CARING FOR SEPARATED CHILDREN

AN APPROACH FROM EASTERN SRI LANKA

Ananda Galappatti
Caring for Separated Children

An Approach from Eastern Sri Lanka

Ananda Galappatti

Save the Children Norway
Copyright is not reserved.
Reproduction of this text in part or in full is welcomed,
with due acknowledgement of the source.

Published by Save the Children (Norway)
Sri Lanka
October 2002
## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................5  
Introduction ....................................................................................................................6  
The Origins of the Separated Children Projects..........................................................8  
Developing the SCN Project Framework.......................................................................9  
The Pilot Phase: June 1991 to June 1992                                             
The Second Phase: July 1992 to December 1996 .......................................................15  
The SCN Project Sites....................................................................................................20  
The ESCO Projects ........................................................................................................33  
The Need for Alternatives to Institutions ...................................................................37  
The Chenkalady Approach............................................................................................39  
Project Activities...........................................................................................................42  
Recommendations for future work ..............................................................................49  
Bibliography...................................................................................................................50  
Annex 1: ESCO Registration Forms ............................................................................51  
Annex 2: Identifying and Assessing Children with Emotional and Behavioural Problems 54  
Annex 3: Measures to Strengthen ESCO’s Projects for Separated Children .............58  
Annex 4: Guidelines for ESCO Guests and Visitors - 2001 .........................................63  
Annex 5: International and National Legal Frameworks Relevant to Separated Children 64
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document could not have been possible without the assistance and cooperation of a large number of people associated with the SCN and ESCO projects. In particular, I would like to thank the following persons for their input and help:

Gethsie Shanmugam, Jeanne Samuel, Markus Aksland and Gunnar Anderson of SCN for their commitment to unflinchingly document the past and for their support to me during this process.

The staff of ESCO - Thayanithy, Geethaveny, Jeyashanthi J., N. Jeyashanthy, Cavary, Geetharanji, Vasanthy, Perinpanathan, Jujitha, Sasikala, Thevika, Ariyararnam, Velthananthy, Udayan, Niranjan, Anthony, Christy, Jude, Kothai, Spiritheyon - for sharing materials, their office, their experiences and many hours of their time with me.

The members of the children's clubs in the Koralai Pattu D.S. Division, and the "Resource Group" - Jeyalochini, Mohanadas, Khemanadas, Koohilavani, Pushpakumar, Yuvanesan - for the time and thoughts they shared with me. Their caregivers and family members also took time to talk with me, especially Kasupathy Rasamma, Rita Thangavel, Pullaiammma Subramaniam, and Kanapathipillai Eliyathamby.

The participants at the Chenkalady reunion - including Ranjini, Sukuna, Sutharsiny, Suyananth, Thangesh, Thivakar, Subashini, Linganathan, Ajantham, Prema Lucas, Tharsiny, Prabu, Kumar, Kowshan, Arun, Nanda Kohulan, Seththuran, Ramachandran, Vijayakumar, Suganathan, Thurithamalar, Logeshwaran, Ramesh, Nishanandan, Jeyapraya, Kandasamy Sahayaran who gave stories, poems and drawings for my use - and former staff of the SCN project in Chenkalady, for sharing their memories of difficult times with me.

M. Sidharthan for his willing and enthusiastic assistance in his capacity as translator and cofacilitator of group sessions.

Gethsie Shanmugam and Elizabeth Jareg for sharing documents, recollections and notes from their personal archives, which were invaluable in reconstructing the past projects.

Anbalagan (aka John) and Gnanam at SCN for the trouble they took in transporting me to and from Batticaloa. Julian Chellappah and all the SCN staff in Batticaloa for their warm hospitality.

Maleec Calyaneratne of SCN for her able assistance with this publication and Thushara Perera who managed to complete the layout under tight time constraints. Sarala Emmanuel and Janaki Galappati for their editing of the text and useful suggestions.

The section on fostering approaches is heavily indebted to David Tolfree's publication Roofs to Roots: The care of separated children in the developing world (Arena, 1995), although I may not have always used his ideas in the way he had intended.
INTRODUCTION

This is an account of a particular approach developed and implemented by Save the Children, Norway (SCN) in Eastern Sri Lanka to support children separated from their parents in a time of war. This document presents details of the pilot project that began this work in 1992 and also describes an ongoing project by the Eastern Self-Reliant Community-Awakening Organisation (ESCO) which continues to implement and further develop this methodology supported by SCN. This "work in progress" has been documented to share with other child-focused agencies and institutions this particular experience of community-based support provision in the hope that it may have relevance to their work.

The global humanitarian literature on children affected by armed conflict draws much attention to the needs of unaccompanied or separated children, identifying them as being one of the most vulnerable groups within conflict situations. Their special need for attention and care is premised on the understanding that they may be unable to care for and protect themselves, and are likely to suffer long-term effects if not cared for and protected. The approach outlined in this document may appear to be most relevant to conflict-related scenarios, but may actually offer ideas for the care of children in a range of other situations.

The work described in this document started a decade ago, at a time when existing care-arrangements for children throughout Sri Lanka were felt to be hopelessly inadequate. In October 1991, the Sri Lanka government's National Planning Department of the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation compiled "A Plan of Action for the Children of Sri Lanka" that expressed the need to improve residential care facilities for separated children and advocated the expansion of community-care systems based on fostering and adoption. SCN's work grew out of the same movement for improving care for children in Sri Lanka. Sadly, however, there has not been the hoped-for shift in the nature or quality of care services. In fact, since that time, the number of residential homes for children orphaned by war has multiplied throughout the island, and particularly in the North and East. The growth of these institutions has been ad hoc and mostly unsupervised by state authorities or other external bodies, giving rise to concerns for the welfare of the children placed within them. This document is, therefore, also intended to reinvigorate the development of alternatives to institutional solutions to problems of separated children.

Methodology

This document was compiled from information gathered from narrative accounts of the projects as well as from documentary sources. The stakeholders interviewed included staff, foster parents, children and community members involved in the projects, and the list of documents consulted featured proposals, consultancy reports, evaluation reports, and staff records during the 10-year course of the various projects. The author gathered this material whilst concurrently facilitating a process to strengthen ESCO's ongoing work. Therefore, the author has been privy to this information through his position as an insider/outsider involved with this process.

There were, however, some constraints in acquiring the necessary information for this document. Details of the past SCN work were hard to come by, since most records and documents related to the Unaccompanied Children's project had been destroyed in 1996 following the termination of that phase of work. The author was able to access a few important written accounts of that period by courtesy of Save the Children Norway consultants Dr. Elizabeth Jareg and Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam, who kindly shared copies of project documents from their personal archives relevant to the period between 1991 and 1996. Also, relevant documents occasionally surfaced in institutions such as ESCO in Batticaloa and the Refugee Studies Centre in Oxford, UK. The snapshot views that these documents offered of the past work were complemented with material from informants who were staff as well as participants involved in these projects. Working through SCN and ESCO, the author was able to access only former personnel and participants who were still in contact with these two organisations at the time of writing, and this account will consequently reflect their perspectives. It must be noted that these retrospective accounts occasionally
differed from one another even in reported sequences of events, pointing clearly to the subjective nature of memories of the projects. The quality and quantity of information available on the ongoing project was also highly variable, as the systematic documentation of individual children's progress and project activities was still in development at the time of writing.

Usage of terms and names

In this document, the term "Separated Children" is used to describe children who have been separated from their parents, for a variety of reasons. This generic term also encompasses the more specific category of "Unaccompanied Children", defined by the UNHCR publication Refugee children: guidelines on protection and care (1994) as 'those [children] who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so'. Although the projects described below were initially conceptualised as being for "Unaccompanied Children", it was found that relatively few of the children participating in the projects were truly unaccompanied, although they were separated from their usual caregivers. Therefore, mirroring the global shift over the past 10 years, the term "Separated Children" has superseded "Unaccompanied Children" in the language of the work done in Batticaloa. This document will describe each phase of work using the terminology in use at that time, as consistent with all the source documents and narratives of personnel who contributed to this account.

Until 1995, Save the Children Norway was known locally as Redd Barna and was involved in the direct implementation of projects. At that time, in line with a shift in its global policy, Redd Barna, Sri Lanka was changed from an operational project implementer to a non-operational facilitator for local partners. From 1996, this new incarnation has worked under the name "Save the Children, Norway". In the interest of clarity, only the current name or abbreviation "SCN" has been used within this document.

The names of child and adult participants contributing to this document have been changed unless the author was requested to do otherwise. Nearly all the children the author spoke with were very anxious that their names be included if possible.

Abbreviations and other terms used

ESCO SCN - Eastern Self-Reliant Community-Awakening Organisation
SCN - Save the Children Norway
RB - Redd Barna (Save the Children, Norway)
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - United Nations Fund for Children
LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
AGA Division - Assistant Government Agent Division - a former sub-district level administrative category, now replaced by the Divisional Secretariat (D.S.) Unit.
Grama Sevaka Niladhari - Government representative at village level
SCN's work with separated children in Sri Lanka was precipitated by the experiences from two parallel projects being implemented in the island during the early 1990s. In February 1991, a team of researchers headed by psychologist Dr. Swarna Wijetunge completed a large study of residential child-care institutions in Sri Lanka. The study presented a troubling account of institutional care in Sri Lanka, drawing attention to a number of basic psychosocial and developmental needs that were not being met by state and private residential facilities. The main insight that SCN derived from this research was that, "far too many children were being institutionalised for the wrong reasons," and because there were no apparent alternative methods of caring for children whose living conditions were either inadequate or damaging.

At around the same time, whilst developing a SCN project with widows and their children in Batticaloa, consultants Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam and Dr. Elizabeth Jareg met a number of children living without parents. In a report from March 1991, Dr. Jareg noted the increasing numbers of such "unaccompanied" children being identified within SCN's Relief and Rehabilitation projects and recommended that, "an innovative, non-institutional approach," be explored to deal with the needs of this particularly vulnerable group. She advised that if SCN-Sri Lanka chose to take up this, "complicated but important challenge," it would be necessary to establish a special programme for this work, with specially trained community workers and a consultant to supervise them. In her view, the primary objective of such a programme was to be family tracing and reunion, though if this were not possible, fostering or adoption were to be considered as possible alternative solutions to the predicament of these children. Dr. Jareg also offered the idea of community-based group foster homes as a further alternative, based on SCN's experiences in Mozambique.

Following from the discussions and report generated by Dr. Jareg's visit in March 1991, Yr. Sigmund Karlstrom, SCN Resident Representative in Sri Lanka, agreed to the planning of a new project to do, "something for unaccompanied children". The process of defining the exact form of this intervention
Developing the SCN Project Framework
The Pilot Phase: June 1991 to June 1992

Collaboration

After the idea of an intervention on behalf of unaccompanied children was raised, SCN Sri Lanka immediately began a process of discussion and consultation regarding the project with both the SCN headquarters in Oslo and the state social welfare authorities in Sri Lanka.

The original recommendations by Dr. Elizabeth Jareg stipulated that SCN-Sri Lanka should develop its programme for Unaccompanied Children with the cognisance and approval of the state social welfare authorities, and with their cooperation wherever possible. She underlined the necessity for, "the Social Welfare Authorities to take upon themselves the full legal responsibility for [the] children, and that work, where possible, is developed as a cooperative effort."

In early June 1991, a meeting was held in the office of the Secretary to the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Social Welfare, regarding the issue of orphaned and unaccompanied children. The summary conclusions of the meeting were as follows:

- It was likely that there were thousands of children with parental/close family losses in Sri Lanka, due to the previous 10 years of island-wide violence.
- There were, so far, no official records related to these children.
- The Sri Lanka Government was responsible for the welfare of these children.
- The Ministry welcomed SCN's initiative on behalf of these children and invited SCN to present a pilot proposal. They assured assistance and cooperation from the Ministry.

The notion that the State was responsible for the care of children deprived of their family environment was derived from Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which underpins SCN's work worldwide, and which Sri Lanka had already signed and was soon to ratify. The right of children to be reunited with their families, also assured under Articles 7, 9 and 28 of the CRC, was also emphasised in SCN correspondence with the state social welfare authorities.

From this point of departure, the initial plans for the project outlined a close working relationship with the central and local government entities concerned with children's welfare. This was also consistent with SCN's tradition and procedures for working together with local government administrators in Sri Lanka. Drafts of the proposed SCN pilot project were shared with social welfare authorities at the national and regional levels. The Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Social Welfare responded positively to the description of the proposed project, and assured assistance from the relevant Government Agents and Assistant Government Agents. Following a preparatory period beginning in June 1991, the pilot project by SCN was to begin in January 1992. At this time, it was thought that no NGOs were working on this issue, although Save the Children UK was following up an earlier orphan support scheme in Jaffna.

Cautious beginning

Although unaccompanied children had been identified within all SCN's relief project areas in Batticaloa, Anuradhapura, Mullaitivu and Jaffna, it was prudently decided to limit initial work to a single area, due to the lack of prior experience of working with unaccompanied children in Sri Lanka. After assessing available personnel resources, it was decided that this work would be carried out through the relief project in the Batticaloa district. The Vellavely and Chenkalady AGA divisions were identified as potential pilot sites, because of SCN's knowledge of the people and public officials of the area, and also because the existing relief project infrastructure would facilitate the insertion of new project staff. A six-month pilot project was also to be a first step if collecting systematic information about the problem, necessary for a carefully considered intervention. It was intended that special training be given to the personnel collecting this data, as it would involve working with children who had experienced serious personal losses.
Objectives

The objectives of the pilot project, outlined in the original proposal, were vague. They suggested that its primary aims were to complete the registration of accompanied children in the project areas and initiate a process, based on this data, to trace parents or siblings with a view to reuniting families. The documentation was also to serve the purpose of "saving" some personal information for the children before it might be lost. An additional aim of the project was to "revive the importance of the [unaccompanied] children's need of care and also to create the social structure in the community for sustenance of care for these children." The proposal also stated that the project was also to provide immediate assistance to children identified as being in especially urgent need.

A few months later, Dr. Elizabeth Jareg, a key project architect, summed up the main purposes of the pilot phase differently as the following:

- To obtain an accurate numerical overview on the actual numbers and categories of children who have lost their parents and other close caregivers during warfare, and to assess the need for assistance.

- To create awareness in government officials, community leaders and members, our own staff and local NGOs about the needs of children who have lost parents, and above all to spread awareness of the fact that children are best looked after in the community if they can stay with people who have affection for them and who the children themselves feel close to, rather than being sent to an institution.

It is clear, however, that many personnel implementing the project retained a perspective that prioritised provision of material assistance. The lack of consensus about the primary focus of the project would be an issue that would sometimes create difficulties for the development of the project over the following years.

Receiving local and international backing

In early October 1991, a meeting was held in Batticaloa between SCN representatives and the Government Agent for the district and the Assistant Director for Social Services. These two key government officials agreed to SCN's proposal to start the pilot project in the Vellavely and Chenkalady AGA divisions, and committed their support for the work. The meeting focused on the division of responsibilities between local government and SCN, and the following was agreed upon:

- That the records of each child would be kept at the office of the Assistant Director of Social Services within Batticaloa town. Copies of the records were also to be kept in the SCN-Sri Lanka Batticaloa office and also with the Grama Sevaka Niladhari (the government representative at the village level). Periodically, information was to be transmitted to the SCN-Sri Lanka head office in Colombo, where a database of this information was to be maintained.

- Local government cooperation would be provided to facilitate the collection of information.

SCN headquarters in Oslo, which considered unaccompanied children a high-priority issue within the organisation's international programme, also approved the project proposal at relatively short notice.
Pilot project implementation

Two months prior to the project’s official start in January 1992, a Senior Project Coordinator, was placed in charge of the overall project, with a Field Coordinator appointed to coordinate the activities at the level of implementation in the two pilot areas of Chenkalady and Vellavelly. The Field Coordinator’s initial work was to liaise with government officials within the project areas and survey the records and information they had related to unaccompanied children, in preparation for the start of the project. The data he obtained from the Grama Sevaka Niladharis indicated that there were 112 children who had lost both their parents in Chenkalady AGA division and 169 children orphaned in the Vellavely AGA Division, figures that would be challenged by the SCN registration process that followed.

