

## Staff volunteerism and corporate support at John Keells Group



Staff volunteerism has become an integral part of the Group's community engagement strategy. This not only connects the John Keells family more closely with one another and the community, but also enables our employees to gain skills, motivation and enjoyment, while giving something back to the community.

The Group encourages its employees to volunteer their services in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities initiated both at Centre (by the Foundation) and Business Unit level. In fact, the Foundation has only two dedicated employees. The Management Committee and the project teams of the Foundation comprise Group employees who volunteer their time in the respective capacity. Project activities are supported by a wider team of volunteers drawn from across the Group.

Employees whose involvement is required in CSR activities are released with minimum restraint and the senior management exercises a flexible policy toward the time devoted by staff to such projects. The John Keells Group does not account or charge for time spent by employees on CSR voluntarism. Similarly, the Foundation does not account or charge for human resources, planning and administration and overhead costs attributable to any of its projects.

Project related transport outside a 10-km radius is facilitated by the Foundation through hire of vehicles from the Leisure-Inbound Sector of the John Keells Group. Under a special arrangement between Walkers Tours Ltd (the inbound tour operator) and the Foundation, vehicles for CSR-related activities are made available at concessionary rates.

Meanwhile, under a similar arrangement between John Keells Hotel Management Services and the Foundation, the food and accommodation requirements of project teams on CSR-related site visits in the proximity of John Keells hotels are met at concessionary rates (for both staff and external resource persons comprising the respective project team). The managements of the respective hotels also work in close collaboration with the project team to provide ancillary support for the team's activities in the proximity of the hotels.

In November 2008, the Foundation published a booklet entitled "John Keells Staff Volunteer Initiative 2008/09" towards highlighting the key social responsibility projects engaged in by the Group and encouraging more staff to volunteer their time and efforts to any project of their choice. Printed in both Sinhala and English, approximately 8,000 copies were circulated among existing staff, new inductees and management trainees of the Group. Based on responses received from employees across the Group on a purely voluntary basis, a database of 344 volunteers has been developed for future mobilisation. Volunteers who have already participated in various CSR initiatives have often shared their sense of fulfilment at being part of a community based activity, which has been circulated among others of the team for motivational purposes.

In 2009/10, volunteer forums have been organised based on the focus areas of the Foundation, to engage the volunteers on a more interactive basis. These gatherings have seen a healthy response, and volunteers eagerly make suggestions for the improvement of projects, different ways of involvement etc. Following from these forums, many volunteers have become increasingly engaged with projects, often volunteering their free time on weekends and other holidays.