



28th Annual General Meeting

A Successful Return to In-Person Gatherings

On the evening of Saturday, 2nd November 2024, Hela Sarana, a UK-registered charity committed to supporting Sri Lankan communities, held its 28th Annual General Meeting at the Becket Centre in Woodford, Essex. This marked the charity's first in-person AGM since the COVID-19 pandemic, with nearly 100 guests in attendance.

The event was filled with a sense of unity and shared commitment to Hela Sarana's mission. Special thanks go to committee members Dr. Jeevani Jayawardena, Mrs. Irie Perera, and Dr. Kanthi Jayawardena for their outstanding work in organizing the event and securing the perfect venue, ensuring its smooth execution. We also express our gratitude to Mr. Aruna Perera for capturing the key moments of the evening through photography, preserving these memories for everyone. A special mention goes to Mr. Leslie Dep for arranging event insurance at no cost to the charity, a gesture we deeply appreciate. We also extend our thanks to Mrs. Lalitha Meehitiya, Mr. Jayantha Silva, Dr. Saman Perera, Dr. Jayantha Perera, Mr. Methsiri Wijeratna, Mr. Asoka Bollegala, Dr. Palitha Serasinghe, Mr. Saman Ranasinghe, Miss Sayuri Serasinghe, and Mr. Ruwan Wijeratna for their unwavering dedication and contributions, which played a crucial role in the event's success.



Formal proceedings, remembrance of late members & re-election of committee



The formal proceedings began with an inspiring speech from Hela Sarana President, Mr. Jayantha Silva, followed by a presentation of the evening's agenda by Secretary Dr. Jayantha Perera, which covered the minutes from previous AGMs and successes from both a project and donation standpoint. A two-minute silence was held in honor of the late Mr. Raja Meehitiya (former president), Mr. Shelton Ranasinghe (former secretary), Mr. Vish Vedage, Ms. Chandrani Amendra, Mrs. Geetha Sathiyalingam (past committee members), and Mr. Daya Meehitiya. Treasurer Mr. Methsiri Wijeratna provided a clear and transparent overview of the charity's financials, highlighting key achievements and the charity's current status. He also thanked Mr. Ranjan Pinto for certifying the accounts. During the AGM, the committee was re-elected, with Mr. Saman Ranasinghe returning after a long absence. His late father, Mr. Shelton Ranasinghe, was one of the founding members of the charity. The re-election process was officiated by Mr. Janaka Alahapperuma.



The re-elected committee members for 2024-25 are:

- **PATRON:** Mrs. Lalitha Meehitiya
- **PRESIDENT:** Mr. Jayantha Silva
- **VICE PRESIDENT:** Dr. Saman Perera
- **SECRETARY:** Dr. Jayantha Perera
- **TREASURER:** Mr. Methsiri Wijeratna
- **GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Mr. Leslie Dep, Mr. Asoka Bollegala, Mrs. Irie Perera, Dr. Jeevani Jayawardena, Dr. Kanthi Jayawardena, Mr. Aruna Perera, Dr. Palitha Serasinghe, Mr. Saman Ranasinghe, Mr. Nevomal Fernando, and Miss Sayuri Serasinghe.

"Building Dreams for Children with Learning & Development Challenges in Sri Lanka"

One of the evening's highlights was the keynote address by Professor Samanmali Sumanasena, titled "Building Dreams for Children with Learning & Development Challenges in Sri Lanka." Her presentation highlighted the challenges faced by children with special needs in Sri Lanka and emphasized the crucial role Hela Sarana plays in providing support and making a lasting impact.



Guest of honor, Raffle & Charity Golf day

The guest of honor, Mr. Sameera Dayasekera, the 1st Secretary at the High Commission of Sri Lanka in the UK, also addressed the attendees, conveying the Sri Lankan High Commission's appreciation for the charity's valuable work.

A lively raffle, organized by committee member Mr. Nevomal Fernando, was another highlight of the evening. His dedication to securing numerous prizes, many donated by committee members, and his leadership in organizing the raffle, resulted in £900 being raised for the charity. Additional thanks go to Dasna Jayawardena, Ayoma Goonetilleke, and Ruchi Perera, Aaron Abeysena for their efforts in helping to sell raffle tickets on the day. Additionally, Mr. Anil Kurukulasooriya and Mr. Alex McHardy once again raised funds through their 'Scores for Schools' Charity Golf Day, which generated £1668 this year.



Raffle Prize Contributions

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed prizes and supported the event. Below is the raffle prize list, along with the generous contributions that made it possible:

Raffle Prizes:

1. £150 Cash – Jayantha Silva (£100) + Kanthi (£50)
2. Vax Spot Wash Duo Spot Cleaner (£99) – Jeevani
3. A Night Stay for 2 at Villa Nilmalee (£80) – Irie and Saman Includes dinner and breakfast at this boutique villa in Gampola, 12.2 miles from Kandy.
4. Toaster, Silver Jewelry Box, and Handbag (£65) – Kanthi
5. Etekcify Smart Bathroom Scale (£59) – Jeevani
6. Features include weight, body fat, BMI, heart rate, and fitness tracking via app.
7. Russell Hobbs Kettle and German Wine (£51) – Nevomal
8. Case of Wine (£42) – Jeevani
9. Christmas Hamper (£40) – Irie and Jeevani
10. Four Bottles of White Wine (£37.39) – Kanthi
11. (Includes 2 Pigalle Brut, 1 Argentinian Malbec Rosé, and 1 J.P. Chevet Colombard Chardonnay.)
12. Single Malt Whisky – Jayantha Silva

Special Thanks to Nevomal:

In addition to donating the 6th prize, Nevomal contributed significantly to the event, providing:

- 15 x 2-litre bottles of Diet Coke
- 15 packets of Bombay Mix
- 24 cartons of Orange and Apple Juice
- Six raffle tickets, which he generously handed to Irie for distribution to guests

His total contribution amounted to £168.

