



Sri Lanka Verein Hamburg e.V.

Review of 2024 and Outlook for



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Actual Framework

With the new government, the political, social, and economic situation in Sri Lanka has changed. The newly elected president, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, has set himself the goal of helping all people in Sri Lanka to live together in a peaceful society to reduce the aftermath of the thirty-year civil war.

The hardship during the coronavirus pandemic and the serious economic crisis have awakened a deep desire for change among the general population and increased hopes for an improvement in the social and economic situation. The new president is paying particular attention to the return of land to Tamils that was taken from them during and after the civil war. In addition, Tamil commemorations, for example, have been reinstated. For the first time in the country's history, a representative with his own council was appointed in parliament to represent the rights of people with disabilities.

The president wants to actively combat corruption in his country. He wants to give greater emphasis to education, and students should receive better financial support because popular education is one of the most effective solutions to poverty. Another focus is on improving the healthcare system.

The country's own industry should be promoted. Further exploration of minerals could potentially promote the extraction of rare earths and other metals. This is one reason why mining should be further developed.

Renewable energies (solar and wind) should account for 100 percent of the energy supply in the future, so that Sri Lanka can one day be self-sufficient. Investments should be made in digitalization.

Tourism is experiencing a sharp increase in visitor numbers. It should be further promoted. This could create new sales opportunities for small shopkeepers.

Inflation has fallen surprisingly sharply from 25 percent to 5 percent. In particular, the prices of many vegetables have decreased significantly, such as:

- Carrots from Rs 755 to Rs 365,
- Leeks from Rs 564 to Rs 405,
- Beetroot from Rs 890 to Rs 645,
- Wheat flour from Rs 211 to Rs 188,
- Sugar from Rs 211 to Rs 199.

The price of rice, on the other hand, has increased slightly (from Rs 220 to Rs 230), the price of coconuts has even increased by 100 percent, and the price of gas, on the other hand, has decreased (figures compared from January 2024 to January 2025).

The government has now presented a new budget. According to this, 30,000 new jobs are to be created. The basic salary of government employees has been increased, and senior citizens, pensioners, and tea plantation workers are to receive more money.

Although the government aims to support particularly needy families, the monthly cash payments are insufficient. The economic hardship of the poorest rural population is unlikely to change overnight and will remain unsatisfactory. Even if the new government gives us hope for improvement



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and is paying much more attention to people's needs, continued support for our projects remains important and worthwhile.

As in recent years, we were once again pleased with the committed and successful collaboration with our local staff.

In addition, we enjoy the positive collaboration with Sri Lankan members of our association, whether Sinhalese or Tamil. Their experiences, ideas, and knowledge, as well as their competent supervision of some projects, enrich our work here in Hamburg.

Projects

Bio-Home Gardening Project

The second phase of the organic home garden project, which began at the end of 2024 in five villages near Dambulla and Doluwa, was successfully completed. Local representatives in the villages pledged their support for all project initiatives. A total of 452 families have already participated in this practical and theoretical program. With Anslem, our long-standing partner in central Sri Lanka, we have gained a dedicated leader who possesses qualified knowledge of horticulture and is able to impart this knowledge to families, especially women. He compiled learning materials in 150 folders. The success of his work was reflected in the harvest yields, which ensured sufficient food supplies for the families. Furthermore, surplus harvests of beans, tomatoes, chilies, bitter gourds, and ladyfingers could be sold at the roadside or at the nearest market – organic products fertilized only with home-grown compost.

As a special event, 90 women and 33 children and young people took advantage of Anslem's offer of a trip to a horticultural research facility at the University of Kandy. They wanted to learn about modern farming methods. The visit to the agricultural research farm was very well received by everyone involved.

Instead of searching for families who had received a prize for particularly high harvest yields and successful management in the previous year, some participants suggested to the project leader that families with particularly successful gardening practices receive learning materials for their children as recognition. Following this suggestion, the volunteers from all five villages selected 75 families, each of whom received a package containing six exercise books and pens.

Training in financial management, including the basics of accounting and personal savings, helped the families save money, for example, due to rising water, electricity, and gas prices.

Anslem provided us with regular updates on the progress of the project through his at least monthly reports, and there was also intensive telephone communication with the board.

In consultation with the project manager, we are considering implementing a third phase of the organic home garden project in 2025. Since our own resources were insufficient for such a larger-scale project, we were able to secure the Schöck Family Foundation as a sponsor for the second phase in 2024. Despite their great generosity, the foundation was unable to provide us with financial support for a third time in 2025 due to statutory regulations. Since we nevertheless want to continue



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the successful organic home garden project, we organized a fundraising campaign in December to ensure the horticulture program can continue. The campaign was relatively successful. After consultation with our local Sri Lankan staff, the selection of families in three towns near Kandy could begin by the end of the year. The basic requirement was again the personal suitability of the applicants. In addition to need, they also needed to demonstrate willingness to perform and commitment. And the willingness to continue your education in the training courses offered and thus acquire basic knowledge in business management, marketing and accounting.

