

Vision and Mission of VACD

VACD was established to assist children with disabilities to overcome hardships associated with their physical and intellectual impairments and to eliminate social discrimination, community isolation and stigma and physical and sexual abuse.

VACD also aims to alleviate poverty by providing financial assistance and vocational training to families where parents of these children are low paid, low skilled labourers or subsistence farmers.

VACD assists children and their parents achieve their individual and collective dreams and aspirations by providing medical help, special education including life skills training etc. for children and parents, conducting public awareness programs for the community and engaging with the local community, local businesses, government departments and ministries to improve their welfare, gain local community acceptance and promulgate the rights of children and parents.

Governance team

Board of Directors

Chairman - Felix Stephen
 Director & Company Secretary - Giles Gunesekera
 Director & Treasurer - James Meighan
 Director - Greg Fendler
 Director - Hemraj Fernando
 Director - Andrew Heyden

VACD Limited – Administration

Administration & Communications Secretary - Yasmin Stephen
 Web Administration - Chris Thomas
 Web Administration - Anura Warnakulasuriya
 Auditor – Nalin Perera
 Tax Agent/Advisor - Patrick O'Brien

Board of Directors – Sri Lanka

Chairman - S M D Milton Anthony Perera
 Deputy Chairman - K A Ratnayake
 Secretary - Col R M Kumarasinghe
 Treasurer – D M Sunethra Deepthi
 D M Ranathunga – Director
 W D Manel – Director
 Sarfun N Niyas – Director
 A S D Alwis – Director





Chairman's report

Volunteers to Assist Children with Disabilities Ltd (VACD) is a non-government, not-for-profit charity founded in December 2011 in Bandarawela, Sri Lanka and Sydney, Australia to assist children with disabilities in the Uva Province overcome their physical, intellectual, social and economic adversities while also taking steps to eventually eliminate myths, ignorance, discrimination, stigma and social isolation these families confront within their local communities. VACD focuses its activities on children with physical, intellectual and developmental impairments mainly due to disorders such as autism and Down syndrome.

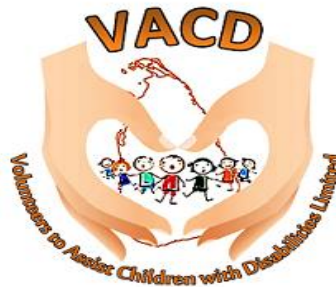
The Australian chapter of VACD is registered with the Australian Charities & Not-for-Profits Commission and the Australian Securities & Investments Commission, while the Sri Lankan chapter is incorporated as a private company under the Companies Act No.7 of 2007. The VACD centre in Bandarawela provides training in special life skills, vocational skills, music and dance for disabled children, and craft instruction for parents.



VACD now have 350+ registered children across all communities, races and religions. A majority of the parents of these children are subsistence farmers or low skilled and low income earning labourers. Children who attend the daily training sessions at the centre are provided with nutritious meals twice a week since a health inspector who visited found that the meals the children brought from home had little or no nutritional value. We have formed a collaborative partnership with "Make Some Change", a crowd sourcing social enterprise group who assist us to generate funds to meet the cost of these meals, which ideally should be provided daily.

In an effort to alleviate economic burdens borne by these families and to encourage the parents to establish viable small businesses that create their own household income opportunities, our leadership team works in close partnership with the Regional Development Bank, Bandarawela, who extend micro financing to parents of VACD registered children. VACD also liaises with the Tea Small Holdings Development Authority, Uva Provincial Department of Agriculture and Department of Industries





Development to provide these parents with training, guidance and assistance so that they could engage in economic ventures such as tea production, horticulture, bee keeping, and food preservation. Mr. Ajith Dissanayake, Provincial Industry Director who has been closely associated with VACD is considering a program to provide handloom machines and training for VACD parents, among many other projects and assistance programs.