Thank you again to all our contributors for their generosity and support in making this event a success!



Vision for 2024-2025

The President of Hela Sarana, Mr. Jayantha Silva, presented the charity's vision for the year ahead, outlining several impactful projects for completion in 2024-2025:

1. Raising funds to purchase two dialysis machines for Anamaduwa Hospital.
2. Commemorating the Tsunami tragedy by providing 75 children from affected families with educational aids and books valued at Rs. 6,000 each.
3. Launching a sanitation and hygiene initiative to provide toilets, washbasins, and clean water facilities for 200 children attending Sunday school at Dharmawardanaramaya, Galana, Gampola.
4. Supplying 75 educational packs for schoolchildren in a rural village community in Ampara, with an estimated cost of Rs. 450,000 (£1,200).
5. Enhancing support systems for elderly care in Sri Lanka.
6. Organizing a 20th-anniversary commemoration of the Tsunami tragedy at the High Commission of Sri Lanka in partnership with the Commission.



Individual Member Projects

The Secretary, Dr. Jayantha Perera, shared updates on several ongoing and completed initiatives led by individual Hela Sarana members:

- **Expanding Knowledge in Pediatric Disability:** Dr. Jayantha Perera is leading an ongoing project aimed at enhancing pediatric disability expertise among community pediatricians in Sri Lanka.
- **Training in Ultrasound-Guided Botox Therapy:** Dr. Saman Perera is conducting training for pediatricians on ultrasound-guided Botox administration to reduce spasticity in children with cerebral palsy.
- **Dry Rations Fundraiser:** Spearheaded by Mrs. Irie Perera in the UK, and supported by Gunnepane Sumanarama Thero, the head monk at Edmonton Samanthi Meditation Center, this project raised Rs. 200,000 to provide dry rations to 30 individuals in urgent need in Kuruwita, Ratnapura District.

These projects reflect Hela Sarana's commitment to meeting essential community needs and fostering impactful collaborations.

Core and recent projects

The AGM also highlighted some of Hela Sarana's key ongoing and recent projects in Sri Lanka:

- **Breakfast Programme:** Hela Sarana continues to provide nutritious breakfasts to patients undergoing dialysis treatment at the Anuradhapura Hospital Renal Unit. The program has received positive feedback from patients and their families, and it enters its 13th year in 2025. The president made a passionate appeal to the audience to come forward not only to support the programme but to promote the immense value & virtues of the programme to hundreds of the most vulnerable patients among friends and relatives.
- **Student Grant:** The charity continues to provide financial support to students in Sri Lanka facing economic barriers to education, offering resources such as school supplies and tuition assistance, enabling them to pursue their education without financial hardship. The programme received positive feedback from students, teachers, and parents, and special thank you to Hela Sarana from two female students who graduated this year with a 2nd class honours BA in Education & a second class upper in Psychology respectively.
- **Singithi Sevana Children's Home:** Hela Sarana funded a music tutoring program at Singithi Sevana Children's Home in Kandy, contributing Rs. 97,200.00 this year to support the children's educational development.
- **Saripuththa Primary School Main Hall Extension:** In March 2024 a new extension was completed for the school's hall, providing students with a weatherproof space for activities. This project was funded at Rs. 750,000. A second extension, completed in May 2024, cost Rs. 1,154,165, supported by the Late Mrs. Florence De Silva Fund and made possible through collaboration among the school staff, parents, and project managed in its entirety from contract award to completion by Hela Sarana Executive committee member Mr. Leslie Dep.



Conclusion

To conclude the evening, attendees were treated to a delicious array of Sri Lankan cuisine, provided by Golden Platter, which added a warm and comforting touch to the event. The evening was further enriched by musical performances from Miss Sayuri Serasinghe, Upecksha Wickramaratne, Dr. Kusum Subasinghe, Thilak Rupasinghe and Dilhani Jagoda, and Ruchi Perera, creating a memorable atmosphere of cultural connection and nostalgia.

Mr. Jayantha Silva closed the event by thanking all committee members and the project team in Sri Lanka, led by Mr. Lucky Wijesekera, Mr. Chandrasiri Liyanage, and Mrs. Deviki Gomez, for their dedication and tireless efforts. He also expressed deep gratitude to the donors whose support has enabled Hela Sarana to make a lasting impact, especially during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and Sri Lanka's subsequent economic crisis. Mr. Silva highlighted the ongoing commitment of the charity's supporters, which has made these positive changes possible. Mr. Jayantha Silva also reached out to other Sri Lankan Charities here in the UK for a collective & a collaborative approach to address many challenges faced by rural communities and for their greater good and also requested the audience to come forward with their initiatives for humanitarian projects to develop a constructive dialogue with Hela Sarana to bring many such projects to fruition.

