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**AYUBOWANG**

**HELLO**

**VANAKKAM**

**REGISTERED CHARITY: 1110022**

**NEWSLETTER 3: June 06**



Dear Friends,

Firstly we would like to say a BIG thank you, to you all for your ongoing support of the Ocean Stars Trust (OST). The generosity of our donors has enabled us to substantially improve the lives of hundreds of people through its involvement in over 25 post Tsunami development projects in Sri Lanka.

The purpose of this newsletter is to update you on

- The progress which has been made since our last newsletter
- The current situation in SL following the recent spate of civil violence on the island, which many of you may have seen in the media. This is having a significant impact on the lives of the people that we aim to help and makes the work that we are doing all the more vital.

**POLITICAL SITUATION AS IT AFFECTS OST**

Most of you will be aware that there has been mounting tension between the Tamil Tiger rebels and the government over the past few months. A ceasefire and a political agreement reached between the government and rebels in late 2002 raised hopes for a lasting settlement. However as we write this letter, Norwegian brokered peace talks have stalled and rising levels of violence have threatened the truce.

The government and the Tigers say they are committed to the ceasefire, but with 270 deaths estimated since early April, many say the violence resembles periods of the two-decade civil war in which over 64,000 people died.

Unfortunately most of the violence has been in the east and north of the island, areas where Ocean Stars is deeply involved. The violence has had a marked affect on the people involved with the projects in Batticaloa, Trinco and Vavuniya. In Trinco the local government has banned fishing, as it is too dangerous. Consequently many families are without regular income and wages and the support we give is a lifeline for these people. In addition, the situation is so serious that Yasmin our contact in SL has been unable to visit these areas regularly as she would like for fear of her own safety. Ranchan and Yasmin our main contacts in the east have specifically asked us to pass on their thanks to all our donors.

We will keep you updated on these developments. Let's hope that a solution can be found soon.

## **PROJECT UPDATE**

For ease we have split the projects into 3 categories: completed, ongoing and future.

### **COMPLETED PROJECTS**

#### **1. THOTEN EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

This project was set up to help the young members of the THOTEN Health Programme (an environmental health project which OST supports) obtain additional educational and vocational qualifications. It is hoped that these new qualifications will not only help them with their current job but will improve their chances in the job market once the Thoten Health Project comes to an end. Courses followed by members include English, Catering, Engineering, Accountancy and Computer Studies. Some members have already completed their training and others are in the middle of their chosen courses.

Dr Pandu Wijeyratne who runs the Thoten Project, in a recent e-mail, said that the support from Ocean Stars to team members has been gratefully received. In addition the members are already demonstrating raised self-esteem from the fact they are improving themselves.

Members of the team who benefited from the education programme celebrating the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year



#### **2. WELLIGAMA FISHING BOAT PROJECT**

During our visit to Sri Lanka in October 2005, we were introduced to Sunil a member of Weligama Methodist Church whose boat was damaged by the Tsunami and then by a freak wave. On our return to England, Ocean Stars was able to secure a corporate donation from BP plc to buy Sunil a new fishing boat. The new boat has been aptly named "The Ocean Star." Our efforts now mean that Sunil together with his 10-crew members are back earning a living thus benefiting over 60 other family members. Ocean Stars has also donated £50.00 to Sunil to purchase a new fishing net.



The naming ceremony of The Ocean Star

#### **3. NADEESHA SEWING PROJECT**

Nadeesha's parents own a clothes and garment shop in the town of Hikkaduwa on the south coast of Sri Lanka. The shop and all the contents were completely destroyed by the Tsunami. Ocean Stars is helping the family get on with their lives by selling shoulder bags on their behalf. These bags are made individually and have an embroidered elephant. If you would like to give some one a present with a difference and help a family in Sri Lanka at the same time then please do contact us.

## ONGOING PROJECTS

### 1. THOTEN PROJECT

OST has now been working with Dr Pandu and the THOTEN project for over one year. Our main contribution is towards helping to pay the wages for the team as well as with ongoing operational expenses. Dr Pandu thanks OST for our continued support and encouragement for their work. The THOTEN project is the only long-term preventative health care programme that has been set up in Sri Lanka post Tsunami and OST are privileged to be involved with the project.



*Making the householder aware of purifying water for drinking and on hand washing.*

### 2. THOTEN WELL-BEING VILLAGE PROJECT

This project is running alongside the main THOTEN project, helping the local communities to move on with their lives. There are several strands to this project and OST has been involved in the following ways.

