

Development and Projects Policy



Last Updated: 8 June 2026



Registered Charity



Vanni Hope (ABN: 19614675231) is a charity registered with the ACNC.

Introduction

Vanni Hope's mission is to empower marginalised families and communities as well as promote the participation of more vulnerable groups in Sri Lankan society – specifically orphaned children, women and girls, and people with disabilities. Vanni Hope attempts to meet this objective by (among other things) providing education opportunities to those children from orphaned and/or poor backgrounds as well as economically empowering women and girls, and people with disabilities. Our Development and Projects Policy (the **Policy**) sets out Vanni Hope's guiding principles that apply to the organisation's development activities.

Vanni Hope has members and volunteers on the ground in Sri Lanka and comprehends the bespoke challenges which face local communities. Such challenges require novel solutions which are appropriate within the framework of the relevant local community which involves assisting local community leaders who have the know-how, network and resilience to create long-lasting change.

In performing our work, we strongly value and adhere to human rights and we apply such principles to ensure that our work complies with best practice, including maintaining transparency and accountability to our donors and supporters.

Definitions

Aid and Development Activities means activities undertaken in order to reduce poverty including community projects, community education, advocacy, volunteer deployment, the provision of technical and professional services and resources, environmental protection and restoration and the promotion and protection of human rights.

Localisation means recognising, respecting and strengthening leadership and decision-making by national and local actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations.

Moral Development School means interactive activities, including storytelling, role-playing, group discussions, and community service, helping children internalise these values and understand their importance in daily life, which includes teachers guide them through the process, acting as role models of ethical conduct.

Non-development activities means activities that are not development activities. Non-development activities include the provision of financial or welfare handouts, which is defined by DFAT's predecessor agency (AusAID) NGO Cooperation Program Guidelines (note: AusAID was abolished in 2013; functions transferred to DFAT) as follows:

Welfare is defined as ‘care and maintenance, other than refugee and emergency situations, which aims to maintain people in a particular condition on a longer-term basis. Substantial and broad impact on social and economic conditions in the community is not normally expected from welfare programs. Welfare is typically provided on an individual or family basis including home-based and institutional care programs, such as those provided by orphanages, homes for the elderly, hospices, support to the disabled, and the provision of food for destitute.’

Scope of Policy

This Policy applies to all of Vanni Hope's activities, projects and operations. All Vanni Hope staff, volunteers and partners are required to read and familiarise with this Policy.

Project Proposals

Project proposals submitted to the board of directors of Vanni Hope for consideration may come from three sources:

- a director, officeholder or member of Vanni Hope;
- a donor or supporter (or group of donors or supporters) of Vanni Hope; or
- a local community leader or organisation within Sri Lanka.

Prior to considering and accepting a project proposal, at least one director of Vanni Hope must have visited the area on which the project will be implemented and present his or her views on the benefits and challenges connected with the proposed project. The board of directors of Vanni Hope will consider the merits of the project and vote as to whether to pursue such opportunity.

Principles underlying each Project

A. Localisation of our Projects

We understand that in order to deliver meaningful solutions and change, Vanni Hope needs to work with local community leaders to leverage their relationships and knowledge of the community. We also have our own volunteers and staff members on the ground in the relevant community so we are engaged every day with respect to the relevant project.

By having our own people on the ground, we are able to build trust quickly and establish strong connections within the communities we work and hold ourselves accountable to the people in those communities. Vanni Hope undertakes the following actions to ensure that local

communities are involved in the whole lifecycle of a project or program. Vanni Hope officeholders/staff members/volunteers:

- speak in the local language of the relevant community (eg, Sinhalese or Tamil) with respect to our work and how we want the local community to be involved;
- consult with local community members in designing projects and programs, by conducting meetings and interviews and visiting the relevant sites with those community members. This helps Vanni Hope identify the most marginalised members of the relevant community and determine appropriate strategies to enable them to participate in our programs and projects and ensure that such programs/projects deliver outcomes which enhance their living standards;
- encourage key local stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating project development and whether such projects and/or programs are delivering the desired outcomes;
- inviting key local stakeholders to reflect on Vanni Hope's performance, so as to improve our impact, strengthen relationships with the community and build trust and understanding; and
- require local leaders to adhere to Vanni Hope's Disability Inclusive Development Policy and Gender Equality and Diversity Policy.

B. Build capability of local leaders

Vanni Hope is not only interested in delivering short term solutions or solutions where local communities are reliant on Vanni Hope in perpetuity. Rather we seek to build the capabilities of local leaders and others within the community we are servicing, which includes providing the knowledge, technology, partnerships and other resources that we can bring to the development process.

