

CANDLE FACTORY

Where our office was closed for the pandemic, but
our hearts were open to help people in need.



Covid 19 hit all who dwell on planet Earth, its effects sparing none. Over 5 million people lost their lives. The world almost came to a standstill. Offices closed, people lost their jobs and others suffered drastic salary cuts. That was the visible picture. The abstract is the myriad ways in which the denizens of every class, creed, race and religion were adversely affected since Covid.

It is almost two years. This newsletter is to humbly share what CandleAid did during these demanding times. Our staff, both in office and volunteers coped amazingly well with the unprecedented situation and the ensuing workload. Here below is the CandleAid track record from January 2020 to end of November 2021. Many candles were lit, not enough to light the world, but sufficient to brighten the lives of our impoverished beneficiaries.

CandleAid Education

Schools closed - online classes began. CandleAid continued its assistance to students from low income families from all 25 districts of Sri Lanka. Despite the severe disruption to the academic calendar, these students struggled to keep up with the sporadic and limited online classes to continue their education.

All time statistics up to 30.11.2021

Total students sponsored	..	4040
Undergraduates	..	1772
Current students	..	1034
Undergraduates	..	363

Corona time statistics

Undergraduates passed out	..	243
A'Levels students completed	..	95
New undergraduates enrolled	..	251
New ordinary students enrolled	..	206

LBW Trust, an entity in Sydney has been supporting 170 undergraduates year after year.



Sameera Siriwardena from Matara district has an aged father and a mother who recently succumbed to cancer soon after he passed out as a doctor. Sameera, whilst in medical college drove a three-wheeler at night to make ends meet. Today Dr Sameera is an intern at the Homagama National Hospital and a volunteer coordinator and more significantly, assists another cancer patient under CA's Cancer Patients' Assistance Programme.



Shaaziya from the Kalutara district is a keen student in Grade 8. Her family's sole income is her father's salary as a driver. Quite insufficient for their basic needs. Her mother is a cancer patient. Elder sister is in Grade 11.



Suvendrani from the Mannar district is in Grade 9. Her father is in jail since 2011 for political reasons in Mannar. Her mother works as a domestic helper in the village and earns a meagre income. There are 5 children; 3 girls and 2 boys in her family.



Book Project 2020

Books and stationery were gifted to 470 selected students in four districts, the main project being in the office at Moratuwa. These are all students of low-income families. 2020 and 2021 being a very tough year for most parents having to equip their children for online studies, buying the necessary textbooks and data etc was a nightmare. This is why this project is of utmost benefit to students and parents alike.

In 2020, the project was carried out slightly differently in our Jaffna center in the North. English and Tamil textbooks for the students were purchased to enable undergraduate, Abishani Selvarasa to teach children using her verandah as a classroom, a wonderful initiative by a young student.



Libraries

Total No. of libraries opened	..	219
General libraries	..	139
Tamil books only libraries	..	38
English books only libraries	..	21
Maths laboratories	..	21

These libraries are not fitted with fancy fans, oak tables and chairs in airconditioned rooms - they are mostly a cupboard lined with books.

Our intention is to inculcate the habit of reading. This is how we sent Tom Sawyer, Robinson Crusoe and King Lear to the rural villages.



CandleAid Health - Comprises of four categories of assistance.

1. Cancer Patients' Assistance Programme - disbursement of LKR 2,000 monthly to poor cancer patients.
2. **Sigiri Trust Fund** - set up by a recognized leader in the Sri Lankan business community to assist patients needing lifesaving procedures that are ill-afforded. Jan 20 to Nov 21, 44 patients with serious life-threatening illnesses were assisted spending LKR 5,629,634.

3. **R & D Fund** - established by two well-wishers to render assistance to cancer patients with a view to fulfilling any of their pressing needs. 26 patients and 2 students were assisted spending LKR 787,685 during the past two years.
4. **Kidney Dialysis Assistance Programme** - to assist mainly poor patients needing dialysis beyond what is given free of charge in the national medical scheme. Up to LKR50,000 p.m. for 6 months has been disbursed among 19 patients since February 2021.

