



# FRIDSRO

## *Summer Update*

Dear Friends of Fridsro,

I trust you have had a great summer with family, friends and loved ones!

The ministry at Fridsro continues to grow and continues to amaze me in terms of what God can do with a handful of people committed to a vision and a purpose that was implanted and is blessed by God.



You will see **some** (*there is too much to share for this letter*) of the progress in the other sections below. All we are able to accomplish on the ground would not be possible without your partnership and help, which we are so very thankful for.

On June 15 this year I lost my sister Lorena which was a tremendous blow to me personally but also to the ministry.

I was boarding a flight to the USA with my family when I got the call from Lorena's husband, Kirk, that she had taken her own life and was no longer with us. As you can imagine, that first flight of many hours was devastating for me and my family who were also traveling with me. Lorena was laid to rest in Sweden beside our Swedish grandma and grandpa there. needless to say it was an emotional summer and we are still feeling the loss and confusion of it all. Lorena helped me in many ways over the past years with the mission of Fridsro and was integral in highlighting many areas that needed change as well as implementing many of those changes. She was always a "rock" I could count on to tell me the truth in black and white. She

was also a sounding board to staff and children, both past and present, and the loss of her is felt deeply both locally and globally.

Lorena struggled greatly with severe depression for many years which had its roots in childhood trauma that none of us knew about at the time. In recent years, as she opened up more-and-more, we have all tried to help but sometimes in very unfruitful ways.

Finally, I believe the extent of what she faced in life got to a point of desperation and disillusionment that caused her to decide to take her own life.

Today, we all move on, knowing that she loved the vision and mission of Fridsro and wanted only for that to succeed. We know that she is with our mother and that they both are at peace together.

I would like to thank all of you whom have been a support to us personally as well as to the extended Fridsro family of Lorena and I humbly ask that you continue to pray for us as we navigate through feelings and realities in the days, weeks and months to come. Please remember to pray for Lorena's husband Kirk, her daughter Alex and husband Quinten as well as her son JJ who lives in a home for autistic kids in Sweden. (Don't forget to pray for my dad Jacob as well. No one wants to live longer than their child)

May God continue to bless each one of you for your support, your partnership, your love, and your prayers in this ministry.

Jake



**Lorena Perera Smith 1972 – 2017**

# Against All Odds



**Kuru** from Jaffna lost his right leg during the civil war when he was young boy. He was helpless in every way and rejected by his family, relatives and society. For many years he was all alone and moving around using a hand-made cart. Eventually he decided to get out of this misery and started growing vegetables on some land and collecting firewood to strengthen his income. After some time he was given two cows by another aid organization and he started to gain his life and livelihood back.

As a result of all the efforts that he has put in over the years, he employed two persons with disabilities and is running his own cattle farm and cultivation. Now he is a father of 5 children and is sponsoring other school children in his area. Being the leader of the Jaffna district self-help group his commitment is highly commendable and a role model for the rest of the people with disabilities and also for society in general. We have identified him in our leadership project as one of the future leaders to lead the people with disability in the country.

**Geetha** is visually impaired but has graduated from University using the Braille system. Given her impairment, not many organizations were ready to hire her though she was qualified. After sometime she was called to join the government sector as a development officer for one division.

In order for her to get this government job she needed to be trained in computers and Fridsro was asked if we could help. She was given special training for six months by us and is now happily and gainfully employed in a secure job that makes a difference just by



her presence, not to mention the excellent work she does for the people in her division. In her spare time she does social work in the field, career guidance, vocational training assistance, and creating awareness among the parents of children with disabilities. Geetha is also one of the leaders of the self-help group and actively takes part in developing other groups as well. She lives a happy life today with her husband and daughter and is full of gratitude to Fridsro giving her the necessary assistance when she needed it the most.

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## Our Children First!

The National Policy for Alternative Care was initiated by the Government of Sri Lanka and headed by the National Commissioner for children's issues in collaboration with Fridsro and UNICEF. Fridsro Board Member (Director) and Consultant for Child Rights, Dr. Pamela Peiris takes the leading role as National Consultant on this project while other INGOs and NGOs also play supporting roles.

The questions we are exploring in the formulation of this National Policy are:

- a) What are ways in which children 'at-risk' of Institutional Care be facilitated to live a dignified life with their families, assuring existing State and non-state services respond to their basic needs adequately, emotional and psychological needs responded to in a timely manner, and where child rights are upheld?*
- b) What are ways in which children and adolescents in institutional care could be facilitated to 'move forward' into De-institutionalized and alternative care settings?*

*c) What are ways in which adolescents leaving care settings be facilitated to transition into safe, independent and secure living minimizing occurrences of their next generation experiencing similar vulnerabilities?*

Fridsro is keeping in line with UN Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children and working together on this daunting task given the huge need to solve this locally. We are placed in a crucial role to form a positive, relevant and practical outcome.



Dr. Pamela Peiris, (National Consultant, Advisor and Board Director of Fridsro), Gelani Tissera (Fridsro CFO) and Rev. Kumar Rasiah (Fridsro COO and Project Leader on this effort) in planning stages for our unique input to the policy.

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