We also listen to the issues faced by local leaders and understand the challenges of any proposed solutions. These may include Vanni Hope staff members obtaining a thorough understanding of the interaction between the private sector and government, access to information in the relevant communities as well as an understanding of the bespoke cultural, socio-economic, financial and technological challenges. Given our consideration of a broad range of factors, we aim to develop relationships with the community to change the culture of that community (eg, to help eradicate discrimination against marginalised communities) and aim to reach out and help a greater number of families.

We provide local leaders with the necessary resources to ensure that they can continue to operate projects and programs (eg, schools, orphanages) in a sustainable and efficient manner.

C. Enhancing gender equality and eliminating discrimination

We focus on the people and communities that are most excluded from economic development, particularly women, girls or those with a disability (who may be required to be the breadwinners in their respective families). We use our best endeavours to ensure that through all stages of our project and program development, from design, to implementation and monitoring, to include

women and girls, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups in our programmes. Vanni Hope wants to ultimately provide marginalised individuals and groups with the means to be educated and participate in income-generating activities in the short, medium or long term.

Vanni Hope acknowledges that overcoming the systemic discrimination against females and those with a disability, requires a deliberate effort to analyse the relevant dynamics in the target community and to take steps to address the specific needs of marginalised groups to help level the playing field and address structural and historical disadvantages.

D. Vanni Hope adapts and is flexible to the changing circumstances of local communities

Members of our board visit the communities in which projects and development activities are being undertaken. The board continually evaluates the impact of our relevant projects and considers ways in which we can improve the effectiveness of such projects. Our directors and key officeholders are continually receiving and digesting new information and changes in context so as to improve the impact of Vanni Hope's projects and programs.

Our approach also considers the market and non-market challenges that have resulted in certain people (eg, women, disabled individuals) being excluded from economic development for so long.

E. Transparency and Accountability

Vanni Hope is committed to transparency and mutual accountability in our relationships with our local community leaders, and the community at large. We do this through the commitments we agree in our Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), by encouraging open dialogue, sharing and feedback, and through formal and informal avenues we provide for any person to raise issues or complaints with Vanni Hope (such as through our Complaints Handling and Whistleblowing Policy and Safeguarding Policy).

F. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Vanni Hope is committed to robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) across all of its Aid and Development Activities. Vanni Hope develops and applies a MEL Framework that describes how it designs for learning, collects and analyses data, documents outcomes and applies learning to improve program quality and effectiveness. Local community members and implementing partners are actively involved in MEL processes, consistent with the localisation principles in Section A above.

Types of activities undertaken by Vanni Hope

Vanni Hope partakes, sponsors and leads the development management of a range of Aid and Development Activities which are broadly split into six categories:

- Community Development
- Education Support
- Emergency Response
- Health Enhancement
- Sustainable Livelihoods
- Women's Empowerment

Community Development

Vanni Hope's commitment to community development is reflected by the sponsoring and ongoing monitoring of orphanages, child nutrition, elders homes, Moral Development Schools and funding projects which promote hygiene and sanitation, environmental protection and climate resilience, and building of homes. For further information on Vanni Hope's community development activities, please see [Community Development – Vanni Hope](#).

Education Support

Vanni Hope champions education through a range of programs such as 'Coaching Classes' which are provided through in-person and online mediums and cater for the diverse needs of disadvantaged students in Sri Lanka and ensure flexible learning options, particularly in preparing for O-Levels and A-Levels examinations.

In addition, our School Infrastructure Projects are designed to enhance learning environments across Sri Lanka, from primary schools to universities. We focus on renovating classrooms, creating modern, supportive spaces that contribute to students' academic success and overall development. Our efforts include building school toilets and developing recreational facilities, ensuring students have the resources they need both inside and outside the classroom. Improved sanitation facilities, especially in rural areas, help reduce absenteeism and support better hygiene for all students, particularly girls. For further information please see [Education Infrastructure – Vanni Hope](#).

Vanni Hope also provides educational supplies such as notebooks, pens, whiteboards, and shoes - to more specialised university resources, like optometry equipment and books. By alleviating financial burdens, we help ensure that students at all levels have the tools they need to thrive at all levels of their education journey. For further information please see [Educational Supplies – Vanni Hope](#).

