

# The Nivasa Foundation

Post Office Box 95, Merrimac, MA 01860  
info@nivasafoundation.org  
www.nivasafoundation.org

## Bi-Annual Report August 2007



The Nivasa Foundation's Sponsor-A-Child Program, implemented in conjunction with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, is subject to review twice annually by an independent auditor in Sri Lanka. The auditor provides direct observation of the program and serves to inform the Nivasa Foundation Board of Directors in Massachusetts. The auditor ascertains the effectiveness of the program by examining the following:

- the distribution of funds
- the use of funds by the families
- the status and well-being of the children and their parents
- the employment status of the parents
- other pertinent observations and general impressions noted by the auditor
- potential difficulties or gaps in the program and procedures
- other issues relating to the program

Audits are scheduled to be conducted in May and November each year. A detailed report and any pertinent materials and records are due to the Nivasa Board of Directors by June 1 and December 1, respectively. Each audit shall be comprised of:

- interviews with the children and guardians at the families' homes
- an interview with Sister Angela of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
- a completed report including all interview forms, materials, and records collected during the audit

### **Auditing Process for 2007**

In May, 2007 the Sisters of the Good Shepherd began distributing Nivasa sponsorship funds to the parents of ten children in Sri Lanka. Families were given three months to use the funds before the first audit in August. Nihal Perera, a Sri Lankan volunteer, conducted the audit in August 2007. Over the course of three weeks, Mr. Perera met with

all of the families and interviewed the children and guardians at their homes. Mr. Perera also interviewed Sister Angela and collected her report and materials. Conflicting schedules and travel time often served as obstacles to the auditing process, but all appointments and interviews were conducted successfully.

### **Distribution of Funds**

Six parents of ten children each received Rs. 3500.00 (\$35 US) on the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month beginning in May. At the first installment, a training session was conducted outlining the parameters for spending the funds, filling out the forms, and obtaining receipts. Each subsequent month, the parents traveled to the Rajagiriya Center to receive the funds and to deposit their receipts. Occasionally, Sister Angela delivered the funds to the homes when parents were unable to attend.

### **Assessment:**

Only one family out of six had complications utilizing the funds according to instructions. A sister from the Good Shepherds was appointed to oversee the expenditures made by that family. The problem was resolved when the grandparents assumed the care and responsibility for those children. Overall, the families were very supportive of the program; the parents and children spoke freely when answering questions and made every effort to accommodate the auditing process. The receipts collected from each family indicated that the parents kept accurate records of their expenditures. The funding received from the Nivasa Foundation Sponsor-A-Child Program was used to provide food, school supplies, school field trips, tutoring, clothes, and medicine for the children.

### **Educational Impact:**

The auditor and the Good Shepherd sisters noted an increase in the children's motivation and participation in education since the start of the Nivasa Sponsor-A-Child Program. The children expressed a greater interest in school and had enhanced grades because they were able to obtain the proper clothing and books and were given funds to attend after-school tutoring, extracurricular activities, and field trips. Their self-respect and sense of dignity has been elevated because they are now able to participate in their education along with their peers. The parents are dedicated to fulfilling the educational needs of their children and spent the funds on school field trips, after-school classes for extra support, clean clothes, and transportation and supplies for school.

### **Living Conditions:**

Several of the children are being raised in impoverished living conditions. The unhealthy, dilapidated living quarters expose the families to the risk of illnesses and injury. Some parents still need to work outside of the home, leaving the children inadequately supervised. Although some families are able to spend funds so that their children can now celebrate birthdays with their school friends or be provided with a toy or special food, others have more pressing needs to fulfill.

