

# Noolaham Foundation

## Project Report



<b>Project Title</b>	Improvement of e-Learning Facilities and Soft Skills of the Students of Children's Home
<b>Project Number</b>	NF/PG/2014/0008
<b>Project Location</b>	Hindu Board Children Home (HBCH), Thirunelvely, Jaffna.
<b>Sector</b>	User Communities, Information Literacy
<b>Implementing agency and contribution</b>	Noolaham Foundation (NF)
<b>Grant Agency and Contribution</b>	Ratnam Foundation, UK, HBCH
<b>Total Budget and Expenditure</b>	Budget LKR – LKR 272,000.00 Ratnam Foundation LKR - 209,000.00 (Obtained LKR 100,000.00 only from Ratnam Foundation) Noolaham Foundation LKR – 45,000.00 HBCH – LKR 18,000.00
<b>Project Period</b>	April 2014 – December 2014
<b>Responsible Stakeholders</b>	Various Stakeholders, Volunteers of the Noolaham Foundation

### Summary

The **Improvement of e-Learning Facilities and Soft Skills of the Students of Children's Home** project is to increase the capacity of 50 school going children in Hindu Board Children Home on their soft skills, general knowledge, and leadership. Other objective of the project is to introduce and help them familiarize to Moodle based interactive virtual learning system and digitize, archive education related document and conducting promotion activities for improving the learning facilities for the children home's students. Noolaham Foundation implemented this project in collaboration with Hindu Board Children Home (HBCH), Thirunelvely, Jaffna.

During the project period twenty three training sessions were conducted. Each training session lasted for about three hours. Forty six students and six resource persons participated in these training sessions. The training series included the following: personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills complement hard skills which children are required to develop in order to increase their employability in the future. They are related to feelings, emotions, insights and IQ.

Further NF's virtual learning environment program which is called "Pallikoodam" and digital library ([noolaham.org](http://noolaham.org)) were introduced. Information Literacy training was provided so that they can search, evaluate, obtain and use study materials and other information sources from Noolaham Digital Library, Epallikoodam and the internet.

## **Introduction and Background**

For over 25 years, the Sri Lankan civil war caused significant hardships for the Tamil population, the environment and the economy of the north and east provinces of the country. The war was very costly in terms of human lives lost and civilian casualties. Many children are also affected by this war. They have lost either one or both parents, their families are broken and they live below poverty line. Many of these children are admitted to children's homes. There are more than 20 children's homes/ centers in the Jaffna district. There are five children homes coming under the Nallur divisional secretariat division and HBCH is one of them.

In Jaffna, development activities and projects focus less on children homes compared to infrastructure developments after the end of the war. Children homes play a major role in protecting child rights. Many children homes face lack of government support for their day-to-day activities and the children in these homes have inadequate educational opportunities, tools, academic resources and facilities. As a result, they are unable to perform well in the General Certificate Examinations. Ultimately this leads to a situation where students are forced to give up education. And these scenario recurs over time. Educational learning facilities for school going students must be increased in each children's home. In other words, children homes face shortage of good guides and highly qualified teachers. Specially, ordinary level and advanced level students from children's homes face lack of educational materials. Normally, those who attend private tuition classes get good learning materials and other facilities necessary for their education, but those at children's home students do not attend private tuition classes due to lack of financial resources.

The Hindu Board Children Home assists the children in the northern part of Sri Lanka. It provides equal opportunity to all disadvantaged children who are seek its services and help them have access to education It does not discriminate against children on the basis of religion, caste, creed or any other factor. There are 250 children benefitted by the HBCH. Noolaham Foundation which has been driven by the benevolent support of volunteers documents all spheres of knowledge related to the Sri Lankan Tamil speaking communities in Sri Lanka. NF closely works with the Tamil speaking community in Jaffna district. NF hopes to save students' education through Pallikoodam program. It promotes a virtual Learning environment for Tamil speaking children and students. Thus NF and Ratnam Foundation collaboratively work with HBCH to empower children and improve their skills. Children, who are at a home like this one, need personal encouragement to dedicate themselves in studies. This project would be very much useful to those children.

Ratnam Foundation is a UK based non-profit charity organization that raises funds to support and improve the education and health of socially and economically disadvantaged Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Over the years, Ratnam Foundation has achieved great success through its dedicated services to meet the needs of children and hospitals in the civil war affected areas of Sri Lanka.

