

Dear fellow VACD Committee Members and Volunteers,

Blessings and Greetings from Australia....

It is with great pleasure that Yasmin and I address this letter to you.

We wish to place on record and express our deepest and most sincere gratitude for your advice, support, assistance, dedication and passion towards children with disabilities and their families. Your devotion to VACD objectives has helped many children and their families overcome known and untold difficulties. VACD has definitely made a meaningful impact and a difference in their lives.

Our charity has grown rapidly since its launch on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2011 and the projects initiated and implemented by us have been a great success. We have been pleasantly surprised by the exponential growth in the number of children registered with us as at date. The present number of 141 registered children/young adults, in just under one year, is beyond what we ever imagined. This highlights the need for us to expand our reach and to help other needy children and families in the province and beyond, and for us to make an even more meaningful difference in their lives. None of these achievements would have been possible without your help and support and the support and assistance given to us by our sponsors and donors.

We are also aware that the success of this charity to date has been primarily due to a few dedicated people having borne more than a fair share of their responsibilities. These volunteers spent their time, money and put their heart and soul into VACD projects for the sake of the children and their families. While the results produced by these volunteers have been outstanding, it is not correct and is unacceptable for us to continue to expect more out of this devoted and dedicated group.

The present rate of growth and increased requests for assistance would amplify the burden placed on these few individuals even further and therefore needs urgent corrective action. We also need to ensure that the momentum and enthusiasm generated by VACD so far in the pursuit of helping children and their families does not weaken. There are quite a few outstanding projects and plans that need to be addressed and implemented. We must not fall into a trap of complacency or lethargy. The children and their families depend on us for continued assistance and guidance. We are their only hope. This fact was abundantly clear to me when I visited Bandarawela in October this year.

The other reason we need to streamline the project committees is because we will soon be undertaking a project to convert a property that is in the process of being donated to us into a modern VACD centre for children and their families. We envisage raising funds needed to upgrade this property and its surrounds so that the centre meets and complies with international health and safety standards and guidelines. The centre will provide the children with a safe and sound environment where they will be provided with health, occupational, recreational, computer, library, retreat, therapeutic and other forms of training and facilities. Our volunteers, in particular the Project Advisory Committee members will have to devote a lot of their time and efforts towards legal, fund raising and other matters around this enormous project.

Yasmin and I are also conscious and aware that some mistakes were made by VACD members during the current year and are keen to ensure that such occurrences never take place in the future. We should at all times avoid letting petty differences, misunderstandings, deliberate or unintended bad behavior or activities that damage the reputation of our charity and the reputation of our members and volunteers take our focus away from what VACD stands for and who we serve. We will not be able to achieve our noble goals and aspirations and continue on this challenging journey to help those who need us most, if we are not role models that are respected and admired by the very community that we serve.

We have accordingly, after consultation with experts in Australia, designed a “code of conduct” for all VACD members and volunteers in order to protect the children, their families, our members and the reputation of our charity. **Mr. Ranjith Manawadu and Mr. Milton Perera** will circulate the “code of conduct” document among all active VACD members very soon. All VACD members need to read, agree and sign this document and I will collect them when I pay you all a visit in April 2013. This document will assist us to conform to strict Australian laws, regulations and the compliance regime that governs activities of organisation such as ours. The intent and the spirit of this document is to protect the children, their families, the charity and its members from unwanted litigation, harm and loss of reputation.

Yasmin and I, after long, deep and thoughtful deliberation and careful judgment have used our insights and discretion as Project Sponsors to design a broad and better streamlined team structure that allocates and defines specific responsibilities across the group. This new structure should help alleviate the excessive burden placed on some members and help the charity function more efficiently and meet future challenges as we expand our activities and reach throughout the province.

**This new structure detailed below will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 and will be incorporated as an addendum in the existing VACD memorandum of understanding.**

***Project Advisory Committee:***

- Hon. Nanda Matthew – Governor - Uva Province - ***Patron***
- Mr. Felix Stephen – Head of Investment Strategy & Research – Advance Asset Management – Australia - ***Project Sponsor***
- Mr. Ranjith Manawadu – Social Worker - ***Chairman***
- Mrs. Damayanthi Munasinghe – Social Worker - ***Secretary & Steering Committee Member***
- Mr. Milton Anthony Perera – Consultant - ***Project Holder & Steering Committee Member***
- Mr. K.A. Rathnayaka - Social Worker - ***Team Leader, Public Relations Coordinator & Steering Committee Member***
- Mr. H.B. Dissanayake – Local Businessman and Social Worker - ***Auditor & Steering Committee Member***
- Dr Ranjith Amarakoon – Medical Superintendent – Base Hospital Diyatalawa - ***Senior Advisor***
- Dr .Mrs. Kumuduni Cooray – Consultant Pediatrician – Base Hospital Diyatalawa
- Dr. Neelika Dissanayaka- Consultant Pediatrician General Hospital Badulla
- Col. R.M.Kumarasinghe – Commanding Officer Sri Lanka Army

