



# Udana Special Children's Centre Fact Sheet



Mr Jaya Dharmasiri, retired scientist in physics at the University of Queensland, Australia, contacted BODHI after hearing Colin and Susan speak about BODHI on Australia's radio programme, Bush Telegraph. Mr Dharmasiri is one of the founders and the Australian representative of the Udana Special Children's Centre, a school for children with special needs in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital.

Mr Dharmasiri says, 'Students include two with Downs Syndrome, two with autism and two others with cerebral palsy. There are two children with learning and hearing difficulties, and two others with learning and walking difficulties.'



'There are three teachers, one specially trained and two trainees. The teachers are presently paid half of what they are worth. They are happy with that until the place is established. The parents of five children are unable to pay the school any money so my contacts meet the costs on their own. They are paying for the transport of kids to the school. It would be nice if someone donates a van to this school. I have not yet started canvassing for help in Brisbane yet. The school is run by the parents of the children and care providers.'

‘At the opening ceremony, Buddhist monks blessed the new venture and the traditional brass lamp was lighted symbolizing the dawn of knowledge.

‘A garage was converted at the beginning to run the school. The school is now housed in the preaching hall of a Buddhist temple, which is leased at a reasonable fee. As a temple premises is not designed for children with special needs, for example certain security changes (fences, lockable gates etc) have to be incorporated.’



## Update January, 2009

Mr Jaya Dharmasiri returned recently from Sri Lanka. He writes:

‘It was heartening to see the children making good progress. The school is struggling to survive as there are no fee paying students at the moment. The teachers are paid by the founders from their own earnings. Our family contributed \$400 this time towards its costs. Children come from poor families around the neighbourhood. Their main problem is to bring the children to the school, as the transport costs are prohibitively high. The spirits of the teachers and the children are high and they keep going. I can only wish them good luck!’

Some of the school’s per-annum needs include (in Australian dollars):

Skill development aids, videos, DVDs	A\$1000/US\$833
Books, manuals, guides	A\$500/US\$417
Student fees for 1 student per year (at 20 Hrs per week)	A\$750/US\$625
Teacher’s salary (\$150 p/m)	A\$1800/US\$1500

## Pictures from the Udana School



The temple where the school is run



The classroom, Principal standing at the centre, with two assistant teachers

## Some students of the Udana Special Children's Centre



Sameera



Sasindu



Sajith



Sakuni



Boy with doll



Dharshani



Maharshi

**Staff of the Udana Special Children's Centre**



Mrs Hemanali, CEO



Miss Thirmanna, Principal



Mrs Nirmala Siriwardena, Assistant Teacher



Mrs Kokila Wasanthi, Assistant Teacher







We had a small Xmas concert on 14thDec2007. Here Dilshan is at the centre on stage guided by her Mother. Dilshans mother is very thankful to you for the donation from Bhodi donation since they manage daily transport fee from it. He has been hospitalized for last 2 weeks due frequent spells of fits. Now he is back in school. He suffers from fits 3, 4 times a day. He is in a waiting list for a brain surgery to remove bad parts of brain.



Prabashi is 17 years old. She is having cerebral palsy condition. Until she came to us 6 months ago she has never attended any training centre or school. She enjoys the class very much. Bur unfortunately now her parents are facing a problem of taking her down from the upstairs of the house since the mother is sick with a heart problem recently. We can hire an assistant if we can have around 25 Aus \$ per month. She is using disposable nappies since the toilet available at temple is squatting type and also not accessible for wheel chair. So if nappies can be provided it will be very helpful to them.



Hasini is 7 years old. Her father is in prison and mother is unemployed. She needs financial assistance to attend school and food for lunch.



Lakmali is 14 years old. She needs hearing aids and a special pair of shoes to adjust difference in length of legs. Her father is a daily paid labour. She needs financial assistance as well..

We are running the school smoothly .The children and parents are happy to attend. Due to hike in cost of living the volunteer teachers are expecting a raise in salary to manage increasing transport cost etc. So we have lots of financial needs.

Some of the photos of other children participating the Xmas concert are below. The siblings of our children also participated the event.



Ramesh above  
Kasuni below



Event by RAMESH, Dilshan & MARIAN





Dilshan, Hasii & Lakmali at school

Xmas concert