



## The TEA Project Annual Report: 2015-16

### Section One – A brief overview

#### Beneficiaries April 2015-16: The TEA Project (Sri Lanka)

1.1 The TEA Project works in partnership with eight, Island wide, local Community Organisations who serve the interests of Sri Lanka’s poorest and most marginalised children. The project provides a wide range of training, workshops and we donate materials and equipment to local schools and children’s homes.

1.2 The TEA Project has a **School Network** (including five local government schools) that reaches rural government schools in the north, east and western regions of the island and two urban schools in the central province. Our school partners vary greatly in size but share common challenges such as extreme under- funding, high levels of pupil poverty and absenteeism. Through our school network The TEA Project has access to over 2,100 vulnerable children island wide.

1.3 We work with three orphanages (**Girls’ Homes**) serving over 130 vulnerable girls aged from 7 to 18 years. One Girls Home provides refuge to sexually abused and pregnant children and young mothers. Some of the girls we work with have no living parents and others have been removed from home due to sexual abuse, neglect, poverty and family breakdown. Commonly girls are returned home to their local communities at the age of 18; this can often be traumatic as girls have few community ties with no transition work or on-going support provided.

#### 1.4 **Chart showing the numbers of children who have engaged in TEA Project activities during a 12-month period: March 2015 – 16**

Projects March 2015-2016	Beneficiaries	Numbers engaged
8 x Leadership (LIFE) Training & Peer Leadership Programmes	School children	165
9 x Health Projects & Training Events	School children, parents, teachers & fare trade workers	500
‘Girls Group’ Workshops (weekly)	Girls from local Children’s Homes	320
10 x International School Partnership Events	Children from x 2 schools in Sri Lanka and x 2 UK schools	200

2 x 'Empowering Girls' Leadership (LIFE) Training	Girls from two Children's Homes	51
PENship Pal Writing Programme (17 UK & SL matches)	Sri Lankan & UK children	34
School Art Therapy Workshops (weekly)	Children from a local government school	252
International Volunteer Projects (health checks, international talks)	School children & day care children's centre	107
Distribution of x 150 health packs and x 40 re-usable sanitary towels	Girls and school children	190
Cultural extra-curricular events (day trips, parties & events)	School children & girls	105
Yoga & wellbeing Sessions x 2 schools	School children	234
3 x Consultation Events	School children & girls	53
Children's Centre Workshops x 20	Local Children's Centre	300
Prefect Training & Project Planning	School prefects	56
<b>TOTAL number of children engaged</b>	<b>School children and orphans engaged</b>	<b>2,567</b>

\*The above is not an exact number of children engaged

1.5 **Eight International Volunteers** including doctors, a professional photographer and teachers brought skills and experience to The TEA Project between March 2015-2016.

1.6 **Four Local Volunteers** recruited in Sri Lanka continue to provide regular input and guidance to the project. Our growing volunteer network has a broad range of professional skills and backgrounds in education, health and social care.

## Section Two – Our Priorities

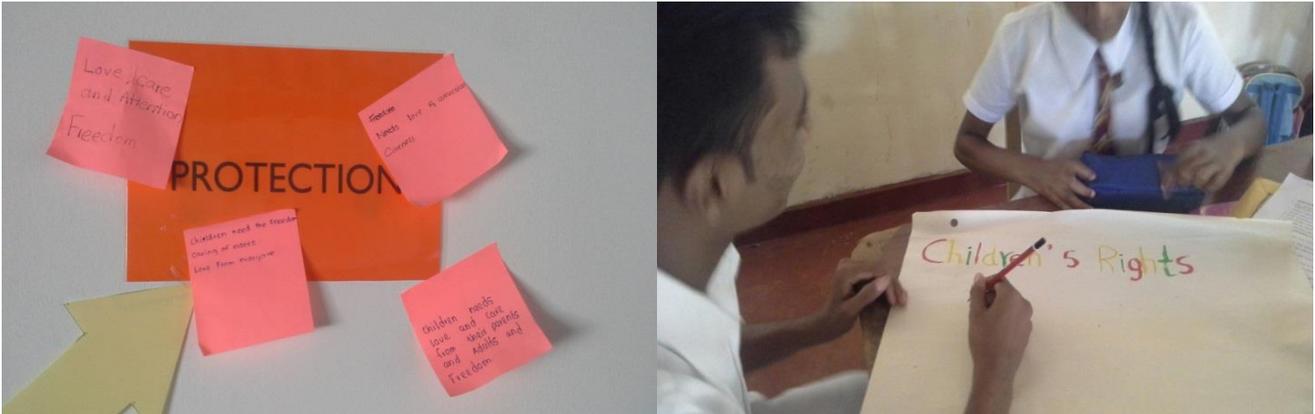
### What does The TEA Project do?

