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# THE HUMANITARIAN

*Join hands for HUMANITY*

## A wholesome younger generation ADRA Sri Lanka

### Nutrition – Programme Best Practices

Ask any person the meaning of nutrition and they will probably tell you nutrition is eating things that are good for you. As children, we were always told to eat our vegetables and drink enough milk if we wanted to grow. Everybody is familiar with this; what most of us do not know is that nutrition goes far beyond growing. It affects our mental wellbeing, a child's school performance, recovery of wounds, and helps reduce the risk of diseases and also the body's ability to fight illnesses. This is especially true during the first formative five years for any growing child, which is why, good nutrition is so important at this stage of life.

Unfortunately, not all children have access to proper nutrition. Almost one-third of children in developing countries are malnourished – 150 million are underweight for their age. Malnutrition has been defined as the state of being poorly nourished, which is not merely a result of too little food, but of a combination of factors: insufficient protein, energy and micronutrients, frequent infections or disease, poor care and feeding practices, inadequate



health services and unsafe water and sanitation.

Malnutrition is also a major health problem among children in Sri Lanka. The most recent Demographic and Health Survey 2006/7 (DHS 2006/7) showed that 22 per cent of Sri Lankan children below five years of age are

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# Challenging their destiny



Today, Amith Shantha is a proud entrepreneur producing pharmacy bags, doormats and wicks. His income is substantial and he is pleased to note that he been able to save for his future needs.

Shantha's life also centres around his family and community. An early riser, he wakes up cleans his home garden and takes care of his ornamental flowers. He then begins work at his make shift workshop and finishes the day at sunset, completing orders from clients. His daily routine also includes visits to the temple to engage in religious activities and spending time with his family.

According to his mother T. A. Mainona, "My son, Amith, has an elder brother and younger sister, they are normal children; we were helpless when he was every small, but now he is

**U**ndeterred by physical and mental deformities, Amith Shantha is a young man determined to challenge his destiny. Despite being born mentally handicapped, and without fingers and toes, he has strived to create a life of normalcy.

His parents stood helpless when he was rejected by the local school community at an early age, thus, depriving him of a normal school routine. Instead, his formative years were spent at the Sukitha College in Horana, where mentally handicapped children are taught. He remained at this institution until he was 18 years and graduated acquiring skills, which will prove vital for his livelihood.



playing with normal children. Therefore, now there is some kind of certainty about his future."

Shantha's story is not an isolated tale, according to Mr. A. D. Sirisena, the Chairman of the Kalutara Parents' and Teachers'

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underweight, 18 per cent being too short (stunted), and 15 per cent too thin (wasted) as measured by weight for height.

ADRA Sri Lanka recognises the right of all children to receive the highest possible standard of health, specially the right to good nutrition. To pursue this goal we have developed a programme based on 'Positive Deviance', a methodology which emphasises sustainable community mobilisation techniques and valuable local knowledge and resources, rather than simply providing external material.

Currently, Project HEARTH is being implemented in the Ampara District, in the Pottuvil Division. It targets mothers and small children from families that were directly or indirectly affected by the tsunami and are currently affected by the political instability

of the country. HEARTH project consists of 12 sessions where mothers learn the principles for healthy habits and good nutrition based on local knowledge and practices.

These sessions also include a background of the project, its contents, a market survey, the training of volunteer mothers, organising feeding centres, weighing of children and preparation of foods.

This is followed by home visits to the caregivers by volunteers to monitor progress. As part of the programme, women are trained on the value of prioritising the use of home gardening to feed their families. Gardening is a common practice in Sri Lanka and the programme aims to challenge the perception that home gardens are only for making profit by demonstrating the nutritional value found in a home garden.

We acknowledge the task is big. However, it is the responsibility of all governments and NGOs to protect children's right to better nutrition. For in doing so we are able to lay the foundation for a healthy and productive society.

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Organisation of the Mentally Handicapped, they have identified 600 mentally handicapped children like Amith within the district. Of these, 130 children have been selected for vocational training. He added that, "Being able to train these children for self-employment is a great achievement since there were strong opinions among the society that these children are a burden for a family, cannot do anything by themselves, and have to be nurtured by another throughout their lives."

Mr. Sirisena's aim is to change society's perception of the mentally handicapped. As a retired Deputy Education Director, he uses his experience and knowledge to advise the

organisation. Their curriculum includes concerts, sports festivals, and annual walks. According to him, these events are also geared to create awareness within the society about these challenged children.

According to him, though the Government has initiated a special Children's Unit for children with disabilities, much more needs to be done to create awareness at national level. Moreover, organisations providing services such as theirs are not recognised. Despite these shortcomings, he is proud and satisfied at the change his organisation has been able to bring about in the lives of these children.



