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**GOOD SAMARITANS:** V M Fawaz, centre front row, along with Executive Committee members of Being Kind Foundation.



# Friends in deed

Sri Lankan expatriate inspires compatriots to fund education of students hit by lack of finances. **P4-5**



**IN THE FAST LANE:** Speedster Dilhara Fernando, right, after giving away the winner's trophy at Ceylonians Mega Bash 2016 in Doha.

**In 2008, it started with Fawaz supporting one child in Sri Lanka from his own pocket. Later, like-minded friends joined the initiative, and today, they support the education of 32 children in their country**

Narrating his story, Fawaz recalled he went on to wash dishes at a restaurant besides working part time at a pizza shop. Among other jobs, he worked in a bank as a data operator and later landed in Saudi Arabia to find work there.

"Growing up, it has always been on my mind that I have to do something for my community. I should make a difference," said Fawaz.

"I initiated this foundation in 2008 with one student. And till now, this student is studying. He was a far relation. I funded his education and this act really gave me peace of mind," Fawaz said.

He then thought of inviting his friends to the cause. So Fawaz approached some of his good friends based in the UK, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE and Sri Lanka.

Initially, he contacted 10 people. Eight of them pledged support straightaway. He kept encouraging the other two. "They also came onboard on seeing the success of the foundation and the good work that we were doing," he recalled.

"We don't do any fundraising. We contribute ourselves. It is within a circle of friends. This foundation is registered in Sri Lanka. We have an executive committee in Colombo," the foundation's founder said.

They have a criterion to select children whose education they intend to fund. It includes a child without a father and the mother is yet to re-marry, or if a student has five siblings or more and they are all struggling to receive education, and/or children whose parents are divorced and the student is living

with biological grandparents.

The foundation pays for every quota year. They have a budget for different grades. The first time when they pay them, the students have to submit the receipts or vouchers. They pay for whatever expenses students incur on their education including extra classes, uniform, school fee, and others.

Recently, 13 of Fawaz's friends got together and funded a university student's education. "It came from one of my colleagues

who told me that there is a girl who is studying to become a lawyer but is struggling to get funds for her studies. So we got together and we funded her studies," says Fawaz, who is 40 now, but says he would love to further his education even now if he gets a chance.

Dilhara Fernando supports Fawaz and his friends' cause and urges people to join them.

"These are very good people. They took really good care of me

here and I am impressed with the work they are doing. I would ask you to become a member of their foundation and help them carry forward their work," said Fernando, who is currently out of the Sri Lankan team, but the 36-year-old hopes to stage a comeback.

Talking about cricket, particularly bowling fast, he believes, cannot be learnt. "With training you can add 5-6 kmph. But, for instance, if a guy

bowls at 125kmph, you cannot make him bowl 145 kmph, that is not possible," Fernando told *Community* at the conclusion of the cricket tourney.

And it is difficult to be a fast bowler in today's challenging conditions and growing demands of the game, he said. "It is quite difficult to be a fast bowler. The captain expects you to bowl fast every time you are in the playing 11 and you have to deliver. And in the sub-continent conditions, it gets really difficult," observed Fernando.

He still plays first-class cricket and believes he still has one or two years of cricket left in him. If given a chance, he would want to make a comeback to the national colours.

His coming into cricket, Fernando recalled, was totally accidental. He used to play basketball and one day, one of his friends invited him to try his hand at the sport. He played a practice game with them and he enjoyed his bowling.

Later, playing Division III cricket from his school, he featured in a match against one of the Colombo teams. He was bowling quick. "One of the umpires noticed it and relayed the information to Arjuna Ranatunga, the former World Cup winning captain of Sri Lanka. Next morning, I got a call from Arjuna and he said we want to see you bowling," says Fernando.

"They were surprised to see that I was able to generate such pace at 17. Arjuna asked me to join the SCC team. I am not a big fan of swing. I love to bend my back and produce speed," said the Sri Lankan speedster.



**FOR A CAUSE:** Fernando praised the cause and urged people to join it to help carry forward the good work.



# Where there's a will

Having struggled during his time as a student for lack of finances, 40-year-old Sri Lankan expatriate V M Fawaz is always at hand – with help from his friends – to pool in for students struggling to make the cut, writes **Umer Nangiana**



**INITIATIVE:** V M Fawaz with a student ambassador Nusrath Aman, right, that his foundation is supporting.

Photos by Umer Nangiana

**M**any would remember their own rough patch through the challenging days of life. But very few would remember other people around them going through the same ordeal. Yet, fewer in their good days would return to help such people out of a crisis.

Forty-year-old V M Fawaz, an expatriate from Sri Lanka, is one such soul. Been there himself, he

could not see others facing similar predicament in life. He therefore, steps forward to help whenever he finds someone struggling to get education due to his or her poor financial circumstances.

As a child, Fawaz wanted to study. Coming from a poor family, it was difficult. He remained resolute though and started working at the age of 12 to fund his education. All that effort took him till O' levels.

Years later in his relatively good days, Fawaz decided to form 'Being Kind Foundation' with the aim to help all those in a similar fix. As a result, he started funding the education of such children. In 2008, it started with supporting one child in Sri Lanka from his own pocket.

Later, like-minded friends joined the initiative, and today, they support the education of 32 children in their native Sri Lanka.

"I started working when I was 12. In the market, they used to throw fruits and vegetables and along with my brother I used to pick those fruits and vegetables, wash and sell them. I did other menial jobs but carried on with my studies as long as I could," Fawaz tells *Community* in an interview at conclusion of a community cricket tourney his foundation organised in Doha recently to raise awareness about the cause.

Sri Lankan cricketer and fast bowling sensation Dilhara Fernando was the chief guest on the occasion, invited particularly for the event.

"My other siblings could not study. I am the only one in my family who can speak English. I did a diploma in English. I really wanted to study, and did not give up on my education," says the founder of Being Kind Foundation.