



The One Sri Lanka Foundation is committed to developing and implementing humanitarian projects in Sri Lanka that will transform **seeds of devastation** into **seeds of restoration**, strengthening community values and rehabilitating families and victims of the war that has plagued Sri Lanka for the past nineteen years.

onesrilanka

The concept of One Sri Lanka Foundation came to life when the wheelchair project was initiated in June of 2002 in partnership with The Wheel Chair Foundation in Danville, California and the support of the Rotary Club of Walnut Creek, California. In August of 2002, 240 wheel chairs were distributed across Sri Lanka to hundreds of needy individuals adults and children alike.

At this time, it was very evident that the wheelchairs were high in demand among all communities in Sri Lanka and the main cause appeared be the landmines in the north and the east of the island. We realized that the landmines affected everybody alike regardless whether you are a soldier, a freedom fighter, a villager or an innocent child.

In addition to the devastation caused to human life, it was also equally damaging to the cattle and the livestock in those regions.

Further, the landmines also posed a barrier to the progress of trade and commerce in the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka. This will seriously limit the business opportunities to the organizations in Colombo looking to expand their operations in the north and the east.

Mission

Our mission is to raise funds from individual donors, charitable institutions and non profit organizations across the world to completely eliminate the landmine menace in Sri Lanka and convert mine fields to rice fields.

These compelling reasons, particularly in the light of the current peace initiatives combined with the passion and the drive of Sri Lankans living in the United States, to help their motherland resulted in ONE SRILANKA, a foundation dedicated to humanitarian projects in Sri Lanka.

the wheelchair project

The wheelchair project was successfully implemented in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Walnut Creek California, The Rotary Club of Colombo West, Sri Lanka, The Rotary International (RI) Wheelchair Foundation and The Wheelchair Foundation of Danville, California. A strategic partnership with the Rotary Club of Colombo West enabled the successful planning and distribution of 240 wheelchairs throughout Sri Lanka. A ceremonial presentation was held on August 16, 2002 during RI President Bhichai Rattakul visit to Colombo, Sri Lanka. The ceremony was attended by a large number of Sri Lankan Rotarians, visiting Rotarians from India, Rotarian N. Pathmanathan, Governor, RI District 3220 and Rotarian Chris Gnanakone, Chief Development Officer, of The One Sri Lanka Foundation (OSLF) in Walnut Creek California.

The recipients included children disabled by polio and people affected as a result of a nearly twenty-year war in the Northern and Eastern regions of Sri Lanka. This humanitarian project was able to deliver hope, mobility and a sense of personal dignity to 240 children and people affected by landmines, advancing age and disease.

The distribution of wheel chairs was carried out on a needs basis to benefit people



of all ethnic groups on an island-wide basis in different cities that included Jaffna, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Matara, Colombo, Galle, North Central Province, and the North Western Province. Landmine disabled soldiers; inmates of the Cancer Hospital and crippled inmates of the Victoria Home for the Incurables also received wheelchairs. The most heart warming experience was the handing over of wheel chairs to children and adults crippled from birth, totally immobile and confined to their beds to lead a life of helplessness and desolation.

A group of 32 Rotarian families of the Rotary Club of Colombo West including 2 Past District Governors, PDG Gemunu Gunatilleke and PDG Gamini Edirisinghe, both of members of the Rotary Club of Colombo West, District 3220, Sri Lanka, visited the

Jaffna District, located in the Northern Province and handed over 40 wheel chairs to children disabled by landmines, polio etc. in Kilinochchi, one of the areas worst affected by the conflict. These children were selected with the active assistance of the Rotary Club of Jaffna.

The efficient distribution of 240 wheel chairs was highly commended by the Wheel Chair Foundation. Strong links forged between the Rotary Club of Colombo West, Sri Lanka and the One Sri Lanka Foundation and The Wheelchair Foundation in California will continue to grow to promote international understanding and good will through humanitarian service. The second consignment of 240 Wheelchairs is scheduled to be delivered to Sri Lanka in April 2003. ■

the landmine project



Landmine Crisis in Sri Lanka

The use of antipersonnel mines has resulted in large areas of fertile agricultural land, urban areas, roads, water resources, and livestock in the northern and eastern parts of the country being seriously affected. Unfortunately, mines have been laid in some of the most heavily populated and most fertile areas.

Sri Lankan Defense Secretary Austin Fernando estimated that the peninsula's roads and farmlands are riddled with around 700,000 mines planted by government forces and the LTTE. There are now two million antipersonnel landmines in the areas under LTTE control.

In April 2001, the UN reported that antipersonnel mines were threatening the resettlement of displaced persons in LTTE-held areas. The problem is only rising in scale with the cease-fire in place. The anticipation of imminent movement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is creating serious concern regarding the need for mine clearance, minefield marking and mine risk education. Thousands of displaced people are spontaneously returning home before mine clearance has occurred.

HALO Project Report on Sri Lanka

In January 2002, following almost twenty years of violence, the Government of Sri

Lanka and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam agreed to a cease-fire as a pre-cursor to peace talks later in the year. Over the years the fighting led to displacement of around 800,000 Sri Lankans of both Sinhalese and Tamil origins. This peace initiative has sparked the start of spontaneous refugee repatriation with many Sri Lankans now returning to the former conflict areas. UNHCR estimate that as many as 250,000 could return to northern Sri Lanka this year alone.

HALO is being supported by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and Foundation Pro Victims to undertake a mine and danger area survey of northern Sri Lanka. The survey will not only produce an accurate picture of the overall problem, but will involve the posting of "Danger Mine Signs!" around hazardous areas.

The survey phase of HALO's program in Sri Lanka is set to run for six months from 1 June, but will be immediately followed by the establishment of a full mine clearance project. HALO is the only mine clearance agency presently registered in Sri Lanka. HALO aims initially to deploy nine manual teams, three mechanical units, 3 vegetation cutters and employ a staff total of over 300. ■