

HELLABEEM FOUNDATION

School for 60 disabled young people aged 12 to 18 in Sri Lanka

NEWSLETTER 11 – OCTOBER 2007

STATUS PROJECT

At last, on 27 May 2007 the moment was there! After nine years of preparation and hard work we welcomed the first six children at Hellabeem! We celebrated this with a festive, ceremonial opening. Following the Sri Lankan tradition we started with the lighting of a special lamp, sponsored by the Sneek Catholic Church. All people involved, including the children performed this together. This lamp has a cock on top, the emblem of the country. After the ceremony and the blessings by the local monks, one of our pupils presented himself in two nice dances. For us it was a very special and emotional day. It is absolutely great that we have been enabled to make this project come true with the help of so many people.

By now we have eight children in our hostel. Their age varies from 12 to 25, with the exception of Kithcheri, who is 37 years old. He was our first pupil. Kithcheri does not have parents any more and his brother, a father of four, earns a minimum income and is not able to take care of him. When he first came to us, he was only able to stand for a very short while. Now he can walk along the wall. Also he is moving increasingly fast from chair to wheelchair vice versa. Our idea is to make him as mobile as possible and to teach him weaving and sweeping, so he can be a useful member of society.



Finding the right young people is not easy. Apart from the fact that we only accept disabled children, they also should fit in our group. It is even more difficult because disabled people in Sri Lanka are either ignored or pampered. Some of them remain inside the house all their lives. They do not go to school and hardly get any attention. Others are carried around and served hand and foot. Our approach is to stimulate these children to undertake things on their own. The Sri Lankan people are not used to this way of treating disabled people. It is no exception that parents during the weekend or the holidays 'cure' their children of all we taught them. We looked after Mahesh for a while. We taught him to eat independently and to walk round the table ten times. Unfortunately his mother wants him to remain her little boy and after the holiday we had to start all over again. In the end we had to send him home.

Most children are at Hellabeem from Monday till Saturday. Three or four children also stay with us for the weekend, because their parents live too far away. We employ three nannies, who take turns, so that there is somebody present day and night. Apart from the pupils, also the teachers and nannies have their meals with us, which is the usual thing to do here. We have a cook who cooks delicious Sri Lankan meals and sometimes, especially for us, French fries. During the week we get free lunches for the children from the local Hotel School. This school was founded after the tsunami and is managed by the local Weligama Lions. Every day we collect the meals by scooter.

Apart from our boarders we also have day pupils. **Amali** comes to us three times a week, she is nearly blind. She did an elementary training in a school for the blind, we give her lessons in painting and drawing and she goes to computer class. **Tharanga** comes two times a week for computer class, electronics, English and drawing. He suffers from a very serious form of congenital myopathy. When he was eleven years old he could still walk to school normally, now he can hardly shift his weight from one leg to the other. **Maduri en Janith** come once a week for physiotherapy or massage. We also took care of **Daminda**, a 26-year-old young man. We gave him a measured artificial leg and now he teaches electronics.



We give the pupils a variety of lessons. They do the regular subjects of Singalese reading and writing and arithmetic and English lessons. These lessons are given by four local teachers. Mayke and Dirk (our Dutch volunteers) teach sports and games and on a daily basis they practise with the pupils the exercises, the physiotherapist has told them to do. They also stimulate the children's creativity by teaching them drawing, painting, working clay and music. Many Sri Lankan people are not familiar with this kind of activities. We see children who never in their lives held a coloured pencil. In addition to these subjects the pupils also get lessons in computer science, electronics, woodworking and weaving carpets.

Our days, of Jan and myself, are filled with supervision, in different fields. On the initiative of Dirk we have implanted a tough structure in the organization. Besides the daily supervision of the school, we also have to supervise the building and to bring in new pupils. There are many things to do in the field of organization and paperwork. During the first months of our stay we had to go to several authorities for permits, visa etc. This was quite an expedition, because we had to go to Colombo: a five-hour drive there and back! Jan and I have a temporary living on the site, where we have a small part of our own belongings. At the end of 2007 or the beginning of 2008 we will start building our own house. We do not miss The Netherlands at all, except for clean toilets and rooms without scary animals.