## **The implementation process**

The importance of the required soft skills was identified and clustered by Noolaham Foundation. Well trained resource persons were identified from the field of counseling,

sociology and psychology. The resource persons have been contacted well in advance to design tools for every single skill. The resource persons were given the following information so that they could effectively contribute to the training activity. They are type and goal of the training, purpose of the event, participants.

The information regarding the input such as time and duration, date, and place of activity, time allotted for training and suggested methods to be used, or how participant will be involved were discussed with relevant resource persons. The required training materials and human resources were provided by NF. After the training, besides questionnaire, other methods of post training evaluation like interview, self dairies, observations and supplement tests were conducted.

### **Objective/s and Achievements or Results**

This project took place under the Noolaham Foundation's objective of fostering User Communities and providing Information Literacy training. Noolaham Foundation contributed towards the capacity for 46 students through the resource team and promotional activities. Taking responsibility, decision making skill, communication skills, healthy life style and life skills are promoted too. Further this project helps students to learn actions skill to prevent substance abuse, enhance self esteem, reduce loneliness, promote health and support in academic and personal achievements.

During the implementation period resource persons handled the students with many different techniques at practical and theory sessions. Each targeted student was recognized as an individual, and children's opinions and needs were included in the activities carried out. The resource persons and the students maintained a good relationship on sharing their experience and knowledge with each other. At the same time, competitions were conducted within students to strengthen their learning improvement and encourage their abilities.

During the post training evaluation interview with students, the majority of respondents agreed that the series of trainings increased their internal motivation for studies. Further they added they can observe significant differences in pre- and post-training on their routine work and they could prioritize their work within the given time. One student suggested the training provided an advantage to practice their communication skills. Another student added he was unable to concentrate on studies but after this training events he was able to concentrate on his studies and other activities.

Noolaham Foundation believes that this type of training series can reduce the gap between capacity to learn and willingness to learn among the students. It also motivated them as a winning team working for a common goal. Many documents related to this project were digitized and volunteer support was obtained to develop activites promoting socialization skills

The degree of involvement of volunteers in the training series was high. For example, Mr. Keethan Sivasubramaniyam and Mrs. Siva Suthanthini participated in each and every training event. They are Noolaham Foundation's volunteers. Noolaham Foundation has observed their primary mission as being altruistic to fight poverty and improve the living standards of students in the developing world. Further, Noolaham Foundation proudly recognizes and appreciates the volunteer participation of Mr. Gowthaman Kunchithapatham (District Coordinator, Volunteer, NF), Mr. Harishanth Thiraviyanathan ('Pallikoodam' programme, coordinator) and seven more volunteers who are awaiting admission to Sri Lanka's universities. Mr. Sanjayan Selvamanickam (Chapter head, Norway, Noolaham Foundation) also participated in this first training event.

During the project period, the involvement and dedication of Noolaham's staff was highly observed. Mr. Shanmugapriyan Shanmugam (Chief Program Executive), Mr. Sivarajah Lambotharan (Program Officer), Ms. Gajani Satchchithananthan (Admin and Finance officer), and Mr. Sriranganathan Srivakeesan (researcher) actively participated in designing tools and the implementation of the project.

Through this project child-friendly environments were created among children who come from geographically, culturally and socially different neighborhoods. During the implementation period, peace and gender equity were upheld and class and religious identities of the children were taken into consideration. We noticed that children's participation increased. Further NF's virtual learning environment program which is called "Pallikoodam" and digital library were introduced. Information Literacy training was provided so that they can search, evaluate, obtain and use study materials and other information sources from Noolaham Digital Library, Epallikoodam and the internet. Virtual Learning will help those who are in need of self learning and those want to share their knowledge through the Internet.

#### **Constraints / Challenges and lesson learned:**

- The biggest challenge NF faced during the initial period of the project was to find resource persons having expertise in a particular subject. Due to lack of awareness, some of the students negatively perceive the free training activities, and fail to understand the actual value of these free learning facilities.
- These training activities were held during weekends and holidays, but we were unable to hold training sessions when the children had their end-of-term exams at school.
- The students actively participated in the training sessions and discussions. A little more discussion time was much needed to fulfill the requirements of the students.

#### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

- It is strongly recommended that NF conduct workshops on soft skills and e-learning facilities in the upcoming years for the rest of the students at this children's home and children living at various other children's homes in the region. It would be better to the

training for a few additional days. Noolaham Foundation found that when conducting the training, the skills, attitudes and knowledge of the students improved. It is a great opportunity for gifted students to advance further.

