

TRANSFORMING LIVES

CAL IN ACTION



"A future of well-being, value and equality for every child, everywhere."



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July, August and September 2024*

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FEATURE ARTICLE

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GAMPOLA SNC YOUTH

The Gampola Special Needs Centre is CAL's flagship initiative to transform the lives of children and youth with special needs. The SNC offers services towards vulnerable children from multicultural and multi-religious populations around Gampola town, most of whom hail from socially and economically under-privileged families.

Recently, CAL celebrated the uplifting reports of 2 individuals from the SNC who, after undergoing vocational training programmes at the SNC, secured part-time employment.

These are their stories:

Mohammed Ashkar, 20 years of age, is the oldest child in a family of 6. Shortly after birth, developmental delays were detected in Ashkar and he was diagnosed with mild Cerebral Palsy. Ashkar began walking only at the age of 2.5 years and had to undergo corrective surgery at the age of 7, which proved to be of little help. For many years, Ashkar attended a special needs unit and experimented with various treatment options. However, none of them proved fruitful.

When Ashkar first joined CAL's SNC, he was observed to be short-tempered and stubborn, often swearing at others. Even though his father was keen on employing Akshar at his three-wheel workshop, Akshar showed no interest in any sort of employment.

Mohammed Hussain, 20 years of age, was diagnosed with a mental disorder at the age of 5, following developmental delays, particularly in his speech. After various treatments, Hussain was enrolled in a public school for a few years, after which he was transferred to a special needs facility. Hussain did not enjoy being a part of a special needs unit.



When Hussain first joined CAL's SNC, he was shy and introverted, rarely engaging in conversations. He was also observed to be lazy and disinterested, requiring his mother's assistance for almost every activity.



While at the SNC, both Ashkar and Hussain, together with their peers, were engaged in various day-to-day tasks and activities. These endeavours were targeted at improving their social skills, building their confidence and equipping them with both life skills & vocational skills. According to each individual's unique needs, every child was also offered various physiotherapy and treatment options. Initiatives such as field trips to community sites and visits from diverse individuals in the community helped foster a more inclusive perspective in the children.

According to their individual capacities, the children were also given various responsibilities at the centre, helping to develop, refine and mature their thinking capacities and behaviour.

Both Ashkar and Hussain are thrilled with their jobs. Their success has also become an encouragement and boost for the families of the other SNC children, giving them hope. In efforts to further motivate the boys, members of the SNC team and family members of the children at the centre regularly visit Ashkar and Hussain at their places of work.

Securing gainful employment has boosted the confidence and self-worth of Ashkar and Hussain. They are excited to be able to generate an income for themselves and contribute to society with their skills. They have also become role models to their peers, exemplifying the power of consistency, determination and hope.

The SNC team proudly celebrates the 'fruit of their labour' and is further stirred up to keep persevering in their mission to nurture special needs individuals.

