversation, Diaspora Lanka workers Sinclair, Grace, Kamal and I openly shared with those gathered. We apologised for the project not going according to plan and not being able to afford the livelihood options they had identified. After some silence and a few women walking out at that point with expectations unmet, an honest assessment emerged from the remaining number. Some of the salient points are captured below:

“If you give us cows and chickens and go back to Australia, and then return, nothing would have happened.”

“NGOs gave sewing machines to some women and provided training but now the machines are just sitting there doing nothing.”

“First NGOs gave us money, then a specific thing, like a cow, then a loan for that thing. Everyone grabbed whatever they could. Some sold what they got. The people adjust to whatever model of NGO support is on offer just to get something.”

Mullikulam Aid – In September 2007 the Sri Lankan Navy commenced occupation of Mullikulam village including the church and school as it expanded its North Western Command Headquarters. With the support of Bishop of Mannar, Rayappu Joseph, the villagers resettled just outside their village in June 2012 to put pressure on the Navy to vacate the area. Their protests over not having access to the church and school were successful but the villagers still find themselves in poor and dire circumstances in makeshift dwellings without basic amenities. Mannar Chamber of Commerce President asked Diaspora Lanka for assistance.

Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- DL staff visited Mullikulam with the Chamber of Commerce President, spoke to numerous villagers, assessed the level of need and identified what DL could provide
- DL supplied water tanks and first aid kits
- An additional request for a generator was also met through funds donated by Professor Michael Roberts; the item was personally delivered.



Temporary shelters in Mullikulam



Generator donated by Prof Michael Roberts

Troubled encounters – Adib and I were introduced to a remarkable young man, Francis Benil Das, who in 2002 as a healthy 18 year old, fell from a tree. A serious spinal cord injury (t11 fracture) left him with no feeling below his chest. As a paraplegic, ulcerated sores first appeared on his buttocks five years ago. Plastic surgery costing \$8,000 fixed the sores. His sister undertook to pay the medical expenses but as this task grew more impossible, committed suicide. Benil’s mother, his primary carer, also attempted suicide, not being able to cope. The present sore has been there for many years and if left unattended, threatens his life. Benil cultivates a positive approach to life and is a prolific, gifted poet. All local affordable solutions have been exhausted.

How you can help

- Contribute funds towards a \$600 computer to enable him to desk-top publish his poetry
- Explore how this young man can be treated medically.



Benil's back



Open wound

2. Business development

IT Platform – Thirteen young entrepreneurs in their early to mid-twenties have commenced a business 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

- ITP offers a diverse range of services and products including computer repairs (the most lucrative), graphic design, printing and website development
- A meeting was held with parents to keep them informed of It Platform's move toward a cooperative business model and to seek from each a Rs60,000 investment toward their children's future. The funds will purchase a colour printer to meet a growing demand in Mannar for this service, currently being met by Colombo outlets
- Canadian diaspora members visited ITP and undertook to help raise funds for a generator
- Australian diaspora member visited ITP while Mannar was flooding, ran two workshops (customer service; intro to Excel) and financially contributed towards the generator and a light projector
- Generator was purchased through the generous support of Canadian and Australian diaspora members.



IT Platform staff in their new uniforms



ITP staff meeting

Next steps

- 'Computerizing Mannar Villages' proposal to bring IT to six outlying villages and to train eighteen youngsters to conduct computer training, is in development
- Two entrepreneurs to be trained in web designing and software development in February.

Reflections

The IT Platform business is being well managed by Kamal and is continually diversifying its products and services in line with customer demands. Everyone at ITP is on a steep learning curve and would benefit from additional training particularly in web development and English language classes. Kamal too needs further business development expertise and mentoring to grow this social business. Kamal balances a disciplined and hard-nosed approach with compassionate understanding, knowing that the young entrepreneurs have all been war-affected.

How you can help

- Financially contribute toward:
 - IT Platform's business establishment \$7,370 (Rs 958,500);
 - Light projector for training \$660 (Rs85,000) and screen - \$190 (Rs 25,000)
 - Web design and software development training for two youths - \$385 (Rs 50,000)
- Help support budding youth entrepreneurs 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 Mannar Urban Council.

Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- 40 flat screened computers and 20 laptops were provided, tagged and tested by ANZ Bank, Melbourne, and coordinated by Diarne
- Rotary International through Peter O'Brien, has paid for all shipping costs
- Computers have been palletted and dispatched to Sri Lanka thanks to Siraj Perera.



Boxed computers at Siraj's home ready for shipment



Diarne, the whip-cracking project manager

Next steps

- Contact Tharunyata Hetak in Colombo to prepare them to receive goods in February
- Arrange transportation of computers to Mannar and for their distribution.

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 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 President and staff to discuss DL's future support of the Chamber
- The Board is still to resolve the issue of the CEO's employment.



Chamber President & DL Director at Mullikulam



Two Chamber staff members

3. Urban planning

Mannarin Marumalarchi 2022 (the re-blossoming of Mannar) – in late 2011, 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

- Subcommittees have met to continue working on their projects under the guidance of Grace Pathmaraj
- Attempted to organise a donor forum of INGOs and businesses at which proposals for funding could be considered; unfortunately insufficient time to find an event sponsor
- Met with Fr George Sigamoney, National Director of Caritas Sri Lanka to discuss event sponsorship; he advised to write a formal request to the Catholic Bishop's Conference.

Next steps

- Distribute costed project plans to MM22 members
- Write to Catholic Bishop's Conference regarding event sponsorship by Caritas.

How you can help

- 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.



MM22 Women's Development Subcommittee



MM22 Town Planning Subcommittee

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.

Preliminary meetings

- Met with Mr Kiringoda, Director, Development Planning, UDA (Colombo) to discuss progress on the draft plan. Since my last visit there has been no movement as still no replacement for the original town planner who created the draft plan. The Director UDA Northern Province (Jaffna) was assigned as my contact. I spoke about the need to complete a land use survey as a vital component of the town planning process and reminded him of UDA's promise to train Mannar-based people who we would employ to carry out the survey. Mr Kiringoda also asked if we could source Urban Designers from Australia to assist with more detailed plans
- Met with Mr Sarath Raveendra, Government Agent Mannar, gave him the town planning workshop report from last visit, briefed him about our town planning intentions during this trip and gained his endorsement.



Meeting with the Government Agent Mannar



Meeting with UDA Director Development Planning

Land use survey

- Met with the Mannar Urban Council Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Members to update them on the town planning process
- Flagged the need to recruit 22 Mannar youngsters for the Land Use Survey
- Negotiated with UDA and NPPD to conduct a two day training session in Mannar
- Advertised, interviewed and recruited 22 young people to undertake the land use survey
- Organised the land use survey two day training workshop
- Recruited a town planner to oversee the daily survey tasks during the three week period.



Dir General NPPD with the 22 Land Use Surveyors



Allocating survey sectors for each pair of Surveyors

Meeting with the Minister

- Negotiated a meeting with UDA Directors, Director General NPPD, town planners and the Minister for Industry and Commerce with the Mannar Urban Council to discuss a staged process for the town plan
- Invited the Mannar Urban Council Chairman, Vice Chair, Secretary and Technical Officer to Colombo to attend the meeting and increase awareness of the town planning process.



Meeting with Minister of Industry & Commerce



Talks - Mannar Town Plan 'must do' projects

Mannar Planning Committee

- Convened the inaugural Mannar Planning Committee attended by the Director General NPPD, Director UDA, local technical experts and the Urban Council Members and staff. This committee will be responsible for the development of the Mannar Town Plan
- Discussed new initiative of planning for a Greater Mannar City which would extend the current urban boundaries and respond to the anticipated future expansion of this area
- Commenced process to have this committee recognized at the national level.



Lively discussion - Planning Committee establishment



Selling a greater Mannar Urban area plan

Reflections

It proved very difficult to garner the cooperation of the Urban Development Authority on this trip. This was partly due to generational change as senior bureaucrats retired (especially at Deputy Director level) and few experienced people to fill the vacancies. Currently the UDA was also developing 54 town plans and did not have sufficient staff for this task. These projects were being fast tracked to capitalise on Asian Development Bank funding. As a result a 'one size fits all' approach was creeping into town planning. This was at odds with National Physical Planning Department's and our intention to develop a town plan uniquely tailored to Mannar, its people's aspirations for the place and NPPD's strategy of making Mannar a Special Purpose City and the gateway to India and Asia.

