

Peace and Reconciliation Centre ***Welimada, Sri Lanka***

TOF 96-02

The centre organises camps for children and youth and holds workshops conducted by the National Council of YMCAs and the member YMCAs on topics such as nutrition and drug prevention. It also organises poverty alleviation training and community development programmes. Once it has been refurbished the income from letting out rooms and catering to the campers and holiday-makers should enable it to be self-sufficient. Eventually it will serve over 5,000 youth and children annually in a Christian environment as a camp and conference centre with a YMCA background, and through its community development and nutrition programmes it will serve almost 10,000 people.



Most of the children who come to the camps have lost one or both of their parents in the armed conflict. Selvam's father was killed during the fighting in 1990. His mother received some assistance from the YMCA and a weaving loom provides enough income for the two of them to live on. Selvam was a withdrawn and lonely child but during a three-day Unity Camp at Welimada, where children from different communities lived, ate and played together as a family, he made friends and is now a much happier child.

Rexon and Nixen, two brothers, also came to the camp. Their mother was killed by the Sri Lanka Army in front of everyone and their father died from the shock. So the boys thought all uniformed people were their enemies. However, the camp made them realise that different communities can get along happily together.