

CSR Focus



COMMUNITY RELATIONS

At Hemas we believe that profit generation is only one aspect of measuring commercial success. We also believe in honouring ethical values, respecting the community & caring for the natural environment. The 'Piyawara' programme is the primary Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project of Hemas Holdings. The project focuses on promoting Early Childhood Care & Development (ECCD) through the establishment of child friendly pre-schools across Sri Lanka. 'Piyawara' is now an integrated educational programme making a valuable contribution to the development of the overall government educational system. The program goes beyond building bricks and mortar to developing a holistic approach to pre-school education.

The programme is founded on a comprehensive strategy with a focus on the key areas of ECCD in collaboration with the Ministry of Child Development & Women's Empowerment. Our strategic partner has heavily supported us in the implementation of the project. The project has been well branded and is driven by a mission. The Key success factors were identified in order to ensure sustainability and success of the project included developing the existing infrastructure, teacher training, parental awareness and mobilizing the community. The 'Piyawara' programme has been subdivided into four main themes; Education, Psychosocial development, Environment and Health. These programmes have been altered to suit the needs of our target audience that has been categorized as employees, community and society at large. Over the last five years our dedication to pre-school education has intensified. We believe that the creation of child friendly pre-schools sets a sound foundation to encourage life long learning.

The ECCD programme 'Piyawara' commenced in the year 2003 with the establishment of 10 model pre-schools in ten districts. In

early 2004 the project expanded to include a total of 13 pre-schools covering 3 more districts. 100 teachers from each of these districts were trained by Hemas in accordance to the 'Piyawara' schools model. In the 2004 Tsunami hundreds of pre-schools were severely damaged or fully destroyed and over 42,000 pre-school aged children were affected by the disaster. Hemas responded to the government's appeal for assistance to rebuild the tsunami affected areas by stepping up the efforts and dedication to continue with its focus on ECCD and volunteered to venture into a major project related to pre-school education. Through the Hemas Tsunami Foundation, our early intervention in the transitional area provided tremendous systematic support. In the first phase 27 temporary pre-schools were set up in refugee camps and the second phase was to build 20 state of the art pre-schools in tsunami affected areas. This project was concluded by 2006. Year 2006 saw the project taking a leap ahead in the area of Early Childhood Care and Development with the establishment of 32 pre-schools in the country.

The following were the key activities carried out during the year;

- Despite many constraints, Hemas tsunami foundation was able to successfully complete the construction of the pre-schools in tsunami affected areas in a short time frame. To coincide with the declaration of the national year for children, a symbolic handover of the newly built 20 pre-schools was made to His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapakse.
- In addition to the 'Piyawara' model schools, 24 under developed pre-schools were provided with a child-friendly play area to broaden the project. These underdeveloped pre-schools are being fostered by 'Piyawara' model centers by providing professional guidance by well trained teachers.
- Each pre-school child in 'Piyawara' centers was gifted with a plant. The concept was to teach young children to undertake responsibility at a young age and care for nature. The progress of this project is being monitored by the teachers, where they encourage the children to talk of their experience in nurturing the plant.
- Consistency and sustainability of the 'Piyawara' project was ensured through the annual six day residential teacher training programme held in Colombo. Over 100 teachers participated in this residential training programme which was conducted in both Sinhala and Tamil languages.





- The efforts of the various institutions and persons involved in the project was recognized at the annual 'Piyawara' Awards Ceremony. Special awards were presented to Ven. Bandagiriye Somawansa Thero, -Director of the National Foundation for Children, and prominent child psychologist- for his outstanding contribution to ECCD in Sri Lanka. The Ambalangoda Urban Council was awarded the best managed 'Piyawara' pre-school by a local council. In addition six teachers of the 'Piyawara' schools also received special awards in recognition of their contribution to ECCD.
- A documentary was produced featuring the learning process in the tsunami pre-school project for future reference. The documentary included information regarding setting up temporary schools in refugee camps, the process of constructing of new schools and comments and opinions of various people including parents, government officials, counselors etc.
- Piyawara utilized the radio - a popular channel of communication in rural areas- to spread the message of early childhood care tips. Each message was aired daily on the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation nationwide. The channels were carefully directed by the Hemas CSR team to tailor the message to suit the key target audience in the rural community of Sri Lanka.
- A hand book titled; "The Child's World" was launched by Hemas 'Piyawara' project. The booklet focuses on the importance of early childhood and deals with prenatal, postnatal care and early childhood care during the first five years of development. They were distributed free of charge by the Ministry of Child Development through the ECCD officers based in each Divisional Secretariat of the country. The books were given to young parents and pre-school teachers. The books were printed in both Sinhala and Tamil languages to reach a wider audience.
- Parental awareness programmes were conducted in all Piyawara centers island wide, in partnership with the Ministry of Child Development. A child spends majority of the time at home and only for a few hours in the pre-school each day. Therefore it is essential to provide a home environment

that is not detrimental to a child's growth and development (free of domestic violence, alcohol, mother migration). Hence, it is vital to focus on programmes and interventions that make a difference for children in their homes.

- In order to minimize the alarming rate of child abuse, Hemas together with the Sri Lanka Police Bureau worked for the prevention of abuse of children and women and conducted many awareness programmes island wide.
- An independent research of the Piyawara project was conducted by Dr. Buddhipraba Pathirana, lecturer of psychology at Peradeniya University. She has concluded that pre-schools and pre-school teachers achieved a significant progress due to this programme.
- Efficient management of the newly built Piyawara pre-schools in the tsunami affected areas was achieved by establishing parent teacher associations, with a formal constitution in place for each school. The required funding was provided through a grant of Rs. 50,000/- per school as a fixed deposit. Minor repairs and maintenance expenses are to be met with this funding and self funding has been encouraged through school fairs, concerts etc.
- Hemas Pharmaceuticals and Clogard sponsored pediatric / dental clinics in the 'Piyawara' centers.
- Hemas was a key sponsor of the World Children's Day organized by the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment.

The management case study conducted by USAID on Hemas Holdings and in its CSR observations states "The 'Piyawara' project is a huge undertaking executed with an integrated holistic community approach that is a benchmark for Corporations to study.

We believe that focus, commitment, empowerment and passion are key to a successful project of this nature and our commitment to ECCD will be the focal point through of our CSR activities in Sri Lanka in the years ahead. We hope our initiatives will make the future generations more productive in a much more cordial and harmonious environment.



Piyawara has been an eye opener. We have seen the results and the changes in behaviour not only of the teachers, students and parents, but from the entire community. There has been complete community involvement with senior citizens and the entire village community coming forward to assist the schools whenever the need arose. Having the commitment permeated right from the Chairman, CEO and Board of Directors to each and every employee of Hemas Holdings, has also strengthened the obligation we have about taking this project to its fruition. We have seen immense dedication by the entirety of the Children's Secretariat, where have been expedited speedily, decisions made and public holidays being no barrier to work. This dedication is hard to find anywhere and from Hemas point of view, these will strengthen the relationship while creating a partnership that will give the ECCD's in Sri Lanka a milieu to ensure the full potential of a child, ensuring complete cognitive, physical, social and emotional development.