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Candle Factory

May 2011

Light a candle that flicker in the wind
but will never die
For those who sigh in silence
and for those who cry

Light a Candle
For peace and for hope
light a candle for the ones
who need a home

For it won't be lit
without that single spark
light one candle
when the night seems too dark

This is "Candle Factory".

CandleAid's e-newsletter. A collection of stories of the amazing people who work to make another person's life better. Stories to prove that every candle that you light counts.

*Tehani & Jaliya
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Cinderellas of Chullipuram

This will be one of the longest intros I write for a write up . But I have a good reason for that . These children are from Chullipuram, as Vinu says , a hamlet with a population of Children, the old & the widowed . Typical life is filled with sighs, emptiness and silence. But there is peace now, you ask me? Yes, but very little have changed in these little one's lives. What the project did and how their lives changed is all in Vinu's story. She writes from the heart not much of the great work they have done, but of the joy of simple kindness.

My short note is about Vinu and Lasantha . To highlight these two wonderful people and what they do. I do not want to overkill the story, so I will just excerpt the following from their project report.

Quote

...We began by cleaning their grimy little feet with a cloth! The staff was a bit stand-offish when we first came. They asked older girls to come & help with the wiping of the feet, as you can see in the back, the cross armed posture of the teacher & the older girl going around with a rag in her hand.

But as time passed, the teachers too got into the spirit of things & even the Principal started cleaning the feet of the children, which we felt was in itself an achievement in humility & love...

Next we made put the socks on for them, while demonstrating how to do it, as even a simple action such as wearing socks was unfamiliar to the lower grade students...

Unquote

Their passion and genuine love in their hearts, shine through the sentences, and from what they say, it seems to be contagious..

Las & I are parents of three teenagers. I am a fulltime wife & mom. I love kids. I am tech savvy to a certain extent & love to keep in touch with people via the internet. Las, our kids & I are Christians, who believe that we are all created with a purpose and one such purpose is to be a blessing when ever God calls us. We are proud to be Sri Lankans. We LOVE living in S.L. and have never contemplated migrating.

Las has a calling on his life to open a bank for the poorest of the poor & has a wealth of experience working in the field of microfinance.

During the Post Peace accord period we have visited Jaffna several times & have made some wonderful friends there. It is our belief that true reconciliation is a matter of the heart and love is the only balm that will heal the wounds left from the prolonged & unnecessary war.

We personally are willing to make sacrifices of time & energy to take this message to the ones who are still hurting, anywhere in the country.

It was 2009 and we were facing a very difficult time in our personal lives as we lost control of our microfinance business. That is when Uncle Elmo 'found' us & 'put' us to work.



*Vinu sharing the moment.
Wearing shoes for the first time.*

He made us the coordinators for the *Candle Aid – Children of The conflict - Libraries-North*-project . A task in which I was the correspondence person & Las was the front man.

The CandleAid work kept me from dwelling on our own issues & gave me the distraction (that I didn't know I needed), to get through this trying time.

UE knew exactly which cards to play (I say this in the most gratifying sense).

He saw our passions & talents, gave us simple tasks to do, one step at a time until we got hooked for life.

I truly feel that we have been blessed to partner with the wonderful CA-COTC team, lead by Priya.

In this team and in the CA family , we have made lifelong friends, who can be counted on to support & cheer us in all that we do. Especially Priya, Rajitha, Dakshini, Janaki,Upamali, Tanuja and recently Iromi, Renusha & Shernal.



Lasantha helping a little one with the shoes

We have seen donors whose hearts seem as large as their capacity to give. such as Mr. Bernard Sinniah, who has taken over the full task of renovating & uplifting Nuffield School for the deaf & blind, after having formed a charity in U.K is one such person He is quoted to have told his wife' "now we are earning very very well. We must die paupers. We have to bless the people who are less fortunate than us at all times..."

