



WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

NEWSLETTER

2019

UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

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Message from Executive Director

Bringing warm greetings to everyone, from the Women's Development Centre (WDC).

It has been another hectic yet blessed year here at WDC where we were able to successfully contribute towards our organizational vision of creating a Just and Secure Society for all. As a collective we have tackled issues of gender inequality, poverty alleviation, peace and reconciliation, community mobilization, social inclusion and gender based violence through our many programmes and projects. Despite several setbacks and challenges experienced within the organisation and in the country, we have managed to reach our targets and establish our mark within communities as 'change makers' having positive influence in empowering communities towards practicing their rights.

I must first of all thank all our Donors for their continuous support, which has been a strength and most importantly for having confidence in WDC. I also extend my appreciation to all volunteers who expended their time and effort and the cooperation received from state structures and well-wishers in providing the much needed moral and financial support. Without their combined support and contribution we would not have been able to achieve as much as we have within this year.

I must not forget to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the WDC staff and the women's network (NoW) for their relentless hard work and commitment towards the advancement of the organisation. The WDC's greatest strength has always been and continues to be its dedicated workforce, who I strongly believe will take the organisation into new heights within the New Year 2020.

I wish you all a New Year filled with Hope, Love, Aspirations and Happiness.

Sashi Stephen

Executive Director

Women's Development Centre



Addressing Disaster Risk and its Gendered Dimension

46 year-old Thushari, a mother of two, is a resident from the Medaweve region in Kekirawa, Anuradhapura. Her family is among the 80 families who are permanent residents of the village. Their main source of income is through short-term crop cultivation, which is an industry that is challenging due to the lack of proper water supply within the region. Not only was Medaweve a disaster prone area, residents also had no proper drinking water until an individual donation from Australia for a drinking water purification system was awarded to the Dimuthu Women's Society (DWS), a Community Based Organisation (CBO) where Thushari was assigned the responsibility of distributing drinking water to residents.

Right in the center of the village is an ancient lake, which had the capacity to supply water to all the fields in Medaweve. Due to deforestation for cultivation and resulting soil erosion the lake was filled with soil, invasive algae and water based plants. During rainy seasons the lake does not have the capacity to retain water resulting in flooding, which damages people's homes and fields. During drought residents suffer from water shortages as the lake dries up completely. A pilot project on tackling the underlying risk of natural disasters was initiated by WDC in collaboration with its NoW (Network of Women) partner the Rajarata Praja Kendraya (RPK) and funding support of Diakonia.

Since Thushari already held a responsible position within her community she was appointed as the president of the DWS who conducted a need assessment in the area through the project and prioritised the water issues and cleanup of the lake using the 'Gender Crunch Model'. As the president Thushari took an active role in organizing the community in acquiring formal approvals from various stakeholders and commencing the cleanup. It took a total of 14 days for community volunteers to clean up the lake, which the Dimuthu women's society ensured to maintain its status regularly as the disaster management committee. The waste which was collected from the lake was used to prepare organic fertiliser for their gardens, making it a sustainable initiative. Thushari too began to make her own compost and start her own home garden as an additional source of income generation. The initiative has been empowering for Thushari who has become an active contributor towards her family's income and is recognized as a leader within her community due to her involvement in development initiatives as well as responsibilities within the disaster management committee. Thushari along with her fellow group members are the main source behind educating their community on becoming resilient during disaster situations

Social Inclusion and Integration of Persons with Special Needs



The WDC 'Sahana' hostel and Vocational Training Centre (VTC) runs separate dorms for girls and boys and provides training for 25-30 youth with disabilities referred through the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) centres, after the completion of pre-vocational training. Some of the skill trainers were also rehabilitated through the CBR programme and are now permanent WDC staff members. Those who have successfully completed the vocational training are referred to job placements through job fairs conducted every year. Others who are unable to work independently are encouraged and given the necessary skills and support to assist their parents in small scale businesses from home. By providing the necessary support structure, recognition and skill development, persons with disability like Kosala are able to become a strength to their families and to society. The Story of Kosala epitomizes the overall outcome of the WDC's CBR programme.

Kosala, who is 23 years old, comes from a family of four. His mother is a housewife while his father manages a small-scale business from home that supports the entire family. Kosala, who was born with Down's syndrome, was enrolled into a CBR run special education unit where after completion he was able to read, write, count and have a good grasp of his surroundings. After finishing his school education Kosala's parents decided to refer him to the WDC's VTC where he was introduced to the carpentry section and was familiarized on the various wood carving tools. He was also able to receive training on weaving carpets, making ekel brooms and cement bricks. Soon he began to show confidence and took a leadership position within the youth club, and participated in sports meets and other events organized through the training centre.

Since Kosala was showing a rapid improvement in his capacity he was selected as one of the 5 trainees from the VTC chosen for job training to work in the hospitality trade as wait staff. After completing the 6-month training he began on-the-job training at the Sthree café that is regularly visited by international guests from G Adventures, where Kosala was able to excel in his duties and responsibilities. Kosala is the longest serving wait staff and hopes to continue in this line of work.





Kirimetiya Village: A Child Focused Community Development

The WDC was introduced to Kirimetiya village through a monitoring visit conducted 5 years prior where we were able to identify the pressing need of mobilizing the community. The residents in this village were deprived of educational and transportation services. Children had to travel 9km daily by foot to attend schools that offered higher grades, which resulted in most of them dropping out of school. This in turn led to an increase in child labor and early marriage further leading to increased prevalence of physical/psychological abuse and violence. In addition many of them did not possess legal documents such as birth/death certificates, marriage certificates Identity cards due to lack of knowledge and services made available to the residents. The most vulnerable groups were women and children in this village with high prevalence of child rights and women's rights violations. A majority of residents from the village were of poor health due to the lack of proper nutrition as a result of poverty and unhygienic living conditions (no proper sanitation and drainage systems).

WDC, along with the funding support of Shining Life Children's Trust (SLCT) initiated a volunteer training based on community development for selected residents. The community was educated on rights issues, importance of formal education, health and nutrition, primary health care, Early Childhood Development (ECD), pre/post natal care, SRHR, gender based violence, hygiene and sanitation, environment conservation and so on. A vulnerability assessment of the village was conducted with the support of the Divisional Secretariat (DS), school principal and other relevant stakeholders to identify the most pressing issues in the village. Following the intervention the community requested that a Tamil medium preschool be started within the village. In preparation of starting the preschool two young women from the village were selected to receive formal preschool training and begin providing quality preliminary education for the young children of Kirimetiya village. Apart from trainings close links were built between the temple-committee and women and children's groups who utilize the temple hall for various activities. The women's group has now begun micro credit schemes and established a revolving fund where they are able to start small businesses or find alternative jobs to improve their economic status. This year a mobile service with the support of state officers was conducted at the village where 38 birth certificates and 11 National Identity cards (NIC) were issued to residents. In addition all employees were informed of their statutory benefits.

