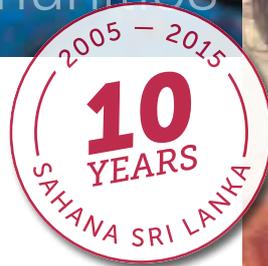




# SAHANA SRI LANKA

empowering rural communities



**Sahana Sri Lanka** is a humanitarian association founded in 2005 in Switzerland which aims to improve the living conditions and increase educational opportunities of underprivileged children and women in Sri Lanka.

“By engaging our beneficiaries in all our initiatives, we empower them while inculcating a sense of ownership, which is essential to ensuring self-sufficiency and sustainability.”

**Indira Kithsiri**, Founder Sahana Sri Lanka.

**SAHANA  
SRI LANKA**  
empowering rural communities

## At 22 she built a village Today, her focus is on reconciliation

An article published in  
the UN special magazine

March 2015

"You need to be truly passionate and optimistic, have entrepreneurial spirit and faith, demonstrate a high level of empathy and always remain humble to achieve greater heights, make a difference in people's lives and become a source of inspiration for others," said Indira with sparkling eyes. Following the 2004 Tsunami, she founded Sahana Sri Lanka, a Swiss NGO that aims to increase the education level and improve the living conditions of disadvantaged children and women around the world. The opening ceremony of the new community was held on 18th July, 2005 in Hiniduma, a rural village located in the south of Sri Lanka. The wind was blowing and the sun was shining brightly. Children were running across the new playground and smiles were on everyone's faces. Surrounding villagers had brought traditional sweets to welcome ten Tsunami-affected families who had lost their houses six months earlier. Notable distinguished personalities were also present. But among everyone, the highlight was a fair skinned Swiss lady, yet bearing the familiar features of a Sri Lankan, clad in a green sari. Her eyes showed signs of both present victory and future plans for many more noble endeavours. Her name was Indira, a woman who struck me with her passion to make this world a better place. It was in February 2005 that I first met with Indira to help her translate a text into Sinhala. At that time, she was selecting vulnerable families and children in refugee camps. I was mesmerised by the efforts of this young girl, then only 22. "Why are you interested in helping us?" I asked her. She smiled at me and said, "Tharindu, we all have our own aspirations in life to feel fully accomplished. For me it is about helping people in need and to see their lives in better conditions; I chose to come to Sri Lanka because of my origins".

Together with James, a Canadian volunteer whom she had met at the immigration office in Colombo, she worked to construct an entire community of permanent houses in Hiniduma with funds raised in Switzerland and Canada. They struggled to speak the local language, yet James and Indira found a way to deeply immerse themselves in the local culture. Indira's warmth towards the children was evident in the way she spoke to them in broken Sinhala: 'Hiniduma yanna kama-thiy' (do you like settling in Hiniduma?) A year later, with my help, she recruited teachers and started classes for children of

the village. "Children in Hiniduma should be taken out of their boundaries. They have set mental and geographical barriers. They have to realise their potential and capitalize on their inner strengths to reach the next level. We should encourage and guide them on their journey." This is the message Indira conveyed to all the staff to be passed on to all children who quickly became eager to learn more. In time, Isuru Sampath, a shy boy from a local tea estate, became active and was eventually appointed leader of the community. Today he works a stable job in a supermarket in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. Imanthi, a very enthusiastic young girl, took every opportunity to learn and study. She was not afraid to raise questions and hence became a member of the leaders' group. As a result of her efforts, she entered university. "I didn't imagine I could make it. But with Sahana Sri Lanka classes, I gained the confidence and the knowledge," she said with tears of joy. These are only two examples of success stories amongst many others. After five years, as children and parents alike realised it was time for them to stand on their own feet; the community was able to reach its independence. Yet Indira wanted to support the ones who needed further help.

In 2011, she acquired a seven-acre tea plantation, profit from which was used to finance educational and healthcare projects in other regions of the country. This innovative self-sustaining solution allowed her to envisage new types of collaboration with other NGOs. Moreover, by allowing Sinhalese tea pickers from the South to support Northern Tamil communities, she had imagined a great initiative that would be a step towards post-war reconciliation between the two ethnic groups of the country.

Later on, in 2014, Indira's NGO entered into a partnership with Terre des hommes (Tdh) to carry out a livelihood project supporting women affected by the consequences of the war in Northern areas. Indira strongly believes that local partnerships can provide win-win solutions ensuring long-term sustainability, transfer of knowledge, and greater impact on the ground.