We have taken socks & shoes to children in Chullipuram, who had only worn slippers all their life. After cleaning the feet of 8,9 year-old children , we have taught them how to put on a pair of socks. A humbling satisfaction filled our hearts as we watched a line of shoe-clad children walking home with a bounce in their steps, happiness in their hearts, and a twinkle in their eyes.

All because someone in Singapore had noticed that the children in earlier pictures were barefoot & decided to do something about it.

We saw the simple innocent joy in the eyes of the same children of Chulipuram again, when they were given used tennis balls, thanks to another kind donor.

We have seen the power a poignant picture coupled with a skillful heartstring tugging can bring to move the coldest of hearts .

We have had the satisfaction of being able to say DONE, achieving goals well within the set timelines.

We have felt loved & forgiven when we make mistakes, in such a way that it is easy to forget that we are only friends in CA, bound by a sense of civic mindedness not blood.

I thank God for finding us a place where we can 'fit' our lives , our passion and for the Candles He has helped us light.

Vinu Mendis

Peace Begins with me

This is the second part that completes COTC story. Dakshini and Janaka (Karunaratna) runs the COTC operations in the East. Parents of 10 year olds , DK & J put their hand up as in response to a call for volunteers to handle the COTC project in May 2009. From that point onwards it has been absolute commitment. I shall not steal the thunder from DK's story . So here goes .

It was 2009 and we Sri Lankans were about to breath in peace at last. The 30 year long Civil war was about to be concluded for good. 30 years is a long time , many were the stories, many were the opinions, and many were the expectations. There was a lot of hype anywhere and everywhere. There was to be euphoria very soon. Sri Lanka was on the path of regaining the paradise it lost .

In saner moments, thoughts of regret and guilt of injury, massacre and destruction on both sides and questions of who really won this pointless war penetrated our minds.

Around this time an email that trotted the globe found its way to our computer from New Zealand forwarded by a friend. The originator of the e-mail, one Capt Elmo Jayawardena, Founder/President of the then AFLAC International, now CandleAid Lanka (CA), urged readers to stop partying, he reminded that it was the "Time to lend a hand". For us, that was a wake up call loud enough.

The same morning of 27th May 2009, we sent an email to the (at that time unknown) Capt offering to volunteer for AFLAC at anytime. That mail fortunately got us deeply rooted in happy humanitarian work under CandleAid's post-war project aptly named 'Children Of The Conflict' - COTC. This was a project about the children. This was about the future and not the past . This was about winning peace and not about celebrating war. This infact was about most of us , as we all are children of the conflict in one way or the other.

The COTC group, many of us strangers to each other, met for the first time at Elmo's place two months later. We discussed what needs to be done, what can be done, and who will do what, although none of us really had answers to "how it can be done". By then, CandleAid had already set up 66 libraries around Sri Lanka, but none in the North & East, hampered by the ethnic war. The urgent need was to first concentrate there.

That day, 12th July 2009, the day after our 12th wedding anniversary when we walked out of the meeting, we found ourselves giving thanks to a higher power, for our daughter and son (8 year old twins.) and all that they are.

From this point onwards our task was to somehow set up 10 libraries in the East. Except for two emails, first from Rajitha and another received from the Asst Director of Education - English, Dept of Education, Eastern Province, we had no other clue how to start the work. However, things moved forward.

Our inability to speak and understand Tamil was to be a major problem, but we were fortunate to find helpful Interpreters to help us along. Efficient and considerate book sellers were a great help as well. The search for needy schools in the East that began with 7 in July 2009 ended in February 2010 at 18 in total (12 Tamil, 2 Muslim and 4 Sinhala). Many of the Tamil schools were ironically recommended by the representatives Sri Lankan armed forces themselves.

As funds kept flowing into COTC kitty, sometimes in trickles, sometimes in rivulets, COTC was able to add an extra bonus to each of the 31 schools in North & East - a set of Tamil or Sinhala Encyclopedias as appropriate. We happily completed our task.

