

**ViSi**  **NS**

**G L O B A L**

*Education. Empowerment. Entrepreneurship.*



## Visions 2013 Annual Report

*Empowering Young Leaders and Communities through Education.*

# Welcome Note

Dear Friends & Supporters,

Ten years ago, a simple idea to conduct a meaningful summer camp experience for orphaned youth in the war-affected region of Eastern Sri Lanka sparked the creation of what later became Visions Global Empowerment (“Visions”) — an organization committed to serving disadvantaged youth and communities affected by poverty and conflict through education. Today, more than 7,500 lives have been impacted by our efforts. We are humbled by the support we have received over the past ten years and the compassion of those who have generously helped build the organization into what it has become today. For all those who have contributed to the growth of Visions and of the youth, teachers, and community leaders whom we serve in Sri Lanka, India, and now Ethiopia, we are so excited to share with you the details of what has been an incredible year for us! Your continued support sends a powerful message that all children should have access to quality education and opportunities and the right to lead a meaningful, healthy, and productive life, regardless of the circumstances into which they were born.

Since our inception in 2003, we have been able to accomplish a great deal. We offer the following insights into just a few of our achievements:

- ❖ **1,684** youth and adults have attended a Visions leadership training
- ❖ **1,000+** youth have attended a Visions after-school program
- ❖ **200+** teachers have received training and material & financial support
- ❖ **122** international & **100+** local volunteers have volunteered with us
- ❖ **114** youth have received a Visions scholarship
- ❖ **19** Visions Chapters established across 5 countries
- ❖ Invested over **\$602,000** in educational programming!

Some of our 2013 highlights in particular include the following:

- ❖ Celebrated our 10-Year Anniversary at a Gala this spring in Southern CA
- ❖ Coordinated our first accredited full semester abroad program for Carnegie Mellon University in India
- ❖ Launched our long-awaited Visions Leadership Academy with our first **56** young leaders
- ❖ Initiated our first project in North India and expanded our work to Ethiopia where we are focused on deaf education and empowerment
- ❖ More than doubled our team and the number of Visions Chapters worldwide

Thank you for enabling our work and for investing with us in tomorrow’s leaders! With the support of so many thoughtful individuals like you, we have found a renewed sense of optimism and enthusiasm that will no doubt guide us in the next ten years and beyond.

All the best,  
The Visions Board of Directors & Team

# Celebrating a Decade of Visions



On Saturday, March 23rd nearly 200 guests, including Visions team members and 25 past volunteers, came together to celebrate a decade of service, marking the 10-year anniversary of the founding of Visions Global Empowerment! It was an incredible evening and a rare opportunity to reconnect with old friends, supporters, and like-minded individuals who believe in global service work and educational equity. The gala event was held at the Marconi Automotive Museum in Tustin, CA with guests joining us all the way from NC, VA, NY, NorCal, DC, Canada, and India. We were very honored to have as our special guest Puujyasri Mathioli Saraswathy, a revered spiritual leader and founder of the Nandalala Seva Samithi Trust (one of Visions' partner organizations in India). She stressed the importance of service and of making the most of one's life. Grateful for the support we have received over the years and the compassion of those who have generously helped build the organization into what it has become today, we honored our Visions "rising stars"--those influential, motivated, and service-minded individuals who contributed the most to our organization over the years. The following "rising stars" were honored:

## **Inspiration**

Mrs. Jennifer Graves, *Huntington Beach, CA*

## **Exceptional Volunteer Leadership**

Mrs. Venita Sivamani, *Sacramento, CA*

## **Volunteer Dedication**

Mr. Nanjunda Reddy, *Bangkok, Thailand*  
& Ms. Tamara Ackland, *New York, NY*

## **Exceptional Partner Organization**

SAWED Trust & Mr. M.S. Abdaheer (Executive Director), *Dindigul, India*

## **Philanthropy**

Mr. & Mrs. Rohan and Angela Paul, *Charlotte, NC*  
Mr. & Mrs. Kandiah and Jayagowri Arulmoli,  
*Huntington Beach, CA*  
Dr. & Mrs. Canagaratnam and Vasundra Pathmarajah,  
*Lancaster, CA*

