

WITH HEART & PURPOSE

Country Visit: Serendip's Projects Across Sri Lanka

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Trisha Williamson

Chairperson

Serendip Children's Home

Regd. Charity No. 1133461



A Glimpse at a Few of the Projects I Was Able to Visit

My recent visit to Sri Lanka, from the 26th of March to the 6th of April, was deeply emotional, humbling, and reaffirming. I'm sharing this report to offer a window into the life-changing work Serendip is doing – not as a boast, but as a quiet testimony to the power of compassion, dedication, and community. These are only a few of the projects I was able to visit, but they each left a lasting imprint on me.

Inclusive Education for All Supporting Children with Developmental Challenges

The centre provides a nurturing space for children with developmental delays, autism, and ADHD. Our team delivers tailored therapies – including speech, occupational, and behavioural support – through a combination of individual and group sessions. Alongside this, we offer play-based learning and provide simple but effective educational materials to help children engage, grow, and thrive. The teachers and support staff are deeply committed, treating each child with patience, care, and respect.

It was incredibly heart-warming to see how much progress many of the children have made since my last visit. They are becoming more expressive, attentive, and independent – and their small milestones are celebrated with genuine joy. What touched me even more was the change in the parents. There is a noticeable shift – from uncertainty and helplessness to calm, quiet confidence. Many have begun to realise that their children do not need to change to fit the world; instead, the world must learn how to better support them. That understanding is powerful. I am proud that Serendip plays even a small part in that journey.



Fine Arts Education Healing Through Creativity and Expression

We launched our Fine Arts Education program in 2012, with a vision to help children move beyond the trauma of war. Today, over 300 students are engaged in this programme at the Kilinochchi centre.

Watching the children immerse themselves in music, drawing, and movement was deeply moving. These activities are not just artistic; they are healing. Many of our earlier students have now grown into capable, well-rounded young adults, proof that the emotional scars of war can be softened with the right support.

The core purpose of this program was to keep children off the streets and away from violence, abuse, and substance misuse. We wanted to offer a space where they could simply be children. I truly believe every child in this programme is on the path to becoming a compassionate, responsible citizen.



Vocational Training for Young Women Empowering Women Through Skills and Opportunity

At Serendip, we offer vocational training to young women who have had very few chances in life. Many left school early and have never had the opportunity to gain a skill that could lead to employment. Some are single mothers, while others face discouragement at home, with little support from their families. For most, financial independence has felt like a distant dream.

Our training programmes run twice a year, with each round enrolling 100 to 120 participants. They learn practical skills that open the door to employment or self-employment – tools that offer not only income, but confidence, purpose, and hope.

Some students also qualify for a nationally recognised certificate – a rare and meaningful achievement for those who never imagined holding a formal qualification.

During my visit, I attended a certificate ceremony where 120 young women were recognised for completing their training. The pride on their faces was unforgettable. For many, this was more than a certificate – it was a turning point. Serendip is proud to walk beside them on that journey.



Meeting Key Stakeholders Building Trust and Recognition

I was fortunate to meet with several key figures during my time in Kilinochchi – the Hon. Governor for the Northern Province, the Secretary for Cultural and Sports Affairs, professionals in the medical sector, and education officials.

Each of these meetings confirmed what we have long believed: Serendip's work is vital and deeply appreciated. These discussions also opened doors to potential collaborations that will only strengthen the support we provide to communities.



A Partnership with the Department of Health Bringing Professional Support to the Children

During my stay, I met with a medical professional from the Department of Health with whom we've signed an MOU. Thanks to this partnership, a team of medical specialists now visits our Inclusive Education for All project weekly to assess children and offer guidance to parents and staff.

This additional layer of expert support means that children are not only receiving therapy but are also being closely monitored by professionals. It completes the circle of care we strive to offer and reinforces the value of working collaboratively with public institutions.



Water and Roof Projects in the Hill Country Reaching Remote Families with Basic Necessities

I had the opportunity to visit communities in Badulla and Monaragala, where Serendip is helping families with critical needs. These hillside communities are home to many hardworking families living in very basic conditions – we met people still sheltering under eroded tin roofs and without easy access to clean water. Seeing these challenges firsthand was eye-opening.

During my visit, I was able to see the progress of some of our recent efforts. One recently completed project involved laying 4,000 feet of pipeline from the mountains to a reservoir, bringing fresh water to over 90 families. We typically complete 3–4 such projects a year, benefiting 100–200 families each time. These projects are vital and transformative.

Equally powerful is our ongoing roof replacement initiative. I visited 12 small dwellings – homes built with clay walls and rusted tin roofs, often housing multiple families. When it rains, water seeps through. Floors are made of mud. These are not houses; they are shelters in the most fragile sense.

Our approach is simple but impactful: replace the roof and provide cement and sand to create a concrete floor. This alone brings immeasurable comfort and dignity. I witnessed children sitting for the first time on a dry surface, free from leaking rain. It was a humbling experience.

Many of these families are tea-pluckers or rubber-tappers, surviving on one meal a day, without toilets or running water. They live with quiet hardship that few of us can imagine. Yet, when they saw us, they smiled. It's that mixture of pain and resilience that broke me, again and again.



Closing Reflections

A Quiet Reminder of Our Shared Humanity

Throughout my journey, I broke down many times – not out of despair, but out of overwhelming emotion. Seeing the light in children’s eyes, the resilience in their parents, and the gratitude of families living in poverty left me both heartbroken and deeply inspired.

I came back with a heavy but hopeful heart. We are so privileged to live in countries where basic needs are mostly met. Many of us take that for granted. Not because we are unkind, but because we haven’t seen what it means to live without.

Serendip is a small charity. We cannot help everyone, but where we can, we do – and we do it with heart.

If you’ve read this far, I thank you. And I invite you – gently, humbly – to join us. Support where you can. Share this story. Remind someone that kindness is still alive. Because what I’ve seen in Sri Lanka is not just poverty. It’s humanity – raw, beautiful, and in need of care.





For more information on the work of Serendip Children's Home,
please visit our website:
www.serendipchildrenshome.com