Another challenge is to bring 'town planning' awareness to the Urban Council. It is still a relatively newly elected Council experiencing a steep learning curve. Most have not worked for government previously so need significant capacity building. Taking them to Colombo for discussions with UDA, NPPD and the Minister commenced to open their eyes to this new field of endeavour, but not sufficiently to match the needs and aspirations of their local constituency including the many experienced technical officers in Mannar. They would benefit from a concrete exposure to urban development possibilities elsewhere but this then becomes a resourcing issue. Their ownership of the process waxes and wanes because their understandings of the processes or long term benefits are limited.

Next steps

- Recruit a town planner to crunch all the data gathered by the land use survey assistants
- Present report to UDA
- 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
- Assist to raise funds for town planning position at the Council.



Prabakaran, Town Planner extraordinaire in b'ground



First field visit and intro to land use surveying

Donkey 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. The fortunes of the Mannar donkey have waxed and waned in the past fifty years. From prized possession to being abandoned due to the war, the donkey now faces real issues of survival. A group of animal lovers from around the world has commenced an active campaign of donkey welfare.

Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Negotiated with Donkey Sanctuary UK to send a team from India to undertake an initial assessment of the donkeys of Mannar
- Organised a schedule for the Country Director, Community Education Officer and Veterinary Surgeon from Donkey Sanctuary India which included meeting with the Urban Council Members and staff, Government Agent and Additional GA, Laundry Association members, Government Veterinary Surgeon, Mannar Association for Rehabilitation of Differently Abled People, Shantipuram Women's Rural Development Society, local business owners, together with field visits to various parts of Mannar to document the condition of the animals
- Established the Welfare Society for Donkeys of Mannar (WSDoM) Committee to oversee project
- Wrote a report and recommendations for consideration by local and international partners.



Donkey Sanctuary India staff meet the Mannar GA



Examining the condition of donkeys

Next steps

- Translate executive summary into Tamil for local partners including the Urban Council
- Follow up with local and international partners on the next stages of the implementation
- Raise funds in Australia and internationally to cover the visit of the veterinarians and for medical equipment and supplies.

Reflections

The perception of most people in Mannar from Urban Council Members (Councillors) and staff to community groups and residents were initially not in favour of the donkeys and wished to be rid of these feral and feared animals. However, after rounds of discussions, their perception began to change and they agreed to preserve and protect these unique local animals. In fact in some groups there was a transformation of attitude once given more information about donkeys and their uses in other countries.

The low status of the donkey in Mannar society, lack of knowledge of the donkey's natural behavior, lack of empathy and the aggressive and unfriendly nature of the local people towards them, have all resulted in serious conflict between people and donkeys. The donkeys were abandoned during the civil conflict and the mistreatment and abuse by people has widened the gap between them. This was evident when we tried to stroke the donkeys. They were not approachable and resisted being touched or handled because they seemed frightened of humans. Instances of abuse came to our notice, of a few people tying fire crackers to the tails of donkeys and of others who had forced cactus plants into their mouths.

Because of the rainy season and a plentiful supply of vegetation, the donkeys assessed were of a good body score between 2 to 3 (out of 5) for donkeys living outside the town limit and 1.5 to 2 for donkeys within the town boundaries. This situation changes dramatically during the drier months when food became scarce. Donkeys were not attended to or treated by government veterinarians. The confusion whether donkeys were classified as domestic or wildlife ensured that no government authority claimed responsibility for these animals. This was the first task, to determine under whose jurisdiction the donkey fell.



MARDAP agreed to trial a donkey therapy project



Women agree to treat Mannar donkeys well

How you can help

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

4. Community advocacy

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 broker a conflict. This involves many meetings and conversations with politicians, officials, government reps and community leaders in Mannar and in Colombo.

Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

Meetings held with:

- Professor Rajiva Wijesinha, Minister for Reconciliation re implementation of LLRC, Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review, Human Rights Action Plan and land acquisitions
- Ms Amali Wedagedara, Research Associate, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute re Diaspora Lanka input into a diaspora engagement strategy commissioned by the Ministry of External Affairs
- Mr Nishan de Mel, Director, Verite Research re diaspora engagement, current government thinking and future political strategies
- Prof Amal Jayawardena, Depart International Relations, Colombo University re diaspora engagement strategy



Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu at a LLRC briefing



Minister for Reconciliation at a community forum

- Prof Siri Hettige, Chair of Sociology, Colombo University re internal and external threat perception, shrinking space of reconciliation, crisis of unemployed graduates, strategic nature of local government and current government thinking
- Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Alternatives re implementation of the LLRC report
- Mr JA Sarath Raveendra, Government Agent Mannar and Mrs Stanley de Mel, Additional Government Agent re fishermen's dispute, town planning strategy with government and donkey issues in Mannar
- Mr Roshan Chathuranga, Centre for the Investigation of the Disappeared re campaigns to stop disappearances
- Minister Rishad Bathiudeen, Industry & Commerce re Mannar Town Plan and future strategic projects
- Mr Phil Vernon & Johann Rebert, International Alert re implications of climate change on regional and national security
- Brigade Commander Maitri Dias re ex LTTE cadres, land allocation and disputes, asylum seekers, violence against Sinhalese in North
- Two ex LTTE cadres re their post-war narratives.

5. Social cohesion

Mannar Peace Brigade – the next generation is the key to achieving a durable peace in Sri Lanka. Young people from villages across Mannar District are being groomed as peace makers to counter ethnic and religious tensions in the community. A new model is being developed which incorporates fun, vocational advancement and skills in peace building. Two day programs in targeted villages aim to recruit and skill up Mannar's youngsters.

Activities summary from last visit to Sri Lanka

- Held meetings with a small group of interested youngsters to identify what would inspire them to be peace-builders. Suggestions ranged from more action and less talk to more formal training in conflict resolution skills
- Held a two day program in a rural village which attracted over 30 young people. The trial of a longer more engaged program yielded pleasing results and incorporated a bus trip, team building, cooking competition, games, presentations on resolving conflict and reflective exercises
- Undertook a review and further developed a model of peace building for Mannar.

Next steps

- Formalize a peace committee and arrange an annual program of events and training
- Arrange formal training in conflict resolution
- Develop peace projects in Mannar that respond to district-specific conflicts.



Some of the Mannar Peace Brigade 'gang'
Reflections



Group exercises in peace building

We struggled to think through what might best win over Mannar's young people to becoming peace builders who would spear-head a counter-culture of interethnic and religious tolerance, respect and cooperation. Diaspora Lanka workers Grace and Kamal came up with an approach. A revamped program would incorporate three ingredients – **safe fun**, because most youngsters had never had the opportunity to enjoy life because of the war, **vocational advancement**, to address disrupted schooling and limited prospects of advancing to A Levels which result in unemployment and being unemployable, and **capacity-building in peace skills**, upskilling them to respond to the many levels of conflict and division endemic to post-conflict situations.

From two hour meetings around a table, the revamped approach evolved into a two day program of fun activity, cooking competitions, sleep overs, talks and discussions on peace building and building relationships across religious, ethnic and gender divides. The first was at the rural village of Parappankandal close by to the Giant's Tank, the lifeblood of the District. The last thirty years of conflict in this region had resulted in the displacement of large segments of the area's population, ensuing poverty through the loss of houses, belongings and many loved ones. With training and upskilling, the young people will be enabled to respond to conflict at three levels – 1) personally and between friends and family, 2) at a village or community level and 3) at a national

level. The war has helped fuel serious conflicts which have manifested in different ways and involves diverse groups at all three levels.

How you can help

- Consider a financial contribution. Each event for 30 to 40 young people for the two days in remote villages costs approximately Rs 30,000 (AU\$230) for bus hire/driver, food, materials and equipment
- Provide formal conflict resolution skills-based training
- Nominate to be the Coordinator of a committee in Australia which liaises, encourages, responds to issues and fundraises for the Peace Brigade in Mannar.



Kamal strides ahead



Group discussion on a public awareness campaign

Diaspora & friends exposure visits – Members of the Sri Lankan diaspora and non-Sri Lankan supporters have begun to visit Mannar on a regular basis. Their visits take the form of short term stop overs to check out the work of Diaspora Lanka or much longer sojourns of between one and four months to undertake specific tasks – business planning, training, project management, town planning, research, and much more. We encourage direct relationship-building with people ‘on the ground’ and through it the opportunities for reconciliation based on real, robust and recurring interaction.