**SAHANA  
SRI LANKA**  
empowering rural communities



“Support from Sahana Sri Lanka has allowed Tdh to help particularly vulnerable female-headed households in a way that would not otherwise have been possible. The integration of livelihood support into our work has provided the opportunity to identify and respond to individuals whose acute vulnerability exposes them to the dangers of exploitation. The project has proven that even a small intervention at the individual level can contribute to significant outcomes,” said Geoff Cordell, Country Representative of Tdh Sri Lanka.

Alongside managing Sahana Sri Lanka, Indira graduated from Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne in 2010, where she received the Social Responsibility Award. Today, she works for the World Economic Forum in Geneva as “Community Specialist for India and South Asia”. “The Forum offers me exceptional learning opportunities which truly inspire me, allowing me to bring another dimension to the work I achieve on the ground. It is also an immense privilege to interact with outstanding individuals sharing similar values and concerned by the same mission, to improve the state of the world.”





# SAHANA SRI LANKA

empowering rural communities

## Empowering women in needs

A project implemented in partnership  
with Terre des hommes Foundation  
(Lausanne)  
2014, 2015



Terre des hommes Foundation



Sahana Sri Lanka and Terre des hommes Foundation (Lausanne) (Tdh) entered into a one-year partnership in April 2014 to carry out a project aiming to strengthen the livelihoods of 13 vulnerable "Female Headed Households" in two Northern districts of Sri Lanka. Selected beneficiaries were either war widows, women who intended to migrate and/or returnee migrant with unstable sources of income. Priority was given to large families or households with a disabled child. The project was conceived as an attempt to reach particularly vulnerable women and those whom it were felt to be at risk of exploitation because of poverty. While Tdh was responsible for the implementation, the monitoring and the successful completion of the project, Sahana Sri Lanka was in charge of its funding. Tdh worked with Sahana Sri Lanka to set up a plan, provided them with material support, vocational training opportunities and/or linking them with service providers. Despite financial and human resources limitations allocated to this project, there was evidence of positive differences made to the lives of its beneficiaries particularly in terms of improvements to economic, social and human capital as well as in terms of the livelihood outcome.

Terre des hommes (Tdh) has been active in Sri Lanka since 1978 and undertakes projects to improve mother and child health, access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as to strengthen child protection mechanisms. In 2013, more than 15'052 people benefited from the activities implemented by Tdh. A majority of the northern and eastern communities, who were able to return to their villages after the war, still face difficulties surviving. Despite the huge government and NGO investments, many needs are not met. Infrastructures (housing, wells, toilets, health centres, schools) for example, are under reconstruction. Access to basic services is still limited. Economic opportunities remain rare and professional training possibilities need to be developed. It is within this context that Tdh intervenes with the aim to help rebuild this northern and eastern region.

## Introduction to information technology in rural areas development of computer learning centre benefiting 60 students

a project implemented in partnership with "Foundation of Goodness"

April 2015



In April 2015 Sahana Sri Lanka set up a Computer Learning Centre in a rural area to bridge the growing digital divide among students of various socio-economic backgrounds. The Centre serves to elevate standards of rural underprivileged children through digital literacy.

Sahana Sri Lanka is confident that the project will provide beneficiaries with additional learning opportunities, greater access to knowledge and information, which in turn will raise the level of academic achievement in the area. By implementing this initiative, the Association strives to support all underprivileged students in reaching their full potential. After the successful completion of the project's pilot phase, we are now working on designing specific course syllabuses, aimed at assisting students to progress in all areas allowing them to be better prepared to enter the competitive workforce upon graduation from school. **Today, 60 students per week can participate in the classes.** The project is closely monitored through regular follow up, mentoring and training to evaluate its impact in the mid to long-term.

## Ensuring access to education for all

a project implemented in partnership with Foundation of Goodness

**Bachelor Students from Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne raised 3,000 Swiss Francs for Sahana Sri Lanka**

May 2015

On May 29th, five final-year Bachelor students from Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL) participated in the Night Marathon of Luxembourg. Running a combined total of over 60 kilometres, Victoria Andriantsitohaina, Angele Goguely, Chalani Perera, Audrey Shiu and Alix Waldis were looking for more than just a physical challenge.

