Rivers of the World - Sri Lanka
Colombo - 2015 & 2016
The Kelani River, Colombo, Sri Lanka
The Kelani River is 145km long, stretching from the Sri Pada Mountain Range to Colombo. It flows through or borders the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Ratnapura, Kegalle, Gampaha and Colombo. The river supplies about 80% of the water used in Colombo. It is the most polluted river in Sri Lanka due to rapid growth of industries located in close vicinity to it. The river is used for transport, fisheries, sewage disposal, sand mining and for production of hydroelectricity. Many people depend on the river for their daily routine in life. In addition, Kelani River water levels affect the flood risk to Colombo. Kelani River is connected closely with Sinhala Buddhist culture. Two of the most venerated Buddhist shrines and pilgrimages, Kelani Raja Maha Viharaya (Kelani Temple) and Sri Pada Mountain (Buddha’s footprint) are on the Kelani. At present, two main concerns in connection with the river are: flooding during the monsoon and saline intrusion in the dry season which is enhanced by the deepening of the river caused by sand mining.
Rivers are an invaluable resource and communities and civilisations of the past were well aware of it. Ancient Sri Lankan civilisations developed a unique method to protect this valuable resource. They believed that there were spirits that protected rivers: their caretakers. People therefore built statues and placed stone carvings along the riverbank depicting these guardian spirits.
Lalith Senanayake’s exhibition Fe+ displayed artistic creations, sculptures and art done out of waste metal products. The artist says he made quick sketches in the wild and then gathered waste metal products such as motor parts, cutlery and assembled them proportionately to form creations of stark beauty. “In my mind every nut and bolt, silencer, steering wheel, that was thrown aside and piled up created a definite shape in my mind’s eye that could be beautified and re-created contributing ultimately to the goal of conservation of Nature”, Senanayake said. A special feature of the exhibition is using every nut and bolt, silencer, steering wheel and stockpiles which are a potential threat to human health and the environment.

Lalith Senanayake

Artist Lalith Senanayake’s passion for wildlife is not second to drawing; he often takes time to trek in the jungle and observe animals in the wilderness. Over the years he has made many sacrifices to pursue his passion of making objects of animals with scrap metal. It’s not been easy to because when travelling in the jungles, he has had to stay away from his loved ones and children.

Lalith with his wife and children in his house and studio (left). Lalith is holding and artwork by his daughter Yani. Behind, a horse sculpture dame from salvaged metal parts.
Jayawardenepura Girls' School was partnered with Coloma Convent School in LB Croydon. We are an all-girl school situated in the administrative capital of Sri Lanka. The school started off as a Christian Missionary School during British colonial rule. The school was established in 1871 and was governed by Christian nuns. The current student population is close 2,000 and is of various ethnicities and religions.
01 - කැටහායින් උච්චය අරළි ගෙන.

02 - නොවුරි හා නොවුරියේ පිළිතුරු මහ මධ්‍ය මැසිලි 3 රාස 2 1/2 ක් යින් ගෙන.

03 - පිළිතුරු මහ මධ්‍ය මැසිලි 2 ක් යින් ගෙන.

04 - ප්‍රේක්ෂණ ඔක්කාට 1 1/2 ක් යින් ගෙන.

05 - ප්‍රේක්ෂණ ඔක්කාට 2 ක් යින් ගෙන.

06 - කැටහායින් උච්චය අරළි මංස මංස විස්තරයට මුල්කේස් ප්‍රේග්‍රණයන් පෙන්න් ගෙන. 

07 - පිළිතුරු මහ මධ්‍ය මැසිලි 1 ක් යින් ගෙන.

08 - ප්‍රේක්ෂණ ඔක්කාට 1 ක් යින් ගෙන.

09 - කැටහායින් උච්චය අමාණ්ඩාල විස්තරයන් පෙන්න් ගෙන.

10 - ප්‍රේක්ෂණ ඔක්කාට 2 ක් යින් ගෙන.

11 - කැටහායින් උච්චය කලාපය අතර කොටස් පුත්තු පුත්තු ගෙන. 

12 - පිළිතුරු මහ මධ්‍ය මැසිලි 2 ක් යින් ගෙන.