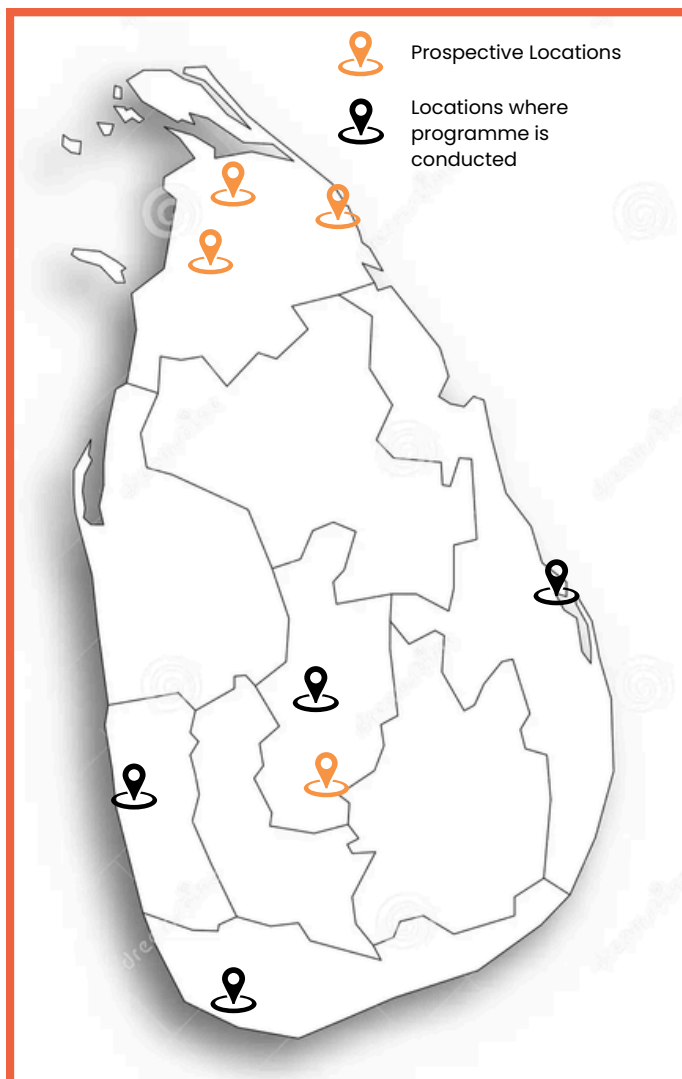
"Transforming Lives" of children across diverse spheres, Ashkar and Hussain's inspiring stories are testament to CAL's expanding impact and influence in Sri Lanka.



CHILD RIGHTS AWARENESS PROGRAMME

Child Action Lanka is an active advocate of Child Rights, with its core values including the provision of health care and nutrition that children need to survive and develop, the protection of children from violence & exploitation and the creation of avenues for children to have their voices heard & participate in their societies.

The Child Rights Awareness programme, launched from CAL's commitment to child rights, aims to prepare children and youth from high-need communities with opportunities to recognize the value of their own experiences and the significance of their role as experts in their own lives. The programme equips children with the ability to act as spokespeople for themselves & their peers and supports children in developing the skills they need to collate their collective experiences and appeal to those in power to bring about transformative change, people such as policymakers, service providers and teachers.



Through thought-provoking and practical activities, this programme stimulates children to seek an understanding of the challenges they face, the possible solutions to these issues and the tools required to resiliently overcome these obstacles.

Children are also coached on effective advocacy that garners support for their transformative causes.

With the skills gained, participants of this programme have created declarations that highlight the key challenges and threats posed to their respective communities, together with proposals on how these issues can be resolved.

Moving forward, the Child Rights Awareness programme plans to collate the declarations that are created among various groups of children across the CAL family, gather these children from their different communities and provide them with the opportunity to present their declarations among their peers.



Tagged the 'Child Rights Action Council', this initiative would also pose as an avenue through which children from diverse backgrounds can synergize to advocate for collective change and transformation. With the aim of boosting their solution-creation capacities, the Child Rights Action Council will also be exposed to the Model United Nations Procedure and introduced to children who have experience utilising these procedures, promoting further collaborations towards Child Rights solutions.

By giving children a 'voice' for change, the Child Rights Awareness Programme demonstrates CAL's active commitment towards "Transforming Lives" through the advocacy of Child Rights.



To date, the Child Rights Awareness Programme has been conducted among children at CAL's **Batticaloa, Colombo, Galle and Kandy CDCs**. In the near future, the programmes will also be extended to children at the **Akkarayan, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Nuwara Eliya CDCs**. Children outside of the CAL community will also be represented in upcoming programme initiatives.





MOBILE SCHOOL

NOW IN BATTICALOA

The Mobile School offers a non-formal and exclusive means of learning outside of the traditional classroom, enabling CAL to bring education to street-connected communities more effectively by adapting to the circumstances and infrastructure within which these children live.

After its impactful stints on the rural communities of Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, the Mobile School now operates in the remote villages of Batticaloa.

Severe poverty looms as a major threat to the learning and education of children in the villages of Batticaloa.



In this way, the Mobile School has become a beacon of hope to children in these exterior villages, bringing learning and educational initiatives into the heart of remote spaces.



