Teapot Sale Held At Hilton Towards Empowering A Community



As part of its ‘Animal Tracks’ pottery project, the MJF Charitable Foundation held a teapot sale and exhibition at the Hilton Hotel, Colombo, recently. This project, which was initiated together with the MJF Foundation’s resource partners, IUCN and the

Department of Wildlife Conservation is aimed at uplifting the lives of the Koulara community, a remote village close to the Udawalawe National Park in Sri Lanka. Dilmah, Sri Lanka's largest value-added tea producer, also supports this project.
This rural community lost their traditional livelihood of brick-making over twenty years ago due to their inability to compete with more efficient and large scale brick-making plants elsewhere, and they had little option but to resort to poorly paid menial labour at the local sugarcane plantation.
The MJF Foundation adopted the village within its 'Local Heroes' initiative with the objective of empowering them in a more sustainable and rewarding livelihood. The 'Animal Tracks' pottery project was introduced to Koulara, combining livelihood enhancement, empowerment of women, and environmental sustainability.
It was introduced to the village community two years ago, and encouraged them to abandon their occupations as unskilled labour and restore their traditional pottery skills for the production of high value ornaments and souvenirs instead of bricks.
The villagers are provided training in pottery through the guidance of an MJF Foundation resource person, Ajith Perera, one of Sri Lanka's most talented pottery craftsmen. Under his guidance, the villagers now produce exquisite items which are enjoyed around the world through the Dilmah marketing network.
Each of the 200 teapots that were on display at the Hilton lobby were the handcrafted creations of Ajith Perera. All proceeds from the sale of these teapots went towards the construction of a preschool for the children of Koulara. The event was declared open by Merrill J Fernando, Founder and Chairman of Dilmah.

Photo Caption – Pic -1 Merrill J Fernando, Chairman Dilmah and Jerome Auvity, GM Hilton.

