



## ANNUAL REPORT

By Chairman of the Board of Directors

VACD Australia

Financial year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017

**Volunteers to Assist Children with Disabilities Ltd**



*"As one lamp lights another, nor grows less, so nobleness enkindles nobleness"*

(James Russell Lowell)

## *Our mission and vision*

VACD's goal is to enrich the lives of children with disabilities in the poorest provinces of Sri Lanka; by easing their physical and intellectual impairments and providing them with skills to lead independent lives because of the severe shortage of proper infrastructure and support facilities for them in that region.

To help these children achieve these aspirations; we provide their parents with training and guidance to endure with the challenges of caring for these children to become valuable citizens and be accepted by their communities.

To accomplish this mission; we engage with local communities, religious groups, businesses, government and medical authorities and through discussion, awareness programs and workshops strive to eliminate poverty, ignorance, discrimination, social isolation, vilification, incest and sexual abuse etc. while promulgating and encouraging communities to value, uphold and respect the rights of children with disabilities.

## *How we realized our mission*

- Sponsoring and equipping clinics at the Diyatalawa and Bandarawela Hospitals and working closely with the Consultant Paediatrician at the Welimada base hospital to provide medical attention, medication, therapy and regular check-ups for our VACD children;
- Providing training at the Bandarawela centre in life skills, computer and vocation, dance and music instruction;
- Providing allowances under the Educational Assistance Program for 59 needy children with disabilities (or a gifted sibling) who show academic potential;
- Providing nutritious meals to centre attendees on two days of the week, following recommendation of a Health Inspector who noticed the meals the children brought to the centre were nutritionally poor;
- Organising workshops for parents to educate them on how to nurture, protect, assist and guide children with disabilities and how to maximise the use of services and facilities provided by VACD;
- Organising workshops for parents to learn leadership skills and to empower them to eventually administer VACD activities;
- Organising microfinance of Rupees 50,000 each (A\$425) in collaboration with Regional Development Bank for seven parents who established their own enterprises in agriculture and tea cultivation, hiring of party goods, running grocery stores and selling readymade clothes;
- Engaging with the local communities to make them aware of the plight of children with disabilities and their families and generate much needed support and sponsorship for our mission;

## Why we did it

- The Uva province, where VACD is focusing activities, is one of the poorest provinces in Sri Lanka and provides no services or infrastructure for children with disabilities;
- Medical and government sector officials have informed us that they lack the resources to provide the services we do, and urge us to open more centres;

STATISTICS OF DISABLED CHILDREN IN EACH DIVISIONAL SECRETARIAT IN THE UVA PROVINCE					
Divisional Secretariat	Disabled Children as per Census 2014	No. of VACD Registered Children	Male	Female	No. Of children requiring VACD services
Badalkumbura	12	3	3	0	9
Badulla	51	26	16	10	25
Bandarawela	52	73	42	31	-21
Bibile	21	0	0	0	21
Buththala	3	0	0	0	3
Ella	48	20	11	9	28
Haldumulla	23	19	8	11	4
Haliela	69	21	16	5	48
Haputale	19	40	22	18	-21
Kandakatiya	25	0	0	0	25
Kataragama	10	0	0	0	10
Lunugala	21	0	0	0	21
Madagama	21	0	0	0	21
Madulla	50	0	0	0	50
Mahiyangana	70	0	0	0	70
Meegahakiwula	22	1	1	0	21
Moneragala	16	0	0	0	16
Passara	38	4	2	2	34
Rideemaliyadda	52	0	0	0	52
Sewanagala	37	0	0	0	37
Siyabalanduwa	91	0	0	0	91
Soranathota	21	2	2	0	19
Thanamalwila	29	0	0	0	29
Uvaparaganagama	59	6	4	2	53
Welimada	109	16	8	8	93
Wellawaya	76	3	2	1	73
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>811</b>

The above data is based on the national census of 2014 and a report compiled by us in 2015. The number of children registered with VACD as at date is 328.

## How we raised funds

- The Poker Night sponsored by Kapstream Capital was our main fundraiser for the past four years and the financial year under review. Our VACD children benefited from this



annual event, thanks to the generosity and magnanimity of the Kapstream leadership. However, this fund-raising event was the last by Kapstream for VACD.

- There was a small spike in donations following the broadcast of a 2-part TV documentary on VACD that was filmed on location and broadcast over local TV in Sri Lanka and globally via YouTube.
- Sponsorship payments under the Educational Assistance Program varied slightly as sponsors dropped out/joined in, ranging between 60 – 70 sponsors. However, we lost approximately 12 sponsors at the end of the financial year 2016/17.
- The ratio of our funding improved during the 2016/17 financial year to 53% from donations and 47% from EAP and miscellaneous items relative to 62% in donations and 38% from EAP and miscellaneous items in 2015/16.