Although CAL operates a dynamic CDC in Batticaloa, reaching children around its immediate vicinity, poor transport systems within peripheral villages prevent children from accessing the CDC, adversely contributing towards the major educational crises in these villages.

The programme offers children a safe environment in which they can explore and learn subjects such as literacy, mathematics, health education and emotional intelligence. In line with CAL's mission, during every Mobile School session, children have also been engaged in initiatives promoting sustainable health & nutrition and child protection.



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TONBRIDGE SCHOOL

VISIT TO BATTICALOA

The Tonbridge School, UK, has been a longstanding partner of CAL, supporting CAL in its mission to transform lives, since 2014.

In July this year, a team of 13 volunteers, consisting of both staff and students from Tonbridge School, spent a week serving at the Batticaloa CDC, which the school had gifted to CAL in 2014. Upon their arrival in Batticaloa, the passionate volunteers instantly connected with the children at the CDC and heartwarming memories were made as the children welcomed the team into their community.

During their stay in Batticaloa, the volunteers embarked on several significant tasks: The team worked tirelessly, even in harsh weather conditions, to contribute towards the upgrading of the CDC's facilities, giving children a 'fresh' environment in which to learn and grow. The team also undertook community visits, granting them a deeper understanding of the dire challenges faced by the communities in Batticaloa. English workshops were also conducted by the volunteers at a few government schools in the Batticaloa district.

The Tonbridge team also facilitated Child Rights programme for the children at the CDC, empowering children and helping them recognise the value of their experiences and voice. The active volunteers also participated in a Cricket Tournament, mentoring the tournament players. Tonbridge School also contributed towards distributing clean water to the community in Batticaloa.

The team's visit culminated with the official Grand Opening of the Batticaloa CDC, a momentous event marked by many heartening moments.

CAL is deeply grateful to Tonbridge School for the numerous ways in which it has believed in and supported CAL's mission.

CAL cherishes its ongoing partnership with Tonbridge School and looks forward to many more accounts of

“ TRANSFORMING LIVES ”

together.

Tonbridge School's visit to the Batticaloa CDC was, indeed, a week of fun camaraderie, insightful exchange and rewarding service. The heartfelt interaction that the volunteers shared with the children at the CDC, together with their dedicated labour, have left an inspirational mark on all who engaged with the dedicated team.









BATTICALOA RESOURCE CENTRE

ENTREPRENEURIAL INITIATIVE

The Nobel & Ben Resource Centre was launched at CAL's Batticaloa CDC in 2023. This Resource Centre, funded through the contributions of kind & generous donors, operates primarily as a training facility for educational initiatives, such as the Youth Skills Programme. The centre is also equipped with stationery supplies, a printer, photocopier and computer terminals that are utilised for learning purposes.

Recently, an entrepreneurial initiative was launched at the Resource Centre, offering students school stationery at discounted prices. Aligning with CAL's goals, this initiative contributes towards motivating children to regularly attend school by providing low-cost stationery. At the same time, the initiative boosts CAL's efforts towards sustainability, supporting members of the community in taking ownership for their development.



The Batticaloa CDC has previously embarked on similar sustainability efforts, producing and cultivating crops that were sold to the surrounding communities at lower cost. Since the recent launch of this initiative, the sale of stationery at the Resource Centre has generated a profit of Rs. 1790.

Even as acceptance of ownership for development steadily grows among the community in Batticaloa, CAL determinedly progresses on its mission of "Transforming Lives".



CRICKET MATCH

Cricket, a well-loved sport in Sri Lanka, creates great excitement and enthusiasm, especially among young ones. A cricket match between children of CAL’s Kilinochchi and Akkarayan CDCs was organised, adding a splash of fun to an otherwise monotonous August school holiday period.

More than just an entertaining and exhilarating experience, the cricket match was also a platform through which valuable skills, such as effective communication, synergizing teamwork, competent leadership, constructive decision-making and productive strategizing, were both demonstrated and taught.

Post-match performance summaries and feedback from mentors and coaches offered our children extra opportunities for growth and development. This play-and-learn experience helped enhance the skills of participants both on and off the field. While the Akkarayan CDC team was celebrated as champion of the match, both teams were honoured for displaying remarkable dedication and leadership qualities. Talented cricketers with outstanding potential were also identified during the match, paving the way for further expansion of their skills.