Awareness-raising

In January 1992, the Unaccompanied Children Pilot Project was inaugurated formally with a one-day workshop held in Chenkalady for the SCN-Sri Lanka Batticaloa project staff, SCN "social supporters" working in relief projects and SCN preschool teachers. The workshop discussions dealt with the following areas:

- Children who have been separated from their parents or whose parents have died
- The responsibilities and role of the Sri Lanka government and SCN-SL
- How the work with unaccompanied children can be integrated with other ongoing SCN-SL work, such as youth clubs and preschools in the community.

The following day, another a one-day orientation meeting was held with 21 Grama Sevaka Niladharis in Chenkalady. The meeting combined both lectures and group work on issues related to children who have lost their parents, in order for participants to focus on some central problems in this work. The outline of the programme was as follows:

- Who are the children under difficult circumstances?
- Who is an unaccompanied child?
- Effects of difficult circumstances on the development of the child
- Group work and presentations on
  a) Who is an unaccompanied child?
  b) Who are the people involved with an unaccompanied child?
  c) What are your feelings / attitudes towards an unaccompanied child?
  d) Formulating a plan of action to help the unaccompanied child.

The Grama Sevaka Niladharis expressed appreciation for the workshop, but stated that it was too short and requested that SCN conduct similar learning opportunities for them in the future.

Registration: selecting and training volunteer staff

Over the next two days, further one day workshops based on the same format were held for potential volunteers nominated from each of the villages to be involved in the pilot project. Of the 78 persons who participated in the workshops, 20 young women were selected for training as social supporters within the pilot project on the basis of their performance at the workshop, previous experience and recommendations by the relevant Grama Sevaka Niladhar. These 20 volunteers then received training for a further two days. The summary outline of the training of selected volunteers is as follows:
- "Who am I?" - a self exploratory exercise
- Developmental stages of a child
- Sharing exercise - a self exploratory and group building exercise
- The traumatised child - child's physical and emotional state
- Communication skills
- Listening skills exercise Meditation
- The child's reactions and feelings - using group exercises Helping children with special needs
- Organisational skills / leadership / personality development
- Group exercise on strengths and weaknesses
- How to interview children and make observations
- Implementation of the programme

Unfortunately, there are no further records of these training sessions, apart from the component related to interviewing children, based on a module written by Dr. Elizabeth Jareg (attached as Annex 2).

A similar series of workshops was carried out in Vellavelly, a month later, involving SCN project staff, government officials, potential volunteers and SCN pre-school teachers and social supporters.

Registration begins

Following their selection, the volunteer supporters in Chenkalady started the work of identifying and registering children who have lost parents in that area. This work was done in close cooperation with the Grama Sevaka Niladharis and other village leaders. The supporters first visited the homes that the children were living in and spent some time getting to know them and their caregivers (usually a family member or relative). Once an adequate relationship had been built up, the documentation of the children was completed on a form, and the children were photographed.

The supporters did not conduct their interviews with their form in hand. They would return from household visits and then fill it out. At this point, the questionnaire was only a vague tool and not used systematically. The focus, rather, was on having individual discussions and building relationships with children.

The supporters had regular meetings with the Field Coordinator to discuss their work, and would meet occasionally with the consultant, Ms. Shanmugam to discuss individual children's case histories. The supporters also spent time in spreading awareness of the aims of their project within their assigned village. They were paid 20 rupees per day, plus travelling allowance and stationary, and worked between 10-20 days per month. At the start of the project, they were provided with no personal means of transport, as most worked within a 2km radius. However, some supporters had to travel up to 10km a day, sometimes within jungle areas.

Establishing relationships with the children and families was not easy, as the accounts of a few former supporters below indicate. Although they were from nearby villages, the supporters had to work persistently to win the trust of the children and put the community at ease. Some of the supporters' initial difficulties also revolved around responding to the expectations of children, their care-giving families and other villagers, and clarifying what the boundaries of the project were. This was likely a particularly difficult task, considering that the future trajectory of the project had not yet been clearly defined even at the SCN Secretariat level. With hindsight, Ms. Shanmugam stated that the supporters had not been ready for the fieldwork they had to undertake, following only a two-day introduction and, "on-the-job training."
Former SCN supporters recall the initial field work of the pilot project

"First, we went to homes to meet children. These meetings were not so cordial. Children nearly went and hid, because they were frightened. They asked, 'why are they coming to ask questions?' Some children cried. Only after a couple of visits was some degree of trust established and children started to tell their stories. Children and parents were both frustrated by things – even after we think we'd established a relationship there were problems. People were unsettled in their minds. Children had seen the tragedy of their parents, so didn't care. Some were angry, some wondering whether these people 'will give all we've lost'. After a long time (2 to 3 months), trust developed and stories started to come out. At the beginning, we visited twice or thrice a week. Home visits took place initially, for approximately 3 months. Held small group meetings of 5 or 6 mothers (mostly women, but few men in the project) in the village during the home visits. These were combined with the home visit, and loosely planned."

"Their caregivers asked us, 'What is your name? What is your organisation? Why only children with no parents? What about my children? Can they also be included?' Without speaking in front of the children, we took caregivers aside and explained that these children have nobody. This child has no mother and father. The child's mind has been hurt by the war. This child feels hurt and sad."

"The [other villagers] expected a lot of things because of these [new] people coming into the village. These problems were reduced after the caregiver programmes were held, because they would return to the village and explain the programme to others."

In her report on meetings in April 1992 with volunteers in Chenkalady, Dr. Jareg noted the strong motivation of the supporters, and underlined the need for on-the-ground training for supporters in interviewing children in families. The value of this instruction was strongly felt by the supporters, one of whom recalled that:

"Elizabeth Jareg and Gettie Anam came and modelled some of the first meetings with the children. These were practical learning and observing ways to ask questions of children and respond to their questions. Observing interaction, I was too stiff at the start, but I learned to respect and listen to the children. I learned how I should prepare myself before we met the people. The shared team planning of events or meetings before implementation still continues today. The benefits are that it generates more ideas, easier to implement after planning – work is divided according to what each of us can do so it is easier. Sharing between experienced people and those with less experience and joint work means that things get done on time. We can share difficult field experiences of trying to achieve some goal and can learn, feel happy and clear and confident."

During the course of the registration of children, one supporter reported the successful reunification of a child with her mother after a 2-year separation. Although she had not been trained or requested to carry out such work, the supporter had traced the mother to a 'refugee' camp in the Trincomalee district, and with the help of a family member had brought her back to a happy reunion with her daughter. The child had been sickly, and was suffering abuse within the family with whom she was living. Unfortunately, no records survive of what the outcome of this reunion was, or of any further details surrounding this particular case.

The findings of the registration process

Within the Chenkalady AGA division, the supporters identified 142 children who were orphaned, and who were living within 90 families. Additionally, they identified 89 children separated from one or both parents for a variety of reasons, who were living with 50 families in the area. These figures were significantly higher than the 112 children the initial survey of local Grama Sevaka Niladhari records had suggested. It was also discovered that although the Grama Sevaka Niladhari identified children as having lost parents 'due to war', this was not always clearly the case. The supporters had difficulty classifying causes of death, because of circumstances such as a father dying of snakebite because he couldn't get to hospital (as a result of the war) or a mother committing suicide after her husband is killed (by a combatting party). It was found that there were no easy criteria for setting boundaries on which children were to be included in the programme.
The proportion of children being cared for by related adults was significant, as compared with unrelated caregivers. The numbers of children in institutions could have been higher than reported, since children who had left the community may have been harder to count than those who were still living there.

The meagre information that has survived since 1992 suggests that around 30% of the children identified had dropped out of school, and many were engaged in manual labour within the homes in which they were living. As this was a general problem affecting many children in the area, it was not known to what extent this problem particularly affected the children in the project. It was reported at the time that the poor economic situation of parents and the impaired school service in 'sensitive' areas were the main factors behind the high proportion of children out of school.

It was also reported that when widowed mothers remarry, their new husbands often do not accept the mothers’ own children, so that they are left in the care of extended family members or other guardians. There were thought to be nearly 90 children in such circumstances in the Chenkalady AGA division.

**Responding to the needs of the children**

The ongoing SCN relief work in the Baticaloa district made it easy for the Unaccompanied Children Pilot Project staff to respond quickly to certain material needs of children. Assistance, in the form of school uniforms, stationary and school supplies, was provided whilst registration was ongoing.

As early as April 1992, plans were being made for a broader programmed response to the children's circumstances. The senior management, senior programme staff and the two consultants Dr. Jareg and Ms. Shanmugam were involved in drawing up an outline for a new project that would build upon the preliminary work.
The Second Phase: July 1992 to December 1996

As the SCN consultants explored the options for a special project for unaccompanied children, they found that many children were already being cared for within informal fostering arrangements. In Sri Lanka's war-zones, it appeared that some grandmothers, aunts and neighbours were already caring for children who had lost their parents or been separated from them. Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam states, "We didn't create anything new. We stepped into something that was already there and built this programme." From the time of this realisation, SCN's approach to caring for unaccompanied children was premised upon encouraging and providing support to similar community-based fostering arrangements.

Though initial information came from the field, and needs were identified specifically by SCN field staff and Ms. Shanmugam, the formulation of ideas came as suggestions from Dr. Jareg in Oslo. There was back and forth communication from Dr. Jareg to SCN Sri Lanka. Dr. Jareg was reportedly very concerned with what SCN Sri Lanka thought of her ideas, and paid most attention to the views of the field coordinators and Supporters, although they were lowest in the organisational hierarchy. It may have been this focus that enabled the later development of project plans that were suited to the field staff and the field environment. This consultative approach also appeared to foster a strong sense of ownership of project amongst the SCN staff working in Chenkalady.

The project concept that emerged through the exchange of ideas was focused on continuing with efforts to register and reunite "unaccompanied" children with their families, and preventing, "the institutionalisation of children through increased community awareness and providing assistance and counselling to selected poor families who are caring for orphaned or partially orphaned children". Bolstering the existing system of care with external material support posed something of a challenge. It was necessary that the support did not undermine the traditional forms of care given to orphans, resulting in relatives demanding payment for what were formerly family obligations, nor single out "the orphans" in a family for special treatment that might create jealousy amongst the family's biological children. Equally, the support should not create feelings of envy and jealousy amongst other villagers towards the family receiving support. It was also important to ensure that the family did not become dependent on external assistance.

To offset such potential difficulties, Dr. Jareg suggested the following principles to guide the provision of material assistance to the family:

- Assistance should when possible, benefit the whole family in which the orphaned child is staying.
- The idea behind the assistance should be fully understood. (Sometimes when a child is living with relatives or non-related caregivers, a letter of agreement is signed by the family and social welfare, stating obligations on both sides, when assistance is given. i.e. The agreement may state that the family must send the child to school).
- Assistance given should be, as far as possible, of the kind that increases long-term sustainability of the family. i.e. Participation in credit schemes; support to increase agricultural produce; income generating. Children who are old enough may also be given start capital and advice on income generating.
- As far as possible, one should think of how children's needs can be solved by assistance which will benefit the community as well. i.e. Instead of giving all orphaned children in the village pencils and books, one might think how the school could be supported with such items in return for the commitment to admit the children to school.
- Assessment of families and their progress can be done in a systematic way by using a set of "sustainability criteria". In this way, families can be phased out from the project as they fulfil the criteria, leaving more time to work with more complicated families.
Dr. Jareg further emphasised the importance of establishing criteria with the community on who should receive assistance, and establishing guidelines on what to do if families abuse the assistance, or the child.

During the course of her April-May 1992 visit, Dr. Elizabeth Jareg discussed with Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam the possibility of introducing the “Child to Child” approach through youth and children’s clubs to offset some of the effects of disruption of schooling. The approach encourages older children to teach basic skills to younger children, whilst strengthening their own competencies in these areas at the same time. It was suggested that the children in the project would be divided into three groups of 6-8 years, 9-12 years and 13-18 years of age – to allow for each group to focus on specific issues that interest and are developmentally appropriate to that particular age group. Although the notion of “Child to Child” teaching was not developed, the idea of grouping children in this manner for other activities related to emotional recovery, relationship-building and self-development was retained.

Trouble with nomenclature
At this time, it became apparent to Dr. Jareg that the term “Unaccompanied Children” was a misnomer in relation to the majority of the children involved in the project. As most children were living in various informal arrangements with grandmothers, other relatives or neighbours, she strongly urged that precise terminology be used to describe and categorise children in relation to the degree of committed adult protection and care they had. She also suggested that the project be named “The Child and Caregiver Family Project”, to reflect the broadened scope of the work. However, many personnel and documents related to the project continued to refer to it as the “Unaccompanied Children’s Project”, an inaccurate label that has remained in usage, even to this day.

The objectives of the "Child & Care-giving Family Project"
In a 1993 report, a senior project coordinator articulated the objectives of the second phase of the project as follows:

- To provide conditions for survival
- To mitigate suffering and protect from distress
- To trace and identify guardians and integrate children into the family unit and community
- To encourage and support their own capacities and self-reliance and create conditions for the proper care-giving and resumption of normal life

Training of project staff
It was felt that the new project activities would require supporters to be trained to carry out the following tasks:

- Assessing families’ needs and the children’s situation using the sustainability criteria.
- Listening and talking with children who are distressed.
- Conducting “mini-workshops” for caregivers on basic needs of children.
- “Speaking up for the child in the community” or playing an advocacy role on behalf of children.
- Preparing children for reunification after a long period of separation, and preparing families to receive them.
- Tracing and other practical measures

The training was also to provide the supporters with opportunities to formulate problem areas and to work out solutions for these. Trainers were to provide guidance in the field, and assist with
particular problems that supporters had identified prior to training sessions. This approach was thought to facilitate a more participatory training approach than trainer-led sessions might allow. There was also a strong recommendation from Dr. Jareg that a systematic training plan should be developed and that a short examination might be used to evaluate the success of the training at a later stage.

**Former SCN supporters speak about training received**

[What training did you receive at this stage?] No big counselling training. However, we were taught how to monitor the visits, how to respond and answer questions from the children, how to identify problems and tell the office. Elizabeth and Gethsie Amma gave instructions at the start. Later, it was Nancy [Moss]. Field Coordinator and the many project coordinators we had also [guided us].

We got 1 week's training in January 1993 from Gethsie Sharmugam and Mr. Sethyraja. Fr. Paul did 2 weeks training on how to establish relationships.

Unfortunately, the systematic training schedule envisaged did not materialise. The factors that hindered the development of a consistent plan appear to have been the sharing of a few trainers by many project sites, the lack of coordination between sites and the disruptions in implementation at all the sites due to the armed conflict or frequent changes of senior field staff. Despite this lack, the staff at the Chenkalady project, in particular, was able to receive consistent on-the-job training, which likely compensated, to some extent, for the lack of a formal training process.

At the outset, it had been hoped that supporters would continue to work within their own families and within their villages after the project was over. Their training, therefore, was in itself a community capacity building effort. Certainly, some of the supporters, who were 17 years old when first recruited, even now appear to be some of the more capable and active figures in their own families and villages. Some of the original SCN supporters still continue to work on the same issues with the Eastern Self-Reliant Community-Awakening Organisation (ESCO).