2.1 In September 2015 The TEA Project moved from 'not-for-profit' status to a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) **Registered UK Charity no.1163485**. We are governed by The Charity Commission jurisdiction and our reporting, monitoring and finance procedures have become significantly more robust, in line with charity law, since our last annual report.

2.2 The TEA Project provides training, support and guidance to individuals, institutions and establishments working directly with marginalised, vulnerable children and young people from poor communities. Our partners in Sri Lanka, India and the United Kingdom include Children's Charities, local Schools & Orphanages.

### 2.3 The objects of The TEA Project are:

1. Advance personal skills and abilities of vulnerable children by providing training and workshops.
2. Advance practical knowledge of children's rights principles and practices by providing education, advice and advocacy.
3. Alleviate poverty by providing sustainable projects, training and workshop provision designed to raise aspirations and increase opportunities and capabilities of vulnerable children living in Sri Lanka and India.



### 2.4 Core Values of The TEA Project

- Help to give vulnerable children and young people a strong voice and be their CHAMPION
- Always listen, respect and value children and young people and treat all children and young people as individuals
- Work to protect children and young people from harm, suffering and maltreatment
- Work to fight the harmful effects of poverty upon children, young people and their families
- Empower children; with a strong focus on girls to make good choices & survival skills
- Aspiration building – find the hidden potential in each child
- Building life skills, resilience and self-confidence in children

### 2.5 Our Priorities - Education

#### The local challenges

2.6 In Sri Lanka, 30 years of civil war has had an extremely negative impact on children's education. Even before the devastating tsunami in 2004, educational disparities have long existed in impoverished regions of the island, such as the estate plantations of the Central Highlands. In those areas it is not uncommon for girls to work long hours for low wages instead of attending school thus widening the literacy gender gap. 45% of Sri Lanka's population lives on less than US\$2 per day<sup>1</sup>; purchasing quality reading material is essentially out of the question for most people. While libraries do exist in some schools they are typically filled with old, dusty books that have little or no relevance for children and do not foster the creative imaginations of children. A lack of quality infrastructure, unequal access, and inadequate school resources have plagued the Sri Lankan

education system for years—factors only exacerbated by civil conflict and natural disasters like the floods of 2016 which effected close to half a million people.

2.7 Despite the availability of free education there is a plethora of international and independent schools which run quite independent of the Ministry of Education. Standards and tuition costs vary greatly among non-state run schools and there is a belief in Sri Lanka that ‘paying for education’ equates to better learning outcomes for children. Commonly poor families will put themselves under enormous financial pressure to send their children to a fee paying school over enrolling in a free government school. This view supports an educational hierarchy where the highest fee paying schools are considered the most prestigious and demonstrate family status and prosperity conversely government schools where education is free demonstrate poverty and low standards.

2.8 It is estimated that in Sri Lanka one in eight children are economically active. Often, it is poverty that prompts families to make their children work. As for the sectors that make use of child labour, these include tea plantations and household help for wealthy families.<sup>ii</sup> Due to low parent literacy rates and harsh economic factors school attendance is erratic the number of children enrolled but not attending school on a regular basis is extremely high.

## 2.9 Our work with local government schools

### The School Network

2.10 The TEA Project works with five local government schools throughout Sri Lanka. We work closely with teaching staff, prefect groups and school children. The view that standards are low at local government schools is unwarranted. However the negative societal perception is damaging and does considerably reduce opportunities and educational outcomes for children. Low expectations, a lack of funding and inadequate teaching resources are key challenges for schools. Commonly children come from poor economic backgrounds and social factors such as parental alcoholism, domestic violence and inadequate housing are everyday challenges. Children from families with high unemployment and single parent families are over represented. Sadly we find a high proportion of students have a parent (mother) working abroad as a maid for years at a time causing children to be cared for by relatives and neighbours in the community; this puts children at greater risk of neglect and sexual abuse.



