**Summer 2011 EMPOWER Fellowship**

***Reflection on Educate Lanka Foundation, Inc. – Manjula M Dissanayake***

As a 2011 Summer EMPOWER Fellow, I utilized my fellowship to work on specific expansion initiatives for Educate Lanka Foundation, Inc., a 501-c3 non-profit social enterprise that I founded in 2007 and continue to manage while a student at the Fletcher School. Having won third place at Tufts Business Plan competition and becoming a finalists at MassChallenge – the world’s largest start-up competition – Educate Lanka Foundation was presented with numerous expansion goals to pursue this summer. My work with Educate Lanka was divided up between the time I spent in Washington DC and the time I spent in Sri Lanka. Some of the key areas that I specifically focused on Educate Lanka are as follow:

* In Washington DC (at Educate Lanka Foundation’s HQ)
  + Attending to operational and management tasks, fundraising events, and recruitment efforts
  + Meetings with the membership on recapitulating last year’s progress and establishing and sharing goals and plans for the rest of the year
* Attending MassChallenge start-up “boot-camp” workshop sessions in Boston, exclusively designed for the 100 global start-up finalists
  + Matching up with industry experts/mentors/advisors to assist with our expansion goals
  + Multiple workshops, guest speakers, training sessions on governance, financing, marketing, leadership, and numerous other start-up related topics
  + Networking, advice, and coaching sessions with fellow finalists, MassChallenge alumni, and industry leaders
* Attending Secretary Clinton’s Global Diaspora Forum at the Department of State as a speaker/panelist in its panel on Education (moderated by the Millennium Challenge Corporation)
  + Spoke about Educate Lanka and its involvement with Sri Lankan diaspora across the globe to a large audience of diplomats, academics, international organizations, private corporations, and NGOs
  + Networking and partner opportunities with similar enterprises who serve in other parts of the world
* Visiting Sri Lanka to oversee operations and expansion programs on the ground
  + Travelled over 2500KMs and expanded organization’s reach (students) to 8 new districts
  + Conducted over 25 meetings with private corporations, governmental institutions, NGOs, and grassroots voluntary organizations for potential collaborations and partnerships
  + Visited over 150 Educate Lanka students and their families to conduct their scholarship distributions, address concerns, and receive feedback on Educate Lanka scholarships
  + Identified and established potential educational expansion projects to complement Educate Lanka’s current scholarship model
  + Established a central location and addressed some of the operational issues on the ground in Sri Lanka