## **Extraordinary Commitment**

Mr. & Mrs. W. & B. Harichandran, *Lancaster, CA*

Thanks to the incredible generosity of all our event sponsors and guests, we were able to raise over \$23,000 at this event to support our after-school programs in Northern & Eastern Sri Lanka and our newly launched Teachers Empowerment Program benefitting 20 teachers across Sri Lanka and India.



## *Growth of the Visions Scholarship Program*

Choosing to invest our efforts and resources into stand-out youth with a strong academic record and clear leadership potential, Visions lent its support to an additional 34 youth across Sri Lanka and India in 2013 alone, bringing the total number of Visions Scholarships given out to-date to an incredible 114. Sruthika is one such outstanding student and young leader now attending medical school in Chennai. She has been a Visions Scholarship recipient for the past 2 years, rising from the Sri Lankan refugee camp in India where she grew up to where she is today in medical school. In her own words, she has shared her story with us: *"I am Sruthika. I am a Sri Lankan refugee staying at Pambardam Camp in Krishinagiri district. My parents came to India as refugee during 1990. I have two sisters and a brother. They all are studying. My father is working as a volunteer (his roles is regional coordinator) in OfERR. My mother is a home maker. I completed my schooling in year 2008. From my childhood, my ambition is to become a doctor and to work for my community. We didn't have any general counseling to join MBBS as for Indian citizen. And the only way for me to join is through management. But I didn't have such a huge amount. So I waited till 2010 without doing any course and after that I have got a seat in Sri Muthukumaran Medical College without any donation. So I joined in 2010. And now I am really happy that I have successfully completed my 2 years and entered to third year. Now my college is going really well. I have realized my part. And I am trying to work harder and better. These 2 years of college have brought many changes in me. I am really becoming confident and I am really proud to be a medical student. I am studying well and this is evident from the marks I have scored."*

Further recent Visions Scholarship recipients were named this spring and fall, with Visions making commitments to provide bicycles, computer course fees, mentoring support, college tuition, room and board, and more to new recipients. With support from Carnegie Mellon University students who participated in the recent "Social Change Semester" in India that Visions organized on behalf of the university and in partnership with Amizade Global Service Learning, Visions has facilitated a



scholarship with support from local nonprofit organizations for two young men, Akash and Suraj, both of whom were our caretakers at the ashram where our group stayed for one month in Wardha, Maharashtra. Akash (featured above) received a bicycle, has started computer classes, and has plans to join the local polytechnic college soon while Akash enrolled in a vocational training and apprenticeship program. All of the youth above from Sri Lanka, India, and Ethiopia received a Visions Scholarship in 2013. While no one can put a price on the opportunities these scholarships have afforded, we are in need of sponsors for other deserving youth like Sruthika, Akash, and Suraj across all three countries...please consider making a donation to enable us to provide a scholarship to them. We will work with any prospective donors in connecting you to specific youth or ensuring your donation is given for a specific purpose depending on your interests. The lives of those involved will be forever changed.

## *Carnegie Mellon University "Social Change Semester" in India*

This spring Visions coordinated a "Social Change Semester" abroad in India on behalf of Carnegie Mellon University and in partnership with Amizade Global Service Learning, both of which are based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Ten (10) undergraduate students and two (2) faculty participated in the program, joined locally by one (1) CMU alum who lives in India and six (6) students from CMU's Doha campus in Qatar. The goal for the semester was to learn how to change the world by partnering with those who are already making a difference. For the first month in India, the group was based at Mahatma Gandhi's ashram in Wardha, Maharashtra and volunteered with a rural development organization, the Kamalnayan Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, to carry forward Gandhi's legacy of service and empowerment.

