

# The HFHSL Environmental Program

*Making a difference through Sustainable Practices*

Non-governmental organizations in Sri Lanka are taking stock and having to re-invent the wheel post-tsunami “hand outs”. The huge source of funding that flooded into the country post-tsunami has well and truly dried up, leaving Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka (HFHSL) amongst a plethora of NGOs, with the challenge of developing our programs with sustainability as our over-arching goal. This challenge comes at a time where people are also coming to terms with the end of a 3 decade-long war and an unprecedented world economic recession.

In times such as these, the need to adopt and adapt to approaches that will encourage savings or generate additional income has never been so apparent. And so it began, HFHSL embarked upon a new journey – one of sustainability and capacity enhancement as a pre-cursor to their conventional core housing programmes.

## **BUILDING TRAINING CENTRES**

HFHSL's Building Training Centre's (BTC's) were first developed to produce environmentally sustainable housing materials (e.g. concrete window and door frames, steel roof frames, cement and soil blocks for walls etc). In Sri Lanka the BTC's are also the centres that are pioneering the implementation of HFHSL's solar powered cookers, compost bins, home gardens and eco-sanitation methodologies. As a centre for not only producing materials, but also training and educating people on how to build cost effectively, the BTC's have been well received. BTC's also teach a basic skill to individuals that can translate to an employment opportunity.



## **HOME GARDENING (INCLUDING TREE PLANTING)**

It's no secret that Sri Lanka, with its tropical weather has the perfect climate for cultivation. The moist, dense, fertile soil and combination temperatures all make home gardening an irresistible antecedent to our conventional housing program.

As the cost of food continues to rise, our home gardening plots have been especially beneficial to housewives who are able to stay home and look after their kids while being able to use the garden crops not only as a means of growing food items they would normally have to purchase but also adding to their income.

## **SOLAR COOKING BOXES**

The solar cooking box program was developed after it was identified, that in Sri Lanka nearly 77% of those living in poverty housing use firewood and that some 17% use LP Gas which is very costly.

Given that Sri Lanka experiences tropical weather and harsh sun most of the year and with worldwide natural resources dwindling, this is an initiative that has the potential to thrive and make a real difference. HFHSL is in the process of distributing the solar cooking boxes and educating people and communities about the value of solar cooking.



Rani lives in Batticaloa and spends Rs. 30 for these 3 pieces of firewood which is barely enough to cook 3 meals a day. By using solar powered cooking she saves Rs. 30 per day which amounts to Rs. 900 savings per month – less than US\$ 10 but a huge difference to a family that is forced to survive on much less.

## **COMPOST BINS**

The compost bins are manufactured either by our BTC's across the island or given to home owners with instructions to assemble them themselves. These bins are made out of natural resources and encourage home owners to not only recycle but also use the compost as fertiliser for their home garden plots.

HFHSL is also investing in developing further initiatives, including Solar, Water and Eco Sanitation projects. We are firm in our belief that sustainable living is an essential resource that will aid our partner families to truly lift themselves out of poverty.