Although we Localise our programs and understand the value of communicating in the relevant local language (eg, Tamil, Sinhalese), Vanni Hope appreciate that having a thorough grasp of the English language is essential for individuals to progress at the tertiary level and beyond. On that basis, Vanni Hope sponsors and monitors English language workshops in disadvantaged communities across Sri Lanka. These workshops focus on essential language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking, to equip participants for

academic and professional success. For further information please see [English Language Workshops – Vanni Hope](#).

Health Enhancement

Vanni Hope is committed to improving the health of marginalised communities through a range of programs, including:

- establishing community health programs;
- providing support to disabled individuals;
- developing health-related infrastructure;
- sponsorship of treatment such as with respect to life-changing surgeries and medical procedures to individuals who cannot afford them, such as free cataract surgeries;
- establishing wellbeing support programs such as donating clinical books on mental health to strengthen hospital resources, building playground equipment in maternal units and hospitals to bring joy and comfort to families, and running programs that foster resilience, self-confidence, and hope;
- by working closely with local partners and providing opportunities for growth and healing that extend beyond basic healthcare – this includes supporting women and children to recover from the effects of conflict and natural disasters and focussing on reducing stigma, encouraging open dialogue, and promoting a holistic sense of health and happiness; and
- adopting a strong focus on women's health by supporting the upgrade of obstetrics and gynaecology wards, ensuring that women receive essential prenatal and postnatal care, as well as regular health check-ups. By improving healthcare infrastructure and providing nutrition education, we aim to reduce maternal mortality rates and improve overall health outcomes for mothers and children.

Sustainable Livelihoods

Vanni Hope's development activities include providing disadvantaged people with sustainable livelihood opportunities, including investment in, and advice relating to:

- fishing and aquaculture;
- handicraft and artisan goods;
- regenerative farming; and
- small business development.

Empowerment of Women

Vanni Hope recognises that in certain Sri Lankan communities women are not afforded the same opportunities as men to economically advance. Our Women's Economic Empowerment initiatives focus on providing financial resources and training to women in underserved communities, helping them achieve economic independence. Vanni Hope offers revolving loans to women's rural development collectives, allowing them to invest in small businesses and income-generating activities. These loans are repaid and then redistributed within the collective, creating a sustainable source of funding for new ventures. In addition to loans, we provide grants to

women entrepreneurs, support their business ideas and pay their startup costs, which helps overcome the financial barriers that many women face.

In addition to economic empowerment, Vanni Hope also partners with the relevant local community members to offer vocational training programs in carpentry, electronics, tailoring, and computer literacy. These programs provide women with hands-on training tailored to local job markets, enhancing their employability and enabling them to start their own businesses. Vanni Hope also provides women in certain underserved communities with the financial acumen to operate their own business by providing financial literacy programs covering budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management. In certain circumstances, Vanni Hope provides microcredit and essential equipment for women to launch and grow their relevant small business.

Emergency Response

In addition to the ongoing Aid and Development Activities undertaken by Vanni Hope, we also provide emergency relief in response to natural disasters. Sri Lanka is historically susceptible to flooding, cyclones and mudslides, and as such we work with relevant community leaders to provide essential resources, such as temporary shelter materials, clean water, hygiene kits, and other life-saving supplies. These initiatives are designed to meet the immediate needs of families affected by floods, cyclones, and other natural disasters, ensuring they have the resources required for survival and recovery. We also implement food distribution programs beyond immediate food relief by promoting long-term food security through community engagement and sustainable distribution methods.

Vanni Hope also focusses on repairing damaged homes, schools, and critical infrastructure, ensuring affected families have a safe place to live and children can return to learning environments. Through our Rapid Infrastructure Repairs initiatives, we work closely with local communities to assess damage and prioritise repairs that have the most immediate impact.

Non-developmental activities

Vanni Hope does not undertake any non-development activities. We acknowledge the difference between Aid and Development Activities and activities undertaken for religious or political reasons. Vanni Hope is a non-partisan, non-religious organisation which works for the benefit of communities regardless of gender, race, religion or political affiliations.

If Vanni Hope ever undertakes any non-development activities in the future, it will ensure that resources designated for the purposes of Aid and Development Activities are used only for those purposes. This separation between Aid and Development Activities and non-development activities will be clear in all fundraising and communications.



Review

This Policy will be reviewed once every two years to ensure that the policy is operating effectively.

Date	Version	Review Description	Reviewed by	Approved by
Feb 2025	1	New template created	Virosh Poologasundaram	Board of Directors
June 2026	2	Complete reformat and general update of policy	Abinaja Yogarajah	Board of Directors