Promoting creative women

Our local partner organization, CWF (Creative Women Foundation), once again conducted training programs for women in the north, south, and central regions of Sri Lanka. They learned skills in making cloth bags and tea bags, as well as packaging them. The women learned how to better manage their gardens to achieve higher harvests. They attended courses to learn how to sell their goods more successfully. Two mobile market carts were organized for the Sri Lankan New Year and again at the end of the year, where the women could offer their goods and gain exposure at various markets. The market near Galle, for example, was a "total success," as the project manager reported to us.

In the rural area surrounding Dambulla, 20 women from poorer families also participated in training courses run by our employee Anslem Nananayakarra. Specific topics included "budget planning" and a general introduction to financial management. The rural women were very impressed and expressed their gratitude for these exceptional training courses, promising to immediately implement the savings measures suggested in the courses. They were aware that, especially given the rising cost of living, the suggested savings opportunities were currently of great value to their livelihoods, helping them win the daily battle with scarce financial resources.

Water is always a major problem. If the monsoon is too abundant, entire plantations or compost pits can be washed away. When, as last year, an unusually long dry period caused problems with gardening, training in the economical use of drinking water became necessary, as drinking water prices had risen by 300 to 400 percent (from Rs. 750-1,000 to Rs. 2,500-4,000). The trainings on effective water management were received gratefully.

Promoting Schools

The support of children and young people is carried out in cooperation with Shilpa Shakthi, our second local partner organization, which is committed to supporting schools in all regions of Sri Lanka. In 2023, Shilpa Shakthi coordinated the renovation of a primary school in the north, which was also funded by the Karan Foundation. In 2024, her program also included the provision of sports equipment to schools in the north, on the tea plantations, and in the south. The Sri Lanka Association helped finance this. Three schools each in the north and on the tea plantations were equipped, and two schools in the south.



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At a large community school in Maharagama near Colombo, which also educates 25 children with special needs, we financially supported a special needs teacher. Her teaching position was about to fall victim to austerity programs. But she was now able to continue her teaching career in the interest of children and young people with special needs.

Our member Umes Arunagirinathan visited schools north of Jaffna in the Kopay district that educate children from the poorest segment of the population. He described the specific emergency situations:

- A water pipe needed to be repaired at a school in Puttur.
- At another school, we were able to have the copier repaired. The teachers wrote us a touching thank-you letter.
- In a village near Jaffna, a meeting room was equipped with chairs and a cupboard for prenatal care by midwives and nurses. Nurses offer pregnancy counseling for women there. Babies can be vaccinated. The room can also be used as a library.

Learning for Future

As in the previous year, four additional young people and students (three for art and dance studies) were selected as part of the targeted individual support program and supported with €30 per month. One student had achieved her A-levels and wants to study. Since the waiting period for university admission is at least a year, the monthly support was discontinued. During this waiting period, the young people look for jobs to earn money. All children, young people, and students we support are monitored by our Sri Lankan board member for learning progress and regular school attendance.

It is also worth noting that three students from the Amunugama dance school near Kandy also received support. The Amunugama dance school and its dancers—including the students we support—were invited to Thailand for the "13th Asean Arts and Culture Exposition." A competition was held at the International Performing Arts Festival. The award ceremony for the best dancers was held. The dance school, which has already received multiple awards in Sri Lanka, won first prize along with the other Sri Lankan dance schools. We were proud that "our" students were among the award winners.

Lunch and Books for Students

Following our appeal for donations at the end of 2022, we received sufficient financial support to support four schools and a kindergarten with cooking and distributing lunches, as we did last year.

Parents are willing to cook the meals. They prepare sufficient quantities of food directly at the schools every day. Suitable rooms and equipment for preparation are provided. School visitors, members, and friends reported how disciplined the children and young people are at their mealtimes. We financially supported Kannakaipuran Primary School in a village near Kilinochchi with a nutritious breakfast.

This support has resulted in almost all children and young people attending school regularly again. Our administrators maintain good contact with all school administrators. In close cooperation with the teaching staff, our association once again ensured transparent accounting of financial contributions.



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In addition, we provided books and writing materials to needy students at the start of the new school year.

Film Promotion

Shilpa Shakthi also coordinated two films that Mr. Parakrama, a well-known Sri Lankan filmmaker, shot with students. We financed these short films. The films have now been produced in Sinhala with English subtitles. They are well worth watching.

Senehasa Childrens Ressource Center

Since 2009, we have been supporting the work of Senehasa, a day care center for children and young people with special needs. Parents and relatives of the children meet regularly at the center to discuss their personal situations. Topics include problems the children and young people with special needs face in dealing with neighbors, and the relationships and reputation of the affected families among the villagers.

At the day care center (in Kithulampitiya near Galle), we again funded two therapists, one for music and dance therapy, and one for body therapy.