Interview

Photo: NRC staff assisting IDPs

## NRC Making a difference for the displaced

### Mandate

*The Norwegian Refugee Council shall promote and protect the rights of all people who have been forced to flee their countries, or their homes within their countries, regardless of their race, religion, nationality, or political convictions.*

*The Norwegian Refugee Council shall in all ways seek to provide viable, durable solutions with regard to both its spokesman activities and its emergency relief efforts.*

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) established its Sri Lanka programme in early 2004. It has since continued to provide humanitarian assistance to those displaced by the conflict in the north

and east of the country as well as the tsunami disaster of December 2004. NRC assists internally displaced persons (IDPs) and supports their reintegration back into the community through its expertise and focus in the following areas; coordination and provision of shelter, information counselling and legal assistance (ICLA), camp management and protection monitoring. At present, it operates in six districts through its head office in Colombo and field offices in Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara, and Puttalam. During the tsunami displacement it also had offices in Anuradhapura, Galle, and Jaffna.

NRC Initially commenced its Sri Lanka programme with

shelter assistance, providing permanent shelter to conflict affected IDPs who were returning to their villages following the ceasefire in 2002. The ICLA project followed, mainly to help IDPs who were facing difficulties with land titles due to long-term absence from their lands, as well as lost documents.

Following the tsunami disaster, the organisation's mandate was extended to respond to emergency and post-tsunami needs. Education, training of teachers, reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools, and camp management training were among the additional projects that were established during this period.

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Photo: Providing camp management training for IDPs

At present NRC is actively engaged in supporting the Government to provide assistance to the IDP influx in Vavuniya from conflict affected areas in the north. NRC has built 240 emergency shelters in one of the transit sites in Vavuniya and has begun construction of a further 320 emergency shelters in a new site which has been allocated for IDPs. More shelters will be built depending on needs. A basic household kit containing non-food items (NFI) have been distributed among 1, 008 arriving families and a further 1, 000 packs will be distributed soon. NRC's Protection Monitoring Team visits IDP sites on a regular basis to assist the Government and other agencies to identify and coordinate related gaps in assistance.

Below is a summary of NRC's core activities and its operations in collaboration with other organisations and Government agencies.

#### Coordination and provision of shelter

Shelter is one of NRC's main projects. At present, NRC is delivering emergency shelters and NFIs to the IDP influx in Vavuniya. Shelter operations also continue for war affected IDPs in Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts. Support to returnees is provided through a Transitional Shelter Programme in areas of return in Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts.

#### Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA)

The ICLA project was established in 2005 and is one of the largest legal aid programmes in Sri Lanka. Assistance is provided through offices in Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Puttalam employing international and national legal experts. As of January 2009, the ICLA case load had exceeded 50, 000, of which approximately 95 per cent were civil document cases and land and property cases. The

programme works in close contact with, and provides capacity building to, local Government Registrar Offices.

#### Camp Management

NRC is the sole provider in Sri Lanka for training in Camp Management to Government authorities, NGO staff, camp management agencies, IDP communities, and host communities. It ensures efficient and timely delivery of all services to displaced people across conflict affected areas in the north and east of the country, in accordance with international standards on managing IDP camps.

#### Protection Monitoring for the displaced

Mobile Protection Monitoring Teams in Vavuniya, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee Districts, led by international protection experts, advise IDPs about their rights during displacement and return. They gather and disseminate information on protection related issues and gaps to relevant Government authorities, UN agencies, and other INGOs.

The NRC is an independent humanitarian organisation, working actively for more than 60 years to create a safer and more dignified life for refugees and IDPs. The organisation works in over 20 countries around the world to defend IDP rights, assist with food, shelter, and education, and offers counselling and legal aid. NRC is a private Norwegian foundation independent of any religious or political allegiance.

# PROMOTING ECONOMICAL LEADERSHIP AMONG WOMEN IN POVERTY



## MILK PRODUCTS – VAVUNIYA

In the past the people of Vavuniya have been dependent on agriculture and local livestock for their livelihood. However, today these ventures do not produce sufficient yield and thereby lack of income. A project which promotes both economic leadership among women has been sponsored by the following organisations: Group SDOO, OXFAM, IOM, Department of Livestock and the State Cooperative Department.

Established in September last year, the Vavuniya Komatha Livestock Entrepreneur Cooperative Society's main

objective is to provide a maximum price for the livestock milk through creating a healthy livestock unit which can contribute towards maximum productivity. The project also introduces Carbon Trioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and hopes to achieve both, economical leadership for women and increase local job opportunities for youth in the area.

This project mainly consists of villages in the Sasthirikoolankulam, Ichchankulam, Kalmadu, Marakkarambalai Grama Niladari Divisions and today boasts a membership of 210, of which 180 are women, and 30 are men.

