

## 'Bioforce' to assist construction industry training

By Sunil C. Perera

Bioforce Development Institute is recognised by the French Government as a charity that assists local construction sector to train skilled young workforce.

Bioforce Director General, Benoit Silve says following a request by the French Red Cross in 2005 in the context of their Tsunami linked programmes, Bioforce evaluated training needs in the construction sector.

As a result of these studies, a training project has been developed, in partnership with the Chamber of Construction Industry of Sri Lanka (CCI). This project is supported and financed by the French Red Cross.

CCI and Bioforce have planned jointly a gradual course of action that will create sustainable employment for young persons, in particular those affected by the

Tsunami, build entrepreneurial capacity within the construction industry targeting small and medium enterprises, and significantly increase the number of skilled craftsmen for construction entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka.

Benoit said the developing network of vocational training centres to reach tsunami-affected areas would increase the number of technicians trained in basic and advanced technical skills according to national skills standards. Additional training will encourage employment creation through the capacity building of managers and entrepreneurial skills in the context of construction enterprises.

"We have inaugurated the first training centre in Balapitya and started the actual training of 100 masons. The training will be 6 months, 3 months in

the centre and 3 months on the job with local entrepreneurs, said Benoit.

Bioforce and CCI are in contact with construction entrepreneurs, both internationally and here, in participate to this project and extend it to all 4 training vocational centres, and to develop the project beyond the 2 years currently planned.

This programme that Bioforce implements with CCI to help young individuals, especially those affected by Tsunami, is totally supported by the Ministries, which are concerned of the disadvantages faced by Sri Lankan workers in the Middle East, by the lack of qualification and certification, thus lowering wage scale.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the tsunami, lot of construction is required and knowledgeable persons anticipate that major road-work will commence

this year; in that context the programme will bring lot of competent skilled workers, which will reduce the need for expatriates.

The partnership initiated by Bioforce with CCI thus conjugates humanitarian concerns with economic reality to promote both the interests of young Sri Lankan and the economic development of Sri Lanka.

Consolidation of years 1 and 2 which will concentrate on the training programming being self sustaining and autonomous (financial and management aspects). At the macro level it is hoped to stimulate growth and professionalize the construction industry, particularly in the Tsunami affected regions. Other NGO's who have construction programmes in progress are able to benefit from having more skilled technicians and construction enterprises on hand.

## Safe drinking water from Brandix

To provide safe drinking water for those most in need, Brandix - Sri Lanka's single largest exporter, together with Reebok India, and in partnership with Rotary Club of Colombo East, brought relief to the people of Lunugamvehera by providing them with drinking water, which was previously unavailable.

Brandix sponsored "Fashion Statement 06" was organized by the Rotary Club of Colombo East to raise funds to provide safe drinking water to a needy community in Sri Lanka. This particular village was chosen as it was found that the

people in the area had to travel over 2 kilometres by foot to obtain safe drinking water. Approximately 100 villagers benefited from this initiative.

The people of Lunugamvehera now have access to pure drinking water via a water tank which has a capacity of 2,000 litres, with provision to

increase this capacity to 10,000 litres. A cultivation well which had previously been used for drinking purposes but had fallen into disuse and disrepair, was cleaned and renovated. Thereafter, a pump house, water tank, pump and a structure for holding the water tank was constructed and the connecting



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pipelines were laid to the village.

"Water" is the central focus of Brandix community outreach activities. Most recently Brandix commissioned a desalination plant at a cost of Rs 5.7 million for the people of Rajapakshapura, Seeduwa, which consists of over 450 families, who never had access to free, pure drinking water. "At Brandix we are committed to mitigating the issues arising from inadequate pure drinking water, a dire need for many communities in the country" said Head of CSR at Brandix, Shamilka Samarasinghe.

## Suzuki leads environmental management

Environmental pollution has not been an entirely new phenomenon, but rather a problem that has grown steadily worse with time. While the population explosion and

social and economic changes are contributing to the increasing population levels, technological change must bear the greatest responsibility. Vehicles have

made a great contribution to the betterment of our lives by transporting people and cargo in cities but at the cost of our environment. Traffic volume and the number of

diesel vehicles have increased so rapidly that measures to prevent vehicle pollution have failed to respond, which is why air pollution from vehicle emissions and noise pollution by road traffic have not been remedied thus far. Given that harmful substances contained in diesel, engine exhaust emissions are an immediate hazard threatening our lives and health.

As good corporate citizens, Suzuki has engaged itself in numerous activities in areas such as research and development and obtaining certification, which has helped them acquire tools that allow assessment of the effectiveness of the environmental management system, the results of which can be used to further their efforts in environmental conservation activities.

As of March 2003, all of Suzuki's domestic plants have gained ISO14001 certification. At Suzuki's manufacturing bases located in developing countries, they have implemented voluntary regulations that equal environmental and emissions standards found in Japan. They also provide technical support, information, and education on environmental conservation. Thus, standards in Suzuki plants in Third World countries match First World standards.

Suzuki's low pollution vehicles are developed utilizing advanced environmental technologies. In 2003, they contributed to environmental conservation by shipping about 480,000 low pollution vehicles. They also contribute to improving air quality by developing consumer vehicles with reduced exhaust emissions.