

Below will be my report concerning my recent trip to Sri Lanka and my findings. The first part of the report will cover the Pahansila projects in Kandy

### **Polgollawatte School**

In the morning we visited the Polgollawatte School. There we met the Principal and his staff. The good news is that with the teamwork of the Principal, his staff and Pahansila, the school is attracting more students and government funding. From my notes, in 2006 the school attracted 6 new students. But as the reputation of the school improved in 2010 they attracted 31 new students to bring total enrollment to about 175. With the subsequent higher government funding, the Principal has no longer the need for funding of basic supplies, such as paper, books etc.

As we toured the school the Principal and Math teacher took us to the Mathematic work shop they have created. The exhibit was created by the Math teacher, with limited resources and materials. The Math teacher created 36 work stations, that give hands on experience, and explains mathematical and geometric principles for the students. My guess was it took several hundred man hours to create. The message is that SL has world class teachers and individuals, just a little extra tiny help is needed.

The Principal only had two requests for additional funding. The first was for Internet connection, and installment fees. The installment fee was 3500 rupees (\$32 USD) and 500 rupees, monthly connection fee (\$5 USD).

The second request was for two additional computers as a part of the enhanced IT center for a cost of approximately \$700.

Nande and Sube discussed the Pahansila Scholarship program with the Principal. The Principal thought he had 10 students that he thought would be good candidates. Nande and Sube said they would provide him applications.

### **Sarana Sevana Orphanage**

Next we visited the Sarana Seveana orphanage. While at the orphanage we were entertained with dance and music. We also met many of the Pahansila teachers and scholarship students.

Concerning SS, first is that the veggie garden is really coming along nicely. The children get the benefit of a better diet, plus a positive project to work on after school. The nicest thing about SS, as others can see the progress we have made in the children's lives, they are more families willing to contribute. A family from Vancouver funded new showers. A family from NJ is helping to pay for the food. As the big cap-ex projects wind down, this additional help also free's us up to work on other projects.

We did discuss additional current needs at SS. It mostly concerns the kitchen. First, Nande would like to put in new wooden cabinets doors, as the current ones are pretty ragged. Secondly, Venetian blinds are needed for the kitchen. Plus a mesh door to the outside to keep mosquitoes out. My guess is that \$600-\$800 USD would cover all items. Probably best to confirm that though.

One KBA member requested one long folding table with 12 additional chairs for when families bring in food for the children. Others seemed indifferent to the idea.

The most positive new project at SS is the carpentry training for the senior boys. To me, this is the perfect fit for our program. The classes can be taught at SS. Nande and Sube believe this training could give our 15 yrs and older boys their best opportunity for good employment,

for when they must leave SS. The biggest problem we face is when the boys are of the age that they must leave SS, most do not have any skilled trades. Hopefully this is the first solution, which if successful could be our most successful project at SS. The teacher and kids are all very excited about this project. My notes do not mention if additional tools must be purchased. If so, I will support all aspects of this program.

Bringing mechanic training was also discussed. Again a great idea. Not as fully developed and ready to go as the carpentry, but everyone believes to be a very worth while project.

We were able to meet many of the teachers and tutors at the SS function. As we got tied up with the SS issues, I probably did not spend enough time talking to them. But I am very proud of their efforts and the successes they have enjoyed over the last year.

### **Weerodara School**

The librarian from Weerodara School meets us at SS. She was very appreciative of our assistance. She gave me letters of appreciation from the students and a DVD of the school. Like with Polgollawatte, the school appears to be getting more funding from the government for basic supplies. Her only request was for curtains for the library. My guess is \$150 USD would be the cost.

The best things about the existing Kandy programs is that each year they are now asking for less and less not more and more. To me, this shows they truly respect Pahansila and the purpose we serve. They needed a little boost to get to the next level and we gave it to them. They are not looking at us a Santa Claus, but a partner.

### **Housing Project**

Finally, we did visit the house of Geethanjali Wijeratne. We met the family, and local civic leader. It is really amazing that under such poor conditions, she as able to earn a place at the university. Our initial pledge was to assist the family with \$500 USD to rebuild the roof. It now appears the whole house/ room needs to be rebuilt at a cost of \$3k USD. This get's tough, as this is not a core mission of Pahansila as I view it. I have mixed emotions with this project. Everyone's heart is in the right place, but not use sure if the funding of one families home is the direction we need to go at this time. Please kick around with Nande or Sube for alternative ideas to help in my view.