The eager and generous donors were many in number and they came in every size. Many were the faces that a smile drew upon, as a brand new library opened in their schools (that was the payoff for all the effort, and it was worth it). Most of them are in touch with us to date.

This has been very fulfilling time for us personally, and it is with humble pride we say that we were fortunate to witness how with each little individual act new shoots of peace appeared. I remember a particular phrase in that email that got us involved in CandleAid in the first place. "Peace Begins with Me"., it read.

JaynDee

From Bermuda with Love

Manjula Kahanadawalarachchi works for HSBC and currently lives in Bermuda, famous for the mysterious triangle . Manjula & his wife Thanuja set up the CandleAid branch there and has done wonderful work since then. It seems that Bermuda Triangle that swallows up ships , spits out kindness. Many students, who otherwise would have ceased their education mid way, today can aim for a brighter tomorrow because of their generosity. He writes-in to say what motivates them to keep lighting those candles

I have grew up and studied in Sri Lanka. My wife Thanuja and I always wanted in our hearts to lend a helping hand to a lesser fortunate child for his/her education. But for the many years while we were working in Sri Lanka we never got on to doing it, we kept on putting it to the next day.

Then when our children were born and when we moved to Bermuda in 2007, this feeling grew stronger. One day I approached Priya Cooray, looking for his

direction on student sponsorships, as I knew Priya was helping the needy people in Sri Lanka. It was his introduction that led me to the CandleAid community and prompted me to start CandleAid branch in Bermuda.

This was the beginning of CandleAid Bermuda branch, AFLAC at that time (my sincere thanks to Priya Cooray for his guidance and encouragement). Initially we sponsored two needy students to continue in their education.

Since then, with the kind generosity of my friends and people around CandleAid in Bermuda , we have been able to sponsor 6 Medical University Students, 5 school children and have been able to collect money for a couple of libraries in 2 rural schools in Sri Lanka.

Personally for us this has been such a wonderful experience. With each letter that is received from a student , writing about

their achievements. With each photograph of an innocent child smiling with new books in her hand. You get this amazing feeling of fulfillment, and that is priceless. And for us that is what pushes us to contribute in our little way, to light one candle at a time to help another person in need.

Manjula Kahandawalaarachchi

The Candles that light ward 14

Cancer ward project has been written about a few times. The difference of this project is , the Candles we light are for easing the pain that bit more. For it might not be for a better tomorrow. Often Cancer is fatal, but kindness helps always, atleast for the suffering to get one night's sleep. Frances is a member of the team who handle the ward14 project in Maharagama Cancer hospital. These are dedicated individuals who spend their valuable free time to make the life of the patients battling for their lives even a little better. Frances writes about the project and his experience.

Ward 14 in consists of 45 beds and is the womens' pre & post operative ward at the Maharagama Cancer Hospital. As typical in all Government hospitals in Sri Lanka, treatment is free but the facilities leave much room for improvement..

For many years now , with the kind intervention of CandleAid, Ward 14 is maintained at a level to be the envy of the Hospital.

The present team of volunteers joined hands in August 2009, they assist CandleAid in the maintenance and upkeep of Ward 14. Two team members visit the ward every month and look into the needs of the ward – repairs and maintenance. Needless to say that if such repairs are not done on time, it reduces the comfort levels of these 45 hapless women.

A visit report prepared and filed by these team members and the maintenance team is prompted to take corrective action.



It is important that this ward in some case is the place these women, under the spell of the deadly disease, spend their last days. In that sense this ward's needs are not restricted to repairs and maintenance only.

CandleAid strives to make the ward as pleasant a place as possible. Hence, whether it be a TV or sheets or towels or a cupboard or screens or drapes that are necessary, the team has highlighted the need and mobilized the funds as far as possible. For the deficit – CandleAid to the rescue.

