

Sharika Jayewardene

Chief Co-ordinator
English Connection,
Bullers Lane
Colombo 7

16th October 2025

To whom it may concern

Meha Balendra has been an exemplary volunteer student-mentor of The English Connection from **May 2023 to December 2023**.

About Us:

The English Connection is the brain child of a committed team of neighbours, living on Bullers Lane, in the heart of the more affluent area in Colombo 7, Sri Lanka's thriving metropolis.

The economic crisis of 2023/24, in Sri Lanka meant that many daily wage earners lost their income; they could barely afford to feed their families and so buying school supplies or pursuing education, became untenable. Within walking distance of Bullers Lane are five such "wattes," shanties, which often do not even have running water. Each "watte" has numerous families (fifty to over a hundred), living in makeshift shelters. Many have no electricity and often survive on one meal a day. By renting the hall of The Cancer Society, these neighbours committed their time and resources to holding elementary English Lessons, for children in these "wattes." Thus The English Connection, was born.

Today, Sixty two children, from these Wattes and some from the streets of the area, aged 5-14 are on the register; weekly English classes begun in June 2023 have continued on a term by term basis, following a syllabus of grammar, comprehension and writing skills, together with spoken English. Clothes, books, stationery and all study resources are provided. Buller's Lane neighbours also enable a nourishing dinner at the end of each class, for children to take home.

The Work Force

The main body of EC comprises a group of committed professionals, assisted by young focused senior high school students, like **Meha**. They cover the syllabus, seated on mats on the floor, ensuring that each of their three charges of the day (as we rotate students to each mentor) follows the assigned lessons. This also includes teaching of social skills: the use of bathroom facilities, washing hands, non-aggressive behaviour, while at the same time building a safe space to commune in. **Meha**, was one of the original volunteers, selflessly showing up and helping to shape the learning programmes and the syllabi at the same time. She used action rhymes and phonetics, to teach the youngsters, always creating enthusiasm amongst them. **Meha** also helped with outings and activities, as with Colombo excursions, Christmas parties and other extra-curricular learning programmes.

Permission & Accreditation

The Colombo Municipal Council, the Cinnamon Gardens Police, the Welfare Board of the area have all given their approval and dropped in to witness these classes in action. Kind donors provide regular school supplies, vitamins, basic medication, reading books, underwear, footwear, clothes and other essentials.

The English Connection would not be able to function without its mentors and young teachers and for this I thank **Meha** for her remarkable selfless service. **Meha** brought with her, a mentorship of patience coupled with enthusiasm and energy. Her ready smile and positive, can-do attitude put our youngsters at ease and helped them to build confidence in reading aloud, speaking in basic conversations and in following a syllabus of written English. Meha will indeed be missed, mostly by our youngsters.

I wish **Meha** well and would be happy to be contacted regarding any further details, I might provide.

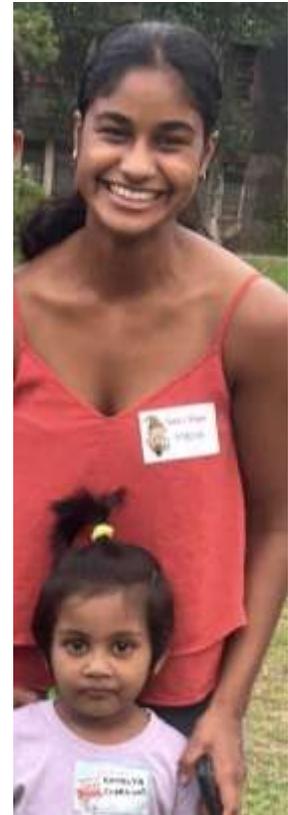
Yours Faithfully



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