

## THE PROJECT EXPANDS - WELIGAMA COMMUNITY WELFARE & EDUCATION CENTRE



Above: Artist's impression of completed project in Weligama, Below: Plan for the centre



The Weligama Community Welfare & Education Centre is now progressing at XXX and has now been expanded to incorporate two accommodation wings, a modular grouping of flexible classrooms for the educational facility, a medical consulting and trauma facility, a hospitality training area, an IT computer training facility, a restaurant, play and sports areas, herb and fruit gardens and facilities for visitors and staff.

The Director and Manager's initial needs assessments combined with their field experience has been invaluable in ensuring that the balance of facilities and services reflect local needs.

The expanded plans focus on education and training in order to build local skills capacity. Programmes specifically assisting with the health & education of vulnerable children and young people are two relevant outcomes from Matthew and Leone's work to date and their time spent in Sri Lanka. Part residential and part community based, the Weligama Community Welfare & Education Centre (WCWEC) will assist vulnerable children and young people and will create long term opportunities for those who would otherwise struggle in daily life. WCWEC will engage with local community based organisations and provide training in community health matters, developing skills and awareness particularly in trauma counselling.

## IODR appoint a Country Director and Programme Manager for Sri Lanka



Above: Matthew Banks and Leone Ellis

Matthew Banks and Leone Ellis have been appointed as Country Director and Children's Programme Manager respectively for the WCWEC project in southern Sri Lanka. Both Matthew and Leone have several years working for humanitarian organisations in Africa and IODR are delighted to have recruited them. Matthew was the Country Director for a UK children's charity in Sierra Leone for 3 years and then in Kenya for a year.

During this time he developed and implemented a range of programmes addressing the needs of street and orphaned children, teenage mothers and developed a very successful amputee football team in Sierra Leone. With a Masters degree in Humanitarian and Development Practice and extensive experience in working with disadvantaged children in difficult environments, Matthew is fully appreciative of the tasks he and Leone are facing in post-Tsunami Weligama. Leone specialist knowledge of working with children, especially those with special needs and behavioural challenges. A qualified counsellor and play therapist, Leone worked with Matthew whilst volunteering in Sierra Leone and was soon running programmes with the street children and supporting local youth groups with micro finance programmes. Matthew and Leone are fully committed to the project. Matthew commented that "Sri Lankan's have suffered tremendously as a result of war and natural disasters in recent times.

As the post-tsunami reconstruction programmes start to wind down and emergency response organisations downsize their operations, now is an ideal time to start rebuilding the capacity of the people and their communities in order that they can sustain themselves in the long term. Additionally the increasingly volatile situation in the north and the east of the country means various conflict-related needs will arise in terms of trauma management and children's services. The site at Weligama provides a fantastic opportunity to provide a range of resources that will build capacity and meet the various identified needs. We are really pleased to be part of IODR and cannot wait to start delivering successful and sustainable programmes in a world-class facility at Weligama."

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