

# **GODS OWN CHILDREN**

**(The aftermath of 20 years of war and natural disaster)**

Steve Krar

Sri Lanka Tamil uprising began in 1983 and ended with a signed 2002 ceasefire that left some issues unresolved. The result of this 20 year conflict devastated the economy and left many people killed and wounded. Many children born during this time are showing retarded intellectual tendencies besides being physically maimed. The children affected by the war were further affected by the Tsunami of 2004 that destroyed everything in its path.

## **Gods Own Children**

The origin of Gods Own Children Foundation dates back to March 2003. After the ceasefire agreement, it paved the way to a reasonable level of normalcy in the Jaffna Peninsula. A private fee-levying school, the British Business College (Pvt) Ltd, an Education and Training company from Colombo, established a school in the Jaffna Peninsula, which conducted Early Childhood Programs and Primary Education both in the English and Tamil mediums.

Due to the war, the standard of education in the Jaffna Peninsula had deteriorated badly and English Language Teachers, Modern Curriculum and Teaching Methods, along with investments from Colombo were welcomed by the population. They had to cope with major problems such as:

- Some intellectually and physically disabled children and those suffering from trauma were admitted and this angered some parents.
- Many parents whose families live in sheer poverty could not admit their children because they could not afford the nominal fee.

On August 24, 2005 the Gods Own Children Foundation was established as a Non-Profit organization and now have Non-Fee Leveling Special Needs schools at Ariyalai and Point Pedro on the Jaffna Peninsula.

## **Admission Policy**

The admission policy is based on:

- The Special Needs of a Child.
- The Income Levels of the parent or guardian.

## **Religion**

The Gods Own Children Foundation is not aligned to any particular religion and no religion is promoted in the school. The children are taught the essentials of life values and the parents are guided to ensure their children attend the religious service of their faith.

## **Curriculum**

Gods Own Children accommodates children from 3 to 16 years. Due to each children's special needs, a child of 13 years might have to be taught with a child of 7. Therefore, the teachers have Individual Education Plans for each of the students. Most of the learning is through Educational Aids, Pictures and Charts, Story-telling and craft have been included in the curriculum at different stages.

Extensive staff training programs are necessary for teachers to suit individual students. Lack of Funds has hindered the teacher-training program. Currently the teachers and staff have limited special needs training conducted by the chairman who has been trained overseas.

## **GOC Methodology**

The GOC Methodology is based on the principles that special needs children:

- Mature and learn at different rates.
- Are individually motivated and self-managing.
- Need guidance and not control
- Require a stable but evolving environment.
- Learn best in a joyful environment.

## **Milk Program**

Most of the children in the schools come from poor families that cannot afford a morning meal for their children. This has a negative effect on their capabilities and attention during class. To overcome this, the school initiated a program of supplying each child with a Glass of Fresh Milk, provided by donors, had a tremendous impact on their attention levels. It is hoped that in the future, a Nutrition Meal will also be supplied.

## **Transport Facilities for Severely Disabled Children**

\ There are many Special Needs Children who do not attend school because their parents are unable to provide suitable transportation. In most cases parents need to go to their work in time and therefore do not have time to transport children to school.

Plans are underway to build a Rickshaw (a type of wagon) that is powered by a bicycle. Up to 6 children at a time could be transported using the Rickshaw. Donor funds may be necessary to fund this project and hire a driver.

### **Remedial Education for School Dropouts and Slow Learners**

The Gods Own Schools have been approached to conduct a Remedial Education program for school dropouts and slow learners. It has been found that due to poverty these children do not have Nutritious Meals at home and find it difficult to cope with the schoolwork and understand the teacher's instructions. Many children have dropped out of school because of the fear of embarrassment in the classroom.

Due to the Quality Standard of education in the Gods Own Children schools, they have been asked to initiate a class for these students and conduct a Remedial Educational Program.

### **External Teacher Trainees Internship at Gods Own Children Special Needs Schools**

To keep up to date with teaching techniques and enhance Gods Own Schools teacher skills it is hoped that Special Education graduates from offshore countries would consider this a practice teaching session to apply and hone their skills. GOC sincerely thank Dr. Kevin Quinlan, Principal and the staff of the Nova Scotia Community College in Canada for initiating such a proposal.

### **Donations**

Donations of any amount are gratefully accepted: \$10.00 dollar (1000 rupees) would provide a mid-day meal for forty students for a day. Donations should be sent by Bank Transfer to: Gods Own Children, Nations Trust Bank, Account 002100011742, Swift Code NTBC LKLX

For further information on Gods Own Children Foundation please go to this link on the internet: [www.advancedtechthinktank.org/godsown.pdf](http://www.advancedtechthinktank.org/godsown.pdf)