

UMSL Operation Teardrop Campaign Fall 2008 Update

Thank you for your continued support of the UM-St. Louis Operation Teardrop Campaign. We had a very successful spring campaign, and accomplished much over the summer break! Our Campaign works to improve the educational opportunities of children at Macaldeniya Tamil Vidyalayam, a primary school on a remote, impoverished tea estate in the central hills of Sri Lanka. Here's what we've been up to since my last update:

Gallery Visio Exhibition

From May 8th to June 28th, we held the *What I See* fundraising exhibition and silent auction at UMSL's Gallery Visio. On display were Macaldeniya children's self portraits from an art workshop held in January 2008.



Gallery Visio Exhibition

Thanks to Sara Arnold, Gloria Schultz, and the staff at Gallery Visio, as well as our campus and off-campus sponsors: UMSL's Center for International Studies, Auxiliary Services, Golden Key International Honor Society, Institute for Women's and Gender Studies, Center for Teaching and Learning, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice; and *CHAKRA, Pvt. Ltd.*, a handmade recycled paper manufacturing company in Sri Lanka. Extra special thanks to Tericia Mayhew, who constructed a beautiful quilt for the exhibition using the youngest children's artwork. In keeping with *CHAKRA's* ecological vision, we're used part of the proceeds from the exhibition to create environmental education and recycling projects at Macaldeniya:

Handmade Recycled Paper-Making Workshop

First, in July 2008, we had a recycled paper-making workshop with the Macaldeniya schoolchildren. Our friends Mana Samarasinghe and Nilu Abeyaratne, owners of *CHAKRA, Pvt. Ltd.*, along with their son Chahel, put on the workshop. The kids had a blast! Now that the teachers have also been trained in how to make recycled paper, they're having students collect paper refuse from their homes, and will hold their own paper-making workshops at the Macaldeniya school once a month beginning in January.



Making Pulp



TURNING THE PULP INTO PAPER:



Step 1: Lifting



Step 2: Couching



Step 3: Pressing



Step 4: Hanging & Drying

In addition, the children collected small flowers from the village surrounds near the school, and added them to the paper to beautiful effect.



Macaldeniya Organic School Garden

The Heimer-Lang School Garden has at last been completed and planting has begun. Macaldeniya's 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders prepared the garden beds, and all students—including 1st and 2nd graders—are growing leeks, carrots, beans, pumpkin, capsicum, beets, and okra. At harvest time, Principal Raja will hold Saturday vegetable markets at the school. Veggies will be sold to parents and other estate workers at a fraction of the market price, while also providing the students education in business. Proceeds will be used to purchase exercise books, pens and pencils for the school. Each grade has its own garden bed, and the grade with the best-kept and productive bed will win a prize: new backpacks with school supplies and a storybook. At the same time the students are learning about horticulture, they're also enjoying one period a day out in the sun and fresh air.

Beginning in January 2009, we will also build a compost pit at the school; students will be provided an educational program on how to compost, and the benefits of composting as fertilizer for their school. They will also be provided with means to collect kitchen waste from home to contribute at the school.



Preparing the garden beds



Mixing organic fertilizer with the soil



Taking a break...

In addition, once the garden fence and gate were installed, Principal Raja and I painted the gate in bright cheerful colors.



All of this in anticipation for the official garden opening ceremony, which took place in late July. Principal Raja invited many principals from the surrounding area, as well as the provincial Education Director and staff in his office. The event was presided over by the Swami at the local Hindu temple, who sought blessings for the garden's success. The children were also actively involved, as they presented us with flower garlands to begin the ceremony.



Puny & I are presented with garlands



From left: Swami, Puny, me, and Principal Raja

Then it was time to head to the garden and commence with the planting...





Additional Summer Activities

We also had a number of additional summer activities. These include:

1. Art Workshop

In addition to our major environmental education activities, we've had a few other fun events at the Macaldeniya school. In June, we held another art workshop, using paper donated by *CHAKRA, Pvt. Ltd.* Thanks to Temujen Gunawardena, who worked with the kids during the workshop. Each student drew multiple small drawings of life on the estate, and these have been used to create original note cards available for sale at various venues around UMSL's campus. Funds from our note card sales will provide support for our continued school programming, including the daily provision of milk and biscuits to the Macaldeniya schoolchildren.