For the older young people, further training in baking cookies and cakes produced results. The products sold well in front of the nearby hospital. This was one step the young people had taken to contribute to their financial livelihood.

In November, we were invited to a festive evening of traditional dances: the 20th anniversary of "Senehasa" was to be celebrated. Unfortunately, no member was able to attend. All we could do was admire the children's and young people's skills in photos.

Blind Association in Kilinochchi

Twice, our members have visited the Vanni Association for Visually Handicapped in Kilinochchi, which we have been supporting for nine years. The association seems increasingly well-organized. Self-sufficiency and a good education for the children of blind families are important goals. A house has been built where single blind women live and 172 children from blind families receive training.

There is a room where coconut oil is produced. The coconut milk is pressed from the nuts. During a member's visit in March, the coconuts were purchased very cheaply at the market.

There was a high demand for the coconut oil. Sales were good—a prospect for self-sufficiency. Association representatives asked us to help them purchase an expensive filtering machine that would quickly filter the coconut milk. This would allow the oil to be sold directly on the market much more quickly. Without a machine, the filtering process takes two weeks; with a machine, it takes only three hours. We initially supported the project with a small sum and wanted to wait and see how the coconut oil sales were ultimately evaluated during the current trial phase. We are still short 300,000 RS (approximately 950 euros). After that, we want to decide whether we can fully finance the project within two or three years.



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Renovation of Girls Home

We have received a request to participate in the restoration of outdated water and electrical wiring at the Wijewardena Girls' Home in Prajapathi, known as the "Girls Hotel." Before we can make a decision, we need clear details about the project, a cost estimate, and a responsible person/contact person for the construction work. Therefore, we will not decide on financial support until 2025.

Activities in Germany

- Our monthly get-togethers took place at the Breitengrad restaurant, as in previous years.
- Information about the political, economic, and social situation leading up to the elections and under the new government of Sri Lanka was regularly exchanged. Current reports from our Sri Lankan members Umes, Sureka, and Ananda attracted great interest.
- The ethnologist Dr. Wolfgang Mey gave a fascinating lecture on the concepts and actions of "demons and jakki." These figures play a role in the healing of illnesses, psychosomatic conditions, and depression.
- Members of the Mandelzweig Association (Mandelzweig e.V.), who were also drivers of a tuk-tuk race through Sri Lanka for the Sri Lankan non-profit organization "Sunshine," were invited to present their original fundraising project for a kindergarten in Sri Lanka. We contributed a small donation.
- We invited friends and members to the screening of "The Singing Pond." It is a film that explores the dream of schoolchildren in a simple village who want to experience the sea one day.
- Another screening took place with director Sabine Eckhard's film about a train ride from Colombo to the mountains. This film was also shown on ARTE.
- A reading by Umes from his new book "Herzensdinge" attracted great interest.
- The renewal of our website was decided. After intensive discussions about the concept, the board commissioned Nilan Rupasinghe to redesign the website.
- Teachers from the International School Hamburg contacted us for information for their Sri Lanka trip with students. This resulted in a lively exchange, which also included cooking a Sri Lankan dish together at school under Ananda's guidance.
- The organization, completion, and sale of a new 2025 Sri Lanka calendar with recipes from the country and pictures of projects were planned and implemented.
- Four members manned the Sri Lanka Association's booth at the winter flea market and organized the baking and sale of fresh waffles to raise funds for school lunches. We received active assistance from a student.
- A donation letter was written to continue the organic gardening project.
- To round off the year, a cozy Christmas dinner for members and friends was held at the Breitengrad Restaurant.



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Outlook for 2025

- The funding and implementation of the third organic gardening project in the Doluwa area near Kandy should be enabled.
- Lunch and Books: School meals should be continued at four schools and a kindergarten.
- We are investigating possible funding for the coconut milk filter machine. We are waiting to see whether the blind association continues to be successful after a test phase with the sale of coconut oil.
- We will continue to provide funding for music and body therapists at the Senehasa day care center for disabled children and young people.
- We will explore the extent to which we can help children from the poorest schools north of Jaffna purchase shoes or books or equip a schoolyard with new playground equipment.
- We want to co-finance support for the production of short films for elementary school children.
- We will decide how we can financially support the restoration of a girls' home.
- We will continue to support our two partner organizations, CWF and Shilpa Shakthi.
- The website update should be completed by May.
- We are preparing for the 20th anniversary celebration of the Sri Lanka Verein Hamburg e.V. (Hamburg Sri Lanka Association) on May 11th.
- Monthly get-togethers will continue to deepen contact between members and facilitate further knowledge about Sri Lanka.
- An ethnology student has been invited to give a talk on the different perspectives and ideas of kinship relationships in a country and their impact on the economy and politics.
- We plan to ask Dr. Wolfgang Mey to give us more information about the Kolam plays.
- Participation in the winter flea market, with the sale of waffles as donations for special projects, will definitely take place.
- And of course, there will be a Sri Lanka calendar again in 2026.