

Final report activities done in relation to Spinal Injuries Association (SIA).

Monday 02/10:

We went to see Mr Priyantha at the SIA centre at Ragama, he was not there, people there told us he was at Motivation in Colombo. We went there and finally spoke with Mr. Priyantha. After asking him about all the times we tried to get in contact he replied that he did not know due to several reasons so we thought we leave it at that and start fresh. He was going to make a program for us this week and the following week.

Tuesday 03/10:

We picked up Mrs Sheila who would guide us through the day. First we went to a place called Prithipura, as it turned out this was the wrong place we were supposed to go to the next door place also called Prithipura, to make matters worse by the time we arrived at this place the OT/seating specialist had to go to his other workplace. He was sorry we missed him because he was waiting for us for a couple of hours unfortunately we did not know this. In the mean time I had a quick look around and discovered a lot of wheelchairs, buggy's and other rehabilitation materials donated from Holland. I felt at home but very hot... I made an appointment to meet with the OT the next week in order to go through some of the wheelchairs and positioning problems he experienced. I already noticed a lot of problems by only walking through the centre.

After this visit we went to a vocational centre near Seeduwa. After waiting, calling and waiting finally someone arrived and he showed me some people in wheelchairs who wanted sporting wheelchairs. I had a look at the wheelchairs they have now for their ADL activities and discovered no immediate problems. With regards to the sporting wheelchairs I will come to that later.

After these visits we went back to Ragama at the SIA to look for Mr Priyantha he was at the basketball field and invited me to have a look at the fellows in wheelchairs and so on. Again looking at them and their wheelchairs they were all suitable, mainly because these were wheelchairs from SIA and I think highly of them! The trainer of the basketball team asked me if I wanted to continue giving the training to the team, he thought because I was a Physiotherapist I should know how to conduct that. I do not know but what I did I asked somebody who is a trainer in Holland to write some basic training techniques and also give some ideas towards sporting wheelchairs in third world countries. To date I (Carla did not receive anything) but I will follow up on that when I am home.

Wednesday 04/10

After picking up Mr Perera, from Ragama, we went on a long trip to Kalutara. We ended at a school with a small special needs/education class and a friendly special needs teacher who asked me about the physical problems of several of his students. I explained several things and suggested a couple of exercises and plays he could do to improve the coordination and motorist capabilities of these children, he seemed happy and satisfied with my suggestions and he went along with us to visit some other places.

The next place we went to was a big centre for physical and mentally disabled persons. I did not see any people in wheelchairs and when I asked for these people they quickly organized some wheelchairs and put people in it who I saw walking minutes before....apparently they did this to accommodate my wish to see a person in a wheelchair which of course was not my idea of helping and assessing people who are wheelchair bound. Anyway after this discovery we had a nice look around the place and also discussed some issues related to physical problems and what you can do with some simple exercises etc. They had a Physio room with equipment but had nobody who did anything with it, they said they would be interested to get some basic training.

After this visit we went in the same area to a young woman's place, still living with her parents CP and mentally retarded. I assessed her wheelchair (a chair from SIA) and found that her back was too low, the seat depth and shape of the seat were wrong. Furthermore she desperately needed a therapy tray and arm supports. The chair she is using at the moment was far too active for her and as a result she was sitting nose and head down making a very inactive impression. After raising the backrest end adapting the seat she started to sit up a little bit more and showed some interest in her environment at the same time, this enforced my idea that she needed better arm support in order to help her sit up better and helping her to be more aware of her environment. Furthermore I suggested that she should go to the centre for disabled people near by for her to get activated and for her Mum to get a little bit time for herself and the rest of the family. Mr Perera wrote everything down, measurements and other adaptations. It would be nice if some follow up with regards to this woman will be conducted by SIA.

Then we went to a very big man living at Payagala who was waiting for his sporting wheelchair made by SIA, I took his measurements again, Mr Perera wrote it down and we left.

The next girl was Mrs Loods Warnakula also living in Payagala, Spinal Injury victim after falling from the cupboard at home....She was sitting in a very heavy big wheelchair (Reha) and it was hard for her to move around or for her sister to move her around. She needs a foldable wheelchair to get around, but which one? I took all her measurements and we will see what we can do from Holland for her.

Friday 06/10

We went up to Kundasali near Kandi to the Digana Rehabilitation centre. Due to the public holiday (Poya day) the local physiotherapist went home early and nobody new that we were coming. We had a quick look around the centre and had to go because no one to share ideas with.

Monday 09/10

We went to the Sambodi children's home in Weligama, near Galle. People there knew we were coming and they showed me some children in wheelchairs, 2 of them in chairs of SIA, sitting perfectly and one little boy called Ranjit with severe spinal deformity after TB of the spine. He is in desperate need of a MUTU 2 wheelchair in order to give him proper support and prevention of further deformity. His body measurements are:

Seat depth: 31
Seat width: 21
Chest width: 20
Height of R. Armpit: 34
Height of L. armpit: 30
Lower leg length: 36

I also spoke to a person everybody referred to as Doctor, he was doing some acupuncture, I asked him what he did and he told me some Chinese lady had given him some ideas about acupuncture and now he is doing it. After enquiring here by several doctors if this was common, they replied that this was quite uncommon and frankly not done!

Tuesday 10/10

Back to Prithipura at Hendela for my appointment with Mr Suranga Malge. We saw about 12 children all lying on the floor getting splints and so on in order to get treatment against contractures. Good to see that treatment was given in that way. After this we saw several children and I explained a lot about all the possibilities of the wheelchairs there because these chairs I work with on a daily basis in Holland. Mr Suranga also showed me the nice book Motivation had written about seating and positioning and he displayed great knowledge of the theoretic. I liked the fact that he was honest in the way he told me that he found it difficult to put all this theory into practice. We positioned some children properly and it was also good to see the difference in appearance of the children and the way that he acknowledged the difference as well. With simple technical adaptations one can achieve a lot in improving the positioning and seating of these children. Mr Suranga told me that he would love to see that a technician of SIA comes with him every 2 weeks to asses and adapt the chairs accordingly, he urged me to make a case for him. I think so too that this would be a very good way in dealing with the seating and positioning problems of these children.

With regards to the question of the sporting wheelchairs: I have no intention to provide sporting wheelchairs when it is obvious that so many people are in desperate need of a proper ADL wheelchair. I like the wheelchairs of SIA but I also think one should look more critical in the way these chairs are fitted because sometimes it is better to give a 4 wheel chair especially for making easier transfers. In essence these wheelchairs are chairs geared for active sitters and users but with little adaptations they are also suited for the more passive wheelchair user.

As an idea I was wondering if it is not possible to create a SIA wheelchair fitted with an extra axle in camber and maybe different narrower front wheels in order to make a combination sporting/ADL wheelchair. Now with the extreme camber they can not use the sporting chair in daily life a combination of the 2 is the most practical en cheapest solution. You will not have the best en lightest wheelchair in the world but you can certainly cater for a larger group of people.

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