



HDI

www.thehdi.org

Communiqué

THE HUMPTY DUMPTY
INSTITUTE

Monthly Communiqué from
Sri Lanka

March 2008

During the month of March 2008 HALO Trust cleared a total of 2,142 square meters bringing the total amount of land cleared in the Jaffna Peninsula since the beginning of our project to 152,572 square meters. Heavy rains hampered clearance as some minefields were flooded. However, HALO maintained productivity as they moved to different minefields that were accessible. HDI continued to fund mine clearance in the Kalvayal-C minefield. The majority of items found here have been unexploded ordnance (UXO) or their component parts such as tails, mortars, or cartridges from launched grenades and motors of rocket propelled grenades. HALO checked the component parts (numbering in the hundreds) to ensure that they have no explosive content and removed the items from the minefield so as not to alarm the local population during future cultivation. HALO has passed these items onto the Sri Lanka Army for disposal. HALO also conducted a number of demolitions of UXO successfully. This included 23 UXO (hand grenades, fuses, launched grenades and LTTE improvised detonators) at Kalvayal-C. HALO Medics were trained by British Doctor Jonathan Williams who spent 2 weeks in Jaffna (See interview).

Land O'Lakes continued to show progress as they began training their new rotation of farmer beneficiaries. 431 were selected with another 30 to be chosen from the 3 Jaffna District islands. A three-day business planning workshop targeting extension agents and the Department of Animal Production and Health divisional veterinarians was conducted in early March. And construction work and farm improvements for the ten model farms were finalized. LOL continued to strengthen capacities as they signed an MOU with LICBO Union defining their technical assistance. The feed mill production reached 60 metric tons of dairy mash in March which is up 200% from November 2007. On the sales and marketing fronts LOL conducted ten two-hour workshops for Yarlco Branch Managers towards improving their marketing and sales skills. The University of Jaffna, Faculty of Business, presented and delivered its detailed market and consumer study of the Jaffna Dairy industry. The Baseline Study on Dairy Cattle Production in the Jaffna District by the Department of Animal Science of the University of Jaffna was completed and presented to LOL and HDI. Both studies will serve not only as baseline data but would help strategize future programs.

Meet Dr. Jonathan William- The HALO Trust Doctor, Dr. Jonathan Williams

Dr. Jonathan Williams, a delightful, energetic individual fresh from his visit from Jaffna spoke to HDI. Each year Jonathan takes 2 weeks off and visits HALO programs around the world training their medical staff. He has visited various HALO programs around the world, Nagorno Karabakh in 2002, Afghanistan twice in 2003, Mozambique in 2005, Cambodia in 2006, Somaliland in 2007 and then Sri Lanka in 2008. He plans to carry on making a HALO visit for about 2 weeks each year. Jonathan is married and has 2 sons aged 19 & 15 and a daughter aged 17. His wife teaches History of Art at A level.

Jonathan who lives and practices medicine in the UK, trained at medical college in London qualifying in 1981 and worked in various London hospitals specializing in Pediatric Medicine before a six month post in Obstetrics and Gynecology before moving into Family Medicine. He has been a Full Time General Practitioner in Banbury near Oxford since 1988 and currently teaches medical students from Oxford University part time. He is currently undertaking further study for the Diploma in the Medical Care of Catastrophes in London that he feels will be helpful with his work with HALO.



With HALO staff on the minefields in Jaffna



Dr. Williams at work in the UK

How did you start working for HALO?

I work in a practice of 7 doctors, 2 others work part time for HALO in the same way that I do. We started work for HALO because one of our patients came to see one of my colleagues because he needed an HIV test before he worked for HALO in Angola. We asked him if they ever needed doctors and he said yes. We have done over 15 trips between us. I had decided to try and find more work overseas after working in The Balkans during the Kosovo crisis. It is difficult to find work abroad for 2 week periods that actually achieves a significant amount. I feel that it is possible to achieve a significant amount in a two week visit to a HALO program.

Have you worked in conflict or post conflict situations?

I worked in Macedonia in May and June 1999 for Save the Children when refugees were leaving Kosovo just before NATO went into Kosovo. SCF were providing health care in a refugee camp and supporting local hospitals and primary care facilities in an area close to the Kosovo border. Save The Children was also operating a service that worked to reunite families who had been separated while crossing the border into Macedonia.

You have just returned from Jaffna. What were your impressions?

I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to Jaffna. I felt the program was as usual extremely efficient and working under difficult and sometimes frustrating circumstances. I am always pleased to be part of an organization that is removing mines from schools, near wells and allowing farmland to be rehabilitated and used for agriculture again. It is of course difficult for HALO to operate in what seems to be a police state and you are well aware of the frustrations around re-supply to the Jaffna peninsula.

Did you visit the local hospital in Jaffna and how would you rate it?

I felt that the hospital in Jaffna was as well equipped as any that I have visited during any HALO visit worldwide. The Assistant Director was charming and had worked in London and Geneva as well as Colombo. I have recommended that all casualties are taken there and only transferred on after careful assessment by the medical director. If I visit Jaffna again I would like to spend more time in the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. I can see real potential for student exchanges between Jaffna and the UK. I would also try to make contact with a primary care practitioner in Jaffna if I return. It is always fascinating for us to see how other health systems work.

You were in Jaffna to train the HALO Trust Medics, tell us something about this.

I find the HALO medics worldwide are generally of an extremely high standard. They are trained to the same protocol worldwide and have a standard list of drugs, intravenous fluids and equipment for use in the unlikely event of a minefield accident. They usually have little or no medical or nursing training. Most of the medics are de-miners who are promoted to be medics. In some other countries there are medics with a background in healthcare and indeed in Afghanistan there are some doctors who work as medics.

It is usually clear quite early in a visit to a HALO program anywhere in the world that the medics are extremely competent. Within a few days the visiting doctor from the UK can see that they are well trained and that the training follows the standard regime. I have never come across a HALO program where the medics are not completely competent. There are always things that they can improve on but I am always impressed by the standard of care they can offer. They are proud to be part of a team that is helping to improve the situation for their fellow countrymen. It is always possible to offer further training if they are already good at minefield accident scenarios. I trained them about Road Traffic Accidents and burns while I was in Jaffna this time.

For more information on HDI's work, please contact Jeanne Samuel, the Director of the Sri Lanka office of HDI, #05-03, East Tower, World Trade Centre, Echelon Square, Colombo 1. Tel: 2421258.

www.thehdi.org.