**Role of social welfare authorities**

During the period of the pilot project, SCN staff felt that the local social welfare authorities were not greatly interest in the issue of orphaned children, although they pledged their cooperation and sanctioned SCN's work in the area. In the early 1990s the social welfare office in Batticaloa was under-funded and under-staffed, with only 4 out of 9 social worker posts being filled. This made it difficult for SCN to request the assignment of a social worker to cooperate closely with the project staff. This low level of cooperation was to diminish further, with the state authorities playing a negligible role in the later work.
The activities of the "Child & Care-giving Family Project"

An initial proposal for the project outlined the following activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage (Total 36-48 months duration - estimated)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Preparatory Stage (Pilot Project) (3-6 months duration estimated) | Collection of existing information on orphans
Awareness-raising of the objectives of the project within the community and local government officials;
identification of volunteer Supporters
Training of volunteers in basic skills to deal with children in distress
Supporters interact with children, relatives, friends and community to assess situation, identify target groups and provide immediate care and protection; provide supportive conversation
Documentation of children's details, including photographs if parents are missing
 Provision of basic life-saving amenities
Reunification with parents; identification of guardians or foster parents |
| Relief stage (6-9 months duration estimated) | Collaboration with existing state facilities and providing basic minimum needs of food, clothing, shelter, health, education and recreation
 Provision of care and protection through supportive conversation, motivation and building of self-confidence
 Education of care-givers |
| Social Rehabilitation / Initial Development Stage (9-12 months duration estimated) | Formation of groups for caregivers, children and youth
 Formation of centres
 Competence-building of caregivers, children and youth
 Provision of credit and promotion of income generation |
| Development Stage I (12-15 months duration estimated) | Expansion of activities related to credit, income generation and saving
 Integration with community by including other trusted relatives or friends of each family into the groups
 Consolidation of activities including improvement to basic needs at home
 Sustainability by linking to the state |
| Development Stage II (6 months duration estimated) | Management of activities along with the rest of the community to build self-reliance
 Phasing out; withdrawal of SCN intervention |

Dr. Jareg, in consultation with Ms. Shanmugam, planned the detailed content of the project, with the overall framework for implementation prepared by the SCN Assistant Resident Representative and a Senior Project Coordinator.
The Participating Children

Recollections of a former SCN supporter

"In 1992, as a supporter, I went to find out about these (unaccompanied) children. Visited 15 villages – it took a long time. In the 6th month of 1992, stepped into the field, and had selected 175 children by January 1993. We had actually met 250, but couldn’t work with them all."

"Why not?"

"Some children were average and some were far away."

Another person quietly mentions, "the budget..."

"[SCN] did work in distant villages. [SCN] decided on the number. It was very difficult for us not to be able to do anything for the excluded children, as we have all gone and taken all their details."

During the course of 1992 and 1993, a proportion of the children identified in the field surveys were selected for inclusion in Child & Care-giving Family Projects within each of SCN’s major working areas in the North & East. The Chenkalady area of Batticaloa, where the pilot project had been conducted most swiftly, was also the first to begin work and had the largest number of children and families participating. Still, the financial and practical constraints that prevented the inclusion of all identified children in the project and greatly disappointed both staff and non-selected children, who had expected that all would be assisted.

### SCN "Child & Care-giving Family Project" areas and numbers of participating children 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Area</th>
<th>Number of participating children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chenkalady, Batticaloa</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vellaveely, Batticaloa</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nallur &amp; Kopay, Jaffna</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putukudiyiruppu, Mullaitivu</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the Chenkalady area, the majority of participating children had not been orphaned by direct violence of the war. However, the staff felt that many other causes of parents’ deaths were linked to the circumstances of war. The hospital in the area was not supplied with adequate medicines, and there was no mode of transportation to medical facilities from distant villages apart from bicycles and sometimes bullock carts. Disappearances often took place, with people being taken away for unknown reasons. Many suicides were precipitated by chronic stress, deprivation and traumatic events related to the war.

### Information on causes of separation, (collected by Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam from meetings with 65 children (including siblings) in Chenkalady, during the months of April and May 1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of Separation</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War &amp; Violence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Causes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion / Disappearance</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked by snakes, dogs &amp; crocodile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickness, childbirth and lack of medical facilities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The SCN project sites

Although Unaccompanied Children Projects were begun in the three districts of Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Batticaloa, it was only in Batticaloa that the project was sustained and established successfully.

Chenkalady

The Child & Care-giving Family Project was first initiated and pilot tested in the Chenkalady region of Batticaloa, and, perhaps not coincidentally, the resulting methodology was most successfully implemented here. From 1993, the following activities were implemented in the interests of approximately 120 children:

- Home visits
- Introductory residential workshops for children, organised according to age-groups
- Residential workshops for caregivers
- Youth club activities
- Savings programme with The People's Bank for caregivers
- Provision of school materials
- Provision of loans to caregivers
- Educational/exposure outings for children
- Practical and legal assistance to children (ie obtaining birth certificates, compensation, etc.)
- Improving access to education (ie. obtaining Grama Sevaka Niladharis' letters to waive school fees for children)
- Training / Sensitisation workshops for teachers and Grama Sevaka Niladhari on "'How to identify and approach children affected by violence".

All these activities took place in the context of the Batticaloa Relief and Rehabilitation Project being implemented in the Chenkalady area, and continued until the end of 1996 when the Child and Care-giving Family Project was closed down as a part of the restructuring of SCN. The only formal evaluation of this project was conducted in March and April 1995, and the field staff conducted an internal review of the project in mid-1996, shortly before it ended. The records that survive of these assessments provide some information about the outcomes of the Chenkalady project.

The 1995 evaluation report was positive about the activities of the project, stating that the approaches used by the staff appeared, "to facilitate the development of a close, caring and sometimes lasting relationship," and suggested that the 'befriender' approach employed by the supporters in relating to participants was a key factor in the success of project. The project staff were felt to assist and respond to a range of issues that covered most of the participants problems and concerns. Increased professionalisation at a Field Coordinator level was recommended, to better guide and supervise the Supporters, although it was emphasised that this training should take care not to introduce theoretical constructs and professional concepts that could be obstacles to communication with the rest of the staff. More systematic processing and use of information generated by home visits was also felt to be required in order to plan field activities and upgrade field work. Despite a sense that the quality and depth of interventions may be improved by upgrading staff skills and project systems, the evaluation was broadly positive about the project impact on participants.
A former supporter remembers the introductory workshop for children in Chenkalady

The children were taken somewhere else as a group for a discussion of their needs. We couldn't meet all the needs, but afterwards [children] felt better. We were able to meet some needs, such as birth certificates and so on. It would not have been difficult to get information on their needs at home, but group-work was the methodology used for doing things. Group sessions were useful because they ended the feeling of isolation and helped children find out that "there are it other children like me." It was very moving. Children cried, but when they left they were happy and free, and began to gain self-confidence.

The internal review by the field staff in June 1996 asserted that the primary objectives of the project had been successful. It stated that overall, the participating children had become better integrated in their foster families and that due to the project's intervention children who had been emotionally affected were able to cope with their situation and return to normal life. The quality of care given by foster parents was also felt to have increased over the years the project was implemented, with caregivers becoming more concerned about issues related to the child, such as education or achieving other rights. The fact that 98% of the participating children had remained in school was also emphasised as an indicator of success.

The internal staff review facilitated by the Project Coordinator, however, also made a number of suggestions for improved administration and development of the project. These were often based on difficulties of the past and were as follows:

Project management

- Avoid changing the criteria for selecting beneficiaries, as this causes difficulties to the staff in carrying out planned activities. Initially, beneficiaries were to be children who had lost their parents due to the conflict, but we were later instructed to select also children who had lost parents due to natural causes. This increased workload was not accompanied by increased staff capacity.
- After the project had begun, the number of villages included was reduced from 42 to 15 in the interests of maintaining quality interventions. This left a number of children excluded, after creating trust, links and expectations amongst them. This should be avoided. The pilot project should have started with 5 villages and expanded to include more villages after the project's strengths and weaknesses had been assessed.
- It is important that the pilot project be given a timeframe for implementation. The project has been implemented so far without any idea of duration.
- More mid-term evaluations conducted by external evaluators would help to keep track of progress in implementing the project in relation to its objectives.

Staffing

- Care should be taken not to select persons who are 'traumatised' to work as supporters in the project.
- Intensive basic training relevant to their job should be provided to supporters for at least a period of a fortnight before they are assigned to the field.
- Ad hoc changes in the forms of contract with the supporters should be avoided, as this has caused unpleasantness amongst the supporters.
- The initial allowance to supporters should be Rs 1,500 if capable, intelligent and dedicated workers are to be attracted to the work. The initial payment of Rs. 500 paid by the project meant that it could not attract capable workers.

Further training for staff

- Supporters and other staff feel that lengthy training in counselling should be made an important component of their training.
- The staff suggests that follow-up training programmes should be based on solving problems encountered by them in the field. They feel that their training programmes throughout the year repeated the same content.
• Certificates should be given upon completion of each training programme.

Programmes for participants

• The foster parents suggested that residential programmes should not be more than one day in duration, since they have family responsibilities to fulfil and cannot spare more time.
• All training programmes should be evaluated to study the impact on participants in relation to its objectives.

There was little opportunity to implement the recommendations of either the evaluator or the staff, since by December 1996 the project had been closed down. The concerns highlighted by the staff in the internal review about costs of sudden termination were to be relevant in the context of the closing of the Chenkalady project.

Vellavely

At Vellavely, the second site where the approach was implemented, Supporters had collected information that there were 460 children who had lost one or both parents. The losses had taken place mostly between 1990 and 1992, and some also in 1988. Only around 20 of these children were living in orphanages, with the rest living with a surviving parent or relatives such as grandparents or siblings. Given this need, it was unfortunate that the difficulties encountered in implementing the project were more pronounced than they were at Chenkalady, as explained in the account of a former staff member below.

**A former Vellavely staff member recalls:**

Vellavali was very poor, war had broken out and daily living was very difficult. It was like a market place. Everyone was in one place – army, LTTE and the people. Caregivers were also affected. Couldn’t expect them to support children. Even though the department of education was there, children weren’t able to go to school continuously. Basic needs were not met. Homes weren’t close together, offering opportunities for mutual support – they were in the jungle or separated by fields. Children were not let into school because of lack of school supplies. Redd Barna did not think they should give children shoes ... things dragged on because of such issues. With a little bit of support from Gethie Shanmugam, the (project staff) were able to speak with principals and get the children into school. Many children changed their lives and went into child labour. Even the army came in and took children to do labour in far away places. Some of these children were in the programme, but when we went to talk about it, caregivers didn’t want us to ask about it because of potential security problems this could cause. Even to the caregivers, we didn’t give happiness or relief. So the question in our minds was “are we doing anything?” Just as these problems were there, we had to close.

Further contributing to the difficulties in implementing the Vellavely project were the following factors:

• The entire Unaccompanied Children’s project had been planned at the secretariat level, with the involvement of Chenkalady staff. Even the pilot phase of the project in Vellavely was handled by the Chenkalady staff. The Vellavely staff were not directly involved in the project planning or implementation process and did not receive adequate information about it either. Meetings with district-level government officials, Gama Sevaka Nilacharis and Supporters for Vellavely were all held with Chenkalady and Secretariat staff. Participation of the Vellavely Community Development Project was limited to renting out a house in the project area for the training of supporters. Not surprisingly, the Vellavely project staff were not very interested in the project, when they were asked to take it over in 1993. They were not particularly focused on the way they were to approach children, but rather on obtaining the information and notes requested by the Secretariat.
• The project in Vellavaly had little psychosocial input or guidance. Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam would come and give intermittent training. The major focus of the project personnel was on the provision of relief, which had been the bulk of their work previously. Material needs were taken care of, but there was a real need for training to deal with emotional needs.

• Of 20 Supporters originally selected for the project, only 7 were retained because the project was integrated into the relief work in the area. This decision created problems in the community.

• Payment of 10001- for the Supporters created problems for pre-school teachers who had been paid only 7501- for the 4 previous years of work.

• Vellavely project lacked clear objectives, guidelines, awareness and direction. The fact that the different personnel involved in the project did not have the same understanding of the aims of the Child and Caregiver Family Project was illustrated during a March 1995 monitoring visit. The consultants to the project were surprised to find that 13 of the 67 children included in the Vellavely project were receiving educational support whilst living in orphanages, with no apparent plans to assist their return to a family setting. Although the project had been designed with a primary focus on keeping children out of institutional care whenever good alternatives could be found in their own family network, the project staff was clearly not aware of this.

The Vellavely Community Development Project was first informed that it had to close in 1996, and from May to December that year, the Child & Family Caregiver project in that area slowed down and ended.

**Jaffna and Mullaitivu**

In Jaffna, there had been pressure from the local government on the Redd Barna office there to do something for orphaned children. At that time, many children had lost their parents to heavy bombing and shelling of Jaffna by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces. Mullaitivu had a pressing need for similar work, with one small village in the district found to have 32 children living without care of a parent or legal guardian. Although preliminary data had been collected, the initial plan had been to wait until the projects in Batticaloa were completed, so that lessons learned there could be used to draw up similar but more fine-tuned projects. However, in 1993, the Redd Barna Secretariat requested the field offices to go ahead with their Unaccompanied Children projects. Up until then, the Jaffna and Mullaitivu projects had been careful not to get deeply involved in this work.

Although the projects were started in 1993, there is little information that remains about their activities, only the understanding that they had not made much progress and had gradually "fizzled out". There may have been a number of reasons for this. Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam recalls that there was very little guidance given or monitoring of these two sites, unlike in Batticaloa. There had been little opportunity for the staff to develop "ownership" of the project idea, since it had been planned and initiated through the Secretariat in Colombo and the Relief Project in Chenkalady. Indeed, Ms. Shanmugam comments that the staff of the Jaffna office often tellingly referred to the work with unaccompanied children as "your project". In addition, Jaffna and Mullaitivu had a high level of conflict at the time, and there were reduced opportunities for the field coordinators to interact with the local community and establish strong links. In addition, they had been facing disruptions in their own lives, with their offices being bombed, shelled and occupied by the Sri Lankan Army. At the time, there was a huge need for large-scale relief action, and less enthusiasm for dealing with a small group of children. In that context, it was sensed that staff felt that, "institutions were easier."
Case Notes

Unfortunately, there are few records remaining that pertain to the children involved in the SCN projects and their lives and progress during the course of the projects. Useful glimpses, however, are available from the records of consultants and evaluators who periodically visited the projects. The accounts below offer some insight on the range of issues that confronted staff working to support children through such a project.

Notes on Vellavely monitoring visits by SCN advisor, March 1995.

The first visit was to a girl of about 9 living alone with her grandmother. She appears to have a mild to moderate intellectual handicap and is not attending school, and has never been to school. Her grandmother greets us by teasing her that we have come to take her away, whereupon she is very afraid and clings to her grandmother. The income generating activity is poultry keeping, which is giving satisfactory returns. The question arises regarding the long-term prospects for this child, for example, when her grandmother dies. We also felt that the grandmother's remarks witnessed a lack of sensitivity for the child's feelings. It is unclear what resources the child does actually have, and what skills she could eventually learn with a view to supporting herself in the future. Her marriage chances may also be reduced considering her handicap. The challenges for the supporter to work on here would be to try to use her contact with the child to patiently assess what interests and skills she has, and what could be developed, also of course bringing the grandmother into the picture. The grandmother should be helped to understand her role in making the child feel more confident and secure — that is the main point of her participation in the programme.

Our second visit was to yet another grandmother caring for her orphaned grandchild, a girl of about 15 years who was attending 9th grade. They had creatively utilised their credit to start a small, neat shop, which was doing very well, and which the granddaughter helped in during her free time. Both gave the impression of being resourceful people with their lives under control — at least for the time being. Perhaps this is a typical example where the utilisation of the assessment forms might point to phasing out of further individualised assistance, leaving more time to the more complicated situations as above or below.

Our third visit (Ms. Shanmugam and myself, together with the supporter) was to a girl of 8 years whom the staff were particularly concerned about, and was the reason that they had come to know about the previously-mentioned abuse in the school. Before visiting the home, we had the following information from the supporter:

The mother of the child and her father had marital problems, which resulted in the mother committing suicide in 1992. The child was 3 years old at the time, and the father was unable to look after her, so she was given to a woman who was a neighbour and a close friend of the family. After this, the father fell sick and disappeared. The assumption is that he is dead, as this was over 3 years ago, and he has never made any effort to contact the child. His house and all the belongings in it are destroyed. The girl eventually started school near her home, but was afraid to go there since the distance was far. The caregiver then took the initiative to move in with her daughter and son-in-law in another village. We are given to understand that the relationships between the caregiver and her married daughter are strained, as she did not want her to move away from her. The elderly caregiver is very close to her small foster daughter, and is worried about the child's future. She has brought a plot of land for her to secure her future.

The little girl is very quiet, and for the last two months has been losing weight because she does not eat. This was put down to worms, and appropriate treatment was given without much effect. She has been off school because of this. The supporter then reveals that the situation in the school is having a serious effect on the girl, who gradually has begun to talk about what is happening to her and others. The Supporters say that although the girl confides in her, she "does not tell me everything".