- Mr. Chandra Dias – Investment Banker & Rotarian - Colombo Sri Lanka
- Mrs. Gaya Hapuarachchi - Consultant

***Project Steering Committee:***

- ***Project Holder*** - Mr. Milton Anthony Perera - Consultant
- ***Team Leader & Public Relations Coordinator*** - Mr. K.A. Rathnayaka – Social Worker
- ***Secretary*** - Mrs. Damayanthi Munasinghe – Social Worker
- ***Auditor*** - Mr. H.B. Dissanayake – Local Businessman and Social Worker
- Mr. K.A.Devaranjana – CEO Special Education Unit - Bandarawela
- Mr. G.D.S.M.Abeynayaka - Staff St. Joseph’s College Bandarawela
- Mrs. R.M. Nandawathi - Staff Dharmashoka MV Bandarawela
- Mrs. Sivapakkiyamathi Veloo – Volunteer Teacher Sir Razeek Fareed MV Bandarawela
- Mrs. Sarfoon Niza Niyas – Social Worker
- 05 Mothers from ‘*Mothers’ Union*’

***Project Steering Committee Associate members:***

- Mr.M.M.P.K. Manathunga – Social Service Officer – Provincial Council (UVA)
- Mr. R.W. Ajith – Social Service Officer – Divisional Secretariat
- Ms. W.M. Jayanthi Kumari – Child Right Protection Officer - Divisional Secretariat
- Mrs. M.S. Thanuja Jayasuriya – Women’s Development Officer – Divisional Secretariat
- Mr. A.S.D. Alwis – Local Businessman and Social Worker
- Mr. A.M.P.D. Chathuranga – Director Abhichara Academy
- Mr. S.M.N.D. Kumara – Staff St Joseph’s College Bandarawela
- Mr. J.M. Athula Keerthi – Staff St Joseph’s College Bandarawela
- Mr.R.M. Ranjith – Staff Dharmashoka MV Bandarawela
- 05 Mothers from ‘*Mothers’ Union*’

***Australian Project Coordinator:***

- Mrs. Yasmin Stephen – Australian Social Worker

***VACD Web Administrator:***

- Mr. Chris Thomas – Analyst – Advance Asset Management Australia

Information relating to the above committee structure will be circulated by **Mr. Ranjith Manawadu and Mr. Milton Perera** to all active members of VACD. Please notify either Mr. Manawadu or Mr. Perera, within two weeks of the receipt of this notice, of any concerns, reservations or suggestions regarding the structure that you may have. In the absence of any response within the specified period, it will be deemed that you have no issues with the new of structure and that you are willing to be a volunteer at VACD.

We have discussed with the project leadership team the need for volunteers to be guided and trained in a manner that will help further our cause. There will be workshops designed to guide train both members and volunteers and also use these training sessions to identify potential leaders of the future.

There are quite a few ongoing projects that are presently being discussed by the leadership. We have requested the leadership to keep all of you closely informed of all ongoing and future projects and would love to see more participation, ownership of responsibilities by all of you. We would also urge you to make yourselves available whenever project meetings are called.

Yasmin and I look forward to meeting with you all in April 2013. In the interim, we will keep in very close touch with all of you. Please feel free to contact us any time should the need arise.

We thank you for all you have done to help the children and their families and thank you also for being part of this journey that we have embarked upon on to share the gifts that we have with those who need them most.

Please always remember that as volunteers, we offer our services and share our wealth, time, talents and skills with the community because we want to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people who are less fortunate than us. We should not seek any glory, personal benefits or accolades as reward for our noble gestures. Ultimately, our goal and aim at VACD is to help children with disabilities and their families overcome many difficulties, offer them a better future and to make a meaningful difference in their lives.

Thank you one and all once again.

May God bless you and all those whom you love now and always.

With best wishes and warm regards,

Felix and Yasmin Stephen  
No: 26, Worthing place,  
Cherrybrook  
NSW 2126  
Australia  
Ph: +612 94845128 (home)  
+612 9236 3018 (Work)  
+61 401 364 156 (Mobile)  
Email: [fstephen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:fstephen@bigpond.net.au)

1<sup>st</sup> December 2012