The VACD leadership and officials from the Uva Provincial council met on 26th April and agreed on a series of measures such as:

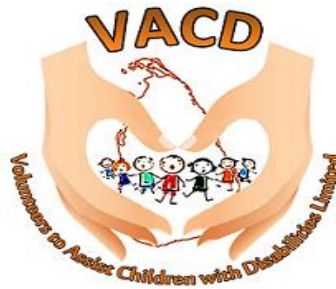
- The Social Services department together with VACD undertake a comprehensive survey to determine the full extent of child disability in the province;
- Provincial authorities to assist VACD to set up centres in townships where the survey reveals 25+ disabled children living in the area;
- Resumption of the VACD Paediatric clinic at the Bandarawela General Hospital with immediate effect;
- Department of Small Industries to provide vocational training to disabled children and parents while paying them a monthly allowance for incidental expenses, and on completion of their program strive to secure suitable employment for the trainees;
- Education, Child Probation Services and Social Services Departments in collaboration with VACD to organize an annual event to celebrate World Children's Day/Disabled Children's Day;
- Child Probation Services and Women & Children's Protection Bureau of the Police Department to share data with VACD on neglected disabled children in the Tea Estate sector;
- All departments to coordinate efforts to organize disability awareness programs for parents in collaboration with VACD;
- Health Department to organize programs to educate young couples on disabilities and their causes in collaboration with VACD;
- Department of Planning to take steps to modify Special Education Units in schools to make them user friendly for disabled children;
- The authorities to look into the possibility of providing travel concessions for disabled children;
- Representatives from all departments and VACD officials resolved to meet regularly to consolidate, plan and review progress of projects and programs;

The framework under which the collaborative partnership arrangement with the Uva Provincial Council has been established combines skills, expertise, strengths and resources found within VACD and various provincial ministries to optimise the implementation of projects and programs for disabled children across the entire Uva province.

VACD are working to source physiotherapists, speech therapists, life skills and specialist education trainers to work with disabled children under the supervision and guidance of paediatric consultants and other specialists under the Australian Government's Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program. We are hopeful that this program would be launched next year. Contact has also been made with Hear the World Foundation to obtain assistance for children with hearing difficulties. The Mind for Life charity based in Sydney, Australia has also offered to help our children next year, under a collaborative partnership arrangement.

Plans are already under way to establish VACD centres in Badulla and Mahiyangana, then in Welimada and Wellawaya in due course, in response to requests from parents in those towns. The table below highlights statistical evidence for the need for VACD to extend its footprint into other key townships in the Uva province. Once support and assistance has been extended across the entire Uva province and VACD projects and programs are successful, the long term plan is to gradually extend the footprint of the charity to other parts of the country.





The Sri Lanka census statistics of 2014 indicate a total number of 1045 disabled children across the 26 divisional secretariats in the Uva province. However, given that VACD have 73 registered children in Bandarawela against 52 in the census, it is quite obvious that many parents/guardians either opt not to participate in these surveys or are reluctant to register their children as disabled due to significant social stigma, isolation and discrimination. On that basis, we firmly believe that the actual number of disabled children across the entire Uva province is likely to be much higher.

Statistics of Disabled Children in Badulla, Bandarawela, Mahiyangana, Wellawaya and Welimada

Divisional Secretariat	Disabled Children as per census 2014	Number of VACD Registered Children	Male VACD	Female VACD	Number of Children requiring VACD assistance
Badulla	51	26	16	10	25
Bandarawela	52	73	42	31	-21
Mahiyangana	70	0	0	0	70
Wellawaya	76	3	2	1	73
Welimada	109	16	8	8	93

Source: Sri Lanka Census 2014 – (Estimated disabled children 1045 in the Uva Province)

Note: The census statistics appear to be inaccurate and work is underway to collect and collate data with the assistance of various ministries and produce a more accurate and up-to-date count of disabled children within the Uva province

VACD have donated modern equipment to the paediatric clinic at the Diyatalawa base hospital and Bandarawela general hospital that provides VACD children with medical check-ups, medication and therapy on a regular basis. Similar facilities are provided for children at the Welimada and Badulla General hospitals while arrangements have been made for children who need special attention to visit the General Hospital Kandy and Lady Ridgeway Hospital in Colombo for specialist consultation and treatment with VACD assistance and collaboration.

