

# VISIONS

G L O B A L

*Education. Empowerment. Entrepreneurship.*

AUGUST 2010

## Educational Support for Internally Displaced & War-Affected Youth in Jaffna



For decades, the conflict in Sri Lanka has taken a heavy toll on educational institutions and the students and teachers that attend these schools. But like the light that shines through the darkness, some schools have endured great hardship yet have continued to uphold the belief that education enlightens and invigorates the mind. Two such schools are St. John's Boys College and Chundikuli's Girls College in Jaffna. Here every child is deserving of a high quality education, even if life circumstances prevent him or her from achieving this need. In the area both these schools are situated, thousands of war-affected children and youth have lost parents, siblings, homes, and years of valuable childhood learning experiences.

Responding to the crisis, St. John's has provided free admission to 545 Internally Displaced (IDP) students, among which 222 are being given free hostel accommodations. Similarly, Chundikuli has admitted 150 displaced children. Through generous contributions from our online fundraising campaign on Razoo.com, we were able to raise \$4,640 in less than 2 weeks to help cover the costs of these displaced students' education. School activity expenses, hostel fees, medical support, extra classes, basic essential items, pocket money, laundry, hairdressing, and administration charges will be covered for each scholarship recipient. Visions divided

Aug '10 Edition

Issue #7

In This Issue

Support for IDP and War-Affected Youth in Jaffna

Leadership Trainings Held in Southern India

KVLC Construction Nearly Complete

Sri Lankan Team Joins Visions in India

Educational Needs Assessment in Sri Lanka

Visions to Launch NEW Website

Upcoming Events

Meet a Visions Volunteer

Sports Equipment Donated to Youth in India

## Visions to Launch NEW Website

After much anticipation, the unveiling of the new and much improved Visions website is scheduled to occur in September 2010. Please check back with us at [www.VisionsForTheFuture.org](http://www.VisionsForTheFuture.org) to see our new look and get updated information about the Visions organization and the work we do to improve the lives of youth in South

lasses, basic essential items, pocket money, laundry, hairdressing, and administration charges will be covered for each scholarship recipient. Visions divided the funds raised proportionally, giving St. John's \$3,640 and \$1,000 to Chundikuli. Thank you to all who contributed generously to this effort!

## Local & International Volunteers Train Young Leaders in Perambalur, India



For the 8th year running, the annual Visions summer leadership & empowerment trainings were held this August at the Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Arts & Science for Women in Perambalur, Tamil Nadu, Southern India. Last year Visions held two 1-day sessions for both undergraduate and postgraduate students at the college. It was with great delight that Visions returned this year to conduct longer, more substantive trainings. Two 5-day trainings were held at the college, directly benefiting a combined 73 students and 7 teachers.

The first training was held August 2nd-6th for 25 undergraduate students--all young, intelligent, and enthusiastic women who attend the university. Students were encouraged to reflect on their own lives and experiences in understanding what leadership means and entails, then taught to broaden their scope by turning attention to their own communities. Of this group, 7 exceptional students were selected to join the team of local & international volunteers for the second training. During this training, these 7 young leaders served as instructors, translators, and small group leaders, putting their new found skills and knowledge into practice.

The second training was held for secondary school students who attend 2 schools (one English-medium, one Tamil-medium) also run by Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College. These 48 young men & women engaged in lessons pertaining to communication, problem-solving, trust & teamwork, meeting skills, and much more during the 5-day period. Students also worked in small leadership groups to plan and carry out various activities on the last day of the training, including a Talent Show, Essay Competition, Dance Competition, and Games Competition.

As always, Visions had the support and enthusiasm of a whole team of local and international volunteers, including 5 American volunteers--Gowri, Aarani, Katherine, Meera, & Greg--and several local volunteers--Nanju, Priya, & the college staff. Two partner organizations also participated and offered their services--SAWED Trust (under the direction of Mr. M.S. Abdaheer) and Thozhamai (under the direction of Mr. A. Devaneyan).

improve the lives of youth in South Asia.



## Upcoming Visions Events

Mark your calendars for these upcoming Visions events:

**SAN DIEGO, CA--Sunday, October 10, 2010; 2:00-4:00pm**

Please join us for the 3rd Annual Visions Charity Fashion Show in San Diego, featuring several local designers.