*“The TEA Project is a path of freedom and success; they join with the children who have a lack of love, care, attention and freedom. They show how to mould a life that has difficulties as well as to show the hidden side of the beauty of life”. Nisansala, (School Deputy Principal).*

2.11 **Kuliyapitiya** is in the Western Province of the Island where most of the population are Buddhist Sinhalese. We work with rural children from low income families, parents mostly work in the low paid farming sector in jobs such as rice cultivation and labouring in coconut and pineapple plantations. Parents work long hours for little pay and issues such as alcoholism and domestic violence are common due to high levels of poverty.

2.12 **Outcomes: Some of the work of The TEA Project in Kuliyapitiya includes leadership programmes for schools prefects, Child Protection training for teachers is planned and a teacher training programme in partnership with Save the Children. International volunteer projects and donations such as re-usable sanitary products for girls and English language school books for teachers and students donated to The TEA Project by the British Council, Kandy. Our PENship Pal Programme is being extended to Kuliyapitiya and we facilitate letters being exchanged between year four groups in SL and the UK. We have trained a local professional volunteer who leads our leadership training programme which is delivered in Sinhala.**

2.13 **Ampara** is the largest district situated in the Eastern province and is one of the most ethnic and religiously diverse regions in Sri Lanka with 44% of the population Moors and 38% Sinhalese. Islam is the most commonly practiced religion with 43.6% of the population Muslim. Ampara like the rest of the East was severely affected by the long civil war. Children we work with commonly come from communities reliant on fishing; the fishing industry notoriously requires long, unsociable hours of work, is very low paid and relies upon child labour. School absenteeism is high; factors include numbers of children who work during harvesting periods.

2.14 **Outcomes: some of the work of The TEA Project in Ampara includes giving donations of much needed school materials and resources, leadership training for school prefects. We are developing a new school partnership with Ampara and a primary school in Scotland. We will manage communication between both schools and once we receive a package from the UK school we introduce the information to children through creative workshops. This project develops language skills, cultural awareness and friendships between children in the UK and SL. Teacher training programmes and a donation of British Council English language school books is to be donated to the English teachers to raise language standards through the use of modern techniques and teaching resources. We finance a monthly Internet supply to the school so students can make use of school computers and access knowledge from the World Wide Web (www).**



2.15 **Mannar Island** is located in the Northern Province approximately 100 km from the Northern capital of Jaffna. Mannar is predominantly Tamil; 81% of the population. Christianity is the most commonly practiced religion with 57.5% of the population Christian. Mannar Island was heavily affected by the war and the loss of life in this region was tragically high. This region of Sri Lanka suffers high rates of poverty; The TEA Project works with a number of war affected children where many families are headed by single women due to high mortality rates of husbands during the war.

2.16 **Outcomes: Some of the work of The TEA Project in Mannar includes teacher training programmes with international volunteers and providing donations of much needed school materials. A 2-day youth leadership programme will harness the skills of pupils and develop key leadership qualities and attitudes. The 10-hour local travel by bus and train to Mannar Island hampers our efforts to visit regularly and take sizable donations of goods. We plan to facilitate Child Protection training to teachers in the New Year.**

2.17 **Kandy** city is the capital of the Central Province. It is one of the island nation's largest cities and the economic focus of the tea-producing Central Highlands. It is also a city of great beauty but in contrast to its beautiful scenery and majestic historical sites the city is also home to crippling poverty where many parents are unable to provide for their children and violence is common. We work with two schools in Kandy, both are extremely under-funded and children come from poor and often unsafe home environments. Two children were recently raped, approximately 50% of children are deemed 'orphans' and issues such as poor attendance and behavioural issues are common.