Cancer Patients' Assistance Programme

Total assisted	- 1524
Current No. of patients	- 336
New patients enrolled during COVID times	- 112

We acknowledge with gratitude the voluntary services of Mrs Sabine Dias, a German national married to a Sri Lankan pilot who lived earlier in Singapore and now in Abu Dhabi. She is the International Coordinator for this programme and has been working 20 long years in this capacity.



Harshanan (4) from Ampara district - brain cancer since 2017. Father has abandoned the family. Mother unemployed. Lives with grandmother who earns LKR 700 as a domestic in a house that has no electricity and running water. Though the tumor was removed, sadly it recurred needing surgery twice over. The cancer sprouted in his lungs needing chemotherapy for which he goes to hospital paying LKR 5,000 per round trip for transport alone. One of CA's saddest stories. He is sponsored by **Clarendon Foundation of California**, mainly expatriate Sri Lankans who have assisted 100 cancer riddled children each year for nearly 20 years.

Kidnan Pathmanathan, a throat cancer patient from Jaffna district is married with 5 children. Eldest son earns a pittance as a labourer. CandleAid enrolled Kidnan not only in the Cancer programme but also in GAM. The LKR 4,000 was a lifeline for Kidnan and his family. Sadly, Kidnan succumbed to his illness, a pennyless poor man, loved by his family. CandleAid continues to support the family under GAM. That is the least we can do for dear departed Kidnan.



A benevolent donor in Singapore continues to give over 200 sponsorships to beneficiaries across all three sponsored programmes, ie education, food and health.



Sigiri Trust Fund (STF)

Erick Prasanna (47) widower - Galle district with son 18 and daughter 8. Eric's mother and an unmarried aunt live with him. He had worked abroad and had saved some money. Their house was washed out in the Tsunami, but thankfully the Red Cross gave him a house. His wife succumbed to cancer. All his savings were exhausted. Life struck another blow - he needed by-pass surgery urgently. STF contributed LKR 150,000. He is presently recovering well.



Aruni Samaraweera (38) - from Kandy district - Nurse at Kandy General Hospital and a mother of 3 kids aged, 9,7 and 3. Spouse is a male nurse. Needed a bone marrow transplant for Non-Hodgkins Triple-hit Lymphoma. STF contributed LKR 200,000. Now recovered and back to work. Spouse, Janaka works with CandleAid as a volunteer hospital coordinator.

R & D Fund

Navodini - 8 years - Anuradhapura district - Ewings Sarcoma of the left femur. Youngest of three sisters of a poor family. LKR 200,000 was made available to fund the internal prosthetic to be implanted. Vajira Thera gathered the villagers and converted her dilapidated home into a habitable unit for Navodini to rehabilitate after surgery.



Kidney Dialysis Assistance Programme (KDAP)

Assistance is also extended to patients required to hire 3-wheelers to travel long distances to get dialysed 2 to 3 times a week at Government hospitals.

Thilini Madhushani (28) - Anuradhapura district, whose husband abandoned her and took away their son, now lives with the mother who is a daily wage labourer. Thilini needed dialysis from 2009 and travels many miles to Anuradhapura twice a week. KDAP gives LKR 8,000 per month towards her travelling expenses.

CandleAid directors having visited her and seen their plight contributed funds to construct toilet facilities for Thilini, coordinated by the village Priest, Vajira Thera.



Sujani (30) from Colombo district was an undergraduate when diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. She lived with her widowed mother helped by her married brother. Having assisted them to pay their house rent, later Sujani was enrolled to KDAP receiving LKR 8,000 p.m. since February 2021. She needed dialysis thrice a month.