## Visions is Growing...Start a Chapter Today!

As we strive to share our mission and our work with others, Visions is currently building a system of Chapters in various cities & universities around the country, and we encourage you to get involved or consider starting your own! We are very pleased to welcome several new Visions Chapter Coordinators to our Visions Team, including:

1. **Venita Sivamani**--Northern California
2. **Pamela Cheuk**--Los Angeles (UCLA)
3. **Vince Gonzales**--Boston (Harvard University)
4. **Shivanu Thiagarajah**--Toronto
5. **Shannon Quihuiz**--Oregon (OSU)
6. **Kari Dietrich**--New York City (NYU)
7. **Nitya Kumar**--Austin (University of Texas, Austin)
8. **San Diego**

A Visions Chapter is a group of motivated volunteers who work together and are committed to raising awareness, funds, and enthusiasm for Visions. All of these Visions Chapter Coordinators are volunteers that have committed to assuming a leadership position in their local communities or universities.

Each Chapter will focus on fundraising for one particular school or organization that serves IDPs, refugee students, and/or children living at or below the poverty line. Chapters will also serve to recruit volunteers for our annual summer leadership trainings abroad, and to raise awareness about the educational needs of youth on the ground & what Visions is doing in response. At present, all partner organizations and schools are based in Sri Lanka and India.

Starting a local Chapter of Visions in your city or at your university can be one of the most rewarding volunteer activities you will experience. Contact us at [visionseducation@gmail.com](mailto:visionseducation@gmail.com) to receive more information about starting a Visions Chapter.

You can now order a trendy, custom-printed Visions t-shirt and benefit our Visions Leadership Education Program at the same time. Both men's and women's t-shirts designed exclusively for Visions and printed on high quality Alternative Apparel shirts are now available. You can order your t-shirts online via [ShopModerne.com](http://ShopModerne.com) for just \$20. All orders will be shipped to you right away. Now you can look good and support a very worthy cause!

## Meet a Visions Volunteer: Arun Ravindran

In our digital era, volunteers like Arun are all too important. With a strong background in computers, Arun has helped Visions with many web- and tech-related issues over the years. Arun's service and commitment to Visions is representative of how those with special skill sets can support the growth and maintenance of the organization. In particular, he has assisted Visions through web development, video & photo editing, setting up financial record-keeping programs, file conversions, and many, many other technical issues.

## Learning Centre Construction Enters its Final Stages



Sri Lanka for Training &

As Visions volunteers in India this summer,

## Sports Gift Donates

enthusiastic young people in need.

Construction of the Kalagam Visions Learning Center (KVLC) has entered its final stage, with the project completion date set for this November! The KVLC is a significant milestone made possible through the joint partnership between Visions and Saiva Mangaiyar Kalagam, with the generous contributions of Operation USA and several key donors residing in Sri Lanka and the United States.

Now we turn our attention to developing a strategy for the optimal use of the space, including plans for programming and the development of the interior of the structure. The post-construction prospect of promoting education, empowerment and entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka through the KVLC is initially what triggered Visions' desire to invest in this project. The KVLC will serve the needs of the school by reducing overcrowding, empowering & training teachers, and providing much needed space & development of the school's programs outside of the traditional classroom. It will also serve as a training facility for Visions in its many efforts. We are optimistic that the center will be up and running by January 2011.

## Sri Lankan Team Joins Visions for Training & Site Visits in India

As Visions volunteers conducted the annual leadership trainings in India this summer, our team was busy working on another initiative too. Four members representing the Church of the American Ceylon Mission (CACM) in Sri Lanka were brought over from Jaffna, Mannar, and Batticaloa, where they are all working in various educational and humanitarian efforts. Visions saw this as an opportunity to build the capacity of both these individuals and their organization. As their first time out of the country, it was an eye-opening experience for the team and an incredible opportunity for culture & knowledge exchange. The four CACM team members--Antony, Juthurajah, Kanchana, and Rohaan--participated in the first of two Visions leadership & empowerment trainings held this summer in Perambalur, alongside the seven university students. During the second week, the team was also taken on various site visits to see how some of India's thriving civil society is responding to the challenges of education, development, and poverty. They also helped translate, conduct lessons, and manage small groups discussions with the secondary school students. While the Church covered the airfare for these four individuals, Visions covered all of the team's expenses once on the ground in India. Special thanks to Mr. Darshan Ambalavanar for enabling this opportunity. It was a valuable experience for us all!

