

Sri Lanka

Replacing the Tear Stained Faces with Smiles

Dear friend,

On May 19th Sri Lanka's Prime Minister declared to the world's media that its civil war was finally over. Immediately after the announcement, a wave of relief and festivity spread throughout the nation.

"You wouldn't believe the celebrations on the streets! It's been a long 30 years! People are dancing all over the place - bands are playing - people are lighting fire crackers - people are running around waving the national flag. It's just totally amazing." - Debs

Despite the end of hostilities, it will take Sri Lanka many years to recover from a war that tragically killed 70,000 of its citizens. The war cast a long shadow over many aspects of normal life, limiting the ability of the government to build for the future. Life continues to be unbearable for many of its citizens.

The media has recently focussed our attention to their plight. Authorities are reporting a considerable increase in the number of illegal boats sailing into Australian waters. 34 boats have already been intercepted this year carrying over 1700 people on board. A high proportion of these desperate people come from Sri Lanka.

However not everyone is trying to escape. *Dilshan & Debs Edirisinghe* and the team from **Child Action Sri Lanka (CASL)** are determined to stay and help make a difference in their home town of Kandy, one of Sri Lanka's largest cities. Kandy has a vast population of entire families living on the streets, begging for scraps of compassion from passerby's.

Thanks to the ongoing and regular support from generous partners and friends, *Feed The Hungry* has recently commenced supporting CASL through our orphanage support program **EveryChild EveryDay**. *Dilshan & Debs* manage several centres across the busy city of Kandy. Each facility acts as a child-care centre for babies and toddlers and as a drop-in centre for older street children.

The availability of child-care centres give the parents an opportunity to maintain regular jobs, and provides a safe and protected environment for their children during the day. Older street children who drop by the centre are fed and ministered to by staff. Daily activities include dancing, singing, games, basic English language instruction and Bible stories.

Staff encourage all street children to apply to study at their school, which is located in a separate facility. Enrolled school students return to the drop-in-centres for hot and nutritious meals every day. Staff assist the children with their homework and provide additional tutoring as required.

"We do not wish to see another generation of these children on the streets, living their lives off others, not knowing what tomorrow holds. Our goal is to be able to see the next generation off the streets, living a life of independence, facing the world with confidence.

We envision the day that our kids will graduate and be positioned beyond their wildest dreams. As a team we equip and empower them with this in mind." - Debs.