Continued...
The people in the village are saying that the principal should leave because of [his] demands for money. The principal argues that he is improving the school, thus people must pay. Some parents have wanted to take their children out, but then they will not release the birth certificate necessary to get into another school. Another boy would prefer to walk a long distance to school. Many parents would like to see the principal go, but there is a strong group behind him. "The children don't want me to talk to him," says the supporter — they are afraid of repercussions. She gives an example of a mother who had complained, and afterwards her daughter was punished. In other schools, there is no money collection on this scale; children might collect a few rupees together to buy small things. Children are also asked for 10-50 rupees for "tuition", which in fact is nothing more than what should be due to them during the ordinary school day. The project coordinator asked for a meeting with the principal and the head teacher, but they did not come.

On our visit to the home, we find the girl just about to leave for school. She is being sent back after about two weeks absence, which started after the last abuse. No adult from the household is accompanying her. She looks very pale, thin and unhappy. It is obvious that she does not want to go back to school. We sit down and talk with her together with her "grandmother", as she calls her caregiver. At first shy and withdrawn, she gradually becomes more confident and is able to tell us what has happened. It transpires that she has received several beatings at the hands of the principal and another teacher, in the principal's office where she was alone. The beatings came in conjunction with [the fact] that she was not able to meet the demands for money. She has been hit on her hands and head. She has felt afraid and anxious going to school. The physical abuse is accompanied by verbal abuse, such as "children like you (i.e. orphaned) should not be going to this school." Other children have also received the same treatment.

I must say that the sight of this small girl so abandoned to the power of abusive adults, without anybody really able or willing to stand up for her, makes a deep impression on us. We also meet the child's "aunt", who also complains about the school's treatment of her own children, but backs off at the thought of making a complaint to the headmaster.

Since the project appeared unable to take any further action at a local level, a decision was taken to obtain legal advice on the matter. [We] visited the lawyer in Batticaloa whom SCN has previously had contact with in another connection. He received our impromptu visit very kindly. His first reaction on hearing the story was that the Child Welfare Act forbids the physical punishment of children in school. Accordingly, he said that the parents have to make a complaint. But, when we pointed out that they were all afraid to do so, he suggested that [SCN] ask for a meeting with the District Director of Education. He agreed to be present at such a meeting, but also [suggested] that the Probation Officer representing Child Welfare should also be present. The Assistant Resident Representative will follow up this issue.

The record above also underlines the valuable role that experienced child-care professionals can play in assessing and guiding project interventions. As in the case of the 9 year old with an intellectual handicap, there is often a need for professional appraisal and involvement in developing a management or support plan. The situation of the child being abused and terrorised by her principal also required intervention by experienced personnel to decide on a new strategy for an urgent problem. This account also hints at the important role that senior or high-status personnel, such as the Assistant Resident Representative, can play in accessing resources and lobbying relevant officials. Clearly, experienced advisors may also play a role in guiding the overall implementation of the project, based on insights in the field — such as when visiting the resourceful grandmother and granddaughter encountered during the second visit above.

The field notes above also underline the hardships and challenges faced by children who participated in the project. Whilst many of these affect other children in the community, the principal's harsh comment about how orphans should not be coming to his school points to particular types of discrimination directed towards separated children.

Further indications of how the project impacted on the lives of participating children may be seen from the field observations below from an assessment visit by a consultant to the project.
Observations from Chenkalady assessment visit by an SCN consultant, March-April 1995.

Family J

Miss J was a participant in RB’s program for unaccompanied children until last year, when she had to leave as she reached the maximum age of seventeen. She lives together with her brother, his wife and two children. The house was built several years ago with the help of RB. Her father died when she was very young and 3 years ago her mother fell sick and died. The RB Supporter who conducted preschool in her neighbourhood invited her to join the RB program for unaccompanied children and the wife of her brother joined a credit group and is presently successful in running a small business. Miss J was also a member of the local RB youth group until last year, when she had to leave because of her age. Recently, she was selected as president for a group of 30 youth in the local group of the National Youth Services Council. NYSC is an organisation operating nationwide giving vocational training and other opportunities for youth to engage in income generating activities.

Last year, when she was participating in the unaccompanied children’s program, she had talks with the Supporter 3 times weekly. They continue to meet informally at least once a week as the Supporter lives close by.

She says that because of RB she has managed “to come up in life”. She has learned to conduct youth club meetings and to deal with her own and others’ personal problems. She has learned how important it is to encourage and give help to children who suffer problems in school.

She describes the relationship to the Supporter as that to a sister or close friend.

Miss J suggested that RB should allow participation in their programs until the age of 20. “At seventeen, we still don’t manage on our own in life.” Furthermore, she focused on all the children who want to continue their studies after completing O-level, but do not get the required grades because they cannot afford to pay for tuition. She asked if RB can provide tuition classes for these children.

Family Y

Master Y is 16 years old and lives with his sister, her husband and their children, a boy of 14 and a girl of 10. He has lived with his sister since she got married. She does not only see herself as a caregiver. In her heart, she considers him as her own child and will support him until he has finished his education and can manage on his own. They became orphans when their mother died several years ago and he was invited to join the unaccompanied children’s program by a RB Supporter who worked with a family in the neighbourhood. The family has received loans to buy fishing nets and the sister’s husband is doing well as a full-time fisherman. The boy joins [in the] fishing on his school holidays. He has completed O-level this year and if the marks are good enough, he will continue his schooling up to A-level.

During the five years the family has participated in the program, they have had regular contact with four different Supporters. The Supporters come on home visits 2 to 3 times weekly.

The caregiver couple have discussed economy and living conditions with the Supporter. In his talks alone with the Supporter, the boy has shared issues regarding his progress in school, leisure time activities and matters in his private life.

When asked about their relationship to the Supporter, the couple say that she takes the place of their relatives who have not been able to give the assistance and support they would have provided under normal conditions in times of peace. They are grateful for the help that has been given and feel they are able to manage on their own regarding subsistence, but still appreciate the follow-up contact with the RB Supporter.
Impact of Terminating the Chenkalady Project

The termination of the project at the sites in Batticaloa, Jaffna and Mullaitivu was largely unsystematic and not planned for. Unlike in many of the other sites, where the project activities had gradually degraded over time, the closing of the Chenkalady Project was particularly swift and without much warning to the participating children, families and staff members.

The ramifications of the closure of the project for the lives of participating children were great. For some children, it meant the end of their education. For others, the loss of financial support and involvement of project staff led to a hastened marriage to ensure security. Some children had lost foster-care support. It is possible that the termination of the project may have contributed in some way to the recruitment of at least one child into a militant group – which has reportedly resulted in her death. Four other participants had also reportedly joined militant groups, for reasons that may be linked to the termination of the project, such as loss of caregivers.

Although one of the reasons for SCN deciding to document its past projects was to determine what the impact of the termination of the Chenkalady project had been, it became swiftly apparent that this could not take place in the way that had been originally envisaged. The issue was still very much a sensitive and difficult one for the ESCO staff members who had been former SCN staff working in Chenkalady. Without the adequate infrastructure to provide support to the children, the team was uneasy about re-establishing a relationship with them for the purpose of obtaining information about their lives after the end of the project. However, the former SCN staff members did feel a strong desire to bring the children together to finally inform them of what had actually taken place in 1996, since it was apparent that many children were never told the reasons for the project being terminated. Finally, some guidance was provided by one of the eldest of the Chenkalady group, Sivarasa, who said that many of the former participants would very much like to meet again. Although there were concerns about creating new expectations amongst the children and young adults who had been involved in the project, it was decided that an overnight reunion would be organised for as many participants as possible. On the evening of April 8th 2001, Fifty-eight former participants arrived at the Manresa training centre, the site of many SCN and ESCO living-in sessions and workshops. After a brief introduction, the group, aged between 9 and 22 years, spent the evening renewing friendships in the company of former SCN staff members. The following day, after some vigorous games, smaller groups were formed, by age, to discuss the objectives of the programme. These were as follows:

- To clarify to the participants the reasons for the SCN project in Chenkalady being closed down.
- To establish contact between ESCO and former participants (for friendship, as there was no possibility of re-establishing a project in the Chenkalady area at present).
- To provide an opportunity for former participants to renew friendship and exchange experiences.
- To provide an opportunity for SCN to learn about the former participants' lives after the end of the Chenkalady project.

Over the course of the day, there were many discussions and activities. These culminated in a session on "Sharing of Memories", where former participants described their experiences in the SCN project and their lives since. All the participants felt strongly that the statements, poems, drawings and plays they created should be represented in this document, to convey their thoughts to SCN and to others planning such work. Below are included as many as could be printed here:

**Thoughts and feelings expressed by the former child participants in Chenkalady**

"The people who looked after us have left us. After that, it was so difficult for us. Because, when they were there, they gave us exercise books, colour pencils and others. Our family is poor, so after you went we had a very difficult time. You left us in 1996."

(Ranjini, 13, F)
'Redd Barna took the responsibility and were looking after us very well. They gave us a lot of benefits and they encouraged us. And they gave a lot of confidence. When we feel lonely, and when we are alone, they came to give confidence and support, like a mother. When they were there, we were happy. They bring us to Manresa and encourage us. So, whenever we were in Manresa, we were happy. At this time, without telling or informing us, they dropped us. We didn't know what were the reasons they dropped us suddenly. And we didn't know whom to ask.

It is so difficult for children who didn't have pencils or exercise books or equipment for school. So, when they gave these things, they really helped for such children. Now, the children are suffering a lot. So, in this reunion, it looks like or creating the expectation that we are going to get the thing which has gone away from us. I want Redd Barna to function again because I feel alone without telling my problems at the moment. So, please continue your work, for it would really help people like us who do not have mothers or fathers."

(Sukuna, 23, F)

'When Redd Barna was there, it was so helpful to our family. So, when Redd Barna left, the children who were with Redd Barna were separated. So we could not meet again. It was so difficult for me. I didn't know why it stopped and they didn't also say why they stopped it. So, when I hear that there is ESCO now, which is functioning, I feel very happy. Not like Redd Barna, ESCO should function continuously. There are many children who want to study and are in difficulties. ESCO should support them. I'm so happy to meet everybody here, because I could meet some from my old programme. I am studying in year 11. I have a younger brother also. So, if (you) need to help people in difficulties and make them happy, then ESCO has to function continuously. I somehow managed to study until year 11. But I need help for my younger brother to study."

(Sutharsini, 16, F)

'We were without any support in our life. We were orphans. Redd Barna, you showed the shape of the life to us. And we thought your service was big. Because of your service, we orphans came from unknown places and met unexpectedly and created friendship between ourselves. When we were in the happiest time in our life, you left us and because of this we were separated. So, do not make us orphans once more."

(Suyananth, 16, M)

'In 1993, they took us and helped us in studying. And they helped us to build our homes. And they told us don't worry, we will look after you better than your parents. They said, if you have any problems, without hesitation, please tell us. And we were so happy after we heard this. I never thought, after my parents' death that any organisation could do like this. So they continued to help us and brought us to Chenkalady, where we interacted with more people like us. So, only after that did I know that there was not only me, but there were a lot of people like me. So they talk about our problems and after that we got a lot of courage. Then suddenly, one day, they left us and went. I have been thinking why they left us and went. Still, I do not know. And I never asked, after giving all this help, why did you leave us (all) alone. It creates a lot of mental sadness."

(Thangesh, 21, F)

'Redd Barna helped poor people. Redd Barna provided clothes, game materials. Because Redd Barna didn't come, most of the people couldn't play. No clothes, very poor. No game materials."

(Nishandan, 11, M)
1. Redd Barna started in 1992
2. Redd Barna helped us to educate ourselves by providing materials
3. Redd Barna left us in 1996 and nobody came to see us.
4. At that time, we went through a lot of difficulties, so I could not continue my studies. I stayed home to do house work.

   When Redd Barna left me, I was ‘like a worm under the hot sun’."  
   (Suganthan, 17, M)

"Redd Barna started [work] in 1993. They included me when I lost my father and mother. Because of Redd Barna’s help, I studies until year 11. I got a lot of good help from Redd Barna. Suddenly Redd Barna stopped their assistance. I couldn’t continue my studies. With a lot of mental pain, I stayed at the home. At that point, because there was no help, I got married. Now, I have three children. Even when I got married, I’m having a lot of difficulties. I was with Redd Barna from 1993-95, so I have experience with Redd Barna. I know how to behave, talk, how to conduct music and dance. There when I think that Redd Barna stopped, it makes me so sad."
   (K. Thirucharnalar, 21, F)

"In 1994, there were 2 activities that took place in Colombo, and I participated in that. I was doing the “Kolatham” (stick dance) and I participated in other activities. It was so nice to meet and talk and move with friends who are like me. So, like this, Redd Barna brought us from the difficulties such as building relationships, interactions like the above one, and also giving advice. Like that, I was with this organisation and I lost two hands. At that point, they gave me a lot of advice and comfort. I was preparing to start small jobs. At that point, Redd Barna left. Now, if this sort of organisation functions, it would help the people. Now I have married and have a child. Now with my brother’s help, I have a beat with an engine. So, if this organisation starts with us again, it will help not just me but friends like me. Thank you."
   (V. Logeshwaran, 23, M)

"Redd Barna started in 1992. It helped bring the poor people up and providing material for children to go to school. It helped many people who got damaged during the 1990 troubles. Also, they put people into school who didn’t go to school. They also obtained birth certificates for children who didn’t have birth certificates. Because Redd Barna was functioning, most people got benefits, were happy. Because it left the people and went, the children got sad. Because some children had unbearable sorrow, they went to LTT (sic)."
   (Y. Ramesh, 12, M)

"When Redd Barna started in 1993, the difficulty I was facing in going to school was lessened. They provided some materials. Even after Redd Barna stopped, with great difficulties I am continuing my studies. My father has died, my mother married another person. I am like an orphan. My grandmother is looking after me. Now my grandmother is also going to die. Imagine what would happen to me. You should help me. I am studying in year 11 – also with great difficulties. I do not have enough materials. If I ask, they say “we don’t have enough money to buy all the time for you. Don’t go to school. Stay and do housework.” Since Redd Barna is functioning again, I am thinking they will help and my difficulties will go. But, I will have to stop my studies, because I don’t have the ability to work and study. If not, I would take an “unexpected turn”. It is very difficult for me. Because I trust you, I have come from so far and am asking help from you. If you will not help, I will be forced to take the unexpected turn. You are a father and mother to me. So, I am asking you all to support me to study."
   (Kandasamy Sahayaan, 16, F)
"Some years ago, when Redd Barna was providing it was light....without Redd Barna support there is no light in life"
(Thivakar, 15)

"...a few years later, the child is worried because they have left..."
(Ajanthan, 13)

The day of the Chenkalady reunion
(Sutharshan, 16)
"1. Redd Barna helps people who have no support. 2. Child is crying because Redd Barna left. 3. Child is happy because Redd Barna is supporting again..."
(Senthuran, 14)

"Some Years Before and After"
(Arun, 14)

"Being supported...[then] sinking in the poverty sea"
(Prema Lucas, 14)
The termination of the project has clearly impacted on children in very individual ways, and what they have shared above is not enough of an indicator to judge the overall effects of the end of the project. Certainly, all the children would have benefited from a more gradual and informed process of phasing our the project activities. Whether particular children were made more vulnerable to subsequent threats because of the project being phased out can only be determined through detailed investigation of their history and current lives. In the present context, it seems that such an endeavour may only be ethically acceptable if it is coupled with concrete interventions to address the current concerns of these children.

**Separated children elsewhere**

The fate of the separated children in other locations is also a concern. There is no real data on children in Jaffna or Mullaitivu. In other parts of Batticaloa, there has been some information that some children may have travelled to Colombo for employment as domestic workers, and others have been working in Batticaloa for vendors and shopkeepers.
The Eastern Self-Reliant Community-Awakening Organisation: 1999 to Present Date

Setting up ESCO

When the SCN Child and Caregiving Family Project was closed down in Chenkalady in 1996, some of the staff facing retrenchment considered the possibility of continuing their work with separated children in Batticaloa. Discussions with a small group of concerned community members resulted in the formation of the Eastern Self-Reliant Community-Awakening Organisation (ESCO) in 1998. A working committee consisting of a local principal, a retired teacher, and a former SCN employee was formed to oversee the running of the organisation, whilst actual management of ESCO activities was to be carried out by the former coordinator of the Chenkalady project and a former administrator from the Vellavely project. A few supporters who had worked on the Child and Caregiving Family Project also joined ESCO, bringing the total number of members to 30. By November 1998, the ESCO committee had prepared a proposal for a one-year pilot project to work with 75 separated children in the Koralai Pattu D.S. Division of Batticaloa District.

