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Ocean Stars Trust



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ESTABLISHED JANUARY 2005

Newsletter 27: JUNE 2018



VANNAKAM

AYUBOWANG

WELCOME



LATEST NEWS

- **Avonbourne Trust in Bournemouth are taking 7 students on an inaugural trip to Sri Lanka to visit their link schools in Batticaloa.**
- **New sewing centres are opened in Yatiyanthota and Karavetty, providing a livelihood for 20 local women.**
- **A new team in our local office in Batticaloa reflects our expanding work in Sri Lanka.**
- **16 preschools in Batticaloa District are registered with the zonal education offices.**

CURRENT WISH LIST

- **Sponsor a child for £15 per month and transform the life of a child and family.**
- **Sponsor a preschool for £1400 per annum and transform the lives of children in rural communities**

A preschool mum in Sri Lanka reflects

"Education is not only from the books but also playing and being creative; learning is not only for getting a job but also for respect."

Maureen Johnston (Ocean Stars Trust Chair)

The early part of this year has once again been a busy time for all of us involved with Ocean Stars Trust. With the growth and development of projects, there has been lots to do, and challenges to overcome. A big advantage of our biannual newsletter is that it gives a chance to look back, and as I do so now, it is clear that much has been achieved.

There have been several important successes in these past months. Our new Ocean Stars Lanka team in Batticaloa has been set up and is now operating well. A new classroom has been built and opened at St Peter's preschool in Yatiyanthota and a Sewing Centre built which will allow local women to develop both sewing and business skills. Thanks to the children at Heatherside Infant school, an outdoor playground has been built at Ampalanthurai preschool in Batticaloa, and Hope House (2), another sewing centre, is being established in Karavetty, Batticaloa. The buildings and facilities provide visible evidence of progress, but perhaps what is more important are the skills that individuals have developed in those places and the opportunities now open to them as a consequence of this growth.

Recently Ocean Stars Trust trustees met on an "Away Day" to review our operations and set targets for this next year. We have grown and developed so much and, whilst delighted that we are now reaching families and communities that otherwise would have no support, we need to be sure that the education in our schools and the skills taught in our community centres are enabling development and growth. Consequently, in this next year we will be focusing on assessing the impact of our work, to ensure that it is meeting needs, targeting development of the right skills, and, within our preschools, giving our children the best possible start to their education journey.

Dan Bunter and Zeddy Kibet are presently in Batticaloa beginning this review process for us.

These are exciting days for us and as ever, we thank you for your continued interest and support. We simply could not manage without it. *Maureen*

Debbie Godfrey-Phaure, CEO of Avonbourne Trust, reflects on her forthcoming trip to Sri Lanka with students from Avonbourne

The dream of experiencing a different culture and becoming part of another country's community will become reality for the staff and students of Avonbourne College Bournemouth, in July 2018. They will have the privilege of enjoying the beauty of Sri Lanka whilst knowing that their visit will make a difference to the education of the children in Ocean Stars-linked schools. The college community hold dear the belief that we are all world citizens and that the footprint a traveller should leave ought always to be one which gives generously to the land it visits. It is an honour to do so in the beautiful land of Sri Lanka.



New Ocean Stars Lanka Team January 2018

Ocean Stars Trust UK relies on the kindness and generosity of our many supporters. We know that it is as important to you as it is to us that your money goes directly to benefit the children and families that we are working with and to pay the wages of our staff. As our work in Sri Lanka continues to grow, in January 2018 we restructured our organisation and team in our Ocean Stars Lanka office in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, to ensure that we continue to have the best expertise, management and accountability processes in place to safeguard our work and your money. Diana has left her role as Manager and we now have a new team in place.

The members of this new team are:

Volunteer Director and Monitoring Manager:

Mr Arunasalam Sudarshan

Operations Manager: Mr Nerujan Nesarajah

Preschool and Sponsorship Manager:

Miss Pooja Selvarasa

Office Manager: Mrs Chitra Ganapiragasham

Volunteer Finance Manager: Mr Bavan Kumutha

We are confident that Ocean Stars Lanka is well-placed to deliver our aim to empower children through education in Sri Lanka. We have a team who are committed to being the best we can be for the children, families and schools that we support. Thank you for your ongoing interest and support of Ocean Stars Trust.

The Trustees of OST UK.