For the next 6 weeks, the group was based in Chennai where they volunteered their time



tutoring disadvantaged youth, conducted individual research for their research papers, and explored much of what South India has to offer. During their time in the south, they also served as volunteers at a 5-day youth leadership training that took place in Thirukovilur, Tamil Nadu. Working with the Arcot Lutheran Church (ALC) School Project, the group trained 50 secondary school students in leadership and life skills, and provided an opportunity for them to learn, express themselves, and have fun. This training represented the 29th Visions leadership & life skills training we have held to-date, with 3 more trainings occurring since then bringing the total number of trainings we have held to-date to 32!

For Visions, this program was a major step in further developing our accredited volunteer programs and enabling a larger pool of socially minded individuals to have the opportunity to learn and serve abroad. We are open and eager to explore new university partnerships...if you are a faculty or have university connections and would like to suggest or explore a partnership with Visions, please contact us. We would love to coordinate more programs like this!

## *New Initiative: Empowering Deaf Youth in Ethiopia*



Over the course of the last 10 years, Visions has limited its work to communities in South Asia, with the exception of 2 summer volunteer trips to Kenya in 2007 & 2008. Our organization was created in 2003 to provide educational opportunities and support to orphaned and war-affected youth in North and East Sri Lanka. Throughout our development, we have remained resolute in our commitment to strengthening the local educational infrastructure and providing valuable opportunities for learning and personal growth amongst youth and teachers in these areas. We recognize that our progress and strength are attributable in large part to the steadfast and generous support we have

received from members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and those who hold a special place in their hearts for South Asia. With the ongoing support of this demographic, we continued our efforts even as the war flared up again in Sri Lanka in 2008. That same year, we also expanded our efforts to Tamil refugees, tribal communities, and Dalits in South India. In 2013, we undertook our first effort in North India as well.

Since then, our efforts in both countries have flourished. We have seen our hard work and collective investments pay off as Visions and its programs have grown, impacting well over 7,500 students, teachers, and volunteers over the past decade. We have welcomed a whole team of volunteers to our ranks as well, many within just the last year. Ever mindful of the future and of our budding and diverse support network, we announced this fall our intentions to launch new initiatives in Ethiopia.

Our work in Ethiopia will focus on educating and empowering the Deaf community, complementing the ongoing efforts of the International Medical Health Organization (IMHO) in this regard. We see great opportunity to strengthen the work that has been done already in building the capacity of local Deaf organizations and ensuring critical access to formal education for youth across the country. The

need is tremendous, with estimates showing that less than five percent of Deaf youth in rural communities in Ethiopia ever receive any formal education. Unemployment is extremely high, as social stigma and discrimination prohibit most Deaf persons from ever leading meaningful, independent, and socially integrated lives. To help improve the situation for some in this vulnerable community, Visions is planning to coordinate volunteer service learning trips to Ethiopia in 2014, provide scholarships for unemployed young adults, support local schools and teachers in various communities, and otherwise work to empower the Deaf community at-large.

Please note that our new work in Ethiopia *will in no way detract from our focus on our work in South Asia or our program finances*. All of our Ethiopia endeavors will be funded through new channels of support and individuals with a specific interest in this region and work. Indeed, our efforts in Ethiopia stand poised to strengthen our ongoing efforts in Sri Lanka and India. One day soon we hope to build a bridge between our current programs and new efforts in Ethiopia by enabling a free-flowing exchange of ideas, resources, curriculum, and experiences between countries.