2.18 **Outcomes: Given the close vicinity of schools in Kandy the project runs weekly therapeutic arts workshops and an after school club (named Fast and Furious) focussing on developing debating and communication skills of pupils. A recent health programme focussed on topics such as CPR training, dental health, diet, exercise and sexual health. The TEA Project supports one school by providing cooked meals for pupils and we regularly donate clothes, shoes and school resources. Weekly Yoga sessions are led by one of our local volunteers; these sessions help to address the emotional and physical health and needs of children. We run a fantastic school partnership between a school in Kandy and a local primary school in Surrey, UK and a PENship Pal programme with UK and SL children.**



*"I learnt everything I didn't know", "you provided answers to our personal problems, gave us solutions; also you gave your maximum support to improve our talents and skills". Children, (schools in Kandy).*

## 2.19 **Our Priorities - Empowering Girls**

### **The Local Context**

2.20 In some areas of Sri Lanka literacy rates for girls fall behind boys by 19%<sup>iii</sup> this is why a major focus of our work targets programmes that develop important life skills and independence of girls. Poor literacy rates result in high unemployment; for over three decades in Sri Lanka unemployment rates of women have been double those of men. Most women who do participate in the labour force do so in the 'informal sector' which leaves them with few rights and vulnerable to exploitation and abuse at work. Currently over 23.4%<sup>iv</sup> of households are headed by women and women bear primary responsibility for care work which creates multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that limit opportunities for them to fully integrate into the workforce.

2.21 High unemployment among women, high rates of informal low paid work in the labour market teamed with a high burden of unpaid child care and domestic responsibilities are factors which cause considerable hardship and inequalities for women and girls in Sri Lanka. Underpinning these inequalities are the gaps in legislation and law enforcement that deprive women of their rights and increase their vulnerability to gender based violence and the gendered norms of socialisation in the family, education system and society.

2.22 There are over 20,000 children living in institutions in Sri Lanka, it is estimated that approximately 50% of children who live in orphanages have one living parent.<sup>v</sup> Orphanages are mostly funded by private donors and they are viewed as a legitimate provision for children despite children being denied a right to family life. Communication with the outside world is restricted and children are allowed little contact with parents and family. Play and social activities for children are limited affecting children's development. Life in children's homes is dull and un-stimulating; children have little privacy due to large communal dormitory accommodation. Staff and caregivers are poorly paid and receive no training or safeguarding checks. Children typically are placed in orphanages due to high levels of poverty. With no welfare system families suffering extreme social and financial difficulties are left with little choice but to place children in homes. It is important to note that the vast majority of children enter care via the courts in an attempt to remove and protect them from abuse and neglect in the home.

2.23 It is estimated that 12% of young girls marry before the age of 18. Marriage at a young age often has a harmful effect on the children involved.<sup>vi</sup> There are more girls than boys living in orphanages in Sri Lanka. The lack of love and parental care children need to develop their potential and self-confidence makes girls particularly more vulnerable. Being separated from family and communities significantly weakens community contacts and the girl's capacity to conduct an independent life when they leave the institution aged 18 years old.

### 2.24 **Our work with local 'Girls Homes'**

2.25 The TEA Project supports three orphanages (girl's homes) in Kandy and on Mannar Island. The girl's homes provide safe refuge to over 130 vulnerable girls aged between 6 to 18 years old; one home provides shelter to pregnant children and provides mother and baby provision.

2.26 The theme of the work we do with girls' homes is to create opportunities for learning and viewing the world differently. We focus on building resilience, soft skills and importantly confidence.

Many girls suffer a lack of self-esteem and this is exacerbated by a lack of maternal care and guidance from mothers and parents. The girls have low personal expectations and few ambitions so we run programmes to harness skills and identify strengths.

**2.27 We run a number of targeted projects with girls, these include girls leadership skills programmes, we organise events and outings, run a weekly girls group, international volunteer and urban regeneration projects and seasonal parties/celebrations. We give donations of clothes, school materials and girls essentials such as re-usable sanitary products and toiletries. A key health programme was undertaken with girls, focussing on diet and general health and well-being. Weekly therapeutic classes help girls to relax, share their views and experiences and provide much needed stimulation.**



## Section Three – Some Key Achievements

### Urban Regeneration Projects

3.1 In the past 12-months The TEA Project has funded and completed three large scale Urban Regeneration Projects which have transformed neglected spaces into vibrant new facilities benefiting hundreds of children. All of our community regeneration projects begin with consulting local children to engage and develop the capacity of local people transferring vision into reality. The projects saw the development of an English Lab, a new school entrance and painting and decorating of a local children’s home.



