



The Professional

The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK

13th
Anniversary

UK Registered Charity No 1145786

www.apsl.org.uk

2018 Spring Edition

President's Message



It is with great pleasure that I present you The Professional 2018 Spring Edition and welcome all of you to the Royal Nawaab, Manchester where we celebrate the 4th Anniversary of the APSL Scholarship Scheme.

Founded in 2004, APSL is a charity registered both in the UK and Sri Lanka. It is our vision to bring all Sri Lankan communities together to promote unity and professionalism, foster good will and cultural relations in the UK and to support relief and development activities in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka offers free education to children and has a high rate of literacy but there are still many families struggling to educate their children. Therefore, in this edition we focus on the journey of APSL Scholarship Scheme which was initiated by Mr. Mervyn Silva and Prof. Terrance Fernando in 2014. The aim of the scheme is to help academically gifted children from economically disadvantaged families to reach their full potential through access to education. It also fulfils one of the APSL prime objectives of helping Sri Lankan communities by educating children in Sri Lanka to become more engaged citizens in helping the development and progress of the country. Over the last 4 years APSL has expanded the scheme to many parts of Sri Lanka and today 51 students benefit from the scheme.

I wish to thank Mr. Mervyn Silva, Prof. Terrance Fernando and the Scholarship subcommittee for their tireless effort and hard work in contributing to the progress of the scheme during these four years. The scheme serves as a vehicle for anyone who would like to help a gifted child in Sri Lanka and I would kindly request all of you who are gathered here today and reading this edition to join with APSL to sponsor a child.

The success of the scheme solely depends on the support of our valued sponsors. Therefore I would like to thank all the sponsors for their generosity. Your kind donation is not only helping children's education but also their confidence, optimism and self-esteem. Every new experience, every word they learn, every behaviour they adopt, is an investment in their fruitful future and you are truly a part of it.

This edition also provides an update about two other APSL projects namely the "Living in the UK" event and the recently launched "APSL Cancer Relief Fund". Both projects have become extremely popular and beneficial to our communities. APSL is

also introducing a new web-based membership administration system allowing all members to easily connect and take part in APSL projects and activities. This new system will also enable APSL to comply with the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislations which comes into force on 25 May 2018.

Finally, in keeping with APSL's pledge to support professional development I am pleased to introduce the "APSL Mentoring Scheme" which will soon be launched to support university students both in Sri Lanka and the UK. The program will offer mentoring sessions and workshops in the areas of career development, professional studies and soft skills development. I believe the strength of APSL lies within its membership and our greatest asset is professional knowledge, therefore I would like to invite like-minded professionals to join APSL as mentors to help support young professionals who will become future leaders.

Thank You

Suraj Wijendra

President

The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK

president@apsl.org.uk

APSL Northern Event 2018 Programme

- 6.00 – 6.30 pm** Arrival, Registration & Refreshments
- 6.30 – 6.35 pm** Welcome & Introduction:
Mr Suraj Wijendra, President, APSL
- 6.35 – 7.00 pm** Keynote Address - Dealing with post-conflict disability: The role of the diaspora - some collective experiences of the work of Meththa Foundation in Sri Lanka and Uganda

By Prof Mahesh Nirmalan,
*MBBS, MD, FRCA, PhD, FFICM
Prof of UG Medical Education & Training, Vice Dean for Social Responsibility and Public Engagement, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health Manchester Medical School*
- 7.00 – 8.00 pm** Buffet Dinner (Royal Nawaab's - by popular demand)
- 8.00 – 8.30 pm** APSL Charitable activities in Sri Lanka
- 8.30 – 11.00 pm** Music & Dance including Sri Lanka Baila (DJ: Genre music)

APSL Executive Committee 2017-2018



President
Mr Suraj Wijendra



Vice President
Mr Thushara Madurasinghe



Vice President
Dr Mahesh De Silva



General Secretary
Dr Mohan Siriwardena



Membership Secretary
Mrs Gayani Senaratne



Treasurer
Miss Buddhini Liyanage



Immediate Past President
Mr Leslie Dep



Exec Committee Member
Dr Leshan Uggalla



Exec Committee Member
Mr Gihantha Jayasinghe



Exec Committee Member
Dr Dilrini de Silva



Exec Committee Member
Prof Terrance Fernando



Exec Committee Member
Dr Dulini Fernando



Exec Committee Member
Ms Paola Bethmaga



Exec Committee Member
Ms Gowri Dep



Exec Committee Member
Mr Tariq Salih



APSL Representative in Sri Lanka
Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy



APSL Representative in Sri Lanka
Dr Roger Srivasan



Co-opted Senior Member
Prof Sir S Arulkumaran



Co-opted Senior Member
Mr Rohan de Alwis



Co-opted Senior Member
Prof I M Dharmadasa



Co-opted Senior Member
Dr Marc Dissanayake



Co-opted Senior Member
Dr Andrew Nayagam



Co-opted Senior Member
Mr Mervyn Silva

APSL Scholarship Scheme

As the APSL scholarship scheme enters its 4th year, it is time to take a closer look at how it is going and what difference it is making.

Aim

The aim of the scholarship Scheme is economic development through education to break the cycle of poverty. The Scheme has as its target academically gifted children from very poor families in Sri Lanka who are at risk of dropping off the education, or not entering higher education and settling for low paid jobs thus perpetuating poverty. The reasons for this is economic disparity in the society due to uneven distribution of wealth, acute competition for university places in the country and poor families simply not having the resources to provide the additional support and tuition their children need in order to compete.

What we have achieved

Starting with five children at the launch, the scheme has grown to support 51 (28 female and 23 male) children today. Each child is paid a set up sum of Rs. 5000 during the first month, followed by bursary of Rs. 3000 every month until they complete their education. Their age range 7–18 years. They hail from a number of different localities: Bandarawela, Chilaw, Ja-Ela, Kaduruwewa, Kegalle, Matale, Moratuwa, Nainamadama, Nochchiya, and Puttalam.



Moratuwa Children



Some of children from Chilaw and Puttalam



The house of one child from Puttalam



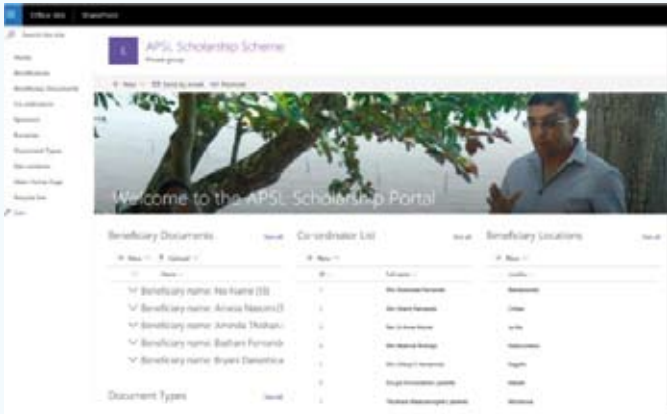
Visit to another family

Currently we have 31 sponsors making regular contributions to support these children. The number of children a sponsor funds vary between 1 to 15. Increasing number of APSL members, their friends and Executive Committee members have come forward on their own accord to sponsor children, confirming that we are on the right track and the work we do is of value.

We now have 10 local coordinators in those areas serving as our links providing support to these children. At the beginning we made a conscious decision not to grow too fast until our systems and processes were robust enough to support the demands that will be making on them.

Last year we managed to gain approval from the Sri Lankan government and open a Bank account in Sri Lanka, making it easier and cheaper to make the monthly payments to children.

During a planning workshop in April 2017, the need for a secure portal as one of the priorities for the growth of the Scheme was identified. Having explored various avenues and following a successful bid to Microsoft we managed to secure a set of Not-for-Profits licences for Office 365 free of charge, which has since provided us with a secure portal to serve as a virtual office with new and exciting possibilities. Work is now underway to digitise and store all scholarship documents and other relevant information on this portal.



The Scholarship subcommittee members, despite being spread across the UK from as far apart as Portsmouth to Leeds and Luton to Liverpool, now have access to up-to-date information they need in approving funding applications and monitoring children's progress. They now conduct monthly meetings virtually using Skype for Business. This way they are able to provide governance and due diligence to the scheme whilst making considerable savings on time and travel.