- **English Language programme.** This scheme has been set up to provide the people of the village with English lessons and help them with getting jobs in the tourist industry. OST has been funding the wages of two teachers and the project has been in operation since January 2006.
- **Sewing Classes.** OST is in the process of helping with the setting up of sewing classes to empower the local women to get back to work. These classes are running in conjunction with Singer.

### 3. WELLIGAMA SEWING MACHINE PROJECT

This project was set up as a result of donations largely received from OST towards the purchase of sewing machines. The women in the village of Weligama are learning new skills and earning an income for their families from the products they make.



The project has been up and running since November 2005 and is going from strength to strength. OST have now received their order of 100 peg bags from the project, which we have been selling at coffee mornings and craft/school fairs. All money received will be invested back into the community to help people get back to work. If you would like to purchase a peg bag for £5.00 plus £1.00 postage then please do not hesitate to contact us.



The women at their sewing machines

### 4. GRACE CHILDREN'S HOME

The children of Heatherside Infant School, in Fleet, raised £610.00 during Christmas presentations for Grace Children's Home in the north of the island. This money has been spent on buying 25 desks and chairs for the children to assist them with their schoolwork. Mrs Nadarajah the lady in charge of the home has employed a local carpenter to make the desks thereby providing employment for the local economy. The remaining funds are going towards

- The completion of an extension to their current building, which will mean a more spacious environment for the children.
- Wardrobes for the children's dormitories
- Gift of clothing for each child

## **5. BATTICALOA PLAYGROUPS 2 AND 3**

Heatherside Junior School in Fleet raised £500.00 for OST during Christmas 2005. This money has been spent on

- Building an extension to a playgroup
- Buying 100 Christmas presents for the children and
- A new item of clothing for all the children who attend both playgroups.

## **6. POONOCHIMUNAI METHODIST NURSERY: BATTICALOA**

St Luke's Infant School in Brighton donated £518.00 to help the children of this playgroup to buy

- New tables and chairs.
- Restoration of a drinking well, which was salinated by the Tsunami
- Supply the playgroup building with mains electricity so that the children will be able to use audio visual aids.



Enjoying the new tables and chairs.

## **7. TRINCOMALEE CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME**

In our last newsletter we asked for 40 sponsors to come forward to help us launch this scheme. Thanks to your generosity as well the generosity of families from Heatherside Schools in Fleet OST was able to launch the sponsorship programme from January 2006. Some families in the UK have already received feedback from their sponsor families. OST are hoping to add six more families on to the scheme following a request from Yasmin our contact in SL.

The original plan was for the donor families in the UK to donate £10.00 a month. The receiving family would withdraw £7.50 and the rest would be saved for the child to draw at the age of 18. This is still the case but may be subject to change due to the present political situation in SL. Most of the local families are involved in the fishing industry. The local government has banned fishing altogether as they consider it to be a security risk. The families therefore have NO income at all at present. Yasmin therefore said that if families were in a desperate situation they could use up the £10.00 during the present volatile situation. OST is in daily contact with Yasmin regarding the families in Trinco. All the families are incredibly grateful for the support that OST has provided them with.



A sponsored child receives her saving book.

## **8. TRINCO TEACHERS WAGES PROJECT**

All the children who are involved in the above sponsorship programme attend a purpose-built playgroup near the camp where they live. The two teachers who work in the playgroup have been doing so voluntarily. Following a request from Yasmin, OST stepped in and has been paying the wages of the two teachers since January 2006. The feedback from Yasmin is that the teachers are very happy to earn an income for the first time in their lives and be able to support their families. They are also well motivated in their job knowing that their wages are being paid for by OST.



Teacher receives her savings book

## **9. BUTTERCUPS DAY NURSERY LINK**

Buttercups Day Nursery in Fleet has linked up with the Trinco Playgroup in Vellaimanal. Buttercups Day Nursery provided funds for the Trinco playgroup to invest in playground equipment. Thanks to their generosity the children in Sri Lanka have a nice playground to play in.

## **10. BATTICALOA ST VINCENTS SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME**

OST were introduced to St Vincent's Girls School by Rev David Jebb, former minister of Farnborough Methodist Church and now at Medway Methodist Church. His sister Shanti who was Deputy Head at the school perished in the Tsunami. OST have set up a sponsorship programme to help 10 of the poorest children with their education. This scheme has also been in operation since January 2006.

A sponsored student receives her savings book.