Special mention must be made of a particularly difficult task undertaken by the incumbent team. That was painting of the ceiling of the ward. As the ward could not be fully evacuated for the purpose, the painters had to use extreme caution to move beds and patients of the entire ward – (5000 Square Feet), without causing harm, injury or damage

or invading on the patients' privacy. The Doctors and the ward staff bore testimony to the wonderful job the painters did.

The team is continues to assist CandleAid in upkeep of the ward and this could not have been done if not for the kind generosity of the wonderful donors. Their donations go towards making the patients, stay a pleasant one.

It is mix of feelings, of the humbling uncertainty of life, of the haunting effect of those smiles that shine through pain, that warm feeling of love. You feel deep in your being, that each of us team members feel, every time we walk out of the gates of the Hospital.

Frances Seneviratne

Tale of two schools

This is a story of two schools divided (or is it joined) by the sea. First one is Tanglin trust School in Singapore. The younger kids made & sold tea towels with their hand-print designs on them, to collect \$1200.

The second is a pre school in Urubokka, in southern Sri Lanka, with minimum facilities.

The money collected by Tanglin school was used to upgrade the facilities with new equipment and a toilet.

The second installment of the money is going to be used to provide nutritional meals for the kids. Kindness knows no boundaries.



The young candle makers

Helen Sampson lives in Singapore and is a mother of young children. She has been involved with Candleaid for some time now. She has been instrumental in contributing towards many of Candleaid's projects. But to me it is not the kindness and her contribution that comes through. It is her willingness to teach her 7 year old this valuable lesson, how she encourages her and supports her to contribute in her little way that is the highlight of the story. How these little one learn to share, help the needy and enjoy the simple pleasures of seeing a smile on another person's face, leaves me lost for words. In a way Helen is not only lighting candles she is grooming young candle makers too. This is her experience in her words.

I first came to know about Candle aid Lanka about five years ago when it was called Aflac International, at a coffee morning where Captain Elmo Jayawardena spoke about the charity in such a manner that it inspired me to look for a small way that I could help too.

My children attend an international school, here in Singapore and every year their class is encouraged to support a charity. It was important to me to not to only help others but that my children would also understand compassion and how lucky they are in comparison to others not so fortunate. It is difficult to achieve this when we are in such materialistic times; we all get swept up in this. But when we are able to take a moment and ponder about the opportunities that are available to us fortunate, that we take for granted, you ones then it is like a breath of fresh air to be able to help and make someone else's life better. It is easy to just throw money at a charity but more of an effort to spare time and enthusiasm...however this is where satisfaction and empathy can really happen. I was thinking how my five year old could understand this and relate to the charity.

The single issue that really stood Candleaid out from the other charities at the time was that all the money raised goes directly to the charity and nothing gets taken out for administration. This in itself was like a breath of fresh air! For the past 5 years we have enjoyed a terrific relationship with CandleAid, the children love the feedback and are able to see what they can do to help. This has been very valuable.

Over the years I have helped my children and their classes support the "learn to swim" campaign along with a pre school project, to begin with we supplied swimming noodles, then old swimming costumes and once the children understood the whole concept of others needing to learn to swim (and without us sponsoring the children they just wouldn't have the opportunity,) then the whole process became easy and the projects moved on and gathered pace.

This year has been a special year for us, firstly my now seven year old, helped organize her class swimathon which contributed to around 25 Sri Lankan children being given the opportunity to swim.

We couldn't have done it without the kind help of swimming teachers that supervised and provided fun games for the children or people that loaned us the use of their pool. The children could understand how far 25 meters was to swim as this was their target distance too. Since then we have received photos and names from CandleAid. These have been proudly put up in the classroom and the children have a great understanding of how they have really helped others.

Beth (aged 7) said : "I've really enjoyed looking at the feedback and photos of the children we have helped and it also gave us exercise as well as helping others. This makes me feel happy. Everyone in my class wanted to join in even if they couldn't swim very well."

