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PRESS RELEASE

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Release no. 20081230

Children affected by violence learn new job skills thanks to funding from the US Government

December 30, 2008 – Colombo: Seven young men who are victims of violence have acquired new job skills and are ready to reintegrate into society after a job training program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The program, *New Beginnings for Children Affected by Conflict and Violence*, is funded by a \$2.6 million grant from USAID and implemented by Save the Children in Sri Lanka. All seven boys live at the Hikkaduwa Government Certified School and received their training in vocational centers in the local community.

“New Beginnings works to protect children affected by violence from further harm, to help them access psycho-social and skills development so they can reintegrate successfully into society,” said Rebecca Cohn, USAID Mission Director. *“Since 2005, New Beginnings has reunited more than 950 children with their families and prevented more than 700 children from being placed in institutions. USAID is proud that our support has directly helped so many children and families in Sri Lanka,”* Cohn continued.

As a result of the conflict, poverty, lack of access to education, family migration, abuse and crime, there are currently more than 21,100 children staying in 488 voluntary residential care institutions and 22 State-run residential institutions, including remand homes, certified schools,

and receiving homes in Sri Lanka. These voluntary homes and institutions provide basic care, education, and job training to children.

New Beginnings helps young people learn trades so they can get jobs and become financially independent. The Provincial Ministry of Probation and Childcare donated the tools the seven boys will need to pursue careers in hairdressing, tailoring, cushion work (upholstery), cooking, and iron work or welding.

In addition, the program reunites children with their families by providing economic and material support. *New Beginnings* has also strengthened child protection through training programs for probation officers and magistrates.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries worldwide for nearly 50 years. Since 1946, USAID/Sri Lanka has invested nearly \$2 billion to benefit all the people of Sri Lanka.

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Left to Right: Provincial Commissioner Gamini Weerakoon, Principal of Hikkaduwa Certified Government School Mr. Thilak Shanta, Hon. Minister Piyasiri Gamage, USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn, and Save the Children in Sri Lanka Southern Province Manager Ranjith Endera Arachchige, participate in the ceremonial oil lamp lighting to celebrate the 7 boys who have completed vocational training and are now ready to re-enter society. USAID provided vocational training to the boys, and the Provincial Ministry of Probation and Child Care donated tools to help them get jobs in their fields.



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