

To: Professor Sunil J. Wimalawansa, President, I-FREED, Houston, USA:

**RE: Application of support for identification and protection of
Vulnerable children in the affected areas following recent tsunami disaster
in Sri Lanka.**

The Tsunami waves that destroyed the coastal belt of Sri Lanka have left many children as orphans without homes and a family. As an Institution established for the well being of the Sri Lankan children, the National Child Protection Authority in collaboration with other Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations has decided to provide assistance to these children. In order to provide the maximum assistance, the NCPA has decided to solicit a fund for donors, supporters willing to contribute to this project.

Prof Harendra de Silva*, Chairman of the National Child Protection Authority is working with governmental and non-governmental agencies and teams of local volunteers to assess and meet the needs of these children. One already identified concern is the protection of orphaned and separated children from child traffickers who are already exploiting the confusion that has followed in the wake of the disaster.

The fund will utilize money in 3 stages.

1. **Immediate assessment** of the orphaned either with a single parent or both dead.

This has already been completed in Galle with 50 law college students and some medical students and the preliminary data is being completed. We found that 28 families had lost both parents leaving 44 children as orphans, 126 families have lost their mother, while 74 families have lost their fathers

The next stage was to assess the situation in Matara and Hambantota, which is now, be complete with approximately 100 student volunteers. Current estimate is that 20 families had lost both parents, 100+ families have lost their mother, while another 100+ families have lost their fathers.

One has to keep in mind that many of these families are dysfunctional to start with, and the loss of even one parent, especially the mother will make matters worse.

Funding is required for such assessments and includes the costs of transportation and food and water for the volunteers. We kindly request I-FREED to provide us \$3,000 for the assessments in the areas in Matara to Kataragama. We expect to seek funding from other sources for assessment in the Eastern regions of Sri Lanka in the near future.

There are reports now of possible abductions and sale of children. There is a need to investigate these reports and bring the children to safety. The process has started with the NCPA police investigating these complaints and set up information telephone numbers. The process to get data on children who have been taken by relatives has started with paper notices and media briefings. The reports would then be investigated, documented; suitability of temporary custodianship verified and the legal procedure initiated as a medium/long term measures. The data from the North and East has not come from the UNICEF yet. But likely to be much worse.

2. Care and protection of children in care facilities identified by us.

The facilities for short term and medium term care in institutions that are formally acceptable have been identified. Other facilities that have offered places will be assessed by the NCPA. The numbers needing care would be only a 'guesstimate' and would be at least a 1,000. The Cost per child per month would be around 50\$ US per child per month.

3. Long term management including psychological counseling.

The long term management would include the monitoring of the care of children who are with relatives or single parent families, including the recruitment, setting up the monitoring mechanism and professional training. A long term community based, culturally appropriate and sustainable trauma counseling program is planned.

The highlights would be: Training of trainers, establishing the network and logistics of district and divisional level trainers to train grassroots level persons such as teachers, priests, social workers and other sensitive persons in the villages to identify traumatic events (not necessarily related to the Tsunami) and be able to manage through basic coping skills such as through play/group therapy, music, or art therapy. They should also be able to refer patients with major problems to psychologists or child psychiatrists. Supply of working toys and other educational material would also benefit children.

In order to collect necessary fund the NCPA has opened an Account.

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION AUTHORITY; Bank of Ceylon SUPER GRADE Branch; BASELINE ROAD, BORELLA, COLOMBO 8

Zip Code BCE YL KL XA ; Account No 00380008001507

Please contributions remitted to this account.

* **Harendra de Silva** is a distinguished Sri Lankan Paediatrician (elected honorary fellow of UK Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in 2004) with a reputation as a tireless advocate for the rights and welfare of children. In the Child Protection community he is perhaps best known for his child protection work with children who are the victims of armed conflict. He had already been invited as a keynote speaker at the ISPCAN/BASPCAN International Congress in 2006. He was recently awarded: the Senior Ashoka Fellowship by The Ashoka Foundation (Washington DC) for Social Entrepreneurship, Outstanding Asian Paediatrician Award By the Asia Pacific Paediatric Association, the honorary fellowship of the Pakistani College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Most Outstanding Citizen's Award by The Lions Club (Sri Lanka)