My now nearly ten year old and her class has helped to organize a whole school swimathon, the project was kindly adopted by our schools head of aquatics and with much parental support they raised enough money For just over 100 Sri Lankan children to learn to swim. These ten year olds have a great understanding and compassion thanks to Captain Robert Spittel and Captain Elmo visiting the school and talking to them about the projects and the kind of life that Sri Lankan children experience that is so very different to their own.

Katy (aged 9) said: "it is a nice feeling to help others and to be able to be part of the charity and to know that we've helped other children not so lucky as us.

The swimathon was great fun and there was such a lovely atmosphere as

everyone wanted to do their part within our school community."

But it's not just the older kids that can get involved, my five year old's class have been supporting the Urubokka Pre School. Last year they raised money by printing tea towels and this paid for new equipment and toilets for the school. This was something that every child understood. This year they have contributed towards a breakfast program. The key is finding something that each age group can relate to and can understand is a basic need and not just a want.

Cara (aged 5) says: "The children are happier because they have nicer toilets and can eat breakfast like me. I feel happy that we have helped them."

The whole process has given me immense satisfaction because not only do I feel that all the children that have taken part have contributed towards improving someone else's life and gained a little understanding of this but during the last school holiday I took my children and the contents of their piggy banks to the Singapore Mint to exchange the coins for notes.

It was a proud moment when my children decided to put aside some money so that they could each sponsor a child to swim. Of course they also wanted to buy some fancy shoes, the love of shoes with girls starts young! In the meantime, a very important and valuable lesson had finally been learnt.

Helen Sampson

Andawal a Kanishta Vidyalaya is situated about 35 Km from Moratuwa, in a village called Meegama, in Matugama.

This school has minimum facilities, and a student population of about 100/10. Candle Aid was offered a Children's Playground material which was a Play Gym, was removed from the Royal Park Residencies in Rajagiriya, to make way for a newer model of Playground. The equipment was a donation to Candle Aid from the Condominium.



The logistics of moving was no mean task. D.Karunaratne, Rubesh Peerez Sunil Warnakulasuriya and Vernon De Mel bore the brunt of the work load, whilst Mr. Sunil Ariyasena, Director of Education for the Matugama area and the school Principal and the students and parents all joined in unloading the container load of goods. The cost of transport and the subsequent installation of the equipment was done fairly fast and on the 10th March, 2011 the entire project was completed due to the cooperation received from everyone.

When a Candle shines bright., the night's a little less darker

As they say, the proof is in the pudding. Following is a letter of appreciations received from beneficiary of an educational scholarship. This letter is shared just to show how each candle you light goes on to shine on a poor student's life and lighting the path for a better future..

Dear Sir, Madam

Hope you all are doing good

First I would like to thank you all for your great support to make my life success. I am A.D.C.Kumara Karunarathna who is a scholarship holder from Candle Aid Lanka foundation (formerly AFLAC). For the time being I am doing clinical studies in the 4th year, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya.

This scholarship is really helping me a lot to continue my studies to become a good doctor.

I think you all are part of my success. I passed the exams with good results and do my clinical successfully.

Thank you

Hope your every effort to make our lives will be success.....!

Wish you a healthy wealthy long life.....!

Take care!

Theruwana Saranai!

Yours Faithfully

Chaminda

What takes to be humane

This is a story about a happy ending, so in a sense it is worth sharing. But I share this for a better reason, to applaud the character of a young woman.

Dhanusha Gamage . Daughter of a poor rubber tapper. University Graduate. A wonderful Human Being. Read on and tell me whether you disagree.

It was another bright morning at the Candleaid office. At the table sat Dhanusha . She was a last year student at the university, from a very poor family, with a sick mother and a father who taps rubber for livings. She struggled all the way up to here, and this scholarship would take a huge burden off her mind. She stops filling the forms and look directly into the old captain's eyes.

"Sir, I have struggled for three years with a lot of poverty, I have only 8 months to go to complete my degree, if you do not have many sponsors, this sponsorship you are giving me - please give to a first year student. I know how difficult it is to be poor in the university, especially when you are in the first year. I can manage this 8 months, please do not misunderstand me, but there are others who are more deserving than me, who needs this "

I am sure the captain who knows the exact thing to say every time, was speechless for a moment, that day.