As a result, the community has become more vocal about their issues and have begun advocating for their rights. Both men and women have been offered employment at the privately owned farm close to the village where they are able to earn a steady income. Furthermore services offered by the Grama Niladari (GN), social service officer, Women development officer, midwife, public health inspector have improved with residents receiving various benefits such as regular meals provided for preschool children and school assistance made available for students. Accessibility to the village has also improved through repairing the roads around the village utilizing local council funds. With the establishment of a safety net there has been a significant decrease in the prevalence of child labour and more children have begun attending school with parents showing more interest in their child's educational pursuits.

Shelter for Survivors



The shelter, which is the heart of the organisation, provides protection, care, rehabilitation and skill development for women and girl survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Residents are provided the option of completing their education, learning valuable life skills and receive training within various skill based industries such as garment, cookery, agriculture etc. After successful reintegration they are provided with the necessary preparations and equipment required to begin their own entrepreneurships creating opportunity for economic empowerment.

There are many factors that contribute towards SGBV within Sri Lankan society. Social and cultural stigma attached to women and girls, poverty, increased migration of women and the negligence that comes with it, particularly within the rural, plantation and war affected areas, is the first identified factor. Moreover, the lack of quality education on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) provided in schools and the unavailability of resources made accessible to the general populace continues to contribute towards its existence. The third identified factor is the lack of knowledge on legal interventions, services and the gaps existing in state referral mechanism on tackling SGBV cases. Due to this many survivors are left vulnerable with no proper justice served to them.

The gap of service delivery between duty bearers and rights holders has further widened, contributing to SGBV cases not being reported or dealt with appropriately. While resources are available many are not educated enough to access them for their benefit nor are the service providers aware of proper intervention processes due to lack of knowledge and awareness. Therefore, it is important that these factors are addressed when tackling issues of SGBV and gender inequality.

Saroja who came from a large family of 10 lived a very unfortunate life from a very young age. After the demise of her mother her older siblings took on the responsibility of bringing her up. However she began to face sexual abuse from the hands of her father and older brother and later on by her sister's husband. Saroja was in a very unsafe environment where she had no hope of escaping her predicament. Even though she did well in school and qualified to sit for her Ordinary Level Examinations (O/Ls) she was not able to attend the exam due to her situation at home. Seeing her distressed state Saroja's teacher notified the authorities who presented her case to courts.

Following the decision taken, Saroja was referred to the WDC shelter through the department of probation and childcare where she began receiving support, attention and care needed to recover and rebuild her life once again. She regularly participated in counselling sessions where she was able to voice all her worries and burdens that were weighing on her since her childhood. While initially she showed hesitance in participating in any activity conducted at the shelter she gradually began to heal and interact more with her peers.

Last year Saroja was chosen to participate in a photography workshop where she was able to showcase her talent at an exhibition held at the shelter. Seeing her eye for capturing artful photographs Saroja was selected to take pictures during various programmes organized through the WDC. While resuming her education she takes time to practice on her photography skills during her leisure and hopes to one day start her own photography business.



Baking for a Cause

In order to expand the vocational training section at the WDC shelter for survivors of SGBV an industrial size electric oven and a mixer along with attachments and baking containers were purchased with the generous contribution of the Rotary Club of Kandy. The equipment was purchased from the internationally recognized Sherry Bakery Equipment company who agreed to provide a free of charge bakery demonstration to selected shelter residents. The training included technical and practical aspects where the residents were taught to make bread, Vienna rolls, chocolate éclairs, sausage buns, fish buns, cupcakes and Swiss rolls.

Following the bakery demonstration the shelter began producing various baked goods which were distributed among the residents and also put up for sale at the WDC Sthree social enterprise store in Kandy. With favourable feedback the shelter has begun to receive external orders and has increased its supply accordingly. Through this the WDC hopes to open its own bakery with freshly baked goods where residents will be provided hands-on training as well as cover the running cost of the shelter, thereby making it a self-sufficient structure.





Contributing to a Strengthened Civil Society

The Women's Development Centre (WDC) together with Sri Lanka Centre for Development Facilitation (SLCDF) and People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) is implementing a development project within the division of Delthota. The 3-year project, which is funded by the European Union (EU) focuses on strengthening Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) towards playing an active and prominent role within good governance and development processes. Through WDC's extensive years of experience working on community development and women empowerment it has become evident that a majority of decision making is done through the top-down approach where those at the grassroots level do not receive the proper services required by them. WDC's mandate focuses on the rights based, bottom-up approach where those at the grassroots level have an important role to play within the decision making process. Therefore it is of vital importance that communities are educated on their rights and that their voices are heard.

The project provides training for community facilitators on a range of topics, such as the Right to Information (RTI), Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Divisional Development Planning (DDP), and Social Accountability (SA), where after they are required to conduct community level awareness within all 29 divisions, 88 villages, within the Delthota division. In addition selected community representatives are provided extensive training on the Self Help Group (SHG) approach, which focuses on the group formation of women from low income households for social and economic empowerment.

Before becoming an active member of the Nirmala SHG in the remote area of Kolabissa in Delthota, Irangani was a housewife who depended solely on her husband's income. Seeing her potential Renuka, a SHG facilitator trained through the Organisational Capacity Enhancement and Networking' (OCEAN) project was able to encourage Irangani in joining a SHG formed within her neighbourhood. After gaining membership she soon showed great potential and interest and was able to hold a leadership position within the group, which consisted of 14 other women. She along with the group began to organize a weekly fair selling vegetables and setting aside part of their profit toward the group fund, going further and further away from being ensnared by loan sharks.

Irangani with the knowledge and encouragement received through the SHG facilitator, was eager to start up her own business. Since there were no shops in the area, she used this opportunity to open a small shop at her home where she began selling vegetables. Later on with the support of her SHG, she was able to take out a loan and expand it as a grocery store as well as startup quail farming on a small scale. This not only helped her pay back her weekly loans owed to loan sharks, but it also gave her an opportunity to provide a service to her community.

