

Honeymoon with consequences...

During our honeymoon in Sri Lanka in 1980, we were truly fascinated by the country and the people we met. This consequently led to more visits and on the fourth visit we decided to sponsor 7 poor children originating from large families.

Mesmerized by this beautiful island, formerly known as Ceylon, we took over a small beach hotel with 25 beds in 1985 in Hikkaduwa. Hikkaduwa was one of the most popular vacation spots on the south west coast at that time.

In 1986 we started delivering a home cooked meal once a week to a state owned children's home free of charge. The meal was prepared in our hotel. The children's home was caring for about 50 children at the time. We also bought a lot of mattresses, linen, mosquito nets, medication and clothes for this children's home.

“Building our own orphanage...” – that sounds like good idea!

We came up with the idea of building our own orphanage because the situation in Hikkaduwa at the time was so critical.

After a big article appeared on us in the local newspaper “Thuner Tagblatt” with a mention of how people could support us, our dream finally came true and we were overwhelmed by the donations we received.

In 1989 we rented our own house with the support of several good friends. In order to receive the necessary permits to become an owner of an orphanage as foreigners, we had to prove our good intentions to the authorities, the social services department, Buddhist monks and policemen. The tedious pleading and negotiating went on for days and days.

The first children

Somewhere down the road....our first child – Lahiru, a four year old boy – was approved by the social services department. Shortly thereafter Nadeeka, Indu and Upeka were approved. Upeka was a very sick four week old baby and had to spend the first few weeks in the hospital.

Today Lahiru is grown up. Indu would like to study at university and Upeka is a pretty intelligent, healthy 14 year old girl. Both Upeka and Rashmi, our youngest one, adorn the cover picture of the “Good News” Number 4 on our website. Please feel free to take a look. She would like to become a veterinarian some day and of course we will do our utmost to help her fulfill her dream.

Thanks to our hotel, our orphanage has become very well known. Almost all of the guests that came to our hotel became members of the “Silvia's Childcare Association” and with a rare sense of enthusiasm, started telling people at home about us.

Our own Houses

Soon, the house we had rented became too small. It resulted in us buying our own house, and later a second one followed.

The burden of having a hotel and an orphanage soon became too overwhelming. Unfortunately, we were forced to give one up. To help children in need was a far more important task so we decided to give up the hotel. The decision was clear.

Silvia had been living in Sri Lanka for the past six years, looking after the hotel and the orphanage. As for me, during those years, parallel to my regular job as a journalist, I was managing the administrative side of the society in Switzerland and the hotel. Furthermore, I took care of advertisements and on Saturdays I sold hand made crafts from Sri Lanka at the local market.

Our goal was to raise as much money as possible. This has never been an easy task for a private charity and to this day it still isn't.

On the large compound we built a modest but generous orphanage that is suitable for 50 children and is resourced with the necessary personnel. According to authorities and the Swiss Embassy in Sri Lanka it is one of the best and most beautiful orphanages in southern Sri Lanka. Of course we are extremely proud of that!

Formation of Foundation

In February 2003 we transformed our association into a foundation: "Foundation Silvia's Kinderhilfe".

Being a foundation automatically places you under the surveillance of the Swiss Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations.

The second Project:

Our support for Families – with over 550 children supported

As there are thousands of poor children in Sri Lanka that we cannot put up in our orphanage we founded another project called "Family Support" a few years ago.

This is where we support destitute single mothers with children or fathers with children, who due to illness, are unable to work.

Currently, more than 550 children are benefiting from this assistance.

Every child who is being supported by us has to go to school at the age of six, otherwise we discontinue our support. In Sri Lanka too, education is very important. Enormously important!

We are planning to expand the “Family Assistance” project in the future. This project is more cost efficient than the orphanage and allows us to reach many more children.

During several visits to smaller isolated towns, we realized that small villages, particularly south of Hambantota, are in urgent need of support.

More Help

Furthermore, we are supporting several smaller orphanages, kindergartens and schools. Each year we distribute thousands of pairs of glasses, medication, clothes and relief supplies that are donated.

We rely on donors, patrons, sponsors and godparents!

Besides the considerable administrative effort which is also demanded from us, it also requires the corresponding amount of funds. The need for financial resources is rising with the expansion of our relief organisation.

Nowadays, it is extremely difficult for a small privately run relief organisation to receive the necessary support.

As we utilize all donations for children, we do not have the funds to advertise as bigger organisations do. This is one more reason why we are so dependent on donations.

We sincerely thank everyone who is willing to support our relief organisation.

To help children in need, provides an unexpected, rare sense of happiness – we have personally experienced this time and again.