## Activities

- Providing healthy cows and bulls;
- Providing and promoting Carbon Trioxide to the livestock;
- Providing training to the farmers;
- Conducting first aid activities to the livestock, and conducting activities and immunisation for them;
- Milk purchase and selling;
- Milk products;
- Sale of drugs to the livestock;
- Production and sale of organic fertilisers;
- Production and distribution of model food for the livestock (hay food, minerals

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# Making a difference?

## 'One very poor rural village restoration'

In the aftermath of the tsunami of December 2004, many international and national organisations joined in the rebuilding effort. YGRO is one such entity which embarked on a relief and restoration mission shortly after the tsunami. Committed to rural poverty reduction through empowerment and development of rural communities, pre-tsunami, the organisation concentrated its work in the northwestern and northern districts of Sri Lanka. This was carried out with all communities irrespective of race or religion, and in particular with both sides of the ethnic divide.

However, once the tsunami struck, the organisation soon realised that due to limited resources and positioning of staff, they were able to focus on the Batticaloa District. Hence, they began their work conceptualised by selecting *'one very poor village totally devastated by the tsunami and doing everything to bring up to beat the community of the village affected'*.

The programme objective was initially to restore the communities to their pre-tsunami status. However, as work progressed, this purpose was enlarged. This was mainly due to the encouragement received from the organisation's several partners including donors, MCC USA, Canada, and CIDA.

They supported YGRO to go beyond simply rehabilitation to the promotion of transforming of a community and the surrounding environment.

The tsunami raised to the ground all dwellings of the village community. The houses were predominantly thatched houses. The entire community were displaced and living in a school nearby. At the outset, immediate relief including, clothing, water, temporary shelter (huts) were built. Thereafter, public toilets, household utensils, cleaning of wells, basic health care, tool for trade, business training, and resuming of vocations was enabled. Also, permanent housing with environment restoration and transformation was carried out. The construction of a nursery building for children is currently ongoing.

### Current status

- For the community of 86 families comprising 325 people of which 153 children and youth and 157 women, 77 permanent houses have been built and handed over.
- A three-year environment transformational programme called 'Green Canopy Vitchukalai' is ongoing. This includes coastal green belt, home gardens for each and every house.
- A community empowerment development programme is ongoing.

- Building of a nursery school to house 100 children with all the necessary equipment.

### Lessons learnt:

The fact that YGRO did not have experience in disaster relief, resulted in being dependent on other partners for advice and implementation, which assisted tremendously in the end result.

#### 1. Partnership

In the wake of a disaster of such magnitude the intentional coming together of the Government Institutions, International Donors such as MCC, CIDA and International NGOs such as Habitat for Humanity, National NGO RRI (Rainforest Rescue International), qualified and experienced Architects (MMGS Architects), a host of well wishers and Donors together with the community of Vitchukalai village was the single most powerful reason for the tremendous success of the programme.

#### 2. Grassroots developmental organisations' coordination

The coordination of the programme by a small grassroots developmental organisation contributed to the empowerment of the villagers through the programme design. This is because concepts of

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- and urea distilling);
- Production and sale of ghee;
- Sale of country egg;

- By Food products;
- Artificial productivity; and
- CO<sub>3</sub> grass sales (sale of high productivity grass).

Outcomes

- Monthly milk purchase and distribution will be 13, 410 litres;
- Economical leadership of women and employment opportunities have been generated;
- Milk productions are manufactured in the Vavuniya district. Among them distribution is being done to outside districts too;
- Productivity of healthy livestock increased;
- Healthy food manufacture for the livestock is increased; and
- Women in Sri Lanka are involved in artificial productivity of livestock.

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Development were continuously brought into the forefront. In view of this, the village partnership with YGRO is now an ongoing long-term partnership.

**3. Governmental liaison**

From the inception honouring the Government’s local bodies from the grassroots level of Gramasevaka, Rural Development Society, health and sanitary officials up to the District Secretary and obtaining permission, permits, and approval, enabled the Government to be rightful stakeholders (land permits, sanitation certification, entrusting State land for environmental

programmes, etc.)

**4. Women as rightful stakeholders**

Consultation with women at every stage and hence their choices in decision making. Examples of location of houses, which side the kitchens should face, chimneys for kitchens were some of the derived benefits (CIDA-PSU assisted the group a great deal in focussing on this).

**5. Community empowerment**

Community meeting and training with a view to empowerment. Here, specialists such as bankers, environmentalists (RRI) have spoken to the community on

conservation, waste management, and harmful use of pesticides, chemical fertilisers, savings habit and business training. YGRO staff constantly called for meetings of the community, whereby, several developmental values and concepts were imparted. In our opinion we feel that this was made possible because of Divine blessings.

**6. Targeting the poor and vulnerable**

Targeting the poor as a priority aided YGRO to take a ‘bottoms up’ Developmental Approach, which eventually benefited surrounding communities and the region as a whole (empowerment process).



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