Irangani goes one step further by holding weekly savings schemes (seettu) among the residents of her neighbourhood in order to minimize people taking loans from 'loan sharks'. Experiencing the hardship and emotional distress caused through loans in the past, Irangani is determined to empower her community through encouraging saving schemes. She along with her fellow group members proudly state that they no longer are afraid as they have a strong support structure amongst themselves as a collective.

When the Right to Information (RTI) act was introduced and approved by the Sri Lankan parliament in 2017 it provided citizens of Sri Lanka an opportunity to promote transparency, accountability and good governance within the workings of every public authority present. However, while the act was passed it was barely implemented at village level due to lack of awareness and was therefore not fully utilized.

The WDC through the OCEAN project began educating communities at grassroots level on the existence of the RTI act and provided necessary training on accessing it. As of now all 88 villages located within the division of Delthota have received awareness on RTI by trained community RTI facilitators. This year it was recorded that a majority of submitted RTI forms were from the Central Province.

After taking part in a voter's education programme headed by PAFFREL, which also included an information session on RTI, a resident of the Suduwella division who also bears membership of the Vennila SHG brought up the issue of overcharging passengers travelling by public transport. She mentioned that there was no means of knowing the actual charge based on the distance. Due to this many bus conductors take advantage of the situation and over charge or keep the change to themselves without handing it back to the passenger. She requested that we take this matter into hand and find a suitable solution.

Upon hearing this case the PAFFREL officer/resource person took the initiative to fill out and submit a RTI form to the Sri Lanka transportation board regarding this lack of information. Following the submission many buses running in Delthota and in the surrounding areas have begun to display information boards containing the charge per distance for ease of all passengers travelling by public transportation. Reducing the risk of exploitation

Following a community level RTI programme residents of a village within the Wanahapuwa division in Delthota voiced their concern regarding an issue they were facing with their local postal services. None of the residents in that village had their letters delivered to their homes but rather were required to collect them from a shop where the postman would store them. With the assistance of a RTI community trainer a RTI petition was filled and submitted to the post office inquiring about their roles and responsibilities. A few weeks after submitting the RTI form residents in the village saw their mail being delivered to their homes.

Following a RTI awareness programme, an elderly woman who had a question regarding her senior citizen's benefit approached RTI trainer Rasana. Even though Laila, a resident of the division of Pattiyagama Udagama in Delthota was 71 years of age, an age eligible to receive senior citizen benefits from the government, she had not yet received any benefit as such. After consulting with the field officers working for the OCEAN project Rasana was able to assist Leila in submitting a RTI petition regarding the eligibility of receiving the senior citizen's benefit. Within 4 days a reply in the form of a letter written in her mother tongue (Tamil) was sent by the Divisional Secretariat's office in Delthota to Ms. Leila who was not only informed of her eligibility but that 14 other residents living in and around her village were also eligible to receive their senior citizen's benefit.





Ensuring the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The WDC Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme for persons with disabilities was first introduced to address issues that mothers of children with disabilities faced due to lack of knowledge, opportunity, awareness and social stigma. The CBR tackles all forms of disability, such as physical disabilities, the hearing impaired, low vision, intellectual disabilities including various syndromes, with particular focus on Autism. They are provided with rehabilitation services that range from early childhood development- that focuses on children aged 0-5 years old, integration to school aged (5-16 years) children for inclusive education, pre-vocational training, vocational training and skills development for future job prospects and overall social inclusion.

The CBR program strives to advocate for disability rights and ensure that persons with disabilities are provided an inclusive and non-discriminative society to live dignified lives within.

Chamodi was diagnosed with low vision when she was a child and thereafter gradually lost her sight. She became completely blind when she was ten years old. Since the school she was attending did not have special education facilities, she had no option but to move to a special school to continue her studies where she began to excel in her subjects. While some of the students in her class used braille typewriters, she used the braille slate, as her parents could not afford to buy her one so she continued to use the slate despite it being difficult and time consuming.

However, her parents did not give up hope in acquiring one for her, which is why they approached the WDC for assistance in acquiring a braille typewriter. Since it was not available in Sri Lanka it had to be ordered from India following necessary arrangements made to finance and import the equipment. Chamodi received the machine with much gratitude promising to do her best in achieving her dream of becoming a teacher one day.

Three years since receiving the machine Chamodi is recognized as an outstanding student in her school by excelling in her studies, extracurricular activities and musical abilities. She took part in an island wide reality TV show this year where she was selected as one of the top twelve contestants of the overall show. With her achievements Chamodi continues to pursue her dreams and hopes to become a music teacher one day.

Asinsa Sathsarani who is the second child in her family of 6 was diagnosed with a neurological disorder at a young age. In order to support her family Sathsarani's mother began a small business of sewing and selling raincoats within her village. The profit acquired through sales was nearly not enough to support her and her 4 children who are currently schooling.



Sathsarani was identified through a field monitoring visit conducted by CBR staff who advised Sathsarani's mother to send her to the Pupuressa CBR centre where she could receive specialized rehabilitation services. Since she lived further away and required to catch two buses to attend the CBR centre the staff advised that Sathsarani visit the centre 3 times a week and continue attending the Pupuressa Diyaga Morahena primary school on the remaining days. Due to her neurological disability Sathsarani is unable to attend regular school, however since her mother requires assistance in ensuring her child's safety the teachers at the school have agreed to accommodate Sathsarani in the same class as her younger sister. While teaching the class the teacher with the advice of CBR staff engages Sathsarani in simple activities to keep her occupied. Sathsarani gradually began to grasp language and mathematical concepts as well as show a talent for art and sports. Participating at a divisional level sports meet organized through the department of social services Sathsarani was able to qualify for the district level competitions where she won gold medals in the categories of 100 meter sprint and shot put throw as well as a silver medal for long jump. At the National level competitions she was able to win a silver medal for shot put throw.



Apart from her athletic achievements Sathsarani was able to showcase her abilities in a shoe-making workshop organized at the Pupuressa CBR centre on the 18th of October 2019. While the training was aimed for the parents of the CBR centre Sathsarani and her younger sister were able to participate along with their mother. As a team Sathsarani and her sister successfully completed a pair of sandals made with cloth, which was selected from the trainers as the most beautiful one out of all the sandals made at the workshop.