The new project had been planned carefully. The ESCO committee had verified with the NGO forum in Batticaloa that there were no fostering programmes being implemented in the district for separated children. The committee decided that such a programme should be started in the Koralai Pattu D.S. Division, because it was felt to be one of the areas worst affected by the ongoing warfare in Batticaloa. From July to December 1998, the personnel who were to become the ESCO field staff collected data on separated children in Koralai Pattu, in their own time. They identified 277 children living with substitute caregivers. ESCO approached a few donor agencies with their project idea, and found that the greatest interest came from the restructured SCN Secretariat in Colombo. SCN still felt the need to support separated children within Batticaloa, and agreed to fund ESCO’s work based on the approach devised in Chenkalady. However, SCN suggested that the project in the Koralai Pattu D.S. Division should begin with only a limited number of children in January 1999, and expand to include the other identified children over the following two years if the pilot project was successful. ESCO accepted this, considering that staggered inclusion of children in the project would help maintain a better quality of intervention, and chose 75 children living in 16 villages to be included in the pilot phase.

The Eastern Self-Reliant Community-Awakening Organisation was legally established on the 1st of January 1999, and funding from SCN followed shortly. In addition to material assistance, SCN provided technical support in the form of experienced Secretariat personnel, who would act as resource persons to ESCO whilst carrying out monitoring functions.

Home visits

Following the Chenkalady model, the project was begun with a period of intensive home visits. The 2 field officers and 4 supporters would regularly visit each home and spend time interacting with the children and foster caregivers. Whilst building up relationships with the children, the field officers and supporters would assess the status of the child and the care-giving arrangement. Where children were felt to be badly psychologically affected, ESCO personnel would visit as frequently as once a day, to spend a couple of hours playing and being with the child. In a few instances, the ESCO personnel discovered that children were unhappy with their caregivers or had been separated from siblings who were placed with other families. In such cases, the field staff was able to negotiate with foster carers to have siblings reunited and children transferred to care giving arrangements that they desired. Most of the foster caregivers were close relatives of the children. Field officers and supporters would also collect information about the details of separation, and based on this several children were successfully reunited with their surviving parents. One boy was reunited with his family during the first six months, and 12 others over the course of the following year.
During home visits, field staff identified specific difficulties that affected individual children, and attempted to find solutions for these. For example, it was found that a number of participating children had stopped going to school. Through the provision of school stationary to a wider group of children in the project, it became possible for many of those who were unable to afford educational materials to start going to school again. In cases where the lack of birth certificates was a barrier to school attendance, ESCO was able to expedite the process of obtaining these to enable children to enroll. Preparing and motivating the children to return to school was a key part of this work, in addition to eliciting support from foster caregivers and teachers. ESCO's ongoing awareness-raising and experiential programmes for caregivers, government officials and education personnel proved to be an asset in establishing working relationships between these individuals and ESCO staff for the benefit of the children in the project. One child who benefited from this was Devarajah who was unwilling to attend school because he was self-conscious about his strong stammer. ESCO staff contacted a teacher at Devarajah's school who had attended the ESCO sensitisation workshops, and he was able to make arrangements for Devarajah to be protected from teasing in class. Simultaneously, through discussions with ESCO field staff, Devarajah decided to return to school.

Another issue that arose during the course of home visits was that of children engaging in labour activities. Given the poverty that many families suffer, older male children were sometimes sent to work for day wages at rice mills in neighbouring districts. In one instance, 3 separated children aged 9, 12 and 13 were found to have dropped out of school to work as a fisherman's helpers. ESCO staff had close interactions with them, their foster mothers and the fisherman to emphasise the importance of education to these children and also inform them of the potential physical consequences of heavy labour work without adequate care or nutrition. Two of the children returned to school, but the 13-year old continued to pursue work with the fisherman because of his dream of "wearing a gold ring and chain." ESCO still remains in contact with him. Although ESCO field staff is concerned about both the 13 year old fisherman's assistant and the 17 and 18 year olds travelling to work in the rice mills, ESCO exercises little leverage over the children or their foster parents through the benefits afforded by the programme, preferring to use education and dialogue to determine appropriate solutions to such issues.

**Living-in sessions and creativity workshops**

Participating children and their foster caregivers each attended 'living-in' sessions with their peers at a residential training centre. 46 foster mothers and 1 foster father attended the initial foster parents sessions in 1999, and 65 children participated in three separate sessions for the age groups of 6-9, 10-15 and 16-18 years. These sessions were often facilitated with the assistance of external resource persons, such as SCN consultant Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam. As originally designed during the SCN Chenkalady project, the living-in sessions focused on building relationships amongst peers, articulating current difficulties and sharing possible solutions to these. Often, ESCO would use these sessions to gain insights into problems that they would follow up through home visits or other project activities.

As a priority, the foster carers raised the issue of low family incomes, which impeded their ability to provide for children in their care. Their suggestion of establishing revolving credit funds for income generation was later taken up by ESCO as a project activity. Problems related to the inheritance of property by separated children were also raised, and ESCO later followed up a number of these through discussion with the parties involved and also through legal action in one case. Aged foster carers, often the children's grandmothers, were concerned about the future of their wards after their death. They requested ESCO to admit these children into residential homes where they could be provided security and continued education. Despite favouring community-based care arrangements, the ESCO staffs were unable to find such alternatives for 5 children whose grandmothers placed them within institutional care. Although these children were welcome to participate in other ESCO activities with those still in the project-supported placements, institutional restrictions often did not allow them to attend.
During the living-in sessions, the issues raised by children as problems to them were often different from those identified by their caregivers. In a couple of foster families, the children complained that they were being used to carry out domestic chores. The field officers followed these complaints up with negotiations with the children and foster parents to bring about changes desired by the children. Children would also share problems they were having with their foster mothers' husbands, who sometimes made the children feel unwelcome in their new homes because of the additional financial burden they represented. ESCO staff would intervene to support the children and foster mother in such instances, and would often engage with the disgruntled spouse to convince him of the need of the children for affection and care. The issue of poverty was also often raised, with relation to children's material needs for school and clothing for daily use. ESCO was able to meet some of these needs through harnessing individual donations, but these problems were to be addressed in the longer-term through the revolving credit scheme established as a part of the project. The living-in sessions were also an opportunity for skilled resource persons to identify children who would need particular support or monitoring through home visits. In this way, the field staff was given guidance and insight by more experienced child-care workers. Unfortunately, this system did not allow for a great deal of expert involvement, so ESCO would often have to turn to the few already over-burdened local counsellors for assistance with particularly sensitive or serious issues.

A few foster parents were unable to attend the living-in sessions, as they could not leave their other children or other domestic responsibilities overnight. Therefore, sessions with similar content were held during the day at locations close to the caregivers' residences. Other difficulties too arose around the living-sessions. A situation arose where a teenage boy and girl who attended a residential programme together struck up a friendship and began corresponding by letter after they returned home. When their foster parents discovered this new relationship, both sets of caregivers were very upset and accused ESCO of being responsible for bringing the children together. An ESCO field officer intervened and asked the children to end their correspondence so that their caregivers may allow them to participate in future project activities, although she felt this outcome was not fair by the children. This problem illustrates the challenges for project staff in supporting the competing views and desires of children and foster parents, within a system of strong societal norms. The practical need to negotiate between children and foster parents in the solving of such problems or conflicts was a reason for ESCO holding a third kind of living-in session, where both foster parents and foster children would attend. The focus of these sessions would be on building closeness and mutual understanding between the adults and the children they care for.

Children were also brought together for creativity workshops, which were intended to stimulate them, "bring out talents and abilities" that may help build self-confidence or self-reliance and build team skills and spirit. The creativity workshops would offer opportunities for the children to use painting, construction, song and drama to articulate ideas of interest to them. Traditional tales such as the Mahabharatha, Ramanyana and ancient Vedas were also re-enacted. Children also related anecdotes, wrote poetry and made up riddles. Some of the children's creations were collected to be published as a book called "Flower Buds".

**Legal and practical assistance**

ESCO staff assisted children who did not have important documents such as death or marriage certificates of parents, or birth certificates to obtain these through appropriate state officials. ESCO also made efforts to obtain due compensation provided by the state for children whose parents had been killed in the war by non-state actors. Although ESCO was able to make successful applications on behalf of many children, the lack of state funds for disbursement meant that payment of compensation was often greatly delayed. ESCO also provided legal assistance who had difficulty claiming their rightful inheritance of property.
Children's clubs

ESCO staff encouraged the participating children to meet in small groups one to take part in games, cultural and literary activities. These were formalised children taking greater responsibility for facilitating and organising the clubs. These clubs are intended to be lasting structures through which participating children can after ESCO's project in the Koralai Pattu D.S. Division is phased out. The resources to the children, providing a mechanism through which to integrate with other children of the village. At present, the clubs are developing community projects such as activities for patients within the local hospital- that are oriented tm relationships with other members of their community.


## The Need for Alternatives to Institutional Care

### The problems within institutions

To assess the value of the Chenkalady approach to caring for separated children, it is instructive to return to the only major study within residential homes for children in Sri Lanka, conducted by Dr. Swarna Wijetunge 10 years ago. In her report, Dr. Wijetunge compiled a list of children's needs that were found to be gravely lacking in a significant proportion of the 41 institutions that her team surveyed throughout the island. Below is a summary of her findings of children's psychological needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Love and a sense of belonging:</strong></td>
<td>The most widely demonstrated and poignantly articulated need amongst children of all ages in the institutions was to be loved and to belong to someone or a family. This was something they missed deeply within their institutional setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustained ongoing relationships with one or more nurturing adults:</strong></td>
<td>Most children did not have opportunities to spend time talking to their caregivers or building intimate relationships with them. Despite an average caregiver-child ratio of 1:11.4, few caregivers reported nurturing interactions with children as a part of their daily routine, instead listing numerous daily chores and tasks. Many were themselves aware of their inability to meet this need, due to the constraints of their other work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult role models:</strong></td>
<td>The lack of exposure to persons other than the care-giving staff of the residential homes meant that children had few alternative role models to choose from. Consequently, many children articulated a desire to emulate their caregivers, even wanting to work within the same institution when they grew up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality development:</strong></td>
<td>Few homes in the sample were felt to foster positive self-concepts, in terms of personal worth, dignity and pride. The social stigma related to institutionalisation was observed to have permeated the homes, with practices often reinforcing the view of the children as being simply &quot;orphaned&quot;, &quot;abandoned&quot; or &quot;destitute&quot;. Regimentation within homes, and the often harsh measures used to enforce compliance, was also seen to demoralise and damage the individuality of the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuation of existing relationships with people to whom they are psychologically attached:</strong></td>
<td>Children were noted to have strong desires for contact with relatives or &quot;loved ones&quot; from whom they lived apart. Some even described contact with such persons, which were thought to be at least in part fantasy. The expectation of future contact was a source of comfort to some children, whilst others suffered much distress over the lack or loss of contact. It was observed that the attitudes and practices of wardens at homes were not supportive of sustaining or increasing the level of contact with such significant persons outside the homes. Transfers between homes was also seen to cause unhappiness amongst children who had developed close, loving relationships with peers and caregivers at their original institutions. The importance of sibling relationships was also felt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
strongly, with children suffering deeply when their brothers or sisters were transferred or moved out of the home.

Quality Care-giving: 

Whilst the majority of caregivers were felt to be persons with genuine concern and warmth towards the children in their homes, some were found to be negligent, insensitive and sometimes punitive. Children reported cruelty, including physical abuse, vindictiveness and unfair treatment. Sometimes the poor or abusive quality of care was associated with one individual caregiver alone, but sometimes it was characteristic of the entire staff.

Whilst Dr. Wijetunge's report depicts a tragic picture of unfulfilled psychosocial needs within the majority of homes included in her study, she is careful to point out that these conditions were only sometimes due to the particular negative characteristics of caregivers. Rather, the nature of institutional practices and mindset are more responsible for hindering the healthy development of children, who, she points out, are already at risk of harm having lost their parents or been separated from them.

Dr. Wijetunge's assessment of the material conditions of residential homes is more positive, despite some shortcomings in some homes with regards to adequate beds, hygiene, stimulating living environments, health care, recreational facilities and vocational training. She observed that children coped better with deficiencies in their physical environment than with the lack of emotional and relationship requirements.

Many of the troubling issues raised in Dr. Wijetunge's study are echoed in the global literature on institutions, and sadly in the anecdotal accounts emerging from many residential facilities for children in Sri Lanka today. Accounts of gross neglect and outright mental, physical and sexual abuse in the media bring on occasional outbreaks of public outrage and sometimes the necessary reparations. However, there remains little debate about the developmental harm that is being done to children within uncontroversial poor quality homes and orphanages. Whilst it is clear that children in such institutions would be greatly benefited by initiatives to improve the skills of their caregivers and upgrade the systems on which these homes run, it is also important to consider possible alternatives to such dramatically unnatural settings for children to grow up within. Whilst these alternatives may not be viable for all children who are usually placed in residential homes, they may go some distance to assist many of them to avoid the long-term developmental risks associated with an institutional upbringing.

**Likely effects of institutional care on children (from Tolfree, 1995).**

- Lack of opportunities for close relationships with trusted adults may impair children's capacity to make and sustain relationships with other people.
- Lack of opportunities to learn traditional roles and skills – many young people emerge from childhood in an institution with no perception of different adult roles and no understanding of the customs and traditions which underpin daily life.
- Institutions tend to create a deep-rooted sense of dependency, with children being denied opportunities to learn to become self-reliant and self-directing.
- Institutionalised children often lose their sense of family, clanship or tribal identity: they lack the security and strength that come from identifying with family and ancestors. Instead, they may assume a negative identity (for example, the 'orphanage child') and face the stigma and prejudice that results.
- Where children have lost contact with their families, they will have to enter adult life without the support that the extended family and community traditionally offers in most cultures.
The Chenkalady Approach

The approach developed in Chenkalady, Batticaloa, certainly offers an alternative that works against the potential negative impacts associated with institutional care, discussed in the previous section. The success of this specific nature of the approach, however, may be dependent on a number of socio-cultural preconditions and it may present particular shortcomings or risks to children in such care-giving arrangements.

The Chenkalady approach to fostering

Fostering is an arrangement whereby a child lives with a family other than her own, usually on a temporary basis, without any implication that her birth parents lose parental rights or responsibilities. Adoptions differ from fostering in that they offer full membership of the care-giving family, to be brought up by caregivers who are usually considered to supplant a child's original parents. Foster parents are often motivated more by a desire or sense of responsibility to help a child in need, and usually take on the parenting roles of nurturing, training and sponsorship into adulthood. Whilst fostering is generally thought of as care-giving by unrelated adults, in the Chenkalady context, the term is used to describe care-giving by unrelated adults, members of the child's extended family and adult siblings.

In his 1995 book Roofs and Roots: The care of separated children in the developing world, David Tolfree categorised foster care arrangements into three basic types:

1. Informal fostering arrangements resulting from attempts by community leaders, volunteers and social workers to facilitate the placement of parentless children within their own communities, built on traditional fostering practices. These differ from spontaneous arrangements only in requiring some sort of facilitating, arrangements for monitoring and provision of additional support.

2. Small-scale, situation-specific programmes established by welfare agencies as immediate, non-institutional responses to the needs of particular groups of children.

3. Larger-scale fostering programmes which are planned as ongoing schemes designed to meet the needs of children drawn from a wider range of circumstances, which require long-term funding and formal organisational structures.

The Chenkalady Approach is perhaps closest to the first category of informal foster care, where SCN staff worked to support existing traditional informal fostering arrangements and facilitate placements in line with community norms. Here, as in many other informal fostering approaches, the scheme is heavily dependent on a sense of responsibility towards separated children and a cultural predisposition for non-parents to play parenting roles.