VACD recently held a public event at St Joseph's College auditorium in Bandarawela to showcase the performing talents of our VACD children. The dances were choreographed and the children trained to perform a series of dances ranging from traditional to modern dance by Mrs Manori Priyangika the dance teacher at the time. Music, dancing and other forms of fine art are extremely effective ways to engage with children with disabilities, in addition to the development of their special talents and skills.





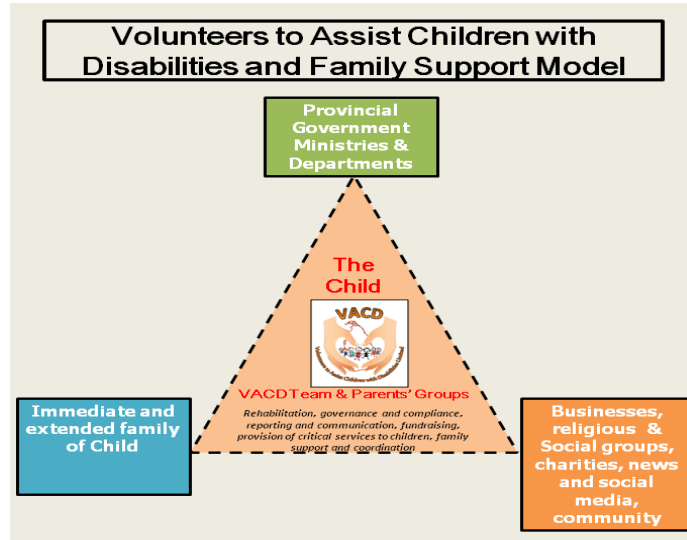
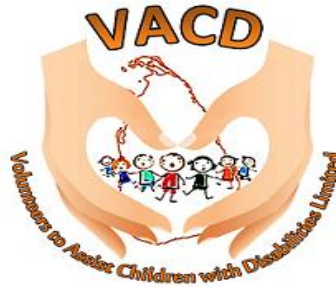
VACD have implemented an Education Assistance Program for disabled children who are identified as having academic potential or a gifted sibling to be granted a monthly sponsor funded allowance of approximately Rupees 2,000, intended solely for educational purposes, to ensure they continue their education, reach their aspirations, dreams and goals and have a better future. Friends and family make regular sponsorship contributions to this program. The collaborative partnership with “Make some change” is also likely to generate some support towards this program.

Workshops and training programs for parents, children and teachers are regularly conducted by VACD and run by qualified and experienced professionals. These programs also provide an opportunity to raise community awareness of the rights and needs of children with disabilities and to provide opportunities for these children and their families to be accepted and integrated into the broader local community.

The voluntary leadership team in Bandarawela are ably assisted in the daily administration of the centre and the implementation of projects and programs by four parents’ groups each responsible for Education & Training, Health & Nutrition, Sport & Culture, and Family Budgeting & Finance. Parents who serve in these groups being mostly housewives and mothers have since received training in performing administrative tasks, organising, addressing and conducting meetings, and are now confident and empowered administrators and advocates of VACD.

The VACD operating model is designed with the clear objective of gradually shifting the administrative responsibilities of the centres, projects and programs to the parents and the parents’ groups who will be supported by their families, the health, education and local authorities, the wider local community, business sector and the VACD leadership. The success of this model is already clearly visible to the VACD leadership.





The combined Australian and Sri Lankan teams number 69 dedicated members of which 64 are volunteers. Just 5 team members are paid modest allowances to perform daily administrative, instruction and teaching duties.

While achieving much while being solely funded by family, friends and an annual fundraiser by Kapstream Capital, a global fixed income specialist manager based in Sydney, VACD now needs the support of Sri Lankan well-wishers, corporates, local businesses and the local community to successfully reach out and continue to uplift the lives of disabled children and their families across the entire country.

Felix Stephen
Chairman, VACD

Treasurer's report

Please see accompanying spreadsheets

James Meighan
Treasurer, VACD