Amila, a resident of the Gampola region is the second child in his family. From a very young age he had difficulties in his speech, behavior and learning. After identifying Amila through field monitoring visits conducted through the CBR he was referred to the CBR special education unit in Ulapane where he received speech therapy, life skills development, and pre vocational training. He was also referred to the Ear, Nose and Throat clinic for treatment on his speech difficulty. Amila was also able to build his confidence through participating in various dancing, art and sport competitions organized through the CBR programme.

Since Amila came from an unstable family background, with him being looked after by his mother, the CBR staff were able to refer Amila's mother towards WDC's legal and counselling services where she was able to lodge a maintenance case which resulted in her receiving regular maintenance fee paid by Amila's estranged father. Furthermore following discussions with their family relatives the house and land was written under Amila's mother, securing them with a permanent home.

After 3 years of continuous rehabilitation he was admitted to grade 2 in the Ulapane Maha Vidiyala for mainstream education. Amila continued his studies up to grade 9 where after with the support of the WDC he was enrolled in a six month long beauty culture course. He was able to place 2nd in his final examination. Today Amila earns an income as a recognized beautician within his village and also has found employment working as a waiter at a hotel. With his capacity he is able to live a dignified and independent life within society.





The Multifaceted Woman

Devika is a senior officer at WDC, currently working as a field manager. She is also the owner of two paddy fields and a part time farmer. Devika, who is rich in experience began her journey towards empowerment from humble beginnings.

After completing her O/Levels in 1989 Devika joined the WDC as a volunteer for the CBR project. Being young and inexperienced she didn't feel confident enough to assume the responsibilities given to her, which is why she left to become a Sunday school teacher at the local temple. In 1993 she rejoined the WDC, more prepared and willing to undertake responsibilities; however, she was very intimidated to engage in fieldwork as it required speaking to women from different walks of life. Accepting the challenge she began her first project on working with children with disabilities and recalls a child who had been affected by Rubella and was unable to see, speak or hear. It was after she began researching on the project that the WDC initiated the Rubella programme. The programme was an immense success and became a national movement following WDC's numerous efforts to spread awareness in schools, garment factories and villages. Later through the education ministry she received a 6-month training on sign language and speech therapy. Once she was back in Kandy she led the Vision unit which also included a well recognised Kandy based musical group that occasionally participated at concerts overseas. Through many efforts she was able to allocate a section at the D. S. Senanayake library for the visually impaired with special access and braille. ***"I have had to face many challenges in my career over the years but as I always say, I am not an individual I am an organization - which has helped me rise above those challenges and reach higher"***. Devika was also able to develop her business skills by planning and participating in various events, such as the Japanese Fair, Hillwood Mela, Kantha Mela and so on organized through the WDC. Devika travels 36km every day to work and plans her tasks accordingly which shows her dedication for the service she does. Apart from her work at WDC, Devika supplies seasonal vegetables, Kenda Kola (used as an environment friendly substitute for lunch sheets) and Kithul honey to the Sthree cafe which is used for breakfast, lunch and high tea organized for visiting tour groups. Furthermore, she has begun supplying fresh vegetables grown by residents from her village to the WDC shelter as well as several small-scale local vegetable stores located within the Kandy town. Not only has she advanced her own capacities she has also found a market for the farmers in her village. Through her extra earnings she is now able to afford tuition lessons for her two children and generate a savings for her family who also support her in her business. Learning to make organic fertilizer, Devika has managed to cut down the usage of chemical fertilizers in her paddy cultivation by half and replace it with organic fertilizer. ***"I come from a very beautiful village, rich in resources"*** She says many people in her village failed to see the resourcefulness of their environment. Now with her encouragement and her successful business she has become an influential woman within her own community

SLCT – Advocate for equal educational opportunities at national/district level decision making platforms. Establishment of community watch groups and complain mechanisms with stakeholders.

Diakonia – District and divisional level advocacy on disaster risk reduction and establish disaster committees.

Rythm – Establishment of community groups, parents groups and independent disability groups for disability related advocacy.

EU – Establishment of CSO forum as a representative body within Delthota. Formation of women's federation through Self Help Groups (SHGs).

UNPBF/DRL/Hi – Build the district and national platform for peace and reconciliation.

Diakonia – Capacity building of WDC staff in expanding resource pool.

Diakonia – Advocacy through Network of Women (NoW), district consortium, district committees on TJR, gender equality, environment justice, education for all, and community mobilization.



Uniterra/WUSC – Encourage entrepreneurship/self-employment towards economic empowerment.

EU, COL – Formation of Self Help Groups among low income households.

Rythm – Referrals towards disability benefits offered through the government.

SLCT – Awareness on home management.

UNPBF/DRL/Hi – Awareness building on peace and reconciliation to minimize poverty resulting through conflict.

Diakonia – Prevent poverty caused by natural disasters.



Uniterra/WUSC – Eco-friendly home gardening trainings.

Diakonia – build resilience towards drought, floods and natural disasters.

Rythm – Referrals towards medical services (hospitals). Nutrition programmes for pregnant mothers, parents and youth.

EU – Counselling services for wellbeing of mental health.

Diakonia – Counselling services and wellbeing of survivors of SGBV and maternity care for pregnant survivors of SGBV.

SLCT – Awareness on Early Childhood Development (ECD), primary health, nutrition, drug & alcohol abuse, sex education, and counselling.



Diakonia/EU – Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and general community members within the Central and North Central provinces educated on the Right to Information (RTI) act.

SLCT – Problem analysis at village level.

Rythm – Referrals towards, hospitals, police and courts on SGBV faced by persons with disabilities. Observe events/festivals inclusive of all cultures and religions. Enforce child protection policy in all activities.

UNPBF/DRL/Hi – Educate communities on sensitively and ethically tackling ethnic and religious conflicts.



Diakonia/EU – Capacity building of CSOs on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

Diakonia – Capacity building of communities and stakeholders on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Establish an effective top-down disaster alert mechanism.



COL – Introduce community and family cooperative systems to communities. Awareness on home management and effective conscious consumerism through upcycling and recycling.

SLCT – Awareness on environment conservation and protection.

Diakonia – Publicize on traditional medicine and food.



Rythm – Refer leaders of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) in city planning platforms.

EU – Encourage participation at grassroots in Divisional Development Planning (DDP) in Delthota.

Diakonia – Fully equipped shelter facility with disability access.

Diakonia – Increase community resilience towards tackling disaster situations



SLCT – Educate women, men and youth on women's & children's rights. **SLCT/EU/UNPBF/DRL/Hi** – Mobile service in obtaining relevant documentation in areas with lack of service.