Fostering

Fostering is an arrangement whereby a child lives with a family other than her own, usually on a temporary basis, without any implication that her birth parents lose parental rights or responsibilities. Adoptions differ from fostering in that they offer full membership of the care-giving family to the child, to be brought up by caregivers who are usually considered to supplant a child's original parents. Foster parents are often motivated more by a desire or sense of responsibility to help a child in need, and usually take on the parenting roles of nurturing, training and sponsorship into adulthood.

Building on what is already there

David Tolfree suggests that the following factors may be important in influencing the patterns of traditional fostering and determining the success of fostering or de facto guardianship or adoption
based on these practices:

a) Whether child rearing is seen as the sole task of a child's biological parents, or as a range of tasks that may be shared amongst members of extended family and community.

b) Whether arrangements are seen as replacing the child's biological parents, and whether the child would continue to derive her sense of identity from her own family and lineage.

c) Whether traditional parenting role-sharing within family systems has also sometimes been used to provide family care for children who are unable (temporarily or permanently) to live with their own parents.

d) Whether there may be a greater likelihood of a sense of community responsibility for separated children in rural areas than one might find in cities.

e) What the cultural norms are related to caring for related children; the importance of blood ties; in respect of the way children who are kin are treated in comparison with children born to the caregivers; in relation to differential treatment in some cultures of fostered children and other children in household.

f) What norms exist with respect to inheritance of property

Throughout Sri Lankan cultures, there have been long-standing practices of caring for children within the extended family network when their own parents have been unable to care for them. Indeed, it is also common for grandparents and older siblings to play a vital role in nurturing, training and sponsoring children to adulthood within both normal and disrupted family systems.

The Chenkalady approach to fostering does build on the potential offered by these traditions. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of foster caregivers in the projects are close blood relatives of the children, usually grandmothers and sisters who may have anyway played a role in the nurturing of the children or brothers who may have been traditionally expected to contribute to the sponsorship of their siblings into adulthood.

However, the close relationships between caregivers and original parents may also prevent the foster child from being offered a new identity as a full member of the care-giving family. Although they may have much love and affection for the child, in the narratives of close-kin caregivers there is always the presence of a lost parent, which maintains the sense that this is a surrogate caring relationship. This may be particularly maintained in cases were caregivers are relatives who remember clearly the dead or absent parents, such as aunts or uncles. Placement with adult siblings may have different dynamics with relation to the development of a family identity.

**Risks**

Situations where the non-parents play the role of primary caregivers are not usually labelled as "fostering" and arrangements are informally negotiated by adults, without the intervention of the State or other welfare agencies. These fostering or de facto adoption practises are usually regulated by custom rather than by statute. The reliance on such informal practices within the Chenkalady approach means that children may be left in an ambiguous position with regards to the legal and social responsibilities of their foster-carers. This may allow some caregivers to use the "easy" solution of placing children in residential homes when caring for them becomes too difficult.

There is a clear need to plan for the long-term together with foster care-givers, in order to secure the child's future. Indeterminate fostering arrangements may be better than poorly defined residential care, but this will certainly create difficulties and insecurity for the child and her caregivers. The implementation of the Chenkalady approach, both in the past and in the current context of the ESCO project in Batticaloa, has lacked a supportive legal framework. Foster caregivers have no legal responsibilities towards the children, and only the State may be required to provide care for the children. However, the options available to the State welfare authorities are limited to institutional care of a questionable quality. Clear legal or de facto adoption might help give chil-
children a sense of permanence and family identity, but many caregivers are unwilling to take this step, preferring informal arrangements for reasons that are still unclear.

Although the incidence of foster-care breakdown appears to have been relatively low in Batticaloa, when fostering fails there needs to be an effective back up service. This often may have to take the form of good quality residential facilities to deal with the short-term consequences of foster home failure. Residential care solutions for dealing with short-term problems, however, can often be counter-productive if the home’s administration does not enable children to maintain contacts with persons they are attached to in their home communities and seeks to supplant these relationships. Obviously, it would be desirable for children to be found new appropriate foster families in the case of irretrievable fostering breakdowns, but in the event that this is not possible, quality residential care may have to be arranged as a long-term solution.

Informal and small-scale situation-specific fostering approaches tend to keep children within their existing social networks, and therefore build on existing attachments and responsibilities. This usually contributes to a high level of success. However, these types of approaches do not always provide the kind of long-term follow-up and support that is required by children. Support of placements and monitoring often decays with time, and continuation of work to trace parents or siblings to achieve reunification may be neglected.

Children being cared for within informal fostering arrangements are potentially at risk because of the low-level or absence of monitoring of their foster families. Children subjected to physical or sexual abuse may have reduced means of protection. These risks may be exacerbated in war situations, because of the additional breakdown of community and State welfare infrastructure that might usually serve to identify and intervene in situations of abuse. Children may also be used as domestic workers within their foster homes, being forced to contribute more to the household economy than other children. Harsh treatment may also be meted out to children in these kinds of care arrangements, without mechanisms for their protection. Within the Chenkalady approach, there is a relatively high level of monitoring during the actual project period, with field staff visiting each participating family at least once a week. The fact that staff are recruited from within the project area also facilitates the necessary interactions with the surrounding community that can provide useful information about the status of the fostering arrangement. There are regular meetings with school teachers, principals, Grama Sevaka Niladhari and neighbours, although these have not been given a formal role within the monitoring and evaluation process.

David Tolfree argues that placing responsibility for support and monitoring with community leaders, people’s organisations, women’s associations and school teachers, rather than with welfare professionals, would expose children to no greater risk to their lives than if they were to grow up in unsatisfactory institutional care, which may provide some reassurance when projects based on the Chekalady approach are phased out of a particular area.

**An approach to monitoring**

A short-lived method developed towards the end of the Chenkalady Project may give some pointers to how community views can be incorporated into the monitoring process.

During SCN consultant Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam’s visits to families, she would implement a three-pronged simultaneous information gathering technique. Whilst Ms. Shanmugam and the relevant supporter interviewed the caregiver, her co-worker would interact with the child, and their driver would speak casually with neighbours and others passers by. The driver would elicit the views of the other community members in line with pre-arranged topics set out in a concealed questionnaire. This latter perspective was felt to be an important addition to the other more obvious sources of information. Often, different “stories” would be told to the different members of the team. Ms. Shanmugam felt strongly that this method offered first-hand information that was not always easily accessible to Supporters.
Project Activities

The key components
The approach used in both the SCN and ESCO projects with separated children

Basic Therapeutic Actions
Mediated Learning Experiences within the family
Child / Youth programmes
Play for children
Loan and Income generation schemes for care-giving families
Group formation for children and foster parents

Project activities of the Chenkalady approach

i. Identify specific problems and provide help

ii. Incorporate/place the children with relatives or other foster caregivers

iii. Work on creating close relationship between children and guardians during home visits.

iv. Training to guardians, children, Grama Sevaka Niladhari, principals, teachers

1. Workshops for foster parents in order for them to understand the feelings of the children. Training to foster parents to bring up a child in the family environment

2. Workshops for foster parents and children by Field Officers

3. Workshops for Children by Field Officers
   0-5 Guardians — Steps of life
   6-9 Children — Basic therapeutic actions
   10-13 Children — Bring out abilities
   16-18 Children — Leadership

4. Training / Sensitisation Workshops for Grama Sevaka Niladhari, Samurdhi, Principal,
   Teachers by external resource persons on “how to approach children during time of war”.

v. Data Collection

vi. Forming groups of foster parents and children

vii. Make arrangements to obtain birth certificates, death certificates and compensations

viii. Make arrangements for children to go to school, if they have not done so previously.

ix. Creating children’s clubs in order to create friendships, unity, patience, happiness, build up physical strength and bring out the abilities of the children. Through library, increase the reading habits of the children.

x. Loan scheme for foster parents in order to improve the well-being of children and their new families

xi. Training to guardians on loans and saving scheme

xii. Monitoring of children

xiii. Initiate legal proceedings related to property and land deeds.

xiv. Provide training to the children on small industries in order to develop self-confidence.

xv. Training for staff
Using the Chenkalady Approach: activities facilitated by ESCO

“My family history” – created at the first residential workshop

Creating a record of their life histories - activities at a life-education programme

Telling a traditional story

“A bird asking the tree for a place to stay” - A play created at a residential workshop

A life-education programme with the ESCO staff

“What’s going on over there?”
Drawing at a residential workshop

A group of foster-mothers discuss children’s problems at a workshop

Play at a children’s club

A day out at the beach for a group of 6 year olds

Opening the end of year “get-together”

The last day of a residential programme
Psychosocial care within the Chenkalady approach

The stated objectives of the projects using the Chenkalady Approach also include the provision of psychological support to children via visits from the staff, although this has perhaps not been implemented with individualised support in quite the way originally envisaged.

The main psychologically oriented activities take place during workshops for the children and caregivers. The home visits focus on observing the treatment of the child by the caregivers, particularly related to the child's education and feeding, and on monitoring the progress of the loans for income-generation scheme for caregiver families. Interpersonal and emotional issues are mainly dealt with if they emerge in the course of these visits or the workshops. This may have a positive benefit of avoiding stigmatisation of children through visits for "counselling", but the focus on material issues or on advice and encouragement may preclude the addressing of deeper personal issues for the children. At the present time, however, the field staff is not equipped to carry out a more advanced counselling role. The approach of Basic Therapeutic Actions (see box below) outlined by Elizabeth Jareg may be most appropriate here, given the limited capacities for interventions beyond supportive listening.

**Basic therapeutic actions**

These could involve a wide range of activities with therapeutic effects. They should ideally have the following characteristics:

- Be rooted in the community, that is, worked out, implemented and evaluated in cooperation with a particular community, involving resourceful persons.
- Be developed through reliable relationships with groups, families and sometimes individuals.
- Have specific aims: i.e. to help children find their family members.
- Promote personal growth through involvement and trusting relationships, and involve children directly wherever possible.
- Be integrated into other relief and rehabilitation activities.
- Be low cost and set in motion sustainable processes that involve people emotionally as well as intellectually.

In the context of the Chenkalady Approach, some examples of the "basic therapeutic actions" being employed are as follows:

- Immediate searches for separated parents, to bring about reunification as soon as possible. Even the fact that the children know that someone is searching can reduce stress considerably.
- Involve children actively in this process, whenever appropriate.
- Prevent separation of siblings after the death of parent(s) by supporting joint placement in foster care or another alternative to institutional care.
- Assist the local community in developing conditions whereby the children can return to a normal daily routine as soon as possible. i.e. Support the rehabilitation of schools.
- Integrate knowledge on how children of different ages react when they are psychologically distressed into primary health care teaching. Open up discussions for mothers.
- Provide courses for teachers to create awareness about how they can support children who have suffered losses, and in general, how they can help their class during wartime. Teachers can play a key role in influencing secondary stress factors such as discrimination and humiliation of children — and can do much to prevent dropping out.
- Provide courses for pre-school teachers on how to recognise and help young children who are distressed. i.e. Young children can be helped to talk about fears and sorrows by using puppets which take up these themes.
- Create community awareness of how children experience the losses of war through discussions with community leaders. This can also be important in minimizing secondary stress factors.
- Activity through play and sport is of great therapeutic value to children — and can be stimulated in the community through the establishment and facilitation of clubs for this purpose.
• Involve children themselves in project activities when possible, as giving children meaningful tasks in the rebuilding or development of their community can be healing. Young adolescents, in particular, need to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. If not given opportunities to do so, they could become passive, depressed or aggressive.

• Group sessions with children and adolescents to allow children to express their needs and feelings. These have to be planned carefully and followed-up over time.

The "basic therapeutic actions" incorporated into the design of the Chenkalady Approach have provided the focus for the staff, children and adults involved in the ESCO projects. These continue to be elaborated (see Annex 3) to address the changing needs of the project as it nears its fourth and final year. However effective these actions are, there is still occasionally the need for specialised individual counselling-style support.

Until recently, the counselling requirements of the ESCO project were primarily met through SCN's consultant in charge of monitoring the project, Ms. Gethsie Shanmugam, as had been the case during the Redd Barna project in Chenkalady. Particular problem situations were related to her, and she would intervene in the field, providing both direct support to the child concerned and also advising project staff on formulating their responses. The effectiveness of this system was hindered because Ms. Shanmugam was not a resident of the area, and would make occasional visits. However, there was no viable alternative for referral, as the few counsellors working within the district were far too busy themselves to play a significant role in the projects.

Given the recent retirement of Ms. Shanmugam, it is unclear how the particular role she occupied will be filled. As this document is being prepared, members of ESCO's field staff are receiving a month-long counselling training in Vellore, India. The coordinators of the project, who often play a troubleshooting role in the organisation are both to receive two-months counselling training from the same institute. This may go some way to enhancing ESCO's internal capacities, but it will take much time to acquire the type of skill and experience that was regularly available through the regular visits from SCN child-care experts.

Financial support within the Chenkalady approach

In contrast to formal large-scale fostering programmes, the Chenkalady approach does not require ongoing financial and material support in order to be viable. The mode of financial support in the Batticaloa projects is very different from the Western model of allowances for caregivers. In the case of the Chenkalady project, it was clear that suspension of material assistance did not immediately end the fostering of the majority of children, although it did result in a number being halted from further education and being engaged in work and marriage to ease the financial burden on the foster carers. The decision to provide care to separated children, therefore, does not seem exclusively contingent on material and programme assistance, although the quality and extent of care may be strongly influenced by this.

However, the role of some form of financial assistance in supporting the care of children may be of vital importance. David Tolfree argues that poverty is nearly always an underlying factor in the chronic problems that affect children who need substitute care in the developing world. This notion seems particularly applicable in the context of Batticaloa, where foster-families can barely provide basic needs to the original members, let alone new dependent children. The fact that many care-giving families are living in poverty puts foster children at risk, since increasingly scarce resources may increase the chances of differential treatment or rejection of the children. Revolving credit schemes tied to the fostering project, therefore, provide two forms of support to the children, by improving the quality of life for her and the family as a whole, but also mitigating the threats that poverty may pose to the care-giving arrangement. The Chenakalady approach, in line with the principles outlined by Dr. Elizabeth Jareg (see section on "The Second Phase" above) aims to inject start-up capital into the foster-family, with the expectation that this will benefit the long-term well-being of the child.
## The multiple roles of the field staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Role primarily</th>
<th>Description of activities</th>
<th>Category of staff involved in this role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor/Befriender</td>
<td>Have supportive conversations with adults and children who suffer psychosocial difficulties in their lives</td>
<td>Supporters, Field Officers &amp; Project Coordinators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help solve conflicts that arise in the family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>Provide the families with necessary items (milk powder, school equipment, etc.) and arranging re-admission into school or free tuition when family cannot afford to pay for this.</td>
<td>Field Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Worker</td>
<td>Help sick in getting medical assistance. Monitor children’s growth and development.</td>
<td>Supporters &amp; Field Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>Prevent children from dropping out of school and encourage them to make progress.</td>
<td>Supporters &amp; Field Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Advise on income generating activities and financial matters.</td>
<td>Supporters &amp; Field Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Advisor</td>
<td>Assist in obtaining legal documents (birth certificates, compensation forms, etc.)</td>
<td>Field Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader for youth</td>
<td>Conduct youth clubs.</td>
<td>Supporters &amp; Field Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Officer</td>
<td>Giving loans and administering savings groups</td>
<td>Field Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainer</td>
<td>Conduct training programmes for the participants and Supporters</td>
<td>Field Officers, Project Coordinator &amp; Visiting Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide/Advisor</td>
<td>Give Supporters/Field Officers guidance and assistance in solving particular difficult problems.</td>
<td>Field Officers, Project Coordinators &amp; Visiting Consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Conduct meetings, oversee the making of weekly work plans, monitoring and reporting on work being done in the field.</td>
<td>Field Officers &amp; Project Coordinators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Overall planning, monitoring and reporting activities. Close contact with SCN Networking with government and non-government agencies</td>
<td>Project Coordinators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many participants and all categories of staff emphasise the importance of field staff's supportive "counselling" or "befriending" role in their interactions with the participants. In 1995, 75% of the supporters described giving psychosocial understanding and support as one of the main tasks of their work. A quarter said that they discuss and help participants solve problems in general. Another quarter listed loans and income generating activities, encouraging children to go to school and conducting preschools as main tasks, and 12.5% also stated that they promote health and nutrition and 12 % reported that they were engaged in leading child/youth clubs.