## *2014 Service Learning Trips Abroad*



For both the youth who attend our trainings and the volunteers who conduct them, the exchange that occurs during our annual Visions summer leadership camp is one that is seldom forgotten. Friendships are forged. Knowledge and experiences are shared. As one volunteered summarized, "*[O]ne of the most amazing experiences of my life...I got the opportunity to volunteer in Sri Lanka and work with 27 incredible youth, who have changed my life. This was such an incredible adventure; words can not express what I am feeling. I am forever changed and will always cherish the wonderful memories that were made. I hope I can go back next year to do this again. Thank you...for the opportunity of a lifetime!*"

For an 11th consecutive year, volunteers from around the globe came together to conduct the Visions leadership training programs in both India and Sri Lanka. In India, our team of 3 volunteers (Margi, Erik, and Greg) spent 3-days leading a training for 16 social workers and staff under one of our partner organizations, the ALC School Project, in Thirukovilur. This training focused on preparing staff to implement the necessary efforts under our new Visions Leadership Academy and to solicit vital feedback for the development of our programs in general. Following this, a 2-day follow-up leadership training for 30 repeat youth was held at the ALC School Project training center. This special 2-day workshop introduced new leadership concepts and centered around the idea of service. Youth were encouraged to brainstorm both issues their communities face regularly and how they can work to improve the situation. At the end of the training, the participants performed social awareness-raising dramas for each other in small groups, touching on such important topics as domestic violence, alcoholism, and HIV/AIDS. It was a fantastic sight to see the maturity, talent, and ambition of these young leaders in action.

In Sri Lanka, our team was comprised of 5 stellar volunteers (Promiti, Margi, Sabine, Ernest, and Anthan) who gave their heart and soul to their work. A 6-day leadership & life skills training was held for 27 exceptional youth from across the Eastern Province at St. John's Church in Batticaloa. One particular highlight of the experience occurred when one of our generous volunteers provided shoes and clothes to all of the students as a special treat and gift. This training marked the 32nd youth leadership training in our organization's history! Additionally, two of our volunteers stayed on longer to conduct project site visits, meet with partners, and organize other trainings & discussion sessions. Thanks to everyone who dedicated their time to our volunteer program, and more importantly shared their lives with the youth, this summer!

## *Teachers Empowerment Program Takes Root*

Launched earlier this year, the Visions Teacher Empowerment Program is designed to assist teachers and schools through material and training support. The primary objective is to help teachers to be better prepared to improve the knowledge and skills of their students and to provide and improve the resources available in schools for students, particularly those in rural communities. There is wide variety among teachers in war-affected areas with regards to their training and teaching experiences. There are also significant discrepancies in the conditions of school and classroom environments and the availability of materials. We will continue to build on our efforts and reach out to more teachers in both Sri Lanka and India in the year to come.

This August, Visions organized two teacher trainings in Sri Lanka. One was held at our Kalagam Visions Learning Centre (KVLC) in Colombo for roughly 25 teachers. The theme of this training was personality development and counseling skills, and we brought in three skilled trainers from the Bright Minds association in India to lead it. The second training and workshop was held for 15 teachers in Batticaloa later in the month and was focused on leadership and overcoming barriers to educational achievement amongst students in disadvantaged communities. The impacts of the devastating war in Sri Lanka and its toll on the local educational infrastructure still present major challenges, but we hope that our Teacher Empowerment Program will help to address some of those issues and provide a vital support network for dozens of hard-working and committed teachers.

Aside from this, Visions sponsored the salaries of 3 full-time teachers at the newly opened “SAWED Radiance School for Tribal and Dalit Children” in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India, which will benefit hundreds of deeply impoverished and highly disadvantaged children. Future plans for trainings, delivery of supply kits, and other assistance are currently being planned in both countries for the benefit of dozens of teachers.



# Visions Chapters Inspire Growth



Having a core team of motivated, passionate, and committed individuals who share in our belief in the transformative power of education has been essential to our growth and success. This year we welcomed a whole new cadre of Visions team members who have breathed new life into our organization and our commitment to creating educational opportunities for under-served youth abroad. No less than 14 of our 20 current Chapter Directors joined our team this year, along with 3 new Board members. We established new Chapters in 9 different cities across 5 countries—Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Qatar, and the U.S. Needless to say, it has been a tremendous year for our team growth! Each of these individuals has brought a unique set of skills, passions, and talents. From bake sales to dance shows to dinners to recycling campaigns, our team members took Visions' message and work to their communities, recruiting volunteers and raising funds that are vital to our programs. We cannot wait to see what our team is able to accomplish in the coming year! If you are interested in getting involved and/or setting up a Visions Chapter in your city or university, please let us know and we will happily work with you to make it a reality!