Rythm – Ensure disability rights, children's rights, and the right to employment.

EU – Access to services without language barriers (women's resource centre), community awareness on good governance.

Diakonia – Donate equipment (sewing machines) for successfully reintegrated residents of the shelter for personal economic advancement and sustainability.

Diakonia – Awareness on equality issues prevalent within Sri Lanka on international platforms.

UNPBF/DRL/Hi – Provide awareness for stakeholders on serving justice.

Diakonia – Equal opportunity and social integration of sex workers.



Uniterra/WUSC – Provide start-up loans and technical support for individual women entrepreneurs. Sale of traditional products and cuisines. Function on the concept of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Upcycle.



COL – Awareness on decent work and women workers' rights for right holders/stakeholders.

Diakonia – Economic empowerment of women survivors of SGBV through skill development.

SLCT – Skill development, self-employment and leadership training for youth.

Rythm – Providing a market, Job placement, on the job training for persons with disabilities.

Uniterra/WUSC – Encourage environment friendly production. Training on starting-up/maintaining homestays (tourism). Provide employment opportunities for women and disabled youth within service industry.

Diakonia – Community awareness on increasing new and alternative production. Self-employment opportunities for sex workers and their children (young adults).

Organisational Capacity Enhancement and Networking (EU)

Contribute to a strengthened civil society which enhanced CSO's role in good governance and development processes in the Delthota DS division

Promoting gender equality for sustainable development (Diakonia)

An enabling environment for communities to experience the quality of life ensuring dignity and protection for women, children and the marginalised

Project on Empowered Women & Girls with Improved Sustainable livelihoods (COL)
Transform community systems to ensure scalability and sustainability that leads to women and girls' empowerment

Upcycled new product development (Uniterra/WUSC)

- Protect the environment through reducing non-degradable waste in the environment
- Promote women entrepreneurship through developing upcycled, marketable products
- Develop new value added upcycled designs

Empowering women for an inclusive and sustainable Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (TJR) process (UNPBF/DRL/Hi)

- Women including marginalized women support a platform for the purpose of influencing the TJR process and mechanisms across dividing lines
- Engage in a collaborative platform to provide common perspectives on TJR valued by relevant TJR stakeholders

Disaster Resilience through Innovative Community Empowerment (Diakonia)

Increasing understanding and capacities to address disaster risk and its gendered dimension with Diakonia partners and relevant stakeholders

Mobilising communities in Kirimetiawatte (SLCT)

- Rights of children ensured through supportive structures
- Community mobilization and involvement in development processes
- Decrease women dependency and vulnerability

Equal opportunity for persons with disabilities (Rythm)

Actively promote the rights of the persons with disability in accordance with the disability inclusion act 2014. Individuals with disability shall have access to long term care, quality services, health care, inclusive education, access to economic empowerment thus actively promoting social



WDC Donors
Diakonia
COL – Commonwealth of Learning
SLCT – Shining Life Children's Trust
EU – European Union
Rythm – Rythm Foundation
UNPBF – United Nations Peace Building Fund
DRL – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour
Hi – Humanity and Inclusion
Uniterra/WUSC – World University Services Canada

The following illustrations depict issues identified within the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (TJR) process in Sri Lanka by women leaders of the TJR platform.



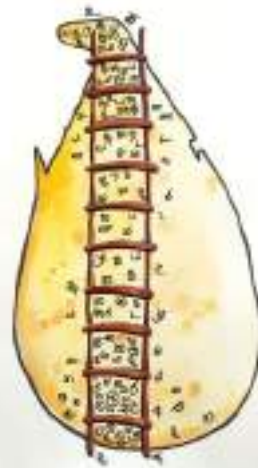
RIGHT TO KNOW



RIGHT TO JUSTICE



NON RECURRENCE



RIGHT TO REPARATIONS

Nimalee is the proprietor and owner of Pearl Creations; a business she registered and expanded after joining Sthree two years ago. She currently designs and creates women's Accessories using fabric. Nimalee visited Sthree over two years ago with the intention of selling side bags she had woven, as knitting was her passion. Not long after, was she able to identify that her woven bags were not selling well at the shop and decided to work on some necklaces she had learnt to make through a WDC implemented upcycling project funded through the World University Services of Canada (WUSC). Although she loved making them she had no confidence that she would be able to sell them. **"I was afraid initially to even show my items because although people appreciated it for its beauty they didn't buy it but when I brought them to Sthree they wanted all of it"**. After we got a few more of her necklaces the reception was great and her items were beginning to sell and became a hit at the shop.



"I never imagined even in my dreams that I would be able to sell my products at shops". After this she started building her contacts, visiting potential institutions that would advise and help her improve her product. She received a 3-day entrepreneurship skill development training through WDC, and was able to cost and market a product more effectively.

As a woman Nimalee believes there is nothing she cannot achieve. Her character and confidence has changed dramatically and she most importantly takes pride in what she does as she is now able to contribute to her household through her business. She engages in teaching others in knitting and lace making which also is a side income for her. Nimalee learnt to find resources available especially for women, which she had no bearing of before. Through the WDC entrepreneur society she was able to get connected with the Department of Small Industries, Industrial Development Board (IDB), Women's Desk and took part in various trainings programs though the *Shilpa sabha*, Tourist Centre etc. She received a lot of confidence during this process. She says she lost that initial fear to approach and ask questions; she was able to challenge anyone that placed restrictions on the growth of her business. **"I got that strength through WDC and Sthree because they had a lot of confidence in me"**.



Since the last two years, Nimalee has managed to register her own business and sells her products at 3 other shops in Kandy. She also sends her jewellery overseas on orders and is impressed at how far she has made it. Nimalee is constantly looking for ways to develop her business in order to expand. She started with a standard sized chain and today she creates small medium and large sizes; she also creates earrings, bangles and bracelets. More than the money that she receives she hopes to be recognized for the style and quality of her products. She is a frequent participator at fairs and exhibitions organized in Kandy and Colombo and established herself as an entrepreneur.



Up-cycled New Product Development

The up-cycling and innovative design initiated as a 6-month project aimed at promoting eco-friendly practices in consumption and production. The goal of the project was to train entrepreneurs to build their businesses in an eco friendly manner while providing the necessary technical as well as entrepreneurship skills needed to incorporate eco-friendly practices in to their businesses. 14 Entrepreneurs from the Kandy entrepreneur society received interest free loans totaling Rs. 280,000 to develop new products to assist them to engage in increased production. With the funding received from WUSC/ Unitera programme and international volunteers, we were able to successfully complete the program as well as up scale the project to its next phase. The follow-up project has reached Nuwaraeliya, Ampara, Matale and Kandy where new entrepreneur societies have been established to encourage entrepreneurship and ecofriendly practices.



