



Hill Country Disability Group



Annual General Meeting for 2007
Rural Knowledge Centre, Bandarawela
10:30 am, 18th March 2007

Minutes

In attendance:

Mr. S. Srikanthan, Mr. S. Chandrakanthan, Ms. S. Prema, Mr. Patrick Harrigan, Mr. Robert Harwood and Ms. Dinah Barton of Koslanda; Ms. S. Nirmala of Haputale; Ms. K. Thilegeswary of Ella; Mr. A Ratnayake of Bandarawela; and Mr. E.G.P. Samuel of Bandarawela attended as an observer.

This is the first Annual General Meeting of the members of the Board of the Hill Country Disability Group. Each Board member introduced him or herself in turn to the group. It was agreed this meeting would be conducted in English and that Mr. S. Srikanthan and Mr. P. Harrigan would chair this meeting.

Adoption of the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association

Mr Harrigan explained the legal requirements for the setting up of the organisation. The Primary and Ancillary Objects of the society are as follows:

Primary Objects:

- (i) To provide assistance to handicapped people of the Hill Country of Sri Lanka in terms of improving their living conditions, health, education, employment opportunities, and general well being so they may enjoy full rewarding lives and contribute to social and economic development;
- (ii) To provide a forum for Hill Country people with disabilities to discuss disability issues with others locally, nationally, and internationally through group meetings and social activities and through use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT); and
- (iii) To use ICT and other electronic and printed media to promote public awareness of the issues facing disabled people and how they can make positive contributions to the advancement of Sri Lankan society.

Ancillary Objects:

- (i) To establish funds or trusts and to receive donations, contributions and subscriptions towards pursuance of the primary objects of the trust;
- (ii) To seek external funding from Sri Lanka and abroad in support of the above mentioned objects; and
- (iii) To engage volunteers from Sri Lanka and abroad in support of the above mentioned objects.

The society's Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association were unanimously adopted.

Mr. Harrigan spoke about the necessary steps in registering the organisation. The Memorandum of Association will be submitted to the Haldummulla Divisional Secretary for approval and issuance of an NGO registration number and certificate. Thereafter only the society may open a bank account.

The following Board members were elected as office bearers on the Board of Trustees:

1. Mr. S. Srikanthan was nominated as President by Mr. A Ratnayake. The nomination was seconded by Mr. P Harrigan and passed unanimously.
2. Ms. S. Nirmala was nominated as Vice-President by Mr. P. Harrigan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. S. Srikanthan and passed unanimously.
3. Mr. A. Ratnayake was nominated as Vice-President by Mr. S. Srikanthan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Mr. S. Chandrakanthan and passed unanimously.
4. Mr. P. Harrigan was nominated as Treasurer by Mr. S. Srikanthan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. A. Ratnayake and passed unanimously.
5. Ms. S. Prema was nominated as Secretary by Mr. P. Harrigan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. S. Srikanthan and passed unanimously.
6. Mr. R. Harwood was nominated as Joint Secretary by Mr. S. Srikanthan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Patrick Harrigan and passed unanimously.



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Projects

Database of Handicapped People

Mr. Harrigan emphasized the importance of identifying families with disabilities, and gathering full medical, educational, contact, etc. details. Then volunteers can create a computer database and provide instant and accurate profile information. This is a first step before other project work can begin.

HCDG web site

Already early last year the society launched its web site www.hcdg.org. With the start of project work among handicapped families of Haldummulla Division, it is expected that the web site will report on projects and invite visitors to sponsor needy families. The web site is designed, hosted, and maintained by Mr. Harrigan free of cost to the society.

HCDG newsletter

Also since last year the society has undertaken to publish a newsletter in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. The newsletter is printed at minimal cost in Koslanda and distributed in small numbers to families of the handicapped as well as to governmental and non-governmental agencies and individual donors. A second issue is planned for the near future. The newsletter is published and printed at the Koslanda Nanasala by HCDG members of the Sri Kanthan family.

Sponsorship scheme

One plan that has already been launched is a scheme to identify needy families with handicapped children and seek sponsors abroad who would pledge their ongoing support for improvements in that child or family's health, nutrition, sanitation, education, and/or livelihood. Already a sponsor in the US has offered to pay for a qualified teacher to visit and provide daily tuition to an 11-year old girl of Haldummulla, Eresha Dharmapala, who has been unable to attend school for the past two years.