THIS INSPIRING DISPLAY OF SPORTSMANSHIP AND PROGRESS ATTESTS THAT, EVEN THROUGH SPORTS AND RECREATION, CAL IS, INDEED, “TRANSFORMING LIVES”.





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Our approach focuses on both practicality and sustainability. We recognise that looking at...more

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YOUTH SKILLS PROGRAMME

In line with one of CAL's goals to be a provider of employable education, the Youth Skills programme was launched, offering school-leavers and tertiary students diverse opportunities for education and skills development, eventually contributing to increased employment opportunities.

A Leadership Training programme was held in August for youth of the Colombo CDC. This 4-day programme, aimed at inculcating in youth a greater sense of responsibility, accountability and leadership, was filled with engaging, challenging and interactive activities that promoted discipline, teamwork and mutual understanding among the participants of the programme. Some highlights of the training programme included a visit to an Elder's Home, as part of a Community Service Project, and a special guest dialogue with a renowned Sri Lankan Cricketer. The skills, knowledge and experience gained through these initiatives further equip our youth for gainful employment in the future.

"Transforming Lives" begins with equipping the next generation with the skills and capacity they need to break out of the poverty cycle – CAL's Youth Skills programme is doing just that.

The Youth IT programme , a subsidiary of the Youth Skills programme, currently operates in CDCs.

07

33 students from the Galle & Batticaloa CDC have completed the IT Course



VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

CAL's day-to-day operations would not be possible without the support of dedicated volunteers. This passionate group includes both local and foreign individuals who are keen on making a difference in the lives of children.

This quarter, volunteer activity included a group of 7 ex-CAL students who returned to the Akkarayan CDC, upon completion of their O'Level examinations, to 'give back' to the centre by offering their support in the various initiatives held at the centre.

Psychology students from Prospect College of Higher Education, Colombo, have also been volunteering on a part-time basis at the Colombo CDC since May. Their involvement in both the pre-school and after-school programmes has been invaluable.

The pre-school at the Colombo CDC has also been greatly assisted by individual local volunteers who are keen to contribute their time, skills and energy towards nurturing young minds. Children at the Shelter Home were also visited by volunteers from New Zealand and the UK. The energetic volunteers conducted fun activities and games, bringing much joy and laughter to the children.

CAL deeply appreciates the sacrificial and invaluable contributions of every volunteer that has championed its cause, "Transforming Lives" together.



PARTNER APPRECIATION

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER

VIST FROM KIDZNET

KidzNet's contributions of dry rations and food supplies to the children at CAL's Batticaloa CDC have boosted our efforts to nourish our children.



HODGESCHOOL UCLL BELGIUM

Volunteers from Hodgeschool UCLL served at the CDCs in Colombo, Galle, Kandy, Gampola, Batticaloa and Kilinochchi.

This partnership is one that we have cherished for many years and its amazing to witness its growth each year with every new volunteer that comes to show love and compassion to the children we serve.

[Click here to view the story.](#)



CLEAN WATER FOR BATTICALOA

The support and assistance rendered by Mr. Mohan Senevirathne to the Batticaloa Drinking Water Project has enabled CAL to extend its impact on the communities surrounding the Batticaloa CDC. We also extend our thanks to Api Apita Incorporation for all the support they have given us in this initiative. New stock tanks have been installed, ensuring access to safe and hygienic drinking water to more families and communities in the vicinity.



TEACH SRI LANKA

Teach Sri Lanka's donation of two tents to the Mullaitivu Child Development Centre has addressed a critical space constraint and supported CAL in creating a more conducive learning environment for its students. Prior to this contribution, a lack of space at the centre resulted in some children having to study outdoors, exposed to harsh weather conditions.





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The Impact of Donations

Your donation gives our children hope for the future and ensures that their nutritional & health requirements are met, and their primary and higher educational journeys are supported. It also enables protection from violence & abuse and the empowerment of girls & women. Children are the starting point in breaking the cycle of poverty and your donation will help make this a reality.

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