Migara first attended the introductory up-cycle program and was interested in making and selling birds nests using plastic bottles and glass jars. Soon she realized there was not a great market for her products. She attended technical skills training workshops organized through the upcycle project that enabled her to come up with a product she can sell and earn an income. Today Migara makes women's accessories and wall hangers using tin cans and is spreading awareness on reducing environmental pollution through her product range





Capacitating Women and Girls towards Economic Empowerment

The 'Empowered Women and Girls with Sustainable Livelihoods' project funded by the Commonwealth of Learning was initiated with the motive of socially and economically empowering 5000 women and girls in the central province 'Reaching the Unreached'. One of our tasks was to identify the barriers that prevented women from engaging in businesses, particularly the reasons behind it. Among the many reasons identified was the lack of information, shortage of job opportunities, accessibility, cultural and educational barriers, early marriage and the responsibility of child rearing that contributed towards the prevalence of unemployment among women and girls.

Our goal was to target women and girls in rural communities and find job opportunities so that they could positively contribute to the country's economy. For this we conducted many training workshops on changing traditional mindsets and increasing knowledge on job opportunities and the availability of skilled work, and how to access them. We assisted young girls and women through counselling and advising them on the importance of choosing their line of employment, meeting the job criteria and acquiring the necessary skills needed to fulfill certain job requirements. They were also guided on starting up micro and small scale businesses in order to ensure their economic stability. These are some of the success stories recorded through the project.

"Life is something that is constantly bargaining with time. Each time we complain about not having enough time we fail to realize how much time we have wasted during a single day. We can never regain the time wasted, however we can begin to extend our precious time towards something we are passionate about and see how time can become money just by utilizing it wisely"

Malkanthi was a housewife residing in the village of Kaikawala in the Matale district. While spending her day doing household chores she began extending her spare time towards starting a small business in sewing and selling carpets, which contributed towards her livelihood. Being a member of the Abimani women's society in her village Malkanthis along with 20 other women were able to participate in a training programme on making bags from start to finish. Following the training Malkanthis began practicing her new skill. From initially sewing 5 to 6 bags, Malkanthis has advanced herself to sewing around 100 bags and starting her own business, which has significantly contributed towards her income. Not only has she been identified as an entrepreneur she has also been provided the opportunity to become a trainer in bag making for other women through the COL project. Following a module development training programme for women entrepreneurs she was able to draft her own training module on bag making, which has further facilitated her training process. Not only is she economically empowered but she is a valuable contributor towards encouraging social and economic empowerment of other women and girls.

Marriage at a young age has become a common practice among contemporary Sri Lankan society. Many early marriages are done right after attending the legal age of 18 years, with or without the consent of their parents. Separation and divorce also has become more common with child maintenance and divorce cases making up 60% of the daily trials brought to courts. It is regrettable to state that most couples who walk out separately on legal terms are young and with children.

39 year-old Ruwanthi decided to get married to Nilantha when she was 18 years of age. While both their parents disapproved of the marriage based on traditional customs and beliefs Ruwanthi and Nilantha continued on in their journey together. Soon Ruwanthi's husband began abusing her and blaming her to be the sole reason for the loss of his inheritance and family relationships. Amidst all the abuse Ruwanthi suppressed her emotions and carried on with her household duties as expected by a traditional wife.

In order to contribute towards the family income Ruwanthi began a small-scale ready-made dress enterprise, which gave her a sense of strength knowing that she could see a better future for herself. However, following the birth of her daughter, Ruwanthi's responsibilities gradually began to increase and she found it difficult to manage her business while taking care of her daughter. In order to protect herself and her daughter from further abuse, Ruwanthi decided to file for divorce and break away from her toxic marriage.

“As a divorced woman I had to face sarcasm and ridicule from various individuals and groups. I felt helpless and alone with no one to seek refuge from. My business fell when I realised that many affiliated with my enterprise had their own ulterior motives. I began to fall into depression and crawled back into my shell of despair and hopelessness. It was at my lowest point that I was referred to the Women’s Development Centre (WDC).”

Ruwanthi sought counselling assistance at WDC where she began to mend her spirit. While receiving counselling Ruwanthi was also encouraged to participate in various self-employment trainings offered through the organisation. Seeing her potential as an entrepreneur she was given the opportunity to become a member of the Kandy district women entrepreneurs association established under the COL funded Girls inspiring project. Her products were accepted by our Sthree social enterprise where she was advised on further improving the quality of her products.

“Participating in these activities strengthened me, as I realized I was not alone; that there were others who had overcome challenges in their lives. I am especially grateful that I could learn a variety of new skills in sewing, upcycling products, mosaic and designing as well. My confidence grew significantly when I began to sell my products. I have become very involved with the entrepreneurs society and enthusiastically learn through every opportunity that I encounter”

Now I have an opportunity to be an instructor on sewing bags to other groups of women and girls who would not have had the opportunity, if not for the Girls Inspiring project. My young daughter who is 13 now is extremely proud of my achievements, which fulfills my expectations in life”



The Girls Inspiring project has opened various avenues for women and girls who have never been reached. Ruwanthi has now become a role model to those women and girls who aspire to live a dignified life.

Mobile Service for Legal Documentation

As part of an initiative of the EU funded women's resource centre in Delthota 2 mobile services for legal documents were conducted in the divisions of Ambalanmana and Bawlana watte during the month of October. A total of 41 birth certificates were distributed in Bawlana watte with 4 certificates pending and 31 birth certificates issued at the Ambalanmana lower division. After conversing with those who received their birth certificates we realised the hardships they had to undergo in acquiring legal documentation with many of them falling victim to scams. Being acquired with a birth certificate they are now able to apply for their National Identity Card, receive their employment benefits, enroll their children into school and enjoy all the rights and benefits of a Sri Lankan citizen.

Thamil Arasi is a young mother of two who resides within the Bawlana watte division. Due to misplacement she had lost her birth certificate and was unable to enroll her oldest son Nadushan who was soon reaching the age of starting formal education. Through participating in the mobile service conducted at Bawlana watte on the 25th of October Thamil Arasi was able to submit birth certificate applications for herself, Nadushan and her youngest son Kaviloshan. After successfully receiving all three birth certificates Thamil Arasi is able to begin the process in enrolling Nadushan into school and ensure him the right to education.