From left to right:
Office Manager: Mrs Chitra Ganapiragasham,
Preschool and Sponsorship Manager: Miss Pooja Selvarasa,
Operations Manager: Mr Nerujan Nesarajah
Volunteer Finance Manager: Mr Bavan Kumutha,
Volunteer Director and Operations Manager: Mr Arunasalam Sudarshan

20 Preschools run by Ocean Stars Trust in Eastern and Northern Sri Lanka

OUR IMPACT: 850 Children in rural communities in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka have access to OST-sponsored preschool education. Feeder schools recognise that children who have attended Ocean Stars Preschools have good English Language skills, are confident, have well developed social skills, are good at sharing, and have an excellent attendance record at school. The Preschool Directors at the zonal education officers are very grateful for the investment that OST puts into early years education.



Former students of Shining Stars preschool return to visit OST staff and to talk about how much they enjoyed singing English songs, meeting UK volunteers, playing, and doing craft activities.



850 pre school children received uniforms and school bags in January 2018



30 new tables and chairs for children and a new teacher's table and chair at Thiru Valluval preschool.

Preschool teachers in the Eastern Region are grateful to Ocean Stars for providing them with employment and support.



Hannah Shaughnessy, OST Intern, reflects on her time with Ocean Stars Trust

Since September 2017 I have been volunteering for Ocean Stars twice a week, as well as getting the opportunity to attend meetings with teams going out to Sri Lanka and meeting trustees, allowing myself to really get to grips with what Ocean Stars does.

It has been great to see such a diverse range of people getting involved with Ocean Stars. Seeing how much students who start fundraising as young as Year 9 in Calthorpe Park School were able to raise was amazing, even bettering their fundraising goal as a team. It is great to see previous team members from both teams still supporting the cause and having a passion for Ocean Stars. It has been great to get to know familiar faces at fundraising events, my particular favourites being the Annual Quiz and the Pancake Café.

The fundraising events that Ocean Stars host now attract so many members of the local community. It is exciting to see what the prospect of introducing schools in Bournemouth and seeing members of Team 2 come from increasingly further afield across the UK will do for the expansion of Ocean Stars supporters and work.

My passion for development work, has only been increased by volunteering for Ocean Stars. It is fantastic to see the impact research by Dan and Zeddy being put into place to greater increase Ocean Stars effectiveness and sustainability out in Sri Lanka.

I have also had the opportunity to participate in more creative aspects of Ocean Stars, for example helping to create marketing material, something I didn't think I would have the opportunity to do, but have very much enjoyed.

Keeping track of databases for sponsorship children, teacher sponsors and preschools involves constant work to maintain, with children turning 18 and new children being added constantly, this has been one of the hardest things to sustain and I applaud the team out in Sri Lanka for managing to keep on top of it, in a more challenging environment than the UK.



Would you like to be a volunteer Intern for Ocean Stars Trust and gain valuable experience in International Development? If yes, then please do contact us at: oceanstarstrust@gmail.com

Natalia, a volunteer and child sponsor from the UK, still remembers her visit to Sri Lanka in October 2016

“Two years ago, I decided to visit Sri Lanka with OST. I was overwhelmed! There are no words to express the feeling when I met my sponsored children. Seeing pictures of them growing from young children to accomplished young adults and knowing that I contributed to rebuild their lives! There is not a feeling quite like it. OST has improved the quality of so many families. I will always be grateful and proud to be a small part of the OST family.” (Natalia Lopez, Team 2, 2016)



Gift Catalogue now online – and with PayPal

Our Gift Catalogue is now available online in our web shop at www.oceanstars.org.uk. You can also pay on-line using PayPal and customise your Gift Card at the same time – all very simple and very quick. (We still accept payment by downloadable order form and cheque if you have no PayPal account).



Amongst the Gift Catalogue gifts donated in 2018:

bikes, boats, chickens, water filters, school uniforms...

Dan and Zeddy report from Sri Lanka

To find out more please refer to: 100daysinsrilanka.blogspot.com

As the son of the Founder, Dilanee Bunter, I have been associated with Ocean Stars since its creation in 2005, and have volunteered on 4 separate October trips, most recently in October 2017.

The charity has made the strategic decision to focus on Monitoring and Evaluating their projects in the coming year, and have commissioned me to get the ball rolling