Adib Behzadpour – a Brisbane-based Aussie with Iranian heritage came for five weeks and supported four projects: Women Village Backbone project (business plan writing), IT Platform (youth support and training), Mannar Town Plan (preparation of presentations for Council hierarchy and staff), Donkey welfare project (research and field visits).



Benil reads Adib some of his poetry



A time of relaxation at the beach between meetings

Samanthi Gunawardena (Australia), **Trudy Jurianz** (Sri Lanka) and **Sion Zivetz** (USA) – the three came for a weekend to gain an overview of Diaspora Lanka’s projects – women’s development, IT Platform, Mannarin Marumalarchi 2022 and the town planning process.



Early morning breakfast surprise for Sion



En route to Tallaimannar with Kithan ice cream

Kumudu – the intrepid traveller braved flooded highways and byways to familiarize himself with the IT Platform crew and conduct training in Customer Relations and an Introduction to Excel. His two day visit laid the foundations for ongoing support and mentoring of staff. Kumudu contributed generously toward a generator and a light projector for ITP.



New generator for ITP with love from Canada & Oz



IT Platform training session

Kithsiri Perera – Siri from Canada and his Colombo supporters visited Mannar to get a sense of Diaspora Lanka’s operation. They were particularly interested in Mannarin Marumalarchi 2022, our community visioning project, and the IT Platform youth business. Back in Canada, Siri also collected funds towards the electric generator for ITP. Sincere thanks to Vettivelu Nallainayagam, Imali Perera, Ken Krakczky and Rajan Vedanayagam for their generous donations.



Kithsiri Perera finds out about IT Platform



Outside the ITP business premises

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 swkrots@dodo.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 **Ross House, Lev 4, 241 Flinders Lane, Melbourne Vic 3000.**

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 informing him of the donation, your name and address and a **tax deductible receipt** will be posted to you.

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



Peace Brigade committee meeting



Diaspora Lanka worker, Grace



Vision

A reconciled and prosperous Sri Lanka through the efforts of a united and constructive diaspora.

Mission

Nurture a durable peace both in Sri Lanka and in diaspora countries through working for reconciliation and social, economic, environmental and political transformation in Sri Lanka.

Values

- **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.

Strategic objectives

- **Leadership** - act as a credible link between the diaspora and communities in Sri Lanka
- **Governance** - ensure organisational integrity in processes and systems
- **Inquiry** - explore a constructive role for the diaspora in post-conflict Sri Lanka
- **Action** - undertake specific actions in response to identified issues in Sri Lanka and Australia
- **Outreach** - collaborate with global diaspora networks committed to a better Sri Lanka.

Core principles

- **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 and multi-stakeholder approach that uplifts a district through harnessing skills, experience and resources of 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.

Principles in action

- 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 our 'ego' at the door.

Key activities

Sri Lanka

- Develop coalitions of support across ethnic, religious and geographic boundaries
- Understand the mind, challenges and aspirations of the Sri Lankan polity
- Develop a range of responses from strategic edge to good practice initiatives
- Ensure implementational capacity through ground staff teams, partnerships and networks
- Scale-up the learning from local contexts to inform strategies at a national level.

In Australia

- Establish an effective organizational base
- To facilitate constructive inter-ethnic relations and dialogue
- Establish close, robust and enduring relationships between Diaspora Lanka and people on the ground in Mannar
- Identify areas of expertise required in Sri Lanka and arrange knowledge transfer
- Promote an alternative 'no-enemies' approach to the issues of Sri Lanka.

In Mannar

- Conduct formal and informal interviews and focus groups - residents, NGOs, government, business, religious leaders and communities
- Investigate government and private sector intentions for the area
- Identify the micro issues and processes which require attention and make links to outside assistance to address deficits
- Gain a strategic understanding and direction for interventions grounded by local input
- Pursue strategic collaborations and networks of reconciliation and community rebuilding.
- Identify and prioritise projects for rebuilding efforts in regional Sri Lanka.

Current projects

Projects for rebuilding efforts in Mannar are established in close collaboration with community:

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

Get involved in Sri Lanka - development projects, business advice & planning, exposure visits, knowledge transfers, government negotiations, skills development, English language teaching

Get involved in Oz - dialogue discussions, project liaison, research, fundraising, media, conference organizing, committee roles (advocacy, PR, finance, web, admin, strategic planning)

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