In 1995, 50% of the supporters said that meeting and talking to the unaccompanied children was what they liked best about the job they do. 25% mentioned specifically that it gives them satisfaction to be able to share the worries and the feelings of the participants and thus to be of help to those who suffer. As one supporter stated, "Consoling people who have problems and sharing their problems with an openness of mind." 40% said that they preferred to meet, talk to and play with children. Three supporters focused on the positive feedback that they get from the participants:

"I like talking to the children and the pleasant and affectionate way the mothers talk to me." "I feel happy when they (widows) accept me and cooperate with me"
"The respect the widows and the unaccompanied children show me during discussion, and the way they do things according to my advice and guidance."

Supporters and Field Officers also deal with conflicts within the caregiver families, through conversations with both the children and the caregivers. Sometimes children are treated differently to the caregiver's own children, being made to do extra household chores and being given little time for their own homework. A few children want to move away to another home. In one case, a child disclosed to a supporter that he felt he had not done well on his a-level examination, and was considering running away to join the LTTE to avoid the angry reaction of his caregivers. In such situations, the supporters act as mediators. They listen, console, give advice and talk to relatives, neighbours or teachers to find solutions to problems.
Recommendations For Future Projects

The lessons learned from the experiences of the Child and Care-giving Family Project of SCN and the Separated Children Projects of ESCO can be instructive to others attempting to forge new initiatives that draw on the Chenkalady Approach. The following ideas may be particularly useful:

Commitment & resources

- Community-based work with separated children requires a serious commitment of time and resources. It is intrinsically long-term work, through which support must be provided consistently to participating children and families throughout the intervention period and perhaps beyond that too. Failure to do so can cause harm.

- This work requires both a long-term financing commitment as well as good long-term access to suitably qualified staff close to the field for referral- which are both often hard to secure.

- It is important when implementing such a community-based project with psychosocial elements that there is careful planning and balanced input from both local staff embedded in the community as well as additional resource persons - experienced psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, counsellors - who may not be available in the community.

- The work is often time-consuming and very labour-intensive. The work outcomes will also be different to other tangible, easily quantifiable outcomes that would be derived from material assistance or relief work, and it is necessary for all levels of management to acknowledge this.

- Projects require skilled staff who can undertake purposeful work with children and family, and who have access to a range of care resources that are used in a planned, rather than reactive, way.

Shared vision

- The lack of a shared understanding of the objectives of the project amongst all implementing staff can compromise its effectiveness. It is important to ensure that the conceptual knowledge with which projects are planned can be translated for use by the staff that will implement the project.

Monitoring

- Ongoing monitoring processes must be put in place from the outset of the project, so that there is constant feedback into project activities. The link between monitoring processes and improvement of project activities must be evident to staff and participating children and adults. It is especially important for the participating community and children to be involved in the monitoring process and have access to its outcomes.

- Monitoring processes need to be sensitive to issues at the level of community groups and especially with regards to the situations of individual children.

This list of recommendations is by no means exhaustive, and many others may be derived from the experiences of working with Separated Children in Batticaloa. However, these may provide some form of guidance in determining key structural or procedural features of future projects. The Chenkalady Approach, as being implemented by ESCO, is continuously being developed and elaborated. It is hoped that this dynamic process may feed into and draw from other similar initiatives that may exist to secure care and support for Separated Children.
Bibliography


Annex 1
ESCO REGISTRATION FORM FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILD (Adapted from Moser and Williamson, 1987)

Important to record information, especially names of people and places, in the language of the local community. This will aid recognition of the child.

- Registration number: ........................................................... Date: ..............................................................
- Present Location of child: ..........................................................................................................................
- Interviewer's name: ................................................................................................................................
- Interviewee's name: ................................................................................................................................

**Description of child**
1. Name (in full): ........................................................................................................................................
2. Father's name: ........................................................................................................................................
3. Mother's name: ........................................................................................................................................
4. Siblings' name/s: age/s: ........................................ (male/female)
5. Where are the siblings: ...........................................................................................................................
6. Sex: ......................................................................................................................................................
7. Date and place of birth: ...........................................................................................................................
8. Age (if date of birth not known): ...........................................................................................................
9. Ethnic group: ........................................................................................................................................
10. Religion: ............................................................................................................................................... 
11. School/s attended: ................................................................................................................................
12. Last permanent address: ....................................................................................................................... 
13. Identifying features or marks: ................................................................................................................ 
14. Personal belongings: ............................................................................................................................

Birth certificate: (yes/no/do not know?)

Have you ever registered the birth? ............................................................................................................

- **Accompanying child relatives or friends**
15. Names: .................................. ages: ............... sex:.......................... relationship:............................

- **Family members (include siblings, other relatives and household members)**
16. Name: ..................................................................................................................................................
17. Relationship: ........................................................................................................................................
18. Age: .....................................................................................................................................................
19. Address: .............................................................................................................................................
20. Present whereabouts: ............................................................................................................................
21. (if parent/s dead) Date: ...................... place: ...................... cause of death: .............................

- **Guardian/s**
22. Name: .................................. age:........ address: ........................................ relationship: .........
23. Children of Guardian: ................................................................. age:........ (female/male)
24. Total number of people in the family, children and separated children: ........................................

25. Did the child have any property when you got him/her? ..............................................................
    In who's name: ...................................................................................................................................
    Explain: ..............................................................................................................................................

26. If the parent/s has died, did you ask for compensation?
    Yes: …… Date of application: …… Rupees: …………………………… (given/not given)
    No: …… Why didn't you apply? ........................................................................................................

27. What are your present belongings? ...................................................................................................

28. Your income? .....................................................................................................................................

29. What do you do to improve your living standards? ...........................................................................

30. The house you live in, does it belong to you? ..................................................................................
    Sanitation facilities? .............................................. Water facilities? ..............................................

31. Does anybody from your family have health problems? .............................................................
    Name: ................................................................................................................................. age: ..............
    Explain: ..........................................................................................................................................

32. What are the medical facilities you can access near by? 
    Village doctor: ...........................................private hospital: .................. Hospital: .............................

33. Do you have any problem providing food/ meals to the family? ...................................................

34. How many times do you all eat? ........................................................................................................

35. What kind of things do you eat? ....................................................................................................... 

36. Do you drink boiled water? ..............................................................................................................

37. If parent/s died what are the reasons for the death? ...........................................................................
    Snake bite
    Accident
    Suicide
    War
    Others

38. How has the parent/s’ death been explained to the child? ..............................................................

39. In your knowledge, has the child seen any violent activities that could mentally shock Him/her?  
    ....................................................................................................................................................... 

40. Do you know if the child himself/herself, directly faced any violent situation? 
    Explain: .............................................................................................................................................. 

41. What is your opinion about how the child is affected by the separation? ........................................

42. What are the activities the child does everyday? ............................................................................

43. Has anybody in the house experienced situations which caused mental distress? (i.e. Faced 
    violence, saw the violent incidents, disappearances, loss of property etc.)

44. Does the guardian accept the child with positive mind? .................................................................

    • **Circumstances when child was found/ identified**

45. When, where was child found? (dates, time, place) 

46. Who was the child with when found?
• Information concerning the child's separation from the family

47. Date, place of separation and reasons for separation

48. When and where did child last see parents/other family members?

49. (If parents presumed dead) Why does child believe this to be so?

• Information about child's life before separation

50. Record people, places, important events

• What has happened to the child since separation?

51. Where and with whom has the child lived, and how long?

52. record people, places, events the child remembers

• Information about the child's physical condition, health, past medical history

• Education

53. Does the child go to school?
Name of school .............................................................. grade........................

54. If not going to school regularly, why? ...........................................................

55. Do you have any other children in the family who go to school?
Yes:..........how many:.............. name of school/s:......................................................

No:.......... how many:.............. why not going to school:...............................................

56. Do you have any problem of sending children to school (money problem, attitude of teacher, attitude of students)
No:........ Explain:...........................................................................................................

• Information about the child's present emotional state
(note relationship with others; daily care of child; unmet needs)

• Information about the child's wishes and plans for the future

57. With whom does the child want to be reunited?..............................................................

58. Relationship:..................................................................................................................

59. Where and how might they be located:...........................................................................

• Other information
Include names and addresses of those who may be able to give further information on the child and the circumstances of the separation.

Name of interviewer: ...........................................................................................................
Organization:.....................................................................................................................
Place of interview:..............................................................................................................

• Programme
Explain how ESCO can support these children
Discuss how the family can use the support given by ESCO
Discuss with the family the programme framework, what issues and problems should be addressed (Note down issues to focus on)
This chapter is written with the focus on the individual child. One has in mind unaccompanied children who are being registered, children in institutions, certain children in school who the teacher is worried about, children who have been brought by parents to health clinics, individual children in refugee camps whose behaviour is causing concern.

One is aware, however, that in field practice, one will mostly be relating to families, and therefore one will have to take into account the whole family situation to understand that of the individual child. Of course the context will also be important for children living in the above-mentioned situations as well.

One is also aware that the following model of assessment is an "ideal", and that only very occasionally will one be able to carry out such a detailed, systematic investigation of a child's situation. However it is valuable to know what you are leaving out of an assessment. Also, such an overview may make it easier for one to decide on priorities when planning, for example, home visits: "today I will concentrate on how the child is coping with daily life".

In carrying out such an assessment, we are trying to get a picture of the total burden of psychological pressure children have had, or are having to bear, to get an idea of how this is affecting children's interaction with others, and their development as a whole.

We are then in a position to use our observations in making some suggestions to children and others close to them, on what might be helpful. We may also be able to make children and their families less anxious about certain aspect of the children's behaviour. We may be able to reinforce positive actions already started on a child's behalf; and we may be able to intervene on negative attitudes and action.

Generally speaking a full assessment of a child's emotional and behavioural state would include:

- **TAKING THE HISTORY**
- **OBSERVATION OF CHILD**

This can be done while doing the history taking where one observes the child's behavior, mood, functioning, developmental level. However it will be very important also to obtain information from other sources:

- **PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, HEALTH AND NUTRITIONAL STATE OF THE CHILD** (if appropriate in situation)

This may be anything from a detailed examination to simple observations of what you can see as regards the child's state of health.

In fact all the above procedures can be rolled into one with some practice and above all, patience.

**TAKING THE HISTORY**

Taking a careful history from the child, can be part and parcel of a “supporting conversation” which also gives a child some help (see training module number 3 - talking with the listening children). As suggested, this should never take the form of a "questionnaire" type of assessment, but a sensitively unfolding conversation guided also by the child.

Gathering information from parents, siblings, teachers and any other persons who have relevant information is, of course, also of vital importance.

Within this history are certain features which are known to be especially significant to the child's psychological state and development. These are:

- The age of the child at the time of the occurrence of the events is of importance.

- The total number of losses the child has suffered (parents, siblings, other central relatives, friends, home, school, pets) and how these have affected the child's life (for example, moves to different places).
- The context in which these losses have occurred - (famine, sudden violent attack from armed forces, "family massacre", bombing from a more distant source). Here the critical factors will be personal involvement and the degree of preparation for the disastrous event.

- Whether or not the child was witness to atrocities committed on parents/others (feelings of guilt and helplessness).
- Whether or not the child him/herself was forced to participate in atrocities against close relatives or others.
- Whether the child was "instrumentalised" - deliberately trained to carry out military action. The child's life under captivity - what was it like?
- The degree to which the child was him/herself attacked, wounded, mutilated, sexually abused, or (frequently) humiliated verbally.
- Whether or not the child was together with his/her family when under attack/the disaster occurred.
- Whether or not the child received immediate help from someone, and how eventual losses have or have not been replaced following the event.
- The degree to which the child is still living under continual threat or not.
- The child's perception and understanding of what has happened, expressed through feelings of fear, grief, guilt, anger, hope, despair. (Children may perceive different happening as more traumatic than adults would).
- The general socio-economic context the child is at present living in. Children when asked usually place great importance on: school, the availability of food and clothing, the presence of surviving relatives.
- How children feel about the way they are being treated at the moment. Are there any secondary stress factors in operation?
- What resources does this child have? Resilience - personal strengths, health, intelligence, social attributes, determination, visions for the future, etc.

HEALTH AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF THE CHILD

This is of course always an important part of any full assessment, but I will only touch on some main features which can have particular significance on the child's emotional and behavioral state, for example:

- Presence of severe malnutrition
- Indication (growth stunting) of chronic under nutrition, perhaps accompanied by developmental delays
- Ongoing illness - e.g. malaria fever etc
- Parasitical infection - anemia of severe degree
- Infected wounds causing constant pain, bad smell or limiting movement
- Disablement/mutilation
- Pregnancy in young girls/rape

These are conditions which primary health care workers should be looking for and able to make immediate assessments on.

It is also important to keep in mind that all the above situations will influence the child's psychological state and also affect the quality of interview with the child.

Obviously the first priority must be to help the child recover, while giving reassurances and comfort, without demanding detailed information until the child has recovered sufficiently.

(the case of pregnancy in young girls is discussed further below)
WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE/IS BEING DONE TO HELP THE CHILD?

The information may be given by the children themselves, parents or other close persons. It can include magic rituals, portions, traditional or "western" medicines, punishments, sending the child to an institution, visits to priests, religious rituals, comforting and talking to child, removal from school, restriction of movement. Try to establish if any form of reaction has been given. Has it helped? What were the thoughts behind the actions? How does the child perceive the help he/ she has been given? Are the actions increasing or decreasing the child's stress?

DISTURBANCES OF BEHAVIOR - DISTURBANCES OF EMOTIONS

In the course of your conversation with the child, you may already have noticed behavioral and emotional disturbances in the child - according to how well you know the child.

In my experience most of the children I have met did not "show" any "special" behavior - except perhaps being a bit solemn in the initial interview phase, and this may of course be because the child is shy of a stranger. However, what you will often find as you invite the child to have a conversation with you, is a long standing unarticulated grief which has not been recognized or comforted or released. Often this is associated with other deep-seated feelings, such as guilt, anger, hate, longing for change.

If children feel themselves changed, perhaps they will be able to describe how they feel they have changed. Adults who know the child well may also be asked this question.

But certain other behavioural disturbances are also met with, which must always be related to age and the experiences found in the history of the child.

- Suicidal thoughts may be expressed {admitted}by young adolescents, if they feel you can be trusted.

- Constant fear may produce certain rituals in child ten - and is a coping mechanism to deal with the psychological pressure. The child has the magic idea that the fearful thing will not happen if they carry out certain actions. Many of us can remember such rituals from our childhood.

- Isolation may be caused by the fear of a certain event happening. A child may refuse to go out of the house or go to school. This may be a sensible and realistic response, but may be inappropriate if the danger is not great, or has been over for some time.

- Anxiety, which is a more defused state, is often expressed especially in small children with experience of separation - as clinging, shadowing, and may also lead to isolation and withdrawal.

Small children are unable to express what they are afraid of, but may state strongly that they do not want to leave their mothers or other persons they are attached to as already mentioned.

Anxiety can also appear as psychosomatic disturbances as we have already talked about. Is the child not going to school because of constant head/stomach aches?

Both anxiety and fear can show itself in the child adopting behavior patterns which belong to a younger age, such as talking baby talk, wetting the bed and clinging.

- Altered state of activity - One can observe hyperactivity {the child being very active}, when the child restlessly moves around without being able to concentrate on anything. Or extreme passivity, as in very depressive state.

- Altered physiological patterns - here one is thinking of disturbed sleep, often associated with nightmares. Eating patterns can also be disturbed as a result of psychosocial disturbance.
Refusal to eat, associated with guilt and depression, can also occur, which might explain loss of weight. But it may simply mean the family can no longer afford food, if the breadwinner has been killed.

Look for loss of weight - does the child/parent connect this up to the time after certain events?
- Aggressive behavior or inability to solve conflicts without resorting to violence - this is often the most difficult to deal with if it is severe, partly because it provokes anger and unsympathetic attitudes in others. It is perhaps most typically seen in young boys who themselves have undergone or been exposed to brutality and aggression over time.

Again it would be important to ask the children if they feel this change in themselves. Was there a time when they did not feel like this?

It may be associated with anti social behavior such as stealing, refusal to comply with social norms, sabotage of group initiatives.