Having faced numerous challenges including a battle with Covid, Sujani passed away in hospital on 5th of November 2021. **It was a very sad day for CandleAid. May she rest in peace.**

CandleAid Food

Comprises of two programmes:

Gift-a-Meal Programme - destitute families receive LKR 2,000 p.m. to supplement their meager earnings enabling them to purchase much needed dry rations.

Total number of families supported	..	777
Families currently supported	..	203
No. of families enrolled during Covid months	..	107



Niluka Nilanthi is from the Galle district. Her husband had left her and her two children in 2018. Niluka's parents have passed away too. She engages in various menial work to earn a living. Her eldest daughter is in pre-school and the younger one is 3 years old. GAM donation is her surest income.

Rasika Bandara is from the Kurunegala district. Her husband succumbed to a liver ailment in July 2021 leaving her with 5 daughters. She works as a labourer in an animal farm earning an irregular and meager income. The eldest daughter is seeking employment having passed her GCE A'Level exam. The others are in Grades 10 & 8 and the younger twins are in grade 3. The family is enrolled in GAM.



Mother & Child Project - established in February 2021 to assist single mothers by supplementing their income with LKR 5,000 p.m. for one year. A total of 40 such families have been enrolled from February to end of November 2021.



Iranganie from Kandapola is a widow. Her husband was electrocuted and died in February 2021. She has 3 children to support. The eldest is in grade 11 and the second in grade 6, the third an infant. They live in a dilapidated house and live on handouts from relatives. She is an MCP recipient.

T A Anusha of Sulthanagoda lost her three-wheel driver husband who was killed by his enemies on a visit to Katharagama. Anusha is the sole custodian of her three daughters aged 7, 4 and 2. She cannot go to do any work as she has to take care of her children. Her relatives and the people in the neighborhood help them as they are totally helpless. She is another MCP beneficiary.



COVID ASSISTANCE

Times have been hard for everyone with so many curtailments, restrictions, curfews and lockdowns. Yet, for the 'Have Not' category of people their lives almost came to a standstill, if not by succumbing to Covid, they almost died of starvation and desperation. And CandleAid had nearly 1500 such families.

CandleAid gave them a lifeline whenever it could afford to do so thanks to the amazing generosity of its donors and sponsors. April, May and June 2020, LKR 8 Million was rolled out to all CA families by donating LKR 2,000 per family per month. Then in November 2020, LKR 726,000 was disbursed among 242 poorest of the poor families giving them LKR 3,000. Once again in May/June 2021, 1369 families were given LKR 3,000 each and another LKR 2,500 per month was given in July/August/September 2021 to 1390 families totalling LKR 4,107,000 and LKR 3,475,000 respectively.

Even CandleAid itself was pleasantly surprised that it had disbursed a whopping total of LKR 16 Million to give relief to its beneficiaries in these unprecedented times.

We "Hit the Ground Running" and once again we have no words to thank all our supporters for making it all possible.

Additionally, through the generosity of a group called **We Are One Lanka** in the UK, much needed machinery, equipment, utensils, masks, food items etc. were distributed among national hospitals in Karapitiya, Ratnapura and Matara. These were all gifted for use in serving Covid 19 patients that flooded these hospitals at the height of the pandemic.



SECRET SANTA

An annual initiative to give some seasonal cheer to the needy. We were able to roll out this project in December 2020 too, with a head-start given by one of our generous benefactors in Sri Lanka.

We raised LKR 1,720,000 from well-wishers.

172 families from all races and religions, 64 families of sponsored students, 63 from 'Gift-a-Meal', 44 families of cancer patients and 1 family from General Projects received LKR 10,000.

One of our most valued coordinators arranged a few families in the Matara district to visit the Arpico Supercentre where the little ones ran helter skelter pushing trollies collecting goodies - a simple enough task for the "Haves" but not so for these kids from impoverished families.

We are making attempts to run this programme this year too specially as people are battered and bruised due to Covid. Once again it all depends on the support we get from our CA friends local and worldwide - this is a wonderful opportunity to share your seasonal joy. Please send an email to admin@candleaid.org if you wish to do so.