### *How we disbursed funds*

Our funds were deployed to finance projects and programs to enrich the lives of the nearly 330 children with disabilities registered with VACD, accounting for more than 90% of total expenditure.

Administration expenses account for about 8 – 10% of total expenses

### *How we plan to do more in the future*

- TV Derana produced and broadcast a two-part documentary on VACD activities which boosted our profile both locally and globally and raised awareness of the plight of children with disabilities in Sri Lanka. We will continue to use similar media outlets and communication means to spread the news about VACD and its mission;
- Litmus Communications have set up a Facebook page for VACD to help gather support and raise awareness of VACD activities across the cyberworld;
- Mr. James Gruver – Managing Director Client Services & Marketing at Heitman Investment Management in Chicago has been instrumental in helping us establish a VACD USA chapter under a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between VACD USA and VACD Australia on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017 to facilitate fundraising for our ongoing and future projects and open new VACD centres across the Island. VACD USA was incorporated as a not for profit charity on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 and are at the final stage of establishing a governing and advisory Board.



- Establishing VACD centres in Welimada, Badulla and other townships to service children in those areas;
- We have established collaborative partnerships with:
  1. Australia Sri Lanka Medical Aid Team (a team of medical experts based in Melbourne who make annual trips to Sri Lanka to provide free services to the needy),
  2. Mind for Life (not for profit organisation based in Sydney comprising of a Psychologist, Counsellor, Hypnotherapist, Life Coach and Holistic Therapist who provide free services to needy people dealing with health and mental issues) to broaden the scope of our activities with the help of these like-minded charities;
- We are working with the Provincial Ministry of Education – Uva Province and Sri Lanka Association for Child Development for teachers in the special education units to be trained by a team consisting of paediatricians, speech therapist, occupational therapist, child psychiatrist and psychologist so that the teachers can discuss broad developmental disabilities occurring in children (down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities), discuss causes, characteristics and how to identify these children, intervention strategies and who to refer them to;
- A wheelchair camp is to be conducted by Dr Gopi Kitnasamy, founder/chairman of Cerebral Palsy Lanka Foundation and his team of Physiotherapists, Speech Therapist, Nutrition and Posture specialists will see VACD children assessed and eligible children gifted with wheelchairs.
- **With 2 VACD centres already in the pipeline to be established next year, we should set our sights on opening at least 6 more VACD centres over the next 10 years.**





### *What makes us gratified*

- Being awarded the Australian Charities & Not for Profits Commission 'tick of approval' for our transparency and accountability;
- Enhancing the living standards and future of seven VACD families that received a boost through the VACD/Regional Development Bank collaboration where microfinancing of up to Rs. 50,000 each (A\$ 425) was given to set up cottage industries such as tea cultivation, agriculture, setting up grocery stores, selling readymade clothing and hiring party goods;
- Several VACD children achieving finalist status in an island-wide dance competition;
- Creating public and community awareness of the plight of children with disabilities and beginning to receive more local support for our mission;
- Making a real difference in the lives of disabled children:

Nadun Maduwatha, (gifted sibling of Nirasha who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) who was sponsored under the Educational Assistance Program initiated just over two years ago completed his education and joined the Sri Lanka Army and is now supporting his mother and sister. He is the first of many children on the path to financial independence and a brighter future for himself and the single parent family;



**Nadun Maduwatha    Nirasha Deepanjalee**

## How you can help

I deeply appreciate all the guidance and assistance you have given me over the years to make our mission to uplift those for whom VACD is their only hope a success, during a relatively short period.

Our VACD journey has only begun and the enormous challenges that lay ahead of us can only be overcome if we stay the course and faithfully commit ourselves to achieving the philanthropic and humanitarian goals we set ourselves. Available data and anecdotal evidence point to the number of disabled children in the Uva province being grossly under reported due to social stigma and community vilification reasons.

I would encourage and urge you to spread the VACD mission and vision story among your family, friends and colleagues and generate more support, assistance and sponsorship so that VACD can achieve a level of self-sustainability relatively soon.

Please encourage them to:

- Make donations by credit card, direct transfer or PayPal through the VACD website: [www.vacd.org.au](http://www.vacd.org.au)
- Sponsor a child with disabilities who shows academic potential or a gifted sibling under our Educational Assistance Program for \$20 per month;
- Sponsor a VACD centre for \$750 per month and have the centre named after you, your family, friend, colleague or your organisation;
- Organise fundraising events to raise much needed funds for our projects and programs through your network or employer;

I consider myself extremely privileged to have a team like you to back me up and look forward to the years ahead and for your continued counselling, guidance, assistance and support to make this journey of ours a memorable one.

Thank you,

Yours in service,



Felix Stephen

Chairman of the Board of Directors  
VACD Ltd. Sydney Australia  
12<sup>th</sup> October 2017