**3.2 The impacts of engaging children and communities in urban regeneration projects harnesses fresh ideas and develops skills and capacity building of local people. Engaging communities develops ownership and re-instils a sense of pride whilst creating new and positive environments for children to play and learn. From planning, budgeting to physical clearance and the actual painting children feel inspired whilst developing practical and creative skills.**

### 3.3 Leadership Training Programmes

3.4 Over 200 Sri Lankan children have participated in eight leadership programmes; five programmes were individually delivered over a 4-week period and three were run over intensive 2-day periods. Training typically focuses on four key topics; developing leadership qualities, learning about international children’s rights, identifying and reviewing a personal goal. All training programmes are tailored to meet the needs of the different groups of children and most programmes were facilitated by local TEA workers and volunteers. The training develops independent thinking and problem solving through creative arts, drama and presentation methods. Children tell us that they develop confidence, public speaking skills and they learn practical leadership qualities from the training programme.



*“You taught us how to face challenges and overcoming fear, identify my weaknesses, this has changed me, before I understand others I must understand myself”. A child (children’s home)*

*“I got many things from the program, how to control my anger, helping others when they are in trouble, I love this project”. A child (local school)*

**3.5 Impacts of leadership training: Training for 15 girls from a Girl’s Home focussed on female empowerment and promoted achievements of great women leaders who rose from hardship. Given the safe training environment we create and the elevation of confidence and open communication the girls opened up and shared a number concerns about their girls home which we addressed separately. 35 girls from a local charity/girls home participated in the training; 50% of the girls had learning difficulties and were illiterate due to non-attendance at school. Many of these girls were pregnant and suffered low self-esteem having suffered abuse and neglect in their local communities. All children who graduate from our leadership programmes are rewarded with certificates of achievement and a group training picture. The most common remarks from children include, ‘developing self-confidence’, ‘achieving a personal goal for the first time’ and ‘feeling listened to and valued’.**

## 3.6 Volunteer Network and Community Development

3.7 In this reporting year The TEA Project developed a broad volunteer policy to ensure the safe recruitment and retention of professional local volunteers and separate procedures for recruiting international volunteers to the project. The recruitment of all volunteers requires a complete background check and ensures volunteers understand our Safeguarding Children policy and strict Code of Conduct when working with vulnerable children. We have a small network of fantastic local volunteers with professional backgrounds and experience of working with children. Our volunteers include an internationally recognised yoga practitioner and trainer, an empowering and dynamic English teacher, a local drugs counsellor and trainer and a British Council teacher. A number of local professionals also provide support with translation skills and donating school resources to The TEA Project.

3.8 “The TEA project always strives to protect children's rights and to give equal opportunities to rise up. It's an inspiring organisation which is fully dedicated to sharpen the children's skills and to raise their own voice. They treat children softly and kindly. As a volunteer, I'm grateful to work with them to do a positive change in children's lives. There I learnt children need to voice openly. They need a good listener. I feel I gave and give chances for the kids to smile innocently and to add rainbow colours to their lives.” Nadeeshani, (*Teacher and LIFE Trainer*).



## 3.9 Evaluation and Outcomes

# Section Four – Our Vision

## 1. Protecting Children from Abuse

We are developing a broad 1-day Safeguarding Children Training Programme for professionals, adults and teachers and a separate programme for children. These programmes will be delivered to all our partners throughout the island. The training will focus on keeping children safe from harm and it will help adults identify report and respond to child abuse appropriately. Children will receive separate training where they will learn what is safe and acceptable behaviour, how to report concerns and stay safe. International child protection agencies, the National Local Protection Agency in Sri Lanka and

input from experts in the field of Child Protection will be consulted and participate in this training programme.