**Family #1:**

The mother lives in Bandaragama with her three children and their grandfather. All six members live in a one room, makeshift hut with one bed, a leaking roof and no proper windows. They do not have clean water. An unsecured well on the grounds supplies water for their daily needs. The children are at risk for illness. The father works as a fisherman and does manual labor while the mother goes to nearby wealthy homes to assist in housework. During the parents' absence, the children are left in the care of their elderly grandfather who is unable to provide proper supervision. In May 2007, the youngest child, now 6 years old, was pushed into a trash burning pit by another child while playing in the yard and seriously burned his legs. He had surgery to remove the plastic that was stuck to his feet. The doctors had advised the parents to provide the child with specially prepared shoes that cost Rs.12,000 (\$120 US) to help him walk but they were unable to cover the cost. Although no update was available regarding the oldest child (age 14), the two children, age 9 and 6, are now doing well with their studies. Both attended an educational school trip and participated in the school fair and sports. They are receiving enough food and supplies for school which makes them much happier. The 9 year old is having some medical difficulties and most of the funds received from Nivasa were spent on his needs. According to the interview report, their average household monthly income is only Rs. 9,000 (\$90 US).

**Family #2:**

The mother lives with her husband and their two children in a one room house that they share with her father. They have no access to clean water. The sponsored child, age 10, is generally in good health. The second child is a year and a half old and does not receive funding from Nivasa. With the funds received, the mother is able to purchase milk and nutritious food and the children have grown healthier as a result. The funds have also eased the burden of paying for transportation to and from school and for school supplies. The sponsored child is now attending special math and English classes and shows a greater joy by being able to go to school. He shows an interest in art and takes part in sports. Recently, he won a prize for his artwork. He also attended a school field trip and celebrated his birthday by sharing a cake with his school friends. He is very respectful to his parents and other adults. The father works as a fisherman while the mother assists the families in the neighbors with cooking. Their total average income per month is Rs.9,000 (\$90 US). Their income is not sufficient to make any improvements in their living conditions and thus they greatly benefit from the funding they receive.

**Family #3:**

The mother lives with her husband and two children in a rental apartment. She is unable to work due to a disability and walks with the help of a walker. Socially active, she leads a "Children's Gathering Program" and keeps her children clean and healthy. The youngest child, age 6, had a fall and hit his head and received treatment. Funds received for both children (age 8 and 6) are used to enhance their well-being and enable them to pay for transportation to attend school.. Both children show more interest in going to school now. They were able to participate in school activities requiring funding and are good in drawing. Both children behave well in school, attend church activities, and respect their elders. The children receive good supervision and care at home. Their father

works as a carpenter making an average monthly income of Rs.12,000 (\$120 US).

**Family #4:**

The mother lived with her adopted twins (age 11) and her parents in Negombo. Both children are unaware that they were adopted. The mother is very depressed about being unable to find a job to provide for her children. Despite the dangers, she is contemplating going back abroad to find employment as a maid. Because of her inability to properly care for her family, the children are now living with their grandparents. The grandmother takes the children to school and attends to their needs. The twins are now well fed, properly clothed, attend school everyday and are doing well with their studies. They attend school plays and sports.

**Family #5:**

The mother lives with her husband in their own home in Divuldeniya where they care for their disabled child. Due to caring for her child's needs, the mother has no time for outside employment. Her husband is also unemployed due to a spinal condition. He receives a pension from his old employment, which is Rs. 14,000 (\$140 US). The hospital bills and medication are their highest expense. This past month they required Rs. 250,000 (\$2,500 US) to cover their daughter's hospital expenses. The child, age 12, was unable to attend school due to the weakness in her legs and she underwent a surgery to help her walk. She is still recovering from her surgery and is learning to walk with a help of walker. The family is in debt and they do not have sufficient income to cover their cost of living. The husband's income is Rs. 8,000 (\$80 US) per month.

**Family #6:**

The mother lives with her husband and two children (ages 9 and 3) in a home they share with relatives. She works at home making sweet rolls while her husband finds manual labor on a day to day basis. The husband previously encouraged his wife to continue to seek overseas domestic work. The funds they receive from Nivasa now provide enough support to allow her to work from home and avoid overseas employment. The funds are put to maximum use providing the children with their necessities. Both children are in good health. They love to take part in religious activities. During Vesak, a Buddhist celebration, both children participated in the school parade. They are growing up with good values, respect for adults, and appreciate the support from Nivasa. The youngest child became ill with a high temperature and was treated. She attends preschool and enjoys going to school. Her brother, age 9, is very excited about attending school and is very interested in drama.

