"It is 10 a.m. on the second day of the Teacher Training Course, Wednesday 7th January 2004, roughly two years since the peace process was brokered. One of the teachers is talking to her conversation partner in English telling her experience during this time. Each of the fifteen days of the ESL teacher-training course started like this - with the students talking in pairs on a topic prepared the night before. Each morning the twenty-four participants from remote villages told their stories and expressed themselves, hesitantly at first, on a range of topics from the role of women in Sri Lanka to the role of computers in the classroom. Sharing and talking amid lots of laughter helped the group to have a sense of cohesion that is so important for maximizing adult learning.

Partners in Micro-development Inc., a volunteer based non-government organisation (NGO), incorporated in Australia and registered in Sri Lanka, focuses on micro, village level programs which enhance sustainability of these communities.

Our current and flagship project is a pilot program for remote village primary schools in Sri Lanka to introduce English as a second language and Computer Literacy for grades 1-5. We work with the teachers in these schools to enhance their skills so that they are more confident and better equipped in the classroom.

The Government of Sri Lanka has a long term vision "to focus on a durable and self-sustaining economic development strategy based on social equity" [1] whilst at the same time bringing peace to the country. The Government has traditionally emphasised social development ....

"Sri Lanka ..holds a unique position in South Asia. It was one of the first developing countries to provide universal health and education coverage....As a result, Sri Lanka achieved human development outcomes comparable to those of high income countries.." [2]

Education is seen as being a fundamental lever in protecting and strengthening the commitment to peace.

The PIMD project, focuses on a particular aspect of primary school education, at the village level, that is, Computer Literacy and ESL for children in grades 1-5 in village primary schools, specifically Type 3 schools (grades 1-5, 1-8). The program is targeted at standalone village primary schools without access to the resources of a Junior Secondary or other higher level educational facility. These schools are a focal point of village life and important to their sustainability. The program can act as an incentive for the village community to actively foster and promote the education of their children

[1] Arjunna Mahendran, Chairman – Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, *Sri Lanka's New Economic Outlook,* 13th February 2002

[2] World Bank Country Assistance Strategy for Sri Lanka, April, 2003, pp. 13

at a very early stage, as it offers them a unique advantage.

Other programs in this field are focused on improving English in the higher grades and access to computers is very limited, even for higher grades. These programs are addressing the immediate vocational needs of older children. PIMD's program is unique. We believe that it is essential to start embedding the core skills of English and Computer Literacy at as young an age as possible to avoid the high cost of addressing skill gaps in later years.

By targeting primary grade children, the primary objective of the program is to make an investment in the future of the children and their communities. The skills acquired in these junior grades will increase the returns from programs in higher grades and enable the students to make a greater contribution to their community. It's a start at the beginning.

There are currently sixty schools participating in the first phase of the PIMD Program which focuses on Grades 1 and 2. Our main achievements since program launch in 2004 are:
- Development of a tailored curriculum for English and Computer Literacy for grade 1 and 2 children which integrates with the Government curriculum (from grade 3). The curriculum includes lesson plans for three terms for Grades 1 and 2.
- Delivery of two teacher training courses for participating teachers and schools: teaching English as a second language using oral/aural techniques and using computers and educational software in the classroom.
- Sourcing donated educational software from Microsoft Sri Lanka, IBM Australia, Vivendi Universal, Eurotalk Interactive (UK), Riverdeep (USA), Advanced

Software Australia, and Protea Textware.
- Purchasing refurbished computers from World Computer Exchange in the US and WorkVentures in Australia for the pilot schools (2 per school) and a printer for each school.

This first phase of the program has focused on listening and talking. The second phase focuses on reading and writing for grades 3-5 to develop fluency in English. This will also be supported through the use of technology, in particular mobile technology and m-learning. This second phase will run from 2011-2014.

Sustainability

Our ultimate goal is sustainable communities. To achieve that end the program itself must be able to be sustained. The school component of the program is being sustained by the more experienced teachers training new teachers as they come on board. In addition, the training curriculum has been handed over to the Department of Education and more experienced teachers are now delivering training courses to other groups of teachers.

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