They were running to raise awareness and funds for Sahana Sri Lanka. For each kilometre ran, sponsors donated money. After

10 days of intense campaigning through family, friends and the EHL community, the group of students, along with several other final-year colleagues, raised nearly 3,000 Swiss Francs, a sum which was used to fund **20 full-year scholarships for talented students**, who were at risk of not being able to continue with their education due to financial difficulty. Scholarships include the provision of school fees, extra classes, books, stationery, uniforms and transportation (if needed). This program encompasses learning life skills as well as building self-esteem and self-awareness. All students are regularly monitored to ensure that academic achievement and dedication to their studies is maintained. With this initiative, Sahana Sri Lanka strives to guide children towards securing gainful employment and thereby enabling them to be productive members of the community.



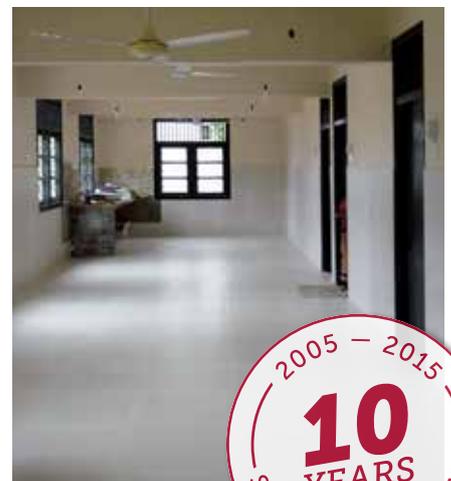
## Giving orphans a new home - renovation of a centre housing 15 orphans

a project implemented in partnership with The Sri Lankadhara Society (Colombo)

July 2015

Sahana Sri Lanka provided financial support to a local Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organization, The Sri Lankadhara Society, to fund the renovation of their "Infants Home" in Colombo. Beneficiaries may be orphans, street children, abandoned children or children whose parents are unable to support them. Although the Society receives an allowance from the government for the upkeep of these infants, it has proved too meagre to provide them with a decent standard living with nutritious food, medicines, clothes and other needs. Last April, the home was in a dilapidated state with water pipe leaks. Bathrooms, kitchen and living areas needed urgent repairs to make the place a comfortable and safe space for children. Thanks to a partial refurbishment last September, the organization was able to re-open their doors to the full capacity of 15 children aged between 2 to 5 years old.

In addition, Sahana Sri Lanka supports the education of 30 girls aged from 11 to 18 years by providing them extra weekly lessons in English and Mathematics to increase their level of education, which in turn will increase their chances to access decent job opportunities.

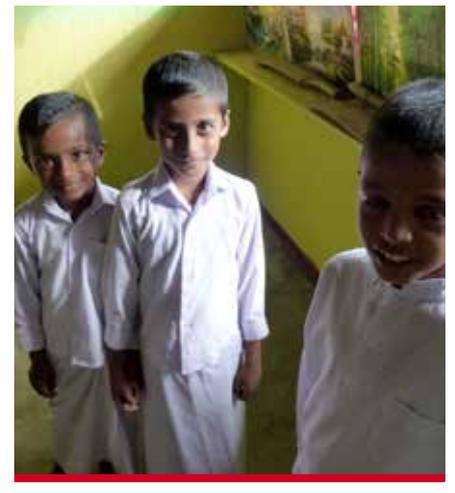




# SAHANA SRI LANKA

empowering rural communities

**Contact :**  
www.sahana-srilanka.org  
Indira Kithsiri  
Chemin de la Crête 66, CH-1936 Verbier  
Email: info@sahana-srilanka.org



## Your support is precious

Your support in the form of donations is invaluable as it helps increase our capacity to help underprivileged children, allowing us to provide better educational programs and facilities. On the occasion of Sahana Sri Lanka's 10th anniversary, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all our donors for the trust they have demonstrated in us and helped us create a positive impact through our several projects on ground.

**Crédit Suisse Verbier**  
Anne-Indira Kithsiri  
Account n° : 355-539-10-2  
Clearing : 4744  
IBAN : CH31 0483 5035 5539 1000 2

## New Website!

[www.sahana-srilanka.org](http://www.sahana-srilanka.org)

With a clean and comprehensive structure Sahana Sri Lanka's new website offers a special experience. In addition to finding information about projects and partnerships, it is now possible for you to support the association through an online donation platform.

## Special thanks to:

- Caroline Gachet for the French translation
- Daniel for designing the brochure
- Marion Sempéré for the French translation of the article published in the UN Special Magazine
- Nicolas Bohnet and Wzart Consulting for the creation of the new website
- Nicolas Monnet for the design of the new logo.