**Improvements to the Nivasa Sponsor-A-Child Program:**

Each family had to spend Rs. 500-600 (\$5 to \$6 US) in traveling expenses, and travel to and from the city often took the whole day. On occasion, Sister Angela was required to deliver funds to families unable to take the time or expense to make the trip. To eliminate this added cost and time commitment required for families to pick up their funds in Colombo, monthly money orders will be mailed instead to each family starting in

September.

**Economic and Social Impact:**

The families have used the funds successfully to take care of the basic physical needs of their children. The ability to do so has fostered joy and contentment within the family. Sister Angela notes that she has seen subtle changes in the family dynamics. Where there was friction and conflict due to financial problems, the families are now happy and relaxed. The husbands are asking questions and showing increased interest in the Sponsor-A-Child Program. Criticism and tension due to financial straits has been replaced by greater respect and regard for the wives. The role of the woman is now looked upon with greater dignity and value. The parents are ready and willing to take on the responsibility of changing their lives to a better standard of living. All they need is extended educational and financial assistance and support.

The children seem to be more relaxed and free with their parents. Joy has entered their lives and they are eager to express their creativity and talents because the mother can now purchase basic school materials such as books, colored paper, crayons, etc. Their enthusiasm has grown since they have been able to participate in all school activities.

**Emotional Impact:**

All of the participants expressed how grateful, hopeful and blessed they feel for the help they have received from the Nivasa Foundation sponsors. The women who were once victimized in slavery overseas now show joy at the care and concern they have been shown by their sponsors. The funds they receive through the Sponsor-A-Child Program have enabled them to care for their children and provide the basic necessities to meet their health and educational needs. This has brought a great sense of joy and relief to their lives. The women expressed the hope that one day they, too, will be able to help other children who are needy. All have stated that their faith has grown because of the love and concern shown them by the members and benefactors of the Nivasa Foundation. Despite the enormous difficulties each of these parents is still facing, hope is in their hearts and they are grateful to Nivasa and especially to the donors who support the Sponsor-A-Child Program. The emotional impact that a monthly sponsorship brings to these families is priceless.

**Recommendations:**

- 1. Provide financial education to the parents and clearer guidelines for spending the funds provided by Nivasa.**  
Financial education will enable the parents to best utilize the funds to their maximum potential. Parents have expressed a desire for financial education and guidelines from Nivasa.
- 2. Provide guidelines for Sister Angela's report and communication to the Board of**

**Directors.**

Sister Angela has successfully provided supervision and guidance to the parents as directed by Nivasa. She has kept good records, has advised the parents according to our directives and has monitored the program efficiently. Stricter guidelines and timetables are needed, however, to increase the efficiency in communication.

**3. Create stricter guidelines for the Auditor's report and timely communication with the Board of Directors.**

The auditor was able to meet and interview all parents in the program. Stricter guidelines and a greater emphasis on providing evidence that support the findings is needed in future reports. All communication must be conducted with the Board members in a timely manner.

**4. Create a branch of Nivasa in Sri Lanka to provide education to all participants and train staff to monitor the program according to our standards.**

A Nivasa branch in Sri Lanka would allow for the organization and training of volunteers and the hiring of one part-time, paid employee who could monitor the program. Thus, the need to search for auditors every six months would be eliminated, communication difficulties would be overcome, fund transfer issues and bank problems could be easily resolved and, most importantly, the opportunity to raise awareness in Sri Lanka would be greatly enhanced. A Nivasa branch in Sri Lanka will also provide the opportunity to reach the rural areas and seek out the less fortunate victims who are not identified by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and who do not have knowledge of the help and services available to them.

**5. Increase donations, staffing and awareness for the Nivasa Foundation.**

To date, the Nivasa Foundation has successfully run with a very small group of volunteers but expansion of the program is needed to help more women and their families. An increasing number of volunteers is needed to reach a wider audience of sponsors. So many women and their children are in dire need of assistance in Sri Lanka. In order to sponsor more children, more sponsors and donations are required to continue our mission.