- Altered states of reality or perception - this is less common in children, and associated with overwhelming experiences which the child has not been able to deal with psychologically.

The child is confused, may see or hear imaginary persons/things, has distorted perceptions of other people (may cling desperately to some, or be frightened of others), cannot join in relationships with other children, may be self destructive, may not talk normally, or answer questions in a way one would expect from his/her age. Learning will be affected. Such a child may also show many disturbed responses to noises - for example, will not react to a school bell, but be terrified of the outside noise of traffic.

This state is in psychiatric terms called "psychotic". It does not mean that the child is mentally retarded. Usually children can be helped through this acute condition back to a course of relatively normal development, but will need help from a sustained relationship with a close person guided by professional insight.
Annex 3
Measures to Strengthen ESCO's Projects for Separated Children

After a process of reviewing ESCO's projects for Separated Children and consultation with both ESCO staff and resource persons closely associated with the organization for some years, a number of key project/institutional areas were identified for development. Together with ESCO management, a series of activities have been planned to bring about the desired changes. Although the primary emphasis is on strengthening the Separated Children's projects, benefits will also accrue to the organisation's other child-focused work and its overall institutional development. Below are outlined the planned activities for 2001 and 2002, as well as the rationale for each of these.

Improving Access to Resources

As a community-based organisation in Batticaloa, ESCO operates outside the main hub of humanitarian and development work in Sri Lanka. Its projects have frequently benefited from world-class technical inputs and significant institutional support from Save the Children Norway. However, it remains necessary to widen the organisation's access to other human and material resources within Sri Lanka, to sustain ESCO's needs as it increases the scale and scope of its activities. Implementing the following activities will help ESCO to achieve this.

Activity 1: Advisory Meetings

**Rationale:** Until recently, the close technical involvement of SCN staff member Gethsie Shanmugam in the Separated Children’s Project has provided ESCO with invaluable support and guidance in implementing and developing their interventions. Ms. Shanmugam's considerable experience and skills, not to mention her role in developing the original model on which the ESCO projects are based, made her a unique resource for the projects. The retirement of Ms. Shanmugam from SCN has provided the impetus for ESCO to seek out new mechanisms for obtaining project guidance and technical support. Consulting a wider range of perspectives on the projects' progress could also benefit ESCO's work. Additionally, ESCO must ensure that lines of communication between SCN staff and itself continue to function well, to benefit the projects. The proposed advisory meetings aim to fulfill these needs.

**Details:** Quarterly meetings with advisors will be convened to provide ESCO with support in reviewing its on-going work and plans related to its Separated Children’s projects and Widow’s Project, and annually to assist with long-term strategic plans related to its work with children. The advisors will make their inputs in an honorary capacity and will have no formal involvement in the organisation's work or internal issues.

The quarterly meetings will bring together ESCO’s management, one contact person each from ESCO's partners, SCN and UNICEF, and three external associates. The focus of these meetings will be to review the work of the past three months and provide input on plans for the near future. ESCO will provide the advisors with a quarterly report prior to each meeting.

The first quarterly meeting of the advisors each year will also coincide with the annual strategy meeting. In addition to the regular advisors, senior programme managers from SCN and UNICEF will also attend these meetings. The objective of these strategy meetings will be to review and generate long-term institutional and project goals.

Activity 2: Obtaining Guidance on Preparation of Reports, Proposals and Budgets

**Rationale:** Although confident of the value of their own work, ESCO recognises that its management possesses neither the fluency of the humanitarian/development dialect of English nor familiarity with donor perspectives to effectively bid for the financial or technical support its projects require. Guidance from persons with these capacities and additional experience in project planning could help represent ESCO's work more effectively to partners and potential...
In order to receive critical and editorial comments on reports, proposals and budgets to be submitted by ESCO, these documents are to be posted in a draft form to a handful of persons familiar with ESCO’s work, donor interests and project planning considerations. The reviewers’ comments will be returned to ESCO prior to the submission of the documents. The reviewers will provide their input on an honorary basis.

**Activity 3: Identifying Trainers, Field Collaborators and Donor Institutions**

**Rationale:** ESCO’s expansion of its work with children could potentially over-stretch the limited resources available to the organisation. Increasing numbers of children participating in their projects calls for the recruitment of new workers and bolstering of existing field staff. Skills training for both groups are essential if current standards are to be maintained or if the quality of ESCO’s interventions is to be enhanced. Equally, the range and complexity of problems that ESCO staff encounter in their field work suggests that they would benefit from access to a wide range of professionals and experienced field workers (i.e. psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, physicians, lawyers, community development workers) for referral and consultation. The problems that arise also occasionally entail expenditures that ESCO has no capacity to make. A greater awareness of humanitarian and charitable funds that support child-focused activities would facilitate support for such needs, and perhaps help ESCO plan its future funding strategies. Identification of such human and material resources could be key to strengthening the Separated Children’s projects in particular, and ESCO’s work in general.

**Details:** ESCO will contact local and national consortia and child-focused organisations to identify donors, trainers and potential field collaborators. Directories and databases of projects and personnel will also be consulted. ESCO will document the contact details, locations, areas of expertise, availability and costs of trainers and collaborators. Details of donor agencies and specific funds for work with/on behalf of children will be recorded, as will information on lay organizations that make charitable donations or provide materials for children.

**Activity 4: Establishing an Emergency Support Fund**

**Rationale:** In the course of the Separated Children’s projects, ESCO staff members often become aware of children in situations of acute material need. As SCN and other donors have strict budget spending guidelines and limited approval for ‘contingency’ expenditure, ESCO often is unable to provide support that may be significant to the well being of the children. The occasional personal donations received are insufficient to meet the needs that arise, which are often urgent. An adequate reserve fund for such instances could greatly assist children within the Separated Children’s projects and other ESCO interventions.

**Details:** This financial resource is intended for use in instances where allocations within the ESCO budget cannot be used to respond to situations of compelling need. In order to be free of donor constraints on expenditure, funds are to be collected from public donations or through ESCO income generation activities, and are to be administered according to a set of guidelines established by ESCO. Established clear procedures for determining which needs are to be met must be a crucial pillar of this scheme. This fund is to be audited along with all other ESCO accounts, and records of expenditure will be made publicly available. An informational leaflet or an internet-page may be used for both soliciting donations as well as for sharing records of expenditure. The success of this scheme may have implications for ESCO’s funding strategy to sustain itself in the long-term.
Improving working practices

The envisaged measures to improve working practices takes into account both prospects for the projects' future and also the long-term institutional development of ESCO.

Activity 1: Documentation Upgrade

Rationale: At present, ESCO does not have a documentation system that is adequate to easily generate project statistics. More importantly, there are no records of the status of the individual children participating in the Separated Children's project. ESCO's current practice of collecting weekly field "accomplishment" reports is useful, but these records are not used for planning and monitoring work over longer periods of time. The available information on individual children is also not sufficiently integrated into planning and monitoring practices. Slight enhancement of the existing practices of record keeping and the development of a system for storage and easy retrieval of data on individual children would significantly benefit the Separated Children's projects, not least by providing a means by which ESCO can substantially demonstrate the outcomes of its work.

Details: The records kept by ESCO on the Separated Children's projects are to be managed through a documentation system that can function as the following:

- A planning tool for interventions
- A monitoring tool for assessing success of interventions and status of individual children
- A record-keeping and report-generating tool for donors
- A training tool for current and new staff members

This documentation system will involve entering information on individual children from field notes and weekly reports into a database at the ESCO office. Apart from detailed records on each child, information will also be kept on the foster family/parent. A set of guidelines will be developed to assist field officers, supporters and village workers in gathering and using this information. There will be a regular review of all children's records (every 4 months). This will be useful for monitoring the status of individual children, and planning individual intervention plans for them. In addition, information will be elicited from children and foster families to help evaluate the progress of interventions. The process of reviewing records and planning interventions based on these can also offer an opportunity for on-the-job training of current and new staff members.

Activity 2: Policy on Sharing of Information and Visitors

Rationale: Currently, ESCO is requested by its partners, donors and other NGOs to share information about its programmes. Often this involves the facilitation of field visits, including meetings and interviews with children participating in their projects. This has caused a tangible diversion of staff time and also disrupts regular work with families. Although they are frustrated by visits that are voyeuristic and do not yield any apparent benefit to children, ESCO staff finds it difficult to prevent them. Also, ESCO staff are worried that sharing details about their participating children may make them vulnerable to exploitative interviewers in development studies or in the press.

Details: A policy is to be developed on the privacy of participating children and foster families vis a vis external visitors such as donors, journalists or other NGOs. This policy will cover the sharing of ESCO records on children and their families, as well as conditions and circumstances of visits by persons external to the projects. Amongst the possible options for this may be a requirement that the children receive some direct benefits from meets (ie. Activities facilitated by visitor).
Activity 3: Strengthening of Psychosocial Activities

Rationale: ESCO's Separated Children's projects are based upon sound principles and a viable methodology for psychosocial support. However, there has been little development of the project's "basic therapeutic actions" beyond those originally devised during the SCN initiative. Therefore, there is much scope for extending the scope of the psychosocial activities of project, through upgrading the current practices and by introducing supplementary activities.

Details: The particular activities within the Separated Children's project are to be developed and strengthened to enhance the positive psychosocial impact on participating children. Amongst these would be the following:
- A personal and family history project through children's clubs
- Follow-up on living-in and workshop sessions for children, foster siblings and parents
- Help-the-Community projects (ie. project for children/adults at local hospital)
- Child development and parenting sessions for foster parents
- Integration with non-separated children in all club activities and many other project activities, mixing children from parallel ESCO projects as well as other children from the community.
- Establishment of youth group activities for older children and young adults who are no-longer formally within the project

Activity 4: Staff Development

Rationale: Continuing staff development is necessary under any conditions, though particularly important because of the rapid accumulation of new field staff.

Details: A schedule of staff training is to be devised, to provide new skills and refresh those already acquired by the ESCO field officers, Supporters, village workers and the Project Coordinator and Assistant Project Coordinator. The training activities will be spread over a minimum 2 year period, so as to avoid overburdening the staff.

Psychosocial Support Skills
- Listening and responding skills development
- Problem-solving methods Tools for working with children
- Principles behind the project's psychosocial activities

Health Training
- Identifying malnourishment and guiding nutrition
- First aid training

Monitoring and Evaluating
- General Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation
- Instruction on using the new documentation system
- Logical framework analysis and planning

Child Rights
- Child participation
- Convention on Rights of the Child

Child Development
- Development 0-2 years
- Development 2-6 years
- Development 7-12 years
- Development 13-18 years

Gender
- Understanding gender
- Gender socialization of children
Annex 4
Guidelines for ESCO Guests and Visitors - 2001

Background

At a meeting with ESCO’s advisors on March 10th, 2001, it was decided that the organisation should implement a policy governing facilitation of access to beneficiary children, their families or information pertaining to either party. The main reason for this policy is that ESCO is annually experiencing increased numbers of visits and inquiries from persons interested in their work and the participating children. Visitors include local and international NGO personnel, journalists, freelance researchers, as well as representatives, resource persons and researchers referred by their funding agencies.

Some of these visits benefit ESCO’s work greatly, with visitors providing skills training, valuable feedback and other resources to the organisation and the children it works with. Others, ESCO believes, benefit children elsewhere, as visitors take away information and ideas that may be useful to the provision of services in other regions of the country and the world.

Whilst ESCO values opportunities for sharing its work with others, it also notes that meeting and showing visitors around is increasingly costly in terms of staff time. In the year 2000, at least 2 person-months of staff time were spent on visitors. This is significant to a small organisation such as ESCO. More importantly, it is feared that field visits by guests can disrupt the lives of the children and families with whom ESCO works, if their visits are inadequately integrated with the ongoing project activities. The presence of inquisitive visitors or unfamiliar onlookers can make children uncomfortably aware that they are subjects to be observed and may undermine the objectives of helping them maintain a sense of being normal individuals. In the event that visitors photograph or gather information on children, the promised copies of prints and articles are often never sent back to the children or ESCO. There is no form of accountability for how visitors use the material they gather during their visit. These are some of the reasons for instituting these guidelines related to visitors. ESCO trusts that their guests will agree with the need for these measures, and that they will assist in maintaining these practices to protect the privacy of children and strengthen their right to control information related to their personal lives.

The guidelines

- Visitors to the field are requested to fill out a log-book, specifying the following details:
  - Name; Organisation/project; Objectives of visit; Projected outputs from visit; Contact details
- Visitors are requested to send ESCO copies of all writings and photographs that relate to the children met during field visits. ESCO undertakes to deliver the copies of photographs to the relevant children, and translate articles and reports for them (unless this would be damaging to the children).
- All visitors to the field are requested to perform some activity of direct benefit / interest to the children they meet (ie. Facilitate an activity, tell a story, teach a class or a game - NOT provide material donations).
- ESCO must obtain the informed consent of children / adults prior to interviews or field visits by the organisation’s guests. This must include providing detailed information of the visitors and their objectives to the children / families.
- Case details related to children or families cannot be shared by ESCO, unless this is in the course of formal technical supervision, there is informed consent from the relevant persons, identifying information is withheld, or unless there are extenuating circumstances.
Annex 5

International and National Legal Frameworks Relevant to Separated Children

Sri Lankan law

Definition of terms

Child: There is no standard or uniform definition of the term "child" in the Law of Sri Lanka and different ages have been adopted to distinguish "children" and "young persons" from "adults" and "majors".

Orphan: (In accordance with the Orphanages Ordinance) "orphan" when applied to a legitimate child, means a child both of whose parents are dead, or one of whose parents is dead, the other being incapable of acting as a parent; and when applied to an illegitimate child, means a child whose mother is dead.

- Article 12 of the Sri Lankan Constitution, within Chapter III guaranteeing fundamental rights provides that "Nothing in this Article shall prevent special provision being made by law, subordinate legislation or executive action, for the advancement of women, children or disabled persons."

  It is seen that by specific mention in the constitution not only are children not to be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, caste, religion etc. but provision is also made for enabling special provision for promoting the advancement of children.

- Article 27 (13) of the Sri Lankan Constitution, within Chapter IV on the Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties, states: "The State shall promote with special care the interest of children and youth, so as to ensure their full development, physical, mental, moral, religious and social, and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination."

  However, Article 29 of the same chapter declares the following:

  "The provisions of this Chapter do not confer or impose legal rights or obligations, and are not enforceable in any court or tribunal. No question of inconsistency with such provisions shall be raised in any court or tribunal."

Statutory enactments

- The orphanages ordinance (ordinance Nos. 22 of 1941,45 of 1946) was enacted to provide for the registration and control of orphanages and other institutions for the boarding, care and maintenance of orphans and deserted children.

- The adoption of children ordinance (ordinance Nos. 24 of 1941,54 of 1943) was enacted to provide for the adoption of children, for the registration as custodians of persons having care, custody or control of children of whom they are not the natural parents.

- (Section 34 of the Children and Young Persons Ordinance) A child or young person is said to be in need of care or protection if such person has no parent or guardian, or a parent or guardian unfit to exercise, or not exercise proper care and guardianship as a result of which the child or young person is either falling into bad associations, or exposed to moral danger, or is beyond control, or is a person in respect of whom certain offences have been committed. For the purpose of this section the fact that a child or young person is found destitute or found wandering without any selected place or abode and without visible means of subsistence, or is found loitering for the purpose of begging or receiving alms shall be evidence that he is exposed to moral danger.
**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

- **Article 7**
  
  1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.
  
  2. State Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.

- **Article 20**
  
  1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.
  
  2. States parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.
  
  3. Such care should include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary, placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

- **Article 38**
  
  1. States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child.
  
  2. State Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities.
  
  3. State Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, State Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.
  
  4. In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, State parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.
In the gardens of different houses there are different kinds of flowers,
   Even amongst these there are flowers of different colour,
       Some have love and some have good habits,
       Some have beauty and some have genuineness,
       Some have money and some have character,
       Some have desperation and some have "hiccups",
       Some have disease and some have ailments,
       Not all the flowers can become fruits,
Bur if they do become fruits and ripen it will become a delicious friend of the tongue,
   What to say? What gives me this ache?
       We are some of these living flowers,
       Some day God will come to pour water for us.