None of our work is possible without the support and collaboration of our trusted local nonprofit partners...

## *Our Current Partners in India:*



## *Our Current Partners in Sri Lanka:*



# Measuring Our Impact...

Visions' efforts over the years have directly impacted thousands of lives across the globe. While our impact cannot be measured in dollars and percentages alone, we know from the heartfelt stories and appreciation we hear from students, teachers, volunteers, local leaders, and others that we are making a difference. We offer the following glimpses into understanding how far we have come as an organization...

Table 1. Growth of the Visions Leadership Program (cumulative)

Trainings & Volunteers	2003	2008	2012	2013
Trainings Conducted	1	13	28	32
International & Local Volunteers	9	155	225	244
Youth Impacted	50	743	1,501	1,624

Table 2. Growth of the Visions Scholarship Program (cumulative)

	2003-2010	2011	2012	2013
Total Scholarships Awarded	37	51	80	114

Table 3. Impact of After-School Programs (Total Students & Teachers Impacted)

Partner	Location	2011	2012	2013
Church of the American Ceylon Mission (CACM)	Vaharai & Karadiyanaru, Eastern Sri Lanka	479	503	430
Church of the American Ceylon Mission (CACM)	Vanni, Northern Sri Lanka (Suthanthirapuram & Neeraviyadi)	--	105	167
SCOPE India Trust	Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India	96	128	111
STITCH Movement	Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka	84	84	--
TOTAL		659	820	708

Table 4. Large-Scale Visions Projects

Project	Location	Local Partner	Visions Support
Kalagam Visions Learning Centre (KVLC)	Colombo, Sri Lanka	Saiva Mangaiyar Kalagam/Hindu Ladies College	\$161,680
JR Ramachandran Higher Education Scholarship Fund	Tamil Nadu, India	Nandalala Seva Samithi Trust	\$100,000
After-School Tutoring Programs (2011-2013)	Throughout Sri Lanka & India	CACM, STITCH Movement, SCOPE India Trust	\$50,239
Rex T. Arulanathan Memorial Computer Lab & Music Room	Jaffna, Sri Lanka	St. John's College, Jaffna	\$35,000

Table 5. Growth of Visions Budget & Overview of Expenses

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total Revenue	\$16,839	\$51,375	\$195,470	\$65,837	\$151,610
Total Expenses	\$18,860	\$26,519	\$120,203	\$139,708	\$148,890
% Administrative	16.0%	10.7%	3.2%	6.1%	18.2%*
% Fundraising	0%	2.7%	8.6%	3.0%	9.8%**
% Programming	84.0%	86.6%	88.2%	90.9%	78.0%

\*This figure reflects the added cost of hiring a staff contractor

\*\*This figure reflects the added cost of celebrating our 10-Year Gala

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

To-date Visions programs have reached **over 7,500** students, teachers, and international volunteers and counting...

## Introducing the Visions Leadership Academy: Sponsor a Young Leader Today!

For more than a decade Visions has been working passionately to help train and shape young leaders to be agents of change in their communities. With 32 youth leadership & life skills trainings under our belt, and drawing from our own uniquely designed and culturally-vetted curriculum, Visions has directly impacted nearly 1,700 youth since 2003 and stands poised to undertake the next chapter in developing our Leadership Program. As we delve into this next phase, we invite you to be a part of the change and support our new initiative...the *Visions Leadership Academy*! Our goal is to develop the inherent leadership potential of high-achieving and motivated youth from disadvantaged backgrounds in both Sri Lanka and India through a year-round leadership enrichment program designed to help youth succeed in both their formal education and daily lives. An initial batch of 25 youth from Sri Lanka and 31 youth from India were selected to participate in the Academy. Among them, those who later choose to pursue higher education or other professional development will be encouraged to apply for a Visions Scholarship, demonstrating our long-term commitment to them and our belief that an investment in every individual is an investment in our collective future.



