

‘Malithi’s Diary’: Helping families talk about Alzheimer’s

Written to mark World Alzheimer’s Month by Romany Parakrama



As she begins writing a diary for her holiday homework, eight-year-old Malithi starts noticing changes in her beloved grandmother. She’s beginning to act differently, forgetting names, misplacing things, repeating stories.

This is Malithi’s Diary, a heartfelt children’s book launched by the Lanka Alzheimer’s Foundation (LAF). It is much more than a storybook, it is a quiet revolution in how Sri Lankan families talk about dementia.



“We’ve seen grown adults struggle to understand Alzheimer’s,” says Professor Shehan Williams, President of LAF. “Imagine how confusing it must be for a child watching an aging family member slowly change. This book gives families a way to help children make sense of that experience.”

Told through the eyes of a child, Malithi’s Diary gently unpacks this emotional journey. There are no clinical explanations but just the child’s confusion, the family’s gentle guidance, and ultimately, an embrace of patience, kindness, and treasured memories.

“It’s about holding on to what really matters,” adds Professor Williams. “The laughter, the stories, the love even as some of it begins to fade.”

With vibrant illustrations and simple, powerful language, the book is designed for children aged 8 and up. But it’s more than just a book. It is a bridge, between generations, between confusion and understanding, between fear and empathy.



Since its launch, just a few months ago, LAF has conducted 46 reading and awareness sessions across Sri Lanka, in schools, libraries, and community centers from Colombo to Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Hambantota. Each 20-30-minute session pairs storytelling with open discussion, giving children a safe space to ask questions, share personal stories, and reflect.

“These are not just reading sessions. They’re deeply moving conversations,” says one volunteer from Jaffna. “We’ve had children talk about their own grandparents, how they act, what’s changed. Suddenly, they realize: ‘Oh, this has a name. And it’s okay.’”

Available in Sinhala, Tamil, and English, the book ensures that no child is left out of the conversation. A digital version is available on LAF’s newly launched website, a comprehensive hub for dementia-related resources, caregiver support, and services like memory screenings, activity centers, and counseling. Physical copies can be purchased at a nominal price from the LAF Information and Resource Centre in Maradana and leading bookstores across the island.



LAF, Sri Lanka's only organization dedicated to dementia care and awareness, has long been committed to dismantling stigma and supporting affected families. Malithi's Diary marks the Foundation's first step into children's literature and it could not have come at a better time.

With Sri Lanka's population rapidly aging, dementia diagnoses are on the rise, and with it come silence, confusion, and fear. "That silence hurts the most," says Professor Williams. "And children often get left out of the conversation. But they're watching. They're wondering. They need tools too."

By placing this story in children's hands, LAF hopes to grow a generation that sees dementia not as something to fear, but something to understand, to talk about, and most of all, to meet with love. Because as Malithi learns, memory may fade but love, and connection, don't have to.



This article was published in The Sun of 1st September 2025