

Like we announced in our last newsletter, this newsletter is entirely about the boys who have left Hellabeem: Tharindu, Tharanga, Thushara, Rawindra and Ernest. The farewell of the 'first shift' was a memorable feast. We were all welcomed by the sound of drums and by Kandy dancers. Everybody gathered in the big hall (the physiotherapy room). There were several speeches, alternated with dancing and drama performances by the students themselves. Finally there was the presentation of the diplomas.



Tharindu in his workplace



Thushara in his workplace



Opening of Rawindra's workplace.
Left Janv Beek, right Helene Heijen and
Welmoet Kok (secretary foundation)

After they left Hellabeem, the boys went back to their own villages. There they finished their own workshops, often with the help of their parents and relatives. They had started this already during the holidays preceding the exams. Hellabeem gives them the financial means to build the workshop and the **Liliane Fonds** has given them a computer. Some parents provided their children with for instance tools. We are very proud to see what they are capable of now and what they have achieved in the past time.

We do not leave these five boys to themselves of course. Every month we get a report of their progress, in which they tell how business is going. We also visited them all. Some of them are doing fine, others need some more time and support to work as independent entrepreneur. It is a big change for them: no longer their like-minded schoolfriends and protective surroundings around them. But also in this respect we try to support them wherever we can.

Tharindu was the first to open his workshop, in December. He now has three pupils whom he teaches computer science and besides he repairs electronic gear, does photoshopping and copies CDs. On his departure from Hellabeem he wrote us: *"Hellabeem showed me how I can have my place in society as a real person. Among other things I learned to help other people and to function as a member of a group. After two years of physiotherapy I have a much better balance and I do not fall any more"*.

Thushara opened his workshop in January. He has some difficulty to start teaching. He is very shy because of his handicap, he is very small and he cannot walk. We try to stimulate him in all respects. In May he will start properly. Thushara wrote: *"Before I came at Hellabeem, I was a disappointed man and I felt hopeless because of my handicap. At Hellabeem I had physiotherapy after which I could move my arms much better and was much fitter. I also got a wheelchair from the volunteers Mayke and Dirk. And I have a hearing aid so that I can hear normally now. Now I am an independent man because of the improvement of my knowledge and my vocational training. I thank everybody at Hellabeem for everything"*.

Tharanga is the show piece of Hellabeem Sri Lanka. His development is an example for others. Two days a week he teaches computer science and electronics at Hellabeem to the beginners and the slower pupils of Hellabeem. Besides, he has a computer centre at home and a repair workshop. Tharanga has a special muscular illness. He hardly has any muscles, but he has enormous perseverance. His sister had the same illness and unfortunately died last year from a lung condition at the age of 19. He called his centre 'Ruvini' after her. He wrote us: *"Hellabeem gave me back my life thanks to the physiotherapy and their correct view on my situation. I now feel a complete human being. Through physiotherapy I became much stronger. I will try to make even more progress than what you taught me"*.

Rawindra opened his workshop when Welmoet Kok and her husband were visiting us in February (Welmoet is secretary of the Stichting Hellabeem). Rawindra has a nice spacious workshop, to which his parents contributed. He wrote: *"Hellabeem helped me enormously, I had two operations on my legs and now I can walk normally. Thanks to the physiotherapy and my education my life has changed. With all my knowledge I want to be good human being in society"*.

Ernest opened his shop last, but that is because he did nearly everything by himself. In spite of his severe handicap (a leg that is not in but beside the hip socket), he made the tables, a CD shelf and the sills. It takes a lot of time, but he manages. He has an enormous willpower and wants to do everything himself, if possible. He already is very busy, from early morning till

late at night. He wrote: “ *Hellabeem is the most specialised centre for disabled children like myself. I improved my mental and physical wellbeing I never went to school, but now I have actually got an education and my knowledge has improved enormously. I thank everybody*”.



Ernest in his workshop



Tharanga is teaching his pupils



Kandy dancers welcomed the guests

VOLUNTEERS

At the end of last year Derek Kleinveld came to us for a couple of weeks. Elles stayed for a couple of days and a Belgian boy Juul stayed for two days. Femke Tilma, Eva van Bennekom en Manon Beerendsen helped us for no less than two months, which we appreciated very much. **Femke** : “*My two months at Hellabeem have flown by! The first four weeks I mainly assisted Samira with physiotherapy, very instructive, but especially very nice! In this way I got to know the boys quite well, they are all darlings! Apart from this I did some odd jobs and during the last four weeks I have been painting nearly all the time! During the sports lessons and singing after the evening meals I felt how the boys liked to be together, the atmosphere really is at its best then! I really felt a member of the family. That is why I know for sure that I will never forget my time at Hellabeem and that I will be back anyhow*”!

*We, **Manon and Eva**, two recently graduated physiotherapists, had a wonderful time at Hellabeem!! After our graduation we wanted to do something meaningful for other people. We chose Hellabeem, the project appealed to us and it proved to be a great choice. The work that Helène and Jan are doing here is beyond description. We are very grateful that we have been allowed to partake in this unique project and we have been affected by it in a very positive way as persons and as physiotherapists. We want to thank Jan and Helène very much for the pleasant and unforgettable time here”!*

NEWS FROM THE DUTCH BOARD

Boardmembers visit Hellabeem

In February my husband and I travelled to Sri Lanka (obviously at our own cost) to see Hellabeem with our own eyes. Of course I knew that Hellabeem is a good cause, but reality surpassed my wildest expectations: the wonderfully situated grounds, the beautiful, spacious buildings, the classrooms, the kitchen garden, they are all solid and beautiful. And everybody works very hard: Helène and Jan, the children and the staff, the results are great! Hellabeem earns the support of all of us, financially and immaterially!!

Welmoet Kok

Well, you are informed again of all the latest developments.
Best wishes,

Helène Heijen and Jan van Beek and the Dutch board of Hellabeem.

Our address is Hellabeem Sri Lanka, Mahagodawatte, Ibbawala Weligama, Sri Lanka. My e-mail address is helene@hellabeem.org.