*Surya (from India) and Diluxam (from Sri Lanka) are just 2 of 45 leadership academy students for whom we still need sponsors at just \$1/day! Will you register to become a monthly sponsor today?*

**It costs just \$1/day to sponsor a youth in Sri Lanka or India** to participate in the Visions Leadership Academy. Sign up today to become a monthly donor or make a contribution towards this endeavor! Simply register online at <http://www.razoo.com/story/Visions-Leadership-Academy/> or mail us a check with "Visions Leadership Academy" in the memo line (and the country preference of "Sri Lanka" or "India"). As a monthly sponsor, we will pair you with a specific youth in the country of your choice so that you can know exactly whom you are helping. Throughout the year you will receive project updates and personal communications from your sponsored student. All donations are also tax-deductible.



### Inspire Tomorrow's Leaders... Volunteer Abroad with Visions in 2014!

Looking to be inspired? Consider spending a few weeks volunteering in Sri Lanka, India, or Ethiopia with us this summer...exploring the culture, experiencing development first-hand, learning about a new place, and giving your time to deserving youth. All volunteers serve as camp counselors at a Visions leadership training, working to encourage creativity, analytical thinking, and personal skills development. Volunteers will also visit and learn from local nonprofits that serve their communities year-round and get to explore some of the immense cultural richness and diversity that these incredible countries have to offer! We invite you to take advantage of this unique opportunity to explore, have fun, and make a difference in the lives of underprivileged youth.

#### **ETHIOPIA: July 19 - August 3, 2014**

Locations: Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Gondar, & Awash, Ethiopia  
Program Fee: \$1,700/person

#### **SRI LANKA: August 9 - 24, 2014**

Locations: Colombo, Batticaloa, Dambulla, Sigiriya, & Jaffna, Sri Lanka  
Program Fee: \$1,800/person

#### **INDIA: August 10 - 24, 2014**

Locations: Chennai, Thiruvannamalai, Trichy, Thanjavur, & Dindigul, Tamil Nadu  
Program Fee: \$1,700/person



[www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org/international-opportunities](http://www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org/international-opportunities)

Please visit our website for more info and to apply today!

## 2013 Financial Summary

### *Support & Revenue*

Contributions and grants	\$149,117
In-Kind	\$2,490
Investments/Other	\$3
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$151,610</b>

### *Expenses*

Programs (Sri Lanka)	\$31,847
Programs (India)	\$22,920
Programs (Ethiopia)	\$3,250
Programs (Other)	\$9,862
Carnegie Mellon University-India Semester	\$37,753
Volunteer Programs (Sri Lanka & India)	\$11,191
General and administrative	\$18,315
Fundraising	\$1,108
10-Year Gala Event	\$13,644
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$148,890</b>

### *Assets & Liabilities*

Total assets	\$24,324
Total liabilities	\$5,948
Current net assets/funds balance	\$18,376



## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Meera Pathmarajah, *CEO/Founder*  
Gregory Buie, *CFO/Director*  
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Dr. Shyamala Nagendran  
Niru Sahadevan  
Venita Sivamani  
Sonny Thadani

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## **TEAM**

Adam Miller, *Legal Counsel*  
Vietly Vu, *Website & Tech Specialist*

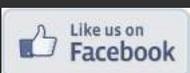
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\*Donate online or become a monthly contributor at [www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment/donate](http://www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment/donate)

\*Send a check made out to "Visions" to: Visions Global Empowerment

1621 Barry Ave. #PH1, Los Angeles, CA 90025

*A receipt will be issued promptly for your tax-exempt donation (federal tax ID#26-3386678). Thank you!*



**[www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org](http://www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org)**