Her humanity shone through her needs. But by that act she became a member of the Candle-aid family.

Since then she has finished studies and with the kind involvement of Candle aid family she has got a job, even clothes and her other needs have been fulfilled.

I think It was Lord Buddha who said that the merits you do come to salvage you at the end

Avurudu treat for children in Sigiriya

CandleAid teamed up with Heritance Kandalama, an Aitken Spence hotel, and other donors to bring some good cheer for Avurudu to the children of the Palutawa Primary School in Kimbissa, Sigiriya.

The Aitken Spence Sports Club gave 50 gift packs that were remaining from their Christmas party for the school's Avurudu Festival while the Aitken Spence Secretaries Club donated a stock of "good as new books" for the primary school library.

Each child was also given a pair of Bata shoes, socks, an Anchor milk powder packet,

a colorful school carrier bag, exercise books and pencils donated by Mrs Iromi Peiris from Moratuwa and Mrs Kumari Wijeratne from the UK.

Under the second phase, the same sponsors will fund the electricity connection for the school at a cost of Rs 14,000 and the supply of a water pump for the well at cost of Rs 15,255. The installation of the pump and related costs and work will be handled by the engineering staff of Heritance Kandalama

Estate Children and Hospitals Benefit From Generous Donors

Aitken Spence staff and other generous donors including Glaxo Smith Kline, enabled CandleAid to make substantial gifts to children at four estate schools and hospitals in the Pundaluoya District In April.

CandleAid visited the schools, crèches and hospitals at Dunsinane, Sheen, Fernlands and Meddecombra estates to distribute school books, Horlicks, cakes, sweets and apples to children and milk, vitamins and linen to the hospitals.

The Horlicks and vitamins were donated by Glaxo Smith Kline, the bed linen was from two Aitken Spence hotels and the cakes, biscuits, sweets and apples from staff members of Aitken Spence hotels in the area and other well wishers.

The school books were donated by or bought from funds given by the staff of the Aitken Spence Group as well as from Brunhilde Gunasekera Henopp, Dr. Andreas and Antje Freytag and Ursula Kruck through CandleAid at a cost of Rs.132,261.

Each candle lit, could go on to light many more

Chamila works in the Candleaid office. She does such great work especially in the Library project and Gift a meal project. First a recipient of assistance from Candleaid , now she gives back. This is her story

I am B.Chamila Darshani Mendis and I come from Rawathawatte, a town in Moratuwa.

My mother, Gayani Fernando is a beneficiary in the gift a meal programme and has been receiving assistance from Candle Aid since the beginning of 2005. My father died in 1999, due to an accident. He was a tractor operator at the time. There are 3 in my family . I am the eldest in the family and I have a a sister and a brother. At the time my father died , my mother could not meet the costs involved in bringing up 3 school going children. She started doing some sewing to sustain the family. The income generated was not sufficient and thus she sought assistance from Candle Aid. We also did not own a house and lived in house by the Galle Road, which comprises of just two rooms and space too was a big problem since the house had to be shared with my father's relatives.

I attended Rawatawatta Methodist College upto Grade Eleven and after sitting for O levels, I worked at a plastic workshop in order to supplement the family income. I being the eldest child have the responsibility of looking after my family. After GCE O/L's I attended Buddhist Girl's College, Mt.Lavinia and studied up to G.C.E. Advance Level Exam.

One day I came to Candleaid (then AFLAC) office to hand over the documents in respect of my family and I met uncle Cyril who made inquiries about the family circumstances and having understood the problems faced in meeting the growing costs, he enquired if I would like to do some work at the office as there was the possibility of a vacancy in office.

Uncle Cyril mentioned that it would help me to polish up my English and also get rid of the fear of speaking in English and get use to an office routine.