## Current Educational Needs in Northeast Sri Lanka

Recent assessments have revealed, unsurprisingly, that children in Northeast Sri Lanka are craving activities. Many of the educational problems that existed during times of war persist today and require deep, systemic change. A great number of youth have been displaced repeatedly throughout their young lives, and have had great disruptions to their formal education. A dearth of suitable, well-trained teachers beyond primary school level remains a constant battle as well. Transportation is a continual challenge, even in a post-conflict setting, as numerous military checkpoints are still in place, and travel to/from home in the rural areas is long and arduous. Very few students have bikes, so most must either walk the long distances to the nearest school, or else go infrequently, or not at all. Additionally, well qualified teachers do not desire to work in these remote areas, where living conditions are poor and there is great hardship. Needless to say, literacy rates in many of these disadvantaged

## We need YOUR support!

Please consider making a donation to Visions today or getting involved in our work. There are many ways you can help, including:

\*Organize a fundraiser or event on Visions' behalf (or turning an event or party into a fundraiser for Visions)

\*Organize a school supplies drive (using our Amazon Wishlist) with campus groups, friends, your church/temple, local businesses, etc.

\*Offer your professional services, such as legal, business/accounting, architectural, web, and more

\*Ask your company to make a corporate contribution or matching grant

\*Volunteer with us locally or abroad

This year the new Visions Leadership Education Program will benefit an estimated 1,000 youth & teachers in Sri Lanka and India. Help give them crucial Leadership & Life Skills and Human Rights training by donating **just \$25** today!

communities are low. Many NGOs are struggling to develop a working educational model to support rural communities and their particular needs.

Arguably, human resource skills are the most valuable assets to any community. An investment in soft-skill training for teachers and students must accompany any plan that also calls for rebuilding the educational infrastructure and/or providing other material support. Visions is committed to looking at these issues holistically and doing our part to address what we see as the core causes of these educational hardships, so that we may contribute to the rebuilding of Sri Lanka's educational system.

Today, Sri Lanka, following years of hardship and conflict, is in a much better position to rebuild and heal. We thank all of you who are supporting positive change in the lives of all Sri Lankans, especially in the lives of children and youth. For the past several months Visions has been building partnerships with local nonprofit organizations and schools whose missions are aligned with our goals of supporting the education of youth affected by conflict or poverty. Several key partners have emerged in both Sri Lanka & India, including:

- Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Arts & Science for Women (Perambalur, India)
- SAWED Trust (India)
- Thozhamai (India)
- Chinmaya Organisation for Rural Development (CORD) (Sri Lanka)
- St. John's Boys College (Jaffna, Sri Lanka)
- Chundikuli Girls College (Jaffna, Sri Lanka)
- Church of the American Ceylon Mission (Sri Lanka)
- Saiva Mangaiyar Kalagam (Sri Lanka)

We look forward to working with all these groups and others in the months & years ahead in responding to the educational challenges and needs of communities across South Asia.

1621 Barry Ave. #PH1, Los Angeles, CA, 90025  
visionseducation@gmail.com

[www.VisionsForTheFuture.org](http://www.VisionsForTheFuture.org)

## PLEASE DONATE:

Donations are accepted online through our website OR can be mailed to the above address. Make che out to 'VISIONS'. All donations are tax-deductible [Tax ID#26-3386678].

*We need your help--there are several projects which need funding, including the Visions Leadership Program, Scholars Program, and various other educational initiatives. We can only do this important work with your support. Education is to development & success.*

### [Forward email](#)



This email was sent to visionseducation@gmail.com by

[visionseducation@gmail.com](mailto:visionseducation@gmail.com).

[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Visions Global Empowerment | 1621 Barry Ave. #PH1 | Los Angeles | CA | 90025

Email Marketing by