It is our intention to build on this success and utilise this technology to improve engagement with our sponsors. We are exploring ways of making better-quality information available to the sponsors on the children they support on a more regular basis.

Also, we would like to extend this technology to coordinators in Sri Lanka so that future applications for funding as well as children's progress reports and use of funds details can be submitted online - thereby reducing paper, saving time and postage as well as providing more consistency. However, there are a number of challenges to overcome before this becomes a reality - such as access to computers and internet, English language, IT skills and user training and confidence.

Next Steps

Having grown steadily over the past 3 years, the scholarship Scheme now has robust systems and processes in place capable of taking on and supporting an increasing number of children who could benefit from the support the scheme provides. The Executive Committee would like to increase the number of children funded to 100 by Christmas 2018 by reaching out to more remote parts of the country and communities not represented so far.

In order to achieve this we are now looking for more donors willing to support these children. The APSL Scholarship Scheme provides an ideal vehicle if:

- You would like to help the needy Sri Lankan children and transform their lives,
- You haven't got the time on your busy schedule, or the contacts on the ground to do it yourself,
- You are looking for a reliable and efficient channel where your donation is well managed and goes a longer way as a UK registered Charity due to Gift Aid.

How you can help

It costs £20 per month to fund a child through education. You can donate any amount you wish as a one-off or regular donation as they will all go to benefit the needy children.

The most popular method of donation among them all is the monthly standing order via our Virgin Money Giving page which automatically claims on our behalf and pass on Gift Aid for donations from UK taxpayers. The link to the page is available on our website www.apsl.org.uk. Some donors also have set up standing orders from their bank accounts to our charity account.

Account name: The Association of Professional Sri Lankans (UK)

Account no: 11444514

Sort code: 40-38-20

I would like to say a big Thank You to all our sponsors for standing by us and supporting us over the past 3 years, which has made it possible for us to reach out and transform so many lives.

Mervyn Silva

Scholarship Scheme Coordinator

scholarships@apsl.org.uk

APSL Fundraising Dinner Dance 2017



The APSL Annual Dinner Dance was held on Saturday the 23rd September 2017 at the Grange Tower Bridge Hotel, London, with the participation of many APSL members and their families, friends and well-wishers.

The event began with the APSL President Mr. Suraj Wijendra welcoming the guests. In his address Mr. Wijendra introduced the key theme of this year “APSL Cancer Relief Fund” and how APSL will work with communities in the UK to help patients in Sri Lanka directly when they need assistance. Furthermore, he described the past and present projects undertaken by APSL, and thanked all APSL project leaders, members and donors for their support. A highlight of his speech was how the proceeds of last year’s dinner dance was used as planned to successfully deliver a solar village for the Nochchiya village cluster in the Kurunegala District in Sri Lanka, in collaboration with Hela Sarana, another registered charity in the United Kingdom.

The welcome address was followed by a presentation by Dr. Dilrini De Silva and Dr. Leshan Uggalla, who formally launched the APSL Cancer Relief Fund. They explained the motivation behind the project, outlining why it is important to support cancer patients in Sri Lanka. They both highlighted the numerous direct and indirect difficulties encountered by patients in the country, particularly those from rural and socially disadvantaged areas. The audience was also informed of the various ways in which the Cancer Relief Fund can help such patients.

Dr. Faiz Mumtaz, Consultant Urologist at Royal Free Hospital, London, delivered the keynote lecture, titled “Surgery’s past, present and robotic future”. Dr. Mumtaz enlightened the audience on the key developments of surgery from the past to now, and explained how modern innovations in the use of Robotics is revolutionizing surgery, including surgery on cancer.

Following a delicious Sri Lankan buffet dinner, Mr. Palan, a Sri Lankan stand-up comedian entertained the audience. This was followed by a Dutch auction to raise further funds for the Cancer Relief Fund. A cricket ball signed by cricket legend Mr. Muttiah Muralitharan to commemorate the occasion of taking his 800 test wickets, was auctioned. A substantial amount of money was raised from the auction. A raffle draw was also held to raise funds for the same cause and the winners received valuable prizes.