64 year-old Margaret is a resident of the Ambalanmana lower division in Delthota. Five years ago she lost her birth certificate while travelling by bus and has since been trying everything to get one remade. Because she did not have a birth certificate she could not apply for her employment benefits, which she had accumulated during her 30-year service at the Pupuressa tea plantation. Desperate in acquiring her documents Margaret first sought help through state structures who were unable to provide her with a solution. She also fell victim to various scammers who promised her a birth certificate for a price. Years went by and she soon lost hope of ever acquiring her birth certificate.

Through an OCEAN project volunteer Margaret was informed of a mobile service for legal documentation being conducted within the division of Ambalanmana. There she was able to submit an application with the assistance of WDC staff and relevant government officials and receive her birth certificate within a matter of weeks. Overjoyed with the outcome Margaret plans to apply for her long awaited employment benefit and expresses her heartfelt gratitude towards the service rendered to vulnerable people such as herself.



The 30- year civil war as well as conflict situations that followed thereafter have been experienced by all ethnic and religious groups, particularly women and children who lost their security as well as had their rights violated. Even though it has been almost 10 years since the war, many affected by the war have not received adequate solutions to their various issues, which is why the WDC, together with Humanity and Inclusion (HI) along with the funding support of the United Nations Peace Building Fund (UNPBF) and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour (DRL), implemented a project on empowering women towards facilitating a productive Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (TJR) process in Sri Lanka.

Awareness and knowledge building sessions on the country's existing TJR process and its tools as well as the responsibilities of stakeholders were conducted at village level within Kandy, Anuradhapura, Ampara, Matara and Hambanthota. Through these sessions the WDC was able to identify 90 TJR facilitators to identify gaps within the TJR process. As a result various issues related to TJR were identified and addressed at district level. The following story highlights just one such positive result through the project.

Land ownership was one prominent issue identified through a survey conducted by the Anuradhapura TJR facilitators. During the civil war 165 families residing within 3 villages located in the GN division of Kabethigollewa in Anuradhapura were relocated to temporary camps. With the end of the war in 2009 families were relocated and began rebuilding and reestablishing their homes. However they did not have official ownership or required deeds for their land, which became problematic to the residents as they were constantly in fear of losing their homes. TJR facilitators and members of the Anuradhapura forum took the initiative to write to the district land commissioner as well as relevant state officials regarding this matter. Furthermore this matter was relayed to officers of the Ministry of Lands and Parliamentary reforms. As a direct result 10 families were issued deeds to their land and 20 more families have receive relevant documentation ensuring their deeds.

The district land commissioner has promised to provide land deeds for at least 100 families by the end of 2019, however there could be delays resulting from the Presidential election and the potential change of government. Much like the land ownership issue in Anuradhapura there have been many issues that were identified within the other four districts as well and necessary solutions provided to vulnerable communities through dedicated TJR facilitators and women's forums. Through mobilizing women a sense of confidence has been built on their ability to tackle any obstacle that comes across.

Selvarani Selvarani comes from the village of Udabowala located in the central province of Sri Lanka. After completing her secondary education Selvarani was able to secure a job at a packaging factory in the district of Colombo. It was during this period that Selvarani sadly lost her arm due to a machine malfunction at her workplace. Not only was she physically disadvantaged but also mentally harassed due to her identity of being a Tamil woman during the period of the Sri Lankan civil war that raged for 30 years. A majority of her colleagues were Sinhalese, which prompted them to make racist and discriminatory remarks against her. She gradually fell into depression and lost confidence in herself. Not only did her colleagues reject her but she was also rejected by her own family who saw her as a burden due to her disability and withdrew from all responsibility of caring for her. Selvarani had reached the lowest point in her life, however, she had a source of strength in her friend *Seetha, whom she had befriended during her period of employment. She was able to find a home living at Seetha's house where Seetha's mother looks after her.

Selvarani was introduced to the Gothami women's society after a conversation she had with two of its members. She began attending meetings and participated in awareness programmes and training related to Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (TJR). Selvarani who previously was hesitant even to attend funerals within her neighbourhood has become confident enough to participate as well as lead community initiatives without hesitation. Through her knowledge building and training on TJR Selvarani always makes sure the message of peace and reconciliation is reflected in every initiative she undertakes. With her restored confidence and acquired knowledge on rights Selvarani is no longer afraid to voice her concerns and represent the vulnerable in similar situations that she faced and to ensure that every voice is heard.



This recipe changes lives.

Sri Lankan Dhal Curry

Ingredients

- 1 cup (128 g) dhal (lentils – orange variety)
- 2 cups (500ml) water
- ½ teaspoon (2.5g) turmeric
- ½ onion chopped fine (medium size)
- 3-4 cloves of garlic chopped
- ¼ cup (180ml) coconut milk
- ½ teaspoon (2.5g) salt
- 2 tablespoon (30ml) oil
- ¼ teaspoon (1.25g) mustard seeds
- ¼ teaspoon (1.25g) fenugreek seeds
- ¼ teaspoon (1.25g) cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon (2.5g) chili flakes
- few curry leaves and pandan leaves

Method



1. Wash dhal in about 3 changes of water. Put the dhal in a pan. Add the 2 cups of water, turmeric, garlic, a portion of the chopped onion and let it boil on medium heat (13 minutes) Once the dhal is cooked, it will turn yellow in color and will have a nice mushy content (there should be no water left at this point).
2. Prepare the coconut milk in ¼ cup of boiling water and add it to the dhal; add the salt. Leave mixture to simmer for 3-4 minutes. Switch off the heat.
3. Take another small frying pan and heat the oil. Add the spice mix (mustard, cumin and fenugreek seeds and chili flakes), the curry and Pandan leaves. When the onions are caramelized and golden brown in color take it off the heat and pour this over the cooked dhal.

Created with our non-profit partner Planeterra, Sthree Café supports training and work opportunities for local women and disabled youth. The spice mix you'll get today is from this project.

To learn more about Planeterra projects and other G for Good commitments visit [gadventures/responsible-travel](https://www.gadventures/responsible-travel)

Inspired by the Planeterra project Sthree Café (Sri Lanka)

G STOCKLIVE

G Adventures
Our world deserves more you.



Sthree together with G Adventures launched 600 recipe boxes sourcing all the spices from WDC's Network of Women (NoW). The idea was to share a local recipe regularly cooked at Sthree Cafe with a group in the UK and share the work we do with women through the WDC.