13 - ප්‍රේක්ෂණ ඔක්කාට 2 ක් යින් ගෙන.

14 - ප්‍රේක්ෂණ ඔක්කාට 1 ක් යින් ගෙන.

15 - කැටහායින් උච්චය කලාපය අතර කුඹුර පුත්තු පුත්තු ගෙන.
The two day art workshop which was held on the 3rd and 4th June at Sri Jayawardenapura Balika Vidyalaya was a success.

The student participation was high and the novel experience of using water colours in their Art work was highlighted. The drawings highlighted the Sri Lankan culture.

I wish to thank the artist Mr. Lalith for conducting the workshop, the British Council for selecting us for this project.

Mrs Gayani Munasighe, Teacher
This was an important programme for us as students and we enjoyed the work very much, working as a team. We were able to get a good idea on how pollution can affect a river and the environment around it. 
K Roshani Harshani Peiris, Sri Jayawadanapura Girls College, Kotte, Sri Lanka
Lalith Senanayake
(2015)
River of Culture

A variety of rituals, customs, ceremonies and festivals were formed to worship rivers. Most murals seen in temples in Sri Lanka depict these festivals. The artwork here recreates an image of these murals.

Lalith Senanayake
(2016)

The students made their work based on their partner river, the Thames. They looked at the way people dump rubbish into the river and the effects this has on its biodiversity. They used clay and plastic to create their artwork.
Moratu Maha Vidyalaya was partnered with St Marylebone CE School in City of Westminster
We are a mixed school situated just outside the commercial capital of Sri Lanka. The school was established in 1930. The student population is about 2,300 and is multi-faith and multi-ethnic. The school is one of the prominent schools in the area and is noted for its achievements in sports.
I learnt a lot from this workshop: things that I didn't know before. We made figurines of people and animals using clay. I made animals like tortoises, elephants and fish. We learnt how humans pollute rivers. My friend Chamith was also at the workshop. I was happy to be one of only 20 students selected from my school to be a part of this workshop.

Yashen Kavinda, Student
Lalith Senanayake  
(2015)  
Polluted River

With industrialisation, river pollution has drastically increased. Disposal of chemical waste into rivers is one of the main causes that has led to river pollution. The artwork depicts the disposal of waste and its effects using clay.

Lalith Senanayake  
(2016)

The pupils researched their partner city, London. They decided that it is a very clean city and that people look after their river. They researched the history of the river through culture, poetry and art and they made their work using plastic bottles and fabric paint.
Jayawardenepura Boys’ School was partnered with London Nautical School in LB Lambeth
We are an all-boys school situated in Kotte. The school was established in 1822 and is recorded as Sri Lanka’s very first school. The school started off as a Christian Missionary School during British colonial rule then became a Buddhist school under government direction. We currently have a student population of around 1,600 students.
I have never done anything like this before. It was a totally a new experience for me which I really enjoyed. Also I was happy to do this workshop as a team with my friends. As a result of these workshops I would like to explore more about the rivers in other countries.

Navoda Kalum Udayalal, Jayawardanapura Boys College, Kotte, Sri Lanka
"This was a really interesting project. We got to know how to prevent river pollution and what sort of things can pollute rivers. We'd like to take part in these workshops again in the future."
Lalith Senanayake (2015) 
Resourceful River

We used balloons, pulp and clay to create masks. We worked in teams and that developed our teamwork. We took our artwork home and worked on them. We learnt how people in the past believed that spirits guarded rivers because of its resourcefulness.

Lalith Senanayake (2016)

The pupils looked at their partner river, the River Thames. They chose to use watercolours and paper to tell the story of the river. They discussed the number of people walking across the river each day, the secrets that the river holds, the joys, sorrows and loneliness that the river absorbs. They discussed the fact that people are born from water and die from water and that this is the secret aquatic cycle of the universe.
Mayadunne Maha Vidyalaya was partnered with Plumstead School in RB Greenwich. We are a mixed school situated 40 minutes from the capital city of Sri Lanka. The school is situated very close to the famous Kelani River. The student population is about 1,600 and is multi-faith and multi-ethnic.
Lalith Senanayake (2015)
River City

Using rocks found on the riverbed and riverbank to draw pictures on was a new experience for me. I really enjoyed it. Even though I don’t live close to a river, my school is situated very close to one. We learnt how civilisations and cities emerged and developed near rivers.