BUILDING PROGRESS

We are busy building the real kitchen, the physiotherapy rooms and the dining-room. (We had a temporary kitchen installed in the Long School) The tiles are already on the roof. Thanks to a contribution of the Bonifatius School in Sneek we have laid out a playing field of more than 400 m². We can build the physiotherapy rooms thanks to an enormous donation of € 25.000,- by the Liliane Fund You can see the construction work on our site www.hellabeem.org.



VOLUNTEERS

In December Tiny van Vliet, Janneke Stam, Saskia Janssen and Sebastiaan Verkuyll were with us and helped us enormously. In January Theo and Mia Visser came to help us for six weeks. We also got help from Etienne Borella from Paris, in the morning he went surfing and in the afternoon he came to help us. This was really wonderful, thank you all very much! We can really do with the help of physiotherapists, speech therapists and skilful people. May be you would like to combine your holiday here with being a volunteer.

FINANCE

Fortunately our list of regular supporters is steadily growing. We now have 45 'authorized' supporters. We hereby appeal to all *Friends of Hellabeem* to give an authorization to our treasurer, for a monthly, quarterly or yearly contribution. In this way we can be sure of future exploitation of Hellabeem. And did you know that about 50% of your gift can be refunded by the tax authorities if you organize your gift by means of a notary?

I was invited to the Gala dinner which was organized for the benefit of Hellabeem by Rotary International Amsterdam on the 9th of July. The result was the fantastic amount of € 12.000,- , which was augmented by the Wilde Ganzen with 55%. We thank register accountant H. Stolk, he controlled and approved our bookkeeping for a very reasonable price. We also thank Admin Dextera who took care of our bookkeeping for free. In the meantime we have bought musical instruments, like percussion, flutes, harmonicas, and a guitar, sponsored by Ton Delfos' Music School. We thank Marianne Villevoeye for the proceeds of her Gi Gong course. We also thank Janny Mook for a part of the proceeds of the sale of her homemade broaches. And we thank the church community and Fair Trade shop of Borne for their gifts. We were supported by the De Opmaat College in Bussum and by the serviceclub Innerwheel in Haarlem. The Desperados gave us a part of the proceeds of their CD. Roel van Klaveren touched us by donating to Hellabeem the money he had received for his seventh birthday. All gifts, great and small: we are very glad with them!

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

Due to a stay abroad of the secretary, the secretariat will be taken over from January till July 2008 by Ineke Bos - Guichelaar, Bussumerstraat 6, 1411 PM Naarden, tel. 0031(0) 35 – 694 14 99, e-mail: bosguichelaar@hotmail.com.

The board made a good SCHOOL FOR SCHOOL PLAN, with which you can get the school of your (grand)child enthusiastic about organizing a campaign for the benefit of Hellabeem. The plan gives a lot of suggestions which set schools up. You can ask for this ready-made plan by phoning 00(0)35 – 694 88 46 or mailing to welmoet@hellabeem.org. You can also read and down-load this plan on www.hellabeem.org.

We go on building Hellabeem. There are still many projects that have to be sponsored, like sewerage, pipelines, the road, electricity poles, staff studios and drain pipes. If you would want to sponsor one of these projects with your colleagues or friends, please contact me. Our address is Hellabeem Sri Lanka, Mahagodawatte, Ibbawala, Weligama. Or by e-mail helene@hellabeem.org.

Kind regards, also on behalf of Mahrooza, Lahir and Jan,
Helène Heijen

Secretary: Welmoet Kok, van der Helstlaan 2, 1412 HK Naarden, The Netherlands

Telephone: 0031(0)35 – 694 88 46, email: welmoet@hellabeem.org

Girobank account: 947 98 07 in the name of Stichting Hellabeem in Naarden

See our website: www.hellabeem.org

This foundation has been approved by the tax authorities, see art. 24 paragraph 4 of the "Successiewet".

Board: president M.R. Kiwi, secretary W. Kok, treasurer S. van de Walle

Members: J.B.C. Vernhout - Koopmanschap and M.H. Heijen