Functioning Independently Through Sustainable Mechanisms

The WDC Network of Women's Organisation (NoW) is an umbrella organization established through clusters of grassroots women's groups where WDC's mechanism for advocacy and outreach work is disseminated to rights holders island wide. There are fifteen such women's forums (Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Hanguranketha, Anuradhapura, Ampara, Kalmunai Akkaraipattu, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Mannar, Vavuniya, Matara, Hambanthota, Monaragala), operational in 12 districts in Sri Lanka with a total women membership of over 35,000 and over 100,000 indirect beneficiaries. The WDC NoW mechanism has been immensely successful with most forums being recognized as independent entities working towards WDC's mandate of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Rajarata Praja Kendraya is a fitting example of a group that started small and grew into an established organisation recognized at national level.

The Rajarata Praja Kendraya was established by the WDC in 1998 while the organization was working in the area of Periyakulam. Once the project was over the WDC identified and began working with one of the women involved in the project who showed capacity and interest in expanding her service working with women. Two others joined her and established small-scale CBOs among their communities with the support of WDC. Within 10 years they were able to establish women's groups and expand their programme in 4 DS divisions with a membership of 3000 women. The organization was registered and became known as the Rajarata Praja Kendraya (RPK)

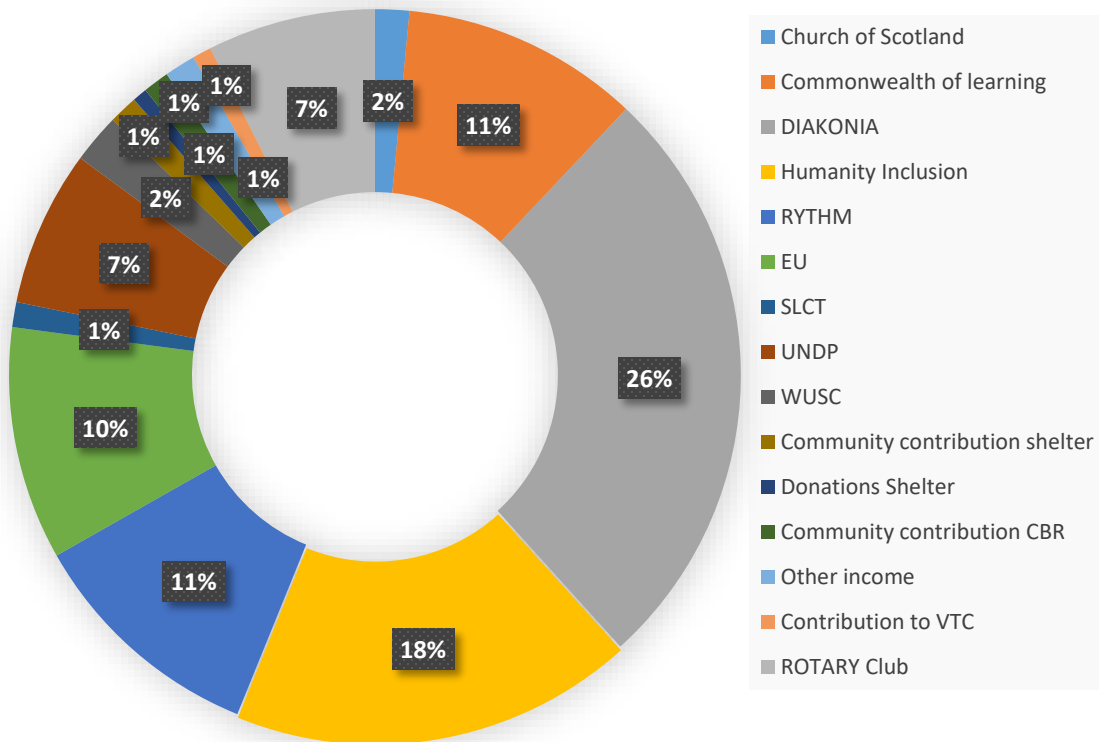
In 2006 during the Tsunami disaster they along with WDC were able to showcase their capacities through implementing a housing project in Pulmudai and mobilizing communities to restart their livelihood. Through this project they gained a lot of valuable experience and learnt to accumulate funds and create networks with state structures.

When the Tsunami project came to an end in 2008 the RPK had no funding to continue their work and to maintain their workforce. They were in desperate need of funding. The WDC introduced to the RPK several donor agencies that agreed to provide funding support for a holistic micro credit scheme within their women's groups. Through the micro credit scheme their membership significantly increased.

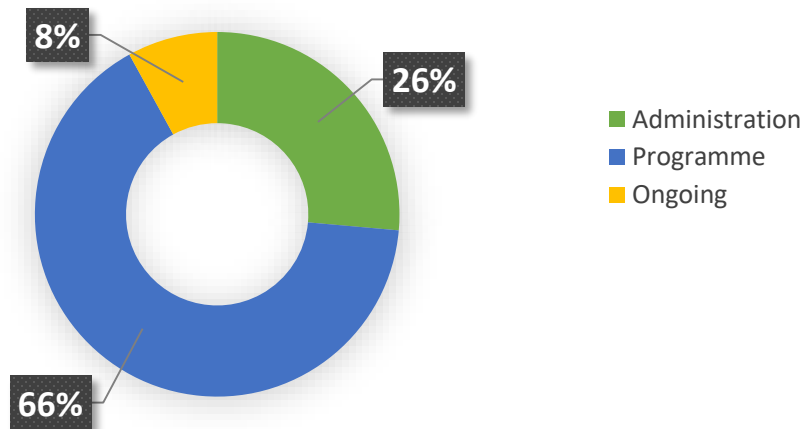
WDC's role was to introduce and build the capacity of the RPK on gender and Gender Based Violence (GBV) action force in the area. As a result of the capacity building on SGBV the RPK was able to start up a safe house in Kekirawa within the Anuradhapura district in 2018.

One of the biggest achievements of the RPK was their micro credit scheme, which was recognized as the best scheme in all of South Asia and was considered as a model programme. The RPK continues to share their knowledge and experience with other WDC forums belonging to the NoW and is now recognized as the most sustainable women's forum within the WDC NoW.

Funds for 2019



Expenditure Allocations





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We are very grateful for those who have supported us in an individual basis in cash/kind. Though we have not mentioned your names individually, we are very much thankful for your valuable contribution in achieving our goals as an organisation serving the socially marginalized.