Chandrapala of Handapandgda is 77 years old, his wife Lalitha is 60 and the son Kamuditha is 13. He tapped rubber. He has never stepped out of his village. He is now old and his wife is sick. When Secret Santa visited them, they were stunned not knowing how to spend the 10K. CandleAid coordinator, Sandeepa helped to settle their LKR 3,000 debt to the village shop. He took them to buy their needs with the balance 7,000. Their joy was incomparable.



That then was the story of CandleAid in times of the dreaded Corona. It is the poor that suffered most. As this newsletter is being prepared, life was limping back to some semblance of normalcy, but once again there are threats of darkness in the horizon. But we can always live in hope that we are seeing the receding of the pandemic and its evil outcomes.

Meantime CandleAid must thank all those wonderful people who gathered around us to do what they could to help people in need. There were so many acts of extreme kindness and generosity by so many people from all parts of the world. In the midst of their own exposure to the life-threatening effects of Corona, they had the desire and the determination to look back and see the misery of the poor.

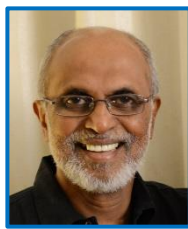
Some of you who read this have been with CandleAid over two decades and some got to know of our work only during the time of the pandemic. The acts of charity too were varied in their intensity and reach. While mentioning them all here is a near impossibility, CandleAid thanks each and every one of you for the trust you placed in it in making CandleAid the vehicle of your kindness and generosity. Be assured your contribution always reached the desired destination, only a snapshot of which is given above. To say we are overwhelmed by your support is indeed an understatement. **Where could we have been without you all!**

Please meet below people behind the work we do - names you may have heard from time to time but have no faces to identify.

Our Hony Board of Directors



President Elmo



*Finance Director
Dayantha*



Vice President Priya



Director Razeen



Director Mevan



Director Himali



Director Yasmin



Executive Director Dil

Our office Staff - current and past - all who worked diligently during Covid times.



Head of Education
Cheryl



C'nating Secretary
Mavis (retd.)



Finance Manager
Krishani



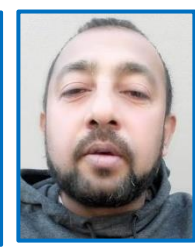
Head of Health
Rajani (Veena)



Manage - Admin
Wiraj (retd.)



Hony Project Leader
(STF) Sunil



C'nating Officer
Chaminda



Asst. Accountant
Malkanthi



Project Asst. (Edu)
Chamila



Project Asst.(Food)
Shalini



Project Asst.(Health)
Reshadi



Admin Asst.
Pumala



Project Asst.(Edu)
Sanushi

Hony. International Representatives

There are twelve wonderful people in various cities across the globe ie. Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Hongkong, Singapore and USA (representing all States) watching out for CandleAid's interests. Without their unstinted support, CandleAid could not have achieved its current level of reach and effectiveness. Their names are given below and their contact details and other information about CandleAid can be found in our website www.candleaid.org

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|-------------|----|---------------------------|
| • Frankfurt | .. | Claudia Frey |
| • Amsterdam | .. | John & Carla Horn |
| • Stockholm | .. | Harald & Dr Maria Wessman |
| • Toronto | .. | Godwin Fernandez |
| • Vancouver | .. | Capt. Wayne Dannhauer |
| • Calgary | .. | Kithsiri & Indrani Perera |
| • Perth | .. | Yolande de Silva |
| • Sydney | .. | Chris & Betty Fernando |
| • Melbourne | .. | Asha de Silva |
| • Hongkong | .. | Jaliya Pilimathalawe |
| • USA | .. | Lakshan Fernando |

**We may not move mountains yet we may perhaps be leveling an anthill or two.
Ain't it better than doing nothing ? As we always say.....**

***"It is better by far to light a solitary candle than to
curse the darkness"***