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ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025

## Sri Lanka: Improving water security, sanitation, legal aid and education for tea plantation communities

The tea estates of Southern Sri Lanka are at the heart of a globally connected industry, yet many of the families who sustain this sector continue to face limited access to basic services. In the Deniyaya area, estate communities often live in small line houses with unreliable water supply, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to early childhood education. Over the past two years, this project has worked closely with these communities to address these challenges in a practical and lasting way. Together with Sevalanka Foundation, investments were made in preschool infrastructure, water and sanitation systems, early education, and access to legal documentation, creating a stronger foundation for children and their families.

### Impact & Achievements



214 families reached, including more than 200 preschool-aged children



5 preschools upgraded with safe water, sanitation, electricity, and improved learning environments



5 water systems and 5 eco-sanitation toilets constructed



10 community water wells cleaned and restored



150 children supported with learning materials



131 out of 135 legal cases resolved, enabling access to essential documents

### Creating spaces where children can thrive

Preschools in estate communities often operated in overcrowded and poorly maintained buildings, with limited facilities for learning and play. These spaces have now been transformed into safe and functional environments, with repaired classrooms, improved play areas, and access to water and sanitation. Attendance has increased significantly, and teachers report that children are more engaged. Parents are also more willing to send their children as they see clear improvements in safety and quality.

In a small preschool in Kiriwalagama, children previously had to fetch water from nearby houses and play with broken equipment. Today, the preschool has a proper water system, a clean toilet, and a safe play area. It has become a place where children spend time beyond school hours and a source of pride for the community.

### Improving water, sanitation and daily health

Access to clean water is essential for both health and education. By installing water systems, filters, and handwashing facilities, all supported preschools now have reliable access to safe water. Ten shared wells were also cleaned with active community involvement. This improved water quality and strengthened local responsibility for maintenance. Better hygiene conditions reduce health risks and support more consistent school attendance.

### Opening doors through legal identity

For many estate workers, the absence of basic legal documents has been a long-standing barrier to services and opportunities. Through mobile legal clinics, support was brought directly to communities. More than 130 individuals received assistance, with most cases successfully resolved. This has enabled people to access services, secure their rights, and take steps toward greater stability.

### Lessons learned and lasting value

The project confirmed that infrastructure alone is not enough. Awareness, trust, and flexibility are essential. Low literacy levels and demanding work schedules required adapted approaches, including simpler communication and activities planned around weekends and holidays.

Furthermore, early childhood education is not always seen as a priority. Initial resistance and low participation highlighted the need for continued engagement. As facilities improved and attendance increased, perceptions began to shift. In this light, strong community involvement has been key. Parents and residents are now involved in maintaining facilities, creating ownership and supporting long-term sustainability. The project also strengthened collaboration between communities, local authorities, and plantation stakeholders, which remains important going forward.

### Closing reflection

Over two years, this project has delivered clear improvements in daily life. Children now learn in safer environments, families have better access to clean water, and many individuals have gained the legal recognition needed to move forward. These results show the value of combining targeted investments with strong local collaboration, contributing to more resilient communities within the tea sector.



Play area at school



Child using toilet facility



Staff at school