Lalith Senanayake (2016)
The students looked at the life of their partner river, the Thames. They looked at the similarities and differences between our lives and the life of a river. The main difference that the students found is that the river is always there to protect us and yet we do not protect our rivers. They used metal, cardboard, and coloured paper to tell their story.
Kelani Maha Vidyalaya was partnered with Alperton Community School in LB Brent
We are a mixed school situated in the historic town of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. One of Sri Lanka’s most famous rivers, the Kelani River, is very close to the school. The school is situated right opposite the historic Kelani temple. The student community is predominantly Sinhalese but we do have students of Tamil and Muslim origin. Student population is approximately 1,500.
First of all I would like to extend my heartiest thanks to the British Council of Sri Lanka, for selecting Kelaniya Vidyalaya for the Rivers Of The World project.

Our students developed their creativity, colour combinations selection, leadership and teamwork through this workshop.

Soft skill development programs such as these are a rare opportunity for a school like ours and we thank you again for the value added to our underprivileged children.

Sakunthala Welligalla, Art teacher

River of Life

Rivers in Sri Lanka are born from springs that release water from underground.

The life of a river is similar to that of a human being. As a spring, the water body projects a playful image findings its way through trees, soil and rocks: like a child. It then flows downhill and forms into a waterfall taking a plunge into the unknown: much like our youth. Then it develops into a river, much deeper than before; calmer yet stronger: The middle-aged man. Finally, as it reaches the estuary, it’s sedate and flows ever so gracefully into the ocean signalling the end of the journey of life.
Lalith Senanayake
(2015)
River of Life

As a spring, it projects a playful image finding its way like a child. Then it develops into a river, much deeper than before; calmer yet stronger. Finally, it’s sedate and flows ever so gracefully into the ocean signalling the end of the journey of life.

Lalith Senanayake
(2016)

The students investigated the life found in their partner river, the Thames. The micro-species, aquatic plants and stones all have a purpose and their own job to do. Between them they are responsible for keeping the water clean and balancing the existence of this universe powered by biodiversity. Students created this artwork using coloured paper, three dimensional shapes and discarded plastic bottles.
Asoka College was partnered with St Paul’s Way Trust School in LB Tower Hamlets.
We are a successful primary and secondary boys school with a student population of 2,500 in the heart of Colombo. The school was established in 1974 and has grown from strength to strength over the years. We have students from various backgrounds, religions and ethnicities.
Lalith Senanayake
(2015)
Working River

We used old newspapers and coloured paper to make figurines of people and animals. This was a new experience for me. We learnt about different occupations that are associated with rivers and we used the figurines to show that.

Lalith Senanayake
(2016)

The pupils researched the life around the river Thames, their partner river. They looked at the both man-made buildings and the natural environment which is given life by the river. The pupils used cardboard and clay to create their final artwork.
**Schools Online - Project Description**

The project will allow students to explore facts about two famous rivers one is Sri Lanka other one is another country. The project will allow students to explore facts about two rivers. It is suitable for age 9-12. Students will understand the ecosystem based on these two rivers, explore key facts including the ecosystem of two famous rivers in the world. They will develop communication skills and ICT. Groups of students collect facts about above rivers using Internet or Encyclopedia or using video conferencing with other schools (skype in the classroom). Students will understand the importance of the river as resource and also the need to preserve it by adopting to sustainable life style.
British Council Schools Online activity

Swarnapuli Balika National School, Anuradhapura

partnered with

Dav Multi Purpose Public School to create a Rivers of the World project about the Malwathu Oya river in Anuradhapura, North Central Province, Sri Lanka

St. Anthony's Girls' College, Kandy

Grade 9 students had a wonderful experience by participating in the Rivers of the world project.

They participated in a brainstorming session and completed a questionnaire to recapitulate their knowledge on rivers.

Then they were engaged in an interesting activity in groups to create an imaginative creature who would be able to live in the river eco systems given to each group.

These activities helped to develop their imaginative power, critical thinking skills, team spirit, leadership qualities, communication and collaborative skills.
Rivers of the World

Waterkings

Art work

digital background