Dr. Mohan Siriwardena delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of APSL. Mr. Thushara Madurasinghe and Ms. Paola Bethmage compered the event.

Attendees danced their way late into the night to the live music provided by Sky High band. The event ended well after midnight with the singing of the national anthems of UK and Sri Lanka.

APSL wishes to thank the Deputy High Commissioner for Sri Lanka to the United Kingdom Mr. Sugeeshwara Gunaratna & Mrs. Gunaratna, Counsellor (Consular) Mr. Manoj Warnapala & Mrs. Warnapala for accepting our invitation and attending the event. Furthermore, APSL wishes to thank all the sponsors for their contributions in making this event a great success.

Living in the UK Event



Once again an excellent ‘Living in the UK’ event was organised at the Redbridge Buddhist Vihara in Ilford on 28th January 2018. This was under the patronage of the Sri Lankan High Commissioner H E Mrs. Amari Wijewardena and Ven. Pethigamuwe Hemarathana of the temple.

The event was a discussion centred on Eastern and Western values and the day to day experiences Sri Lankans face living in the UK. Project Leader and Vice President (Finance) of APSL Mr. Thushara Madurasinghe commenced the event by giving a brief introduction of APSL and on the background of the project. Thushara mentioned that this discussion series has been conducted in various locations in the UK including London, Birmingham and Manchester. The speakers for the event were Dr. Dulini Fernando – executive committee member of APSL and Associate Professor of the University of Warwick, and Mr. Rohan De Alwis, a Past President of APSL and a Solicitor by profession.

The event was well attended with close to 100 parents and children. The engaging aspects of many of the Sunday school students made the session interactive as well as entertaining at times. VPFinance@apsl.org.uk.

APSL Cancer Relief Fund

The APSL Cancer relief fund was launched at the Dinner Dance 2017 and made tremendous progress over the past months. So far significant amount of funds raised for this good cause through the proceeds from the dinner dance 2017, special fundraising event organised in Cardiff and online donations through the dedicated Virgin Money Giving page. Also Marks and Spencer, Sri Lanka has pledged to renovate the toilet facilities at Badulla hospital as a result of a request made by the APSL president Mr. Suraj Wijendra.

The fund has already supported several patients in Badulla hospital to purchase emergency medical supplies worth Rs.72,000 and organised printing of leaflets for raising awareness on prevention and treatment options among the cancer patients in Sri Lanka.

cancerrelief@apsl.org.uk

Fundraising event organised by the Sri Lankan Community in Cardiff



The Sri Lankan community in Cardiff, South Wales, got together on 25th November 2017 at Lisvane Memorial Hall, Heol-Y-Delyn, Lisvane, Cardiff, with the intention of raising funds for the APSL cancer relief fund.

This was a very well-organized event with delicious food, good music, great company and above all for a great cause. More than thirty families around the area brought various delicious dishes whilst making a voluntary financial contribution towards the fund having a great intention of helping the needy cancer patients in Sri Lanka.

The community has managed to raise over £1100, including the contributions during the event and via direct online donations. APSL highly appreciates the efforts of Dr. Anuradha Samarasinghe, Mrs. Arjuna Samarasinghe and Dr. Dilum Jayawickrama, for organizing the event and would like to say a huge thank you to the Cardiff Sri Lankan community for their spirit and generosity on behalf of all fellow Sri Lankans.

Nochchiya Solar Village in Sri Lanka



The first stage of a large solar village project at Nochchiya village-cluster "Nochchiya Solar village" situated in the Kurunegala district, Sri Lanka, was established in January 2017, with the installation of two solar power systems, each funded by UK registered charities – The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL) and Hela Sarana. The Hela Sarana funded system was dedicated in memory of Mr Raja Meehitiya, the founder President of Hela Sarana who passed away in June 2015.

Following the opening of the first pilot solar village in 2008 at Kaduruwewa in the Kurunegala district, this will be the second large village cluster to replicate the solar village model in Sri Lanka.

Solar village project concept was designed and developed by Professor I M Dharmadasa of Sheffield Hallam University, UK, in the late 1990s, during a Higher EducationLink programme, to empower rural communities using clean energy technologies for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Poverty alleviation programmes in any community should have two main features; wealth creation method and follow-up methods for job creation within the community.