Wheelchair Project

A wheelchair project was discussed, whereby either the society invites individuals to sponsor the gift of a locally purchased wheelchair for Rs 12,500 (ca. US\$116) or the society works in partnership with the Wheelchair Foundation of the USA and Rotary Clubs and/or Kiwanis Clubs nationally and internationally to bring down entire sea containers each containing 280 wheelchairs for distribution island wide at highly subsidized rates. Already we have initiated discussions with the Wheelchair Foundation, the Rotary Club of Colombo East, and the Kiwanis Club of Colombo City

Livelihood schemes

Nationally and internationally, nowadays priority is given to livelihood projects that empower the handicapped and/or their families to attain greater self respect and financial independence. Our society always looks first to see how it can empower the handicapped with small scale family-run enterprises.

1. **Mini-loans.** The society is now in the process of visiting handicapped families and determining which families or handicapped individuals would be capable of undertaking a profitable small scale business enterprise. Exact terms of repayment have yet to be decided. Typical examples for rural families include ca. Rs. 10,000 or US\$100 credit to purchase seeds and fertilizer for home gardens, or a similar amount to purchase inventory to start a home grocery shop.
2. **CDMA Telecom Enterprise.** Digital fixed wireless phones work well in isolated communities lacking fixed phone lines. We plan to approach Lanka Bell shortly and invite them to provide at least 20 CDMA phones so handicapped families can (1) provide cheap yet profitable telecom service to their neighbouring communities, and (2) communicate with each other to create an affordable home phone network serving handicapped families of Badulla District. Family members will acquire basic accounting, etc. skills to run a home telecom enterprise. The scheme provides sustainable income from the first month and it is ideally suited to handicapped individuals and their carers who normally remain in one place for long hours.
3. **ICT training and employment.** Our founding members have demonstrated that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a viable avenue to sustainable livelihood for handicapped individuals. Our membership's strength is in ICT sector (our members operate



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five 'Nanasalas' or Rural Knowledge Centers in Badulla District) and there is ample scope for external support for ICT-based livelihood ventures. We are now involved in the opening of a sixth Nanasala in Haputale town where we hope to employ our members including handicapped.

National Secretariat

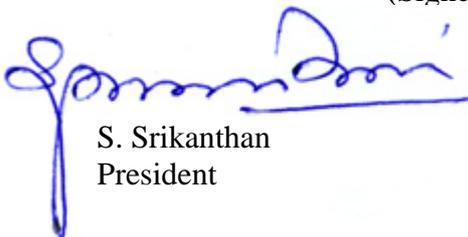
Mr. Harrigan talked about the Social Welfare Ministry and his meeting with the Director of the National Secretariat for People with Disabilities, Mrs. Yamuna. The Hill Country Disability Group is now registered with the National Secretariat and will participate in activities on the national level.

Resolutions

The Board considered and passed the following resolutions unanimously:

- a. Resolved, that there shall be a "Hill Country Disability Group" society governed by the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association and legally registered at the Haldummulla Divisional Secretariat of Badulla District.
- b. Resolved, that the office bearers of the society for the coming year shall be as follows:
 - i. Mr. S. Srikanthan was nominated as President by Mr. A Ratnayake. The nomination was seconded by Mr. P Harrigan and passed unanimously.
 - ii. Ms. S. Nirmala was nominated as Vice-President by Mr. P. Harrigan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. S. Srikanthan and passed unanimously.
 - iii. Mr. A. Ratnayake was nominated as Vice-President by Mr. S. Srikanthan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Mr. S. Chandrakanthan and passed unanimously.
 - iv. Mr. P. Harrigan was nominated as Treasurer by Mr. S. Srikanthan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. A. Ratnayake and passed unanimously.
 - v. Ms. S. Prema was nominated as Secretary by Mr. P. Harrigan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. S. Srikanthan and passed unanimously.
 - vi. Mr. R. Harwood was nominated as Joint Secretary by Mr. S. Srikanthan. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Patrick Harrigan and passed unanimously.
- c. Resolved, to open a bank account with the People's Bank at its Koslanda branch. Cheques must be counter signed by two signatories as follows:
 - i. 1st signatory shall be either the President or the Secretary or the Joint Secretary.
 - ii. 2nd signatory shall be either the Treasurer or one of the two Vice Presidents.
- d. Resolved, to print an official society letterhead, receipt book and voucher book.
- e. Resolved, to have an official seal made together with rubber stamps for society office bearers who shall be empowered to place the society's stamp and seal upon documents.
- f. Resolved, to adopt the society's provisional logo as its official logo.
- g. Resolved, to liaise with the National Secretariat for People with Disabilities and any other relevant local community based organizations, and local & international Non-Governmental Organizations to advance the aims and objects of this society.
- h. Resolved, to meet again after the Sinhala-Tamil New Year holiday period at a time and place to be decided by the membership.

(Signed)


S. Srikanthan
President


Patrick Harrigan
Treasurer