



Communiqué

THE HUMPTY
DUMPTY INSTITUTE

Monthly Communiqué from Sri Lanka

February 2008

As HDI completes the first year of its two-year program in Sri Lanka, we can look back with a great deal of satisfaction. In spite of the severe security challenges posed by working in a hot conflict zone, our partners, HALO Trust and Land O'Lakes, have made huge strides under extraordinarily difficult conditions. Much of it has been due to the dedicated staff on the ground who continue to work relentlessly even as the security situation in Jaffna deteriorates. One thing is certain: the removal of land mines coupled with our Dairy Development project has brought new hope to the people of Jaffna. The land we have cleared has liberated areas for agriculture and provided new access to roads, schools and hospitals. Mary Wilson's benefit concert in Colombo was a rousing success and with the additional money that was raised we were able to expand our support to landmine survivors by contributing concert proceeds to the Jaffna Jaipur Center for Disability Rehabilitation, the Vazaaham Home for the Blind, and Sri Lanka's Association of Disabled Ex-Service Personnel.

In February 2008, HALO Trust cleared an additional 3,000 square meters at our project site, bringing the total land cleared of deadly land mines since January 2007 to 150,430 square meters. A total of 430 land mines have been removed from the ground. Also in February, HALO began to tackle three new minefields. One of these fields - Kalvayal C -- is a huge, expansive task with surveys indicating "nuisance" mining. This demonstrates that LTTE and SLA forces did not have the opportunity to establish thick defensive mine lines due to the fluid nature of the battles fought in this particular area. As a result, individual land mines are now found dotted sporadically around the minefield following no set pattern or logic - making mine clearance that much more difficult, tedious and dangerous. The psychological effect of these "nuisance" mines on families living in proximity to the Kalvayal C minefield means that the land has remained unused and uncultivated. Clearance of this area will reverse this trend allowing small farmers to cultivate this land for the first time in nearly 15 years.

The month of February, 2008, also marks Land O'Lakes' seventh month of operation. Even in this relatively short period of time and under Land O Lakes steady hand and experienced leadership, our program is making a deep impact on the dairy sector in Jaffna. LOL has already graduated 448 small farmers in Jaffna from the first phase of its training seminars, and during February, LOL began phase two selecting the second batch of farmers to be trained. All told, 1,300 farmers in Jaffna will receive modern farming and livestock training when the program is completed. Moving beyond our initial projections, LOL received permission from the Sri Lankan authorities to expand the scope of work to the Islands in Jaffna. LOL is planning to recruit farmers in this area for training as well. LOL has also established 10 model farms and continues to monitor the operation of these farms. Small farmers from around the district are visiting the model farms to get a first hand account of new and modern methods of caring for livestock. Under the program, 10 new computers were donated to field veterinarian offices who work closely with our local partner, the Yarlco Dairy, and LOL's Extension Agents. The computers will be used to keep a database of dairy farmers along with dairy products for Yarlco, while continuing to assist the Dairy in financial management techniques. New packaging designs and logos were launched for pasteurized milk, yoghurt and ice cream products as well. And new promotional sign boards and wall hangings were supplied and hung at 9 Yarlco sales branches. Record sales of milk were recorded after the face lift. All in all, we are well on way to reaching our goal of dramatically increasing the volume of milk being produced in Jaffna. February was a very good month for the Humpty Dumpty Institute and its partners.

An interview with Elango Mariathan - Program Coordinator for Land O'Lakes

Elango Mariathan is 31 years old and lives in Jaffna with his wife who is a teacher at a Government School. He has been LOL's Program Coordinator for the past 8 months. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science from the Bharathidasan University in India. He was born in Jaffna and studied at St. Patrick's College, a leading Catholic School. His studies were interrupted when he was in Grade 9 as he was displaced together with his family as war broke out. They fled to India as refugees in 1990. He went on to continue his studies in India earning a degree and returned to Sri Lanka in 2002 after the Ceasefire Agreement was signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE.

Did the rest of your family return to Jaffna when you did?

Most of my family live in Colombo. My father works as a Coordinator in an NGO in Vavuniya, and my mother is a housewife. I have 4 brothers and a sister. My older brother is in Canada, first younger brother works as a software Engineer in Colombo with a German company, second younger brother is studying in India, my sister works as Assistant Programme officer in an NGO and my youngest brother is a student.

What sort of training have you had and what has been your work experience?

I have followed several Community Development courses and Project Management trainings. I worked in the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR-India), Movimondo-Italy, Caritas-France, Danish Red Cross and Jaffna Social Action Centre. (JSAC). I started my social service activities when I was in a refugee camp in India and my leadership qualities improved while I was the president of youth groups. After the completion of my education I joined OfERR and started my work as computer operator cum education sector assistant and at the same time I served in refugee camps as a district volunteer. I was there for 2 years. When I came back to Jaffna, I was employed as a Field Officer at Movimondo. I was then offered the position of Field Coordinator at Caritas for Jaffna and Vanni which I accepted. My managerial skills improved in this job. I then worked for the Danish Red Cross and gained more knowledge about project management and finance. I worked as Documentation officer in JSAC for a short period. I have managed projects in the fields of emergency relief, construction and psychosocial support successfully.

Why did you apply to LOL?

My long term ambition is to contribute my talents and abilities to a well-established and reputable organization, where I can pursue career aspirations through which my dreams will be materialized. I am doing my best for the success of this development project because the success will help the people of Jaffna to improve consumption of nutritious fresh milk and value added products.

What do you do at LOL?

I am responsible for management of the programme, coordination with stake holders and partner organisations, monitoring of activities and reporting progress. I enjoy my job as it is interesting especially meeting with beneficiaries during field visits and working with our well experienced senior staff.



Elango at work



Outside the LOL Office in Jaffna



With cow on "Pongal" with Senior Staff

Jaffna has become increasingly tense in the past months. How do you cope with the stress?

I am not involved in any anti-government activities and don't have any bias, so I am always safe. Of course there is stress because of regular round-ups and road blocks, as well as shelling. I have conditioned my mind and live my life. However this tension should be reduced or stopped but I wonder who will solve this? The civilians of Jaffna should be protected and given a peaceful life.

What are your other interests/hobbies?

Playing volley ball in the evening and have fun with my friends at weekends. Other than that I like helping others.

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