The first stage in Nochchiya village will be provided by water pumping in the dry-zone using clean and freely available solar energy. Modifying the project features according to the requirements of the community, this new project at Nochchiya creates much-needed revenue to cover water pumping expenses within the village cluster.

Two solar roofs of 3 kW each were installed in the village with the funding provided by the above two charities. The cost of each system was Rs 830,000 (£4,500), and the total cost was Rs 1.66 million (£9,000). The power produced from 6 kW solar roofs will be fed into the national grid, and the income generated will be used to cover the cost of two water pumping stations operated using grid electricity. These funds will be managed in a totally transparent way by the Village Development Committee with the guidance from project initiators. The project team will monitor the performance of the solar roofs over time and publish the data for the benefit of Sri Lankan solar initiative.

This project also complements the Sri Lankan Government recently initiated “ONE Million” solar roof programme to produce clean energy by reducing the ‘important and burn’ of coal and diesel in Sri Lanka.

The water pumped and purified is mainly used for drinking by the 1200 strong population this village, thereby reducing the risk of kidney and other water-borne diseases within the community. In addition, the surplus purified water is made available to seven other surrounding villages to purchase at a nominal cost. The project team within the APSL-UK is guiding the community to achieve rapid economic development by applying solar village concepts.

This project also fulfils 13 out of 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) established by the United Nations. It is also highly relevant to Sri Lanka, supporting the promotion of the recently launched “Soorya Bala Sangramaya” (Battle for Solar Energy) programme, and helping to provide clean drinking water to the people in the region.

This project can be a useful model for other developing countries closer to the equator, as a vehicle to support sustainable development, harnessing the power of the sun to overcome the detrimental effects of global warming.
wesrilanka@apsl.org.uk

APSL new membership admin system

We would like to draw your attention to an exciting development which will impact on all APSL members.

Decision to introduce a new system

During the last Executive Committee meeting held on 24th February, a decision was made to introduce a web-based system for membership administration from April 2018. Following considerable research, the product we have chosen is WebCollect a popular membership admin system used by well over 1000 UK clubs, societies and associations.

Reason for the change

Over the past 15 years APSL has become a benchmark for quality, professionalism, inclusiveness and has carried out numerous knowledge transfer, relief and poverty alleviation projects.

As the APSL is run by volunteers at their spare time with no resources or overheads of central admin office, it places significant burden on a few dedicated individuals to deliver the service. Also, during the last few decades IT and web technology has made huge advances thereby changing the way people communicate, collaborate and conduct business. This in turn has created new opportunities as well as threats organisations cannot afford to ignore. New General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation coming into force from 25 May, replacing the

previous Data Protection Act places greater responsibility on organisations holding personal data to ensure security, accuracy and provide individuals access to their data.

Benefits of the new system

Many of our members’ details such as job titles, addresses, phone and email addresses may have changed since you filled your membership application to join the APSL some years ago. The new system offers a secure and convenient way for you to check and update your information and assurance that information we are holding about you is up-to-date, accurate and secure. Also, you don’t miss out on our communications due to out of date email addresses etc. WebCollect is a secure system meeting strict industry standards. In addition to checking and updating your data, it makes it possible for you to renew your membership subscriptions, book your place in our future events. It will also help us improve our communication and member engagement through a monthly newsletter.

Action you need to take

In a couple of weeks, you will receive an email from us via WebCollect containing a link for you to login to the system and make it secure by setting your own password to access the system in future. Please look out for this email so that it will not end up as spam!

14th Annual General Meeting

The 14th APSL Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 12th May 2018 at Citadines Holborn – Covent Garden, London, WC1V 6LF. All APSL members are welcome.

Join, donate and how you can support our work

If you are interested in contributing to any of our activities, have ideas for fundraisers and suggestions on how we can engage with our wide member base we would like to hear from you. To join us, please email Dr. Mohan Siriwardena at generalsecretary@apsl.org.uk, speak to a member of the Ex-co for a membership form or visit www.apsl.org.uk for further details. Membership costs only £15 per annum. You can also connect with us via our Facebook page. We look forward to hearing from you!





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