On 3rd October 2005 I joined the office as a raw recruit and has since worked in various sections of the organisation & have never looked back. I have worked under the guidance of Uncles Cyril, Sunil Perera, Sunil Warnakulasuriya, Vernon de Mel and Upamali Akki. Now I am work for the Library Project as well as the Gift a Meal project. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who helped me to reach the expected goals and would like to do my best for the organisation which nurtured me to reach this level.

Most of all I think, I have gained the confidence required to undertake any job in the organisation. My spare time is devoted to music and am learning the basics of how to play the Guitar. I wish to thank Capt. Elmo for the encouragement given.

This year October 2011, I will be completing six years of continuous work with CandleAid Lanka. I'am grateful to everybody who helped me.

Chamila Mendis

A place to sleep

There is an orphanage in Kilinochchi , which houses 50 plus kids. This was heart of Tiger country a few years ago. This is a land which has seen many deaths from both sides.. Forget the politics, and the racial ideologies, the fact remains each one who died there was somebody's father, mother, sister or brother. Many children lost their parents and every relative they had. In the name of a war to win over land, they lost in life and became orphaned 50 plus such children live in this orphanage, needless to say in very trying conditions.

Kumar lives & works in Canada at present, but thoughts of his motherland lives strong in his heart. He bought in to the idea of peace begins with each of us, and went on to collect funds and due to his effort this orphanage got 50 beds and mattresses. Kumar intended to remain in the background, no publicity for me he said. He was reluctant to write his story . Yet after some convincing, he finally agreed to write a few words .

Here I was on a Sunday seated in my office trying to kill some time and I was surfing the web when I saw the website Serendib.com. As I was planning to go to SL, I just visited the site mainly to find some cheap accommodation. An article published by Capt. Elmo titled "Cinderella's of Chulipuram", caught my attention. This struck a chord in my heart and rekindled the thought of who am I, what am I doing to eliminate the suffering of those who are less fortunate?. The thought of us sitting around sipping whisky and talking endlessly about the plight of others. Our perfect solutions to end all suffering, that we present so passionately infused and encouraged by a little alcohol. And how those intentions fade away like alcohol itself , all came to my mind . What a bunch of glorified hypocrites we are, nothing but arm chair critics, my heart kept on telling me. Elmo's actions motivated me. I wanted to do something.

I started calling and e-mailing relatives, friends, business associates and forwarded them a copy of Elmo's story. People are very skeptic about charities. So I assured them that I will be there personally and so on.

Explained to them, for the cost of a bottle of whisky and two packs of cigarettes we will be able to give a child a bed and mattress for life. These children have gone through some unthinkable ordeals, and it is the least that one can do for them.

We were able to collect about 500,000 rupees.

There were a wide range of people who helped out. Canadians, Sri Lankans (All communities), Norwegians and British.



The girls of the orphanage in their dorm with the new beds

So when I was in Sri Lanka , I went to the Candleaid office in Moratuwa and handed over the money Today having done this, I feel there is a reason we were born. That is to think of others who are less fortunate, and help out in ways we can. I have never ever thought of which community was going to be helped in SL. It has never struck my mind and it never will. The thought of helping my countrymen was the foremost; to pick and choose the most deserving is for Candle Aid to decide.

Kumar Sivakumar

Some of CandleAid's highlighted projects

Project	Description	Number of sponsorships
Swim for Safety	Program to teach under privileged kids to swim	3500 as at Jul 2010
Educational Sponsorship	Sponsoring underprivileged kids for school and higher education	1300 + as at Jul 2010
School libraries	Providing books to libraries in remote and poor schools	106 as at Nov 2010
Cancer Patients sponsorship	Sponsorship medicine and nutritional supplements for underprivileged patients	551 as at Jul 2010
St Joseph's school for hearing impaired	Sponsorship of students in the school	17

For detailed information on all our projects and how you can help, please visit

<http://www.candleaid.org>