2. Saturday Matinee

Thanks to Joris Gunawardena and his high tech computer equipment, we also had a Saturday matinee in June. We draped the classroom windows with curtains and sheets, and projected English-language cartoons for the children's enjoyment. We also provided homemade milk-rice treats, cooked fresh on the estate that morning.

3. New Toothbrushes & Toothpaste for Macaldeniya Students

Thanks to Marilyn Morton, our dental hygiene program at Macaldeniya Tamil Vidyalayam continues. All of the students were given new toothbrushes to replace those given in January, as well as additional tubes of toothpaste.

4. New School Filing Cabinet

We also purchased a new filing cabinet for the school. Here's our rationale: We regularly bring an assortment of supplies to the school for the various projects we're sponsoring. Storage at the school is a challenge, made more difficult by a nighttime visit from one of the resident wild elephants in the area. He nearly turned one filing cabinet into an accordion...



Elephant tracks at the school playground



Remains of a school filing cabinet

5. Purchased a School Printer

In January, we provided Macaldeniya Tamil Vidyalayam with its first computer. Principal Raja has put it to good use preparing school lessons, as well as continuing his own school development activities. Most recently, he drafted a petition and collected signatures from parents requesting additional teachers from the Ministry of Education. Though our Campaign funds two volunteers for the school, there is only one government-appointed teacher for the 76 students at the school. The printer will facilitate Principal Raja's continued efforts on behalf of Macaldeniya Tamil Vidyalayam.

6. Built a Cow Shed

Last year, we began a nutrition program at Macaldeniya Tamil Vidyalayam, which includes providing a glass of milk for the students each morning. To date, logistics have required us to use milk powder purchased from the local town. However, my husband Puny's family has volunteered to donate cows to our project. We plan to hire Macaldeniya parents to take care of the cows, and provide fresh milk to the students each day. In anticipation of this program, which will begin on my return in January, we had a cow shed built on the estate.



7. Elected Parent Representatives

The summer was not without its challenges, in this case spurred in part by rumors around the estate about how much money we raised and how it was spent. Sri Lanka's government has been cracking down on foreign non-government organizations, and some of this suspicion filtered down to our project. The good news is that after numerous meetings between combinations that included myself, estate owner Mr. Radhakrishnan, Principal Raja, teachers, parents, we turned this potentially negative outcome into a positive one. Macaldeniya parents elected a board of representatives, who we will now regularly report our activities to, and who will have input on our program.

What's Next?

In collaboration with Principal Raja and with enthusiastic support from parent representatives, we have identified the next phase of the Operation Teardrop Campaign. There is an old school building on site at Macaldeniya in quite a state of disrepair. However, it holds much potential

for our efforts. We are currently renovating the building to create three new educational sites: (1) a *pre-school*; (2) a *school library*; and (3) a *school computer room*. We've secured funding—with our deepest thanks to a donor who wishes to remain anonymous—for the cost of the building renovations.



"BEFORE" – July 2008



School Library Site



Pre-School Site



Computer Room Site

We have hired a contractor and workers from the estate to complete the job, which provides additional benefits the local community.



“IN PROGRESS” – August 2008

In addition to the physical renovations, we are very happy to report that through our friend Nilu Abeyaratne, we located a pre-school in Colombo willing to provide free training for our pre-school teacher. We put parent representatives in charge of spreading the word about the post, and thanks to their efforts, we have hired a young women from the estate. Her training will begin in September, and we hope to begin operations in January.

However, we have additional fundraising needs to successfully complete this project:

- (1) salary support for the pre-school teacher (approximately \$100/month; or \$1,000 for the year)
- (2) funds to purchase books and shelving for the school library
- (3) funds for the purchase of school computers (approximately \$300 each), as well as computer desks, chairs, and internet connection (approximately \$50/month)

In addition, we need continued support to fund our ongoing programming. To make an additional **tax deductible** donation, please send checks to:

UM-St. Louis Sri Lankan Educational Fund
Center for International Studies
366 Social Sciences Building
University of Missouri-St. Louis
St. Louis, MO 63121

I hope you appreciate seeing the continued impact of your generous donations. Thank you for all of your support!

Jody Miller, Project Coordinator

OPERATION TEARDROP CAMPAIGN

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