

## **Chandrika**

For young people that have money, there are many options after their G.C.E. A/L Exams (National Level Government Examination) with regards to higher education and careers in the major cities of Sri Lanka. However, for thousands of young people like Chandrika whose lives are trapped by poverty in the tea plantations of Sri Lanka, there are no options. Sadly, most of the time the pressing needs of their families such as food, medical treatment, or securing their line rooms, influence them strongly to work in the tea plantations where they live, erasing out all their dreams and aspirations for the future.

Chandrika knows well what the life of a tea estate worker is like; the vicious cycle of poverty, poor working conditions, the undignified manner with which they are treated by the management and society at large. How she wishes things could change ...

Chandrika's family live on a Tea Estate based in Maskeliya (approximately 130 km east of the Capital City, Colombo.) Both her parents are estate labourers. It was always a struggle for them to feed five mouths, meet the children's school and medical needs, as well as the various other expenses that families incur. Her mother took early retirement due to sickness. Now she works as a casual estate laborer when there is work, earning a meager wage. Her father is repaying a loan he has taken from the estate. Chandrika's elder brother has recently started work at a jewelers in Maskeliya town, but is yet to bring home his first month' wage, and her younger brother is still in school. The family is struggling to cope with the sky rocketing cost of living.

After sitting for her G.C.E. A/L Examination in August 2009, Chandrika heard about the Basic English Programme conducted by the Tea Leaf Vision Centre for Professional Development, through the World Vision mobilizers working on her estate. It was only possible for her to follow this course of studies because it was free. She was a diligent student who studied hard during the Basic English Programme and has greatly improved her English language since the start of it.

Chandrika has always wanted a job that is respected on the tea estates, such as a teacher, but after she completed the Basic English programme, problems at home meant that she had to find a job to relieve the financial burden of her parents. However, a last minute change of heart by her father meant that she was able to register for the one-year diploma course which includes English Grammar and Speech, business studies, I.T. and Success and Ethics, a subject that helps people to bring out their best qualities and overcome life's battles.

Chandrika lives a bus ride away from the school but her parents were unable to provide the bus fare and so she turned to Tea Leaf Trust for help. As always, ready to reach out to those whose potential are trapped by poverty, the Tea Leaf Trust found a donor that currently helps Chandrika with her travelling costs, books and stationary, enabling her to attend school every day. She understands that with improved English knowledge and more marketable skills such as computer literacy, acquired through the one-year diploma programme at the Centre, she will be able to get salaried permanent employment.

Chandrika believes that through hard work and the helping hands of her kind-hearted donor found by the Tea Leaf Trust, as well as the staff at the Tea Leaf Vision Centre for Professional Development, she can be who she wants to be.

The Tea Leaf Vision Centre for Professional Development is a dream come true for many like Chandrika, who will one day become an instrument of transformational development, to help many others.

\*\* Student's name has been changed to protect her identity. Exchange Rate :- SL Rs. 168 = £1 approximately