## **11. BATTICALOA LUNCH PROJECT: SINNA URANEI PLAYGROUP**

Thanks to the generosity and kindness of a donor OST was able to successfully launch the lunch project at this Methodist Nursery. 75 children are now having a cooked meal at lunchtime. For some this is the only cooked meal they will have in a day. We have had feedback to say that the parents extend their thanks to OST and our donor.



Enjoying a lunch of rice and curry

## **12. KOMARI SCHOOL**

The Connaught School in Aldershot raised £640.00 for the Komari School, which was destroyed for the most part by the Tsunami. The school is being rebuilt by the Italian Government. Mr David the Head Teacher of the school said that the school needed funds for science and sports equipment, a photocopier, and TV and Audi visual equipment.

The Connaught School recently held a mufti day and raised funds, which will go towards refurbishing the new school building. OST are very grateful to all the pupils at the Connaught School for supporting our work.



### **PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE**

#### **1. KALLADAY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME**

OST are looking to set up a third sponsorship programme. Rev Ranchan of Methodist Church contacted us about a group of families that needed help with their children. The parents of all the families concerned are deaf and dumb. The children however all have normal hearing. There are 18 families that need a sponsor and the cost will be £10.00 a month. Rev Ranchan will be in charge of administering the scheme and feedback will be given on the families. If you would like to sponsor a child in this project please do not hesitate to contact us.

#### **2. NAWATKUDAH NURSERY: BATTICALOA**

Rev Ranchan has asked OST if we could help this playgroup with funds for school materials. The playgroup does not even have basic equipment like pens, toys and glue sticks. The other equipment on their wish list is as follows

- 29" Colour TV= £329.00
- VCR = £28.00
- Cassette Player= £43.00
- Percussion Instruments for the children= £138.00

#### **3. TEACHERS' WAGES**

OST are currently funding the wages of 10 teachers at a cost of £20.00 a teacher per month. If any of our donors would like to fund a teacher's wages even for a month then please let us know.

#### **[www.buy.at/Oceanstars](http://www.buy.at/Oceanstars) Web shop**

We would like to remind you to shop at [www.buy.at/Oceanstars](http://www.buy.at/Oceanstars). All you have to do is log on to our web shop at [www.buy.at/Oceanstars](http://www.buy.at/Oceanstars) and select the retailer that you would like to shop from. You will then be directed to the normal on-line web shop of your choice. Any purchases you make from the retailers will generate commission for Ocean Stars -at no additional cost to yourself. Many of the big name on-line retailers feature on the web shop e.g. Amazon, Marks & Spencer, John Lewis etc and many have **free postage**. The commission they pay Ocean Stars is our reward for promoting their retailer.



**FUND RAISING PROJECTS**

1. John Bunter, Chair of Ocean Stars Trust, has set himself the fund-raising activity of climbing Ben Nevis on Sat 17 June and is keen to hear from any one who is willing to sponsor him. Sponsorship money raised will all go towards the ongoing work of the OST. Look out on the website for the result of the climb! If any cheques are sent for this, we would be most grateful: please write “Ben Nevis” on the back of the cheque! And make the cheque payable to “Ocean Stars Trust.”
2. St Luke’s Infant School in Brighton are planning a sponsored walk in aid of Ocean Stars Trust.
3. Fleet Town Football Club run a monthly quiz night and will be raising money for OST on one of their quiz nights in the future.
4. Heatherside Schools Summer Fair, Fleet: OST will be having a Charity stall selling peg bags, shoulder bags and other items made by the Weligama sewing project.

If any of our donors would like to do a fund raising event for OST then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. We hope you continue to support our work in making a difference to the lives of the people of Sri Lanka. Donations made payable to “ Ocean Stars Trust” can be sent to us at the above address. We will continue to keep you updated with our work.

If you are a new donor please contact us about a Gift Aid form, as we can claim tax back on your donation.

May God Bless you. Budhu Saranay.

Dilanee Shona Janaki Jo John

*Trustees of the Ocean Stars Trust, Registered Charity 1110022*

**[www.oceanstars.org.uk](http://www.oceanstars.org.uk)**

Grace Children’s Home/Heatherside



-Trinco Teacher Training Project  
-Trinco Child Sponsorship  
-Trinco/Buttercups Playgroup Link Scheme

Thoten Environmental Project  
Thoten Educational Programme  
Thoten Well Being Village

-Batti/ St Vincent’s Child Sponsorship scheme  
-Batti/St Luke’s School  
-Batti Lunch Project

•Weligama Sewing Machine Project  
•Fishing Boat Project

Komari School linked With the Connaught School Aldershot