- The use of external experts as resource persons rather than using typical school teachers and their home staff, increased the student's interest in participating in these sessions.
- Involvement of stake holders throughout the project process starting from planning will help to find students' individual needs.
- Use of evaluation report for strategic decision making such as planning and organizing the project in the near future can help effective implementation.
- Adequate budget will be more helpful to buy ideally suited training materials and to enable quality evaluation and reporting. It will help us in planning in the future.

#### Case Stories / Quotes etc...

*"The Noolaham Foundation's entire planning of this training series was world class model for all the participated home students. I am able to observe the entire course was deeply informative, timely, captivating and provides a solid foundation for our students. The right balance of principles and practical applications during the sessions makes the material understandable and very useful for the students. The facilitators and administration staff are outstanding. I would definitely recommend this to be conducted to all person in our home. I would like to thank Noolaham Foundation and the team of the organizers and congratulate them on a very successful training series. All did a very good job in making each and every member of the students to understand and practice on the individual soft skill provided to them."*

**Mr. Somasuntharam Pathmanathan**  
**(President, HBCH)**

*"The training program was really good for our home students who are learning for the first time about soft skill. It was really a great experience for them to have a practical demonstration and lecture from the specialists. HBCH observed the attitudes, dedication and knowledge much improved among the participant's. I thank for all the team members of Noolaham Foundations for their hard work and good organizing to make this training program success. I could saw the resource person put all their efforts to make the students understand the concepts. This is the best regulatory training that I have ever seen in HBCH. I would like to request NF that this well constructive and informative training shall be provided to rest of the home students."*

**Mr. Thiruselvam Selvamanoharan**  
**( Secretary, HBCH)**

*"The training was very interesting. I really learned a lot and I wish to thank Noolaham Foundation for organizing and hosting this training event, as well as the very helpful and energetic staff. The environment was very positive and engaging from the start, and it was very nice to have the experience with such a diverse but commonly propelled group of people. I am very anxious to see what kind of work will come out every time."*

**Mr. M. Tharmarjah, A/L 2015, Hindu Board Children Home**

*"I found this training to be a very enlightening experience- in many ways. The introduction to the epallikoodam was very well-, and the attitude of the resource person and the assistants was very positive and enabling. It was very nice that there were so many assistants available for us during the training program, as well- their help made things very smooth and ensured that no-one fell behind along the way."*

***Ms. T. Kurinchi, A/L 2015 Hindu Board Children Home***

*"This was an excellent prepared training, even only three hours in a day but provide an effective results according to its goals. The training provide with a number of practical examples about soft skills that will support for me in the near future. I understand many things that I had no idea before and I like the NF's staff they are very friendly and helpful."*

***Mr. M. Kamalraj, A/L 2016, Hindu Board Children Home***

*"The training was great, I simply enjoying learning. The teaching method is easy to follow, materials are very good for the learners, good chance for exchange the knowledge. I would like to say Noolaham Foundation thanks very much for opportunity to attend in this training."*

***Ms. G. Thanusha, Grade 10, Hindu Board Children Home***

**Annexure 01: The Resource Persons**

<b>Name of the Resource Person</b>	<b>Occupation and Organization</b>
Mr. Amirthalingam Antony Pirasanna	Counselor, Economic Development Officer, Divisional Secretariat, Tellippalai, Jaffna
Mr. Ponnuthurai Arumaithurai	Clinical Psychologist, Tellippalai Base Hospital and Divisional Secretariat, Tellippalai, Jaffna
Mrs. Siva Suthanthini	Counselor, Former Staff officer at FORUT, Sri Lanka
Mr. Pulendran Tharmendra	Deputy Manager, Coordinating, Secretariat for Science, Technology and Innovation (COSTI)
Mr. Amirthalingam Mayuran	University of Jaffna
Mr. Gowthaman Kunchithapatham	District Psychosocial Officer, District Secretariat, Jaffna.

**The participants**



**Some Photos from Trainings event**



**Dress for success**





Dress for success



Creating Peace Tree



To improve their mental health and for the relaxation



**Putting an eye on the elephant**



**Building a water towers as a group work**



**Define Problem and Identification**



**Mr. Somasuntharam Pathmanathan (President, HBCH) on final Day of the training event**