The second part report will be concerning my visit to the Sri Siddhartha Maha Vidyalaya School and Tapovanaya orphanage in the Colombo area. On this trip I was accompanied by Nande. For a little background, this school and orphanage was recommended to me as a potential project to consider by my sister in law Aruni Shapiro. From her contacts, the above seemed very similar to the work we started in Kandy nearly 5 years ago. Sri Siddhartha Maha Vidyalaya School is in a very poor part of Colombo. The orphans at Tapovanaya also attend this school. Unlike SS, Tapovanaya is a Buddhist meditation center, under the direct supervision of the temple.

Our point of contact and guide was Dhammika Suriyaarachchiga. She along with her sister Asoka, who resides in Austria, they have been working in the last several years to approve the condition of the above school and orphanage.

### **Sri Siddhartha Maha Vidyalaya School**

Sri Siddhartha Maha Vidyalaya School has approximately 125 students, ages 5-16 years old. The approximately 36 of these students are from Tapovanaya. As stated above, Dhammika and Asoka have already started to take the steps necessary to improve the physical condition of the school. Asoka has recently funded the acquisition of books for the library. The library now has a nice variety of books for the children. (To be honest, much more extensive than what we have provided for the schools in Kandy.) The books are bright, colorful and of good quality. They have also created a "Home Science" lab for the students. (It took me a while to figure out. This is what we call "Home Economics" in the states.) Via DVD, they have provided me with before and after pictures and detailed expense report of this project.

From the above, the beginning initiatives have already been taken. The following are items we should consider to further their efforts. The main project needed is to refit the Science Room. Two main items. First is to make major repairs to the roof. From inspection, it is in pretty bad shape. To the extent, that does not provide much protection from the rain. Secondly, we need to replace outside screens with proper windows. The dust from the outside simply gets into everything in the lab. The amount discussed to new roof was \$3k USD. Windows I believe would be about \$300. But need to confirm. A new sink is needed. I would guess \$50-75 USD for it.

Finally, the computer room is in desperate need of re-tiling the floors. Cost mentioned was \$300-\$400.

### **Tapovanaya Orphanage**

After visiting the school, we visited the Tapovanaya Orphanage. While at the facility we were fortunate to meet the Ven. Mettabani in his studies. He reviewed the status of the orphans and his dedication to improving their lives. We then took a tour of the facilities. Like with SS 5 years ago, there are many initial needs. First, there is one item that gave me a sense of urgency. I told Dhammika to procure them now, I will get her the funds somehow. New shoes for the kids. Many of the children did not have shoes for school. School starts early Sept. With my blessings, Dhammika was able to procure the 35 pairs of shoes for Rs.31,388.76 (about \$285 USD or about \$8 each). The shoes have been delivered.

Like with SS at the beginning, the basic first needs will be the most expensive. But I believe we need to provide clean sanitary living facilities as our initial step to improve their lives. The toilet facilities are pretty bad. Appears to be open pit, with septic tank. I stepped inside and found it to be unsanitary and full of mosquitoes. I have already e-mailed Dhammika to find out what is technically feasible. Do they have the water infrastructure for bringing in flushable toilets, or do we need to work with what we got and improve upon it? Within this scope, we need to look at improving the showers. My guess would be in the 3k range. But let's see what is possible.

Secondly, we need to upgrade the living conditions for the kids and staff by upgrading the kitchen. Several items can be immediate. All meals are currently done on open fire. Dhammika has priced a 6 kg rice cooker at Rs.32,480 (about \$295 USD) and veggie cutter at Rs.10,235 (about \$93 USD). The kitchen, once we get the rice cooker in, could use a nice fresh coat of paint. I would guess cost of paint supplies would be \$200.

Not as urgent but as an upgrade to quality of life, the kids do have a TV in their dorm room. But they have limited options to watch Soap operas etc. I would like to buy a DVD player and some quality DVD's for them to watch. Disney, educational material etc. Dhammika will

know what's best on the market for the kids. DVD should run around \$200 USD plus \$75 for initial library.

We were accompanied on the trip by Chaminda. He is a PHD candidate at University of Colombo. (Nayani is his advisor I believe) He grew up in the neighborhood and would like to start an after school tutoring program. I explained how our program worked in Kandy. He seemed very comfortable with it. We would need to work with his studies schedule, but appears to be an excellent candidate to start an English tutoring program in the area. Rather to have class at SMV, Tapovanaya, or rent a room, was briefly discussed with Nande.

The most comforting thing of the visit is seeing members of the local community already taking steps to improve the school. Just as importantly from my observation, Dhamiika does provide the documentation Pahansila is accustomed to. Like with SS and the schools in Kandy, this would probably be a 3-4 year project to get where we need to be.

Kelley Davis