## 2. Improving Teaching Skills of Teachers

Teachers are key to happy, healthy and empowered students. The TEA Project will roll out a programme to develop modern and creative teaching methods and standards for local teachers. Professionals from our local volunteer network and international volunteers will assist us to inspire and help teachers develop new skills to improve educational standards. We will donate school materials and run projects to develop local school facilities and amenities. We will continue to donate much needed school resources, such as school shoes, internet provision, school meals, school bags, pens and pencils.

## 3. Children's Rights Promotion

Children's rights promotion is a key area of our work, we aim to continue to train children to understand their rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This year our focus will expand to train school teachers and adults who work with children about the rights of children to participate in decision-making and not only have a strong voice but be listened to by adults and teachers in a structured way. Children's 'right to participation' and 'best interests of the child' will be key learning principles of our dynamic training programmes.

## 4. Empowering Girls to be Healthy, Happy and Resilient

Developing emotional intelligence and strong mental health of girls will be a key focus our work. We have a number of projects planned targeting girls from local children's homes. Independence programmes and workshops will teach girls about life skills, how to manage challenging situations, provide careers advice and focus on practical skills such as budgeting skills and relationships. Our planned programmes will teach girls about their rights as children and women.

## 5. Improving Children's Capacity to Achieve

4.6 Our broad range of tailored programmes with school children throughout Sri Lanka and India will continue. The TEA Project will continue to run dynamic training programmes and a variety of creative 'thinking outside of the box' workshops with groups of children. Developing technological knowledge, leadership skills, confidence, soft skills and inspiring children to believe they can achieve will be key themes of our work. Projects planned include developing a short film, running focussed after school leadership programmes and working with artists to help children associate everyday sounds with happy memories. Local workers, volunteers and skilled international volunteers will enhance the impact of our work.

"The TEA Project has excellent structured methods to empower children. They enrolled with lots of programmes which enhance the leadership qualities of children. I am very lucky to be a part of this project". Sachini, (TEA Project Worker).

## Section Five - Finance

5.1 The TEA Project became a registered charity in September 2015. We have a dedicated board of trustees chosen for their abilities & skills to lead and inspire others the board scrutinise and strategically advise the work of The TEA Project. The day-to-day work of the charity is currently undertaken by three members of staff and a group of professional volunteers based in Sri Lanka. We rely on good will to run the project and the shared commitment and desire to improve the lives and futures of children in Sri Lanka.

5.2 One staff member works full time on fundraising and communication activities. A broad fundraising strategy is assisting the project with fundraising activities however funds are limited due to the competitive nature of the charitable sector, an increase in need and reduction in funding from the global financial turn down; sadly limited funds directly reduces the capacity and impact of our work. Our financial monitoring and reporting procedures are governed by and adhere to The Charity Commission regulations.

### Fundraising

5.3 At a glance, fundraising activities show 82% of supporters are female and 18% are male. 90% of fundraising comes from the UK and we are growing our local support in Sri Lanka through the use of donation boxes in local shops and volunteer opportunities. The TEA Project works hard locally to promote the outcomes of the work we do, we work with shops and businesses in Kandy to raise donations such as school materials, shoes and school bags. This work is extremely time consuming and resource intensive.

#### 5.4 Fundraising activities in 2014-15 included:

- A Pop Up Stall selling Sri Lankan handicrafts
- School Fair and Assembly
- Independent fundraising events, i.e. baking and selling cakes
- A sponsored run
- Handmade Sri Lankan cards being sold in the UK by TEA volunteers

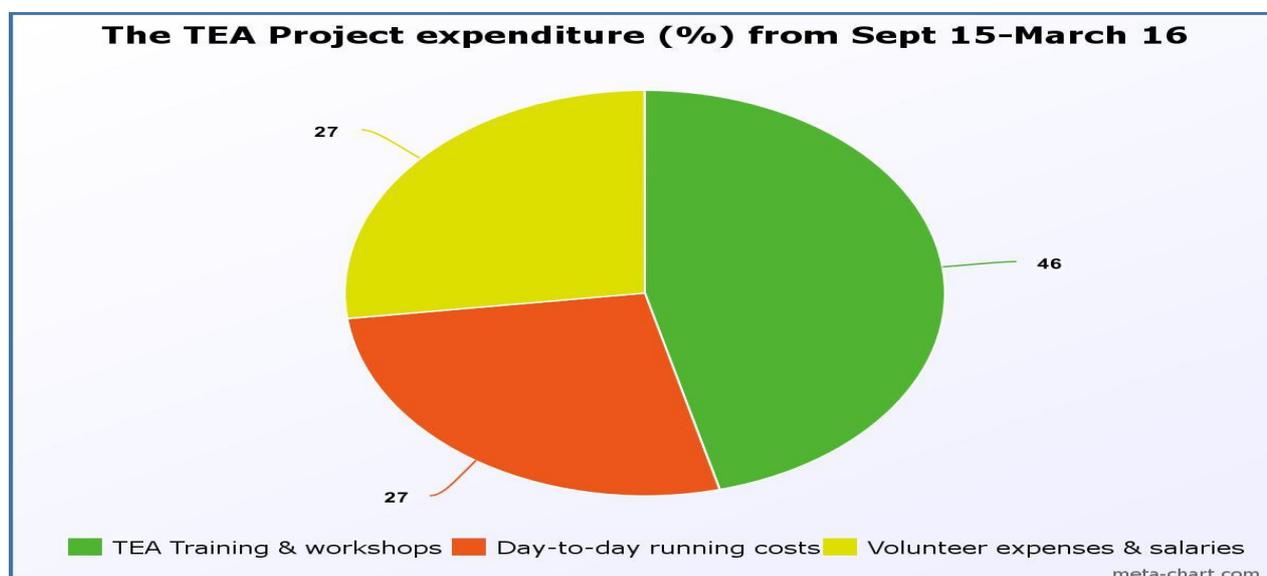
5.5 The TEA Project has a small amount of private supporters who donate via direct debit on a monthly basis – this essential fundraising source allows the project to plan ahead and contributes to essential day-to-day running costs. If anyone is considering donating please contact [info@theteaproject.org](mailto:info@theteaproject.org)

5.6 From the period The TEA Project became a registered charity, from September 2015 to March 2016 (two financial year quarters) the project raised £2,497.

5.7 Below is a chart which breaks down the expenditure of The TEA Project into three key categories. The three categories are; work shop and training programme costs, volunteer expenses and salaries and running costs of the project – running costs include purchasing materials such as certificates, stationary and transport costs. The largest amount of money fundraised is spent on

developing and facilitating TEA training programmes and workshops with children. Volunteer expenses and salaries account for the smallest percentage of spending (27%).

## TEA Project Expenditure (September 2015 – March 2016)



## Proposed Annual Budget 2016-17

### 5.8 The TEA Project: Annual Budget 2016-17

Expenditure	Cost
Project Costs/training & workshops	£6,400
Volunteer expenses & salaries	£4,200
Visas	£400
Annual health cover	£1,000
School network project	£600
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>£12,200</b>

### 5.9 Financial Challenges for the financial year 2016-17 will include:

- Plans to move to a new, more suitable office location.
- Plans to recruit and facilitate a larger number of professional local and international volunteers to the project.
- To realise our fundraising targets and increase regular support such as, individual and corporate sponsorship. To double our fundraising income to meet project demands in 2016-17.
- To meet the increasing costs of workshops and training programmes to enable the project to be spontaneous, dynamic and to meet the changing needs of children we serve island-wide.
- To apply for grants and external funding sources, the use of limited project resources to make detailed plans and applications which may not be successful.

Annual Report written by Racheal Ireton,  
Director of The TEA Project  
July 2016

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<sup>i</sup> Source: Inter Press Service News Agency, 2015

<sup>ii</sup> Children of Sri Lanka, **Realizing Children's Rights in Sri Lanka**, <http://www.humanium.org/>

<sup>iii</sup> UNDP, gender Dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals in Sri Lanka

<sup>iv</sup> UNDP, gender Dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals in Sri Lanka (when?)

<sup>v</sup> Out of Sight, Out of Mind report, UNICEF, 2007

<sup>vi</sup> Children of Sri Lanka, Realizing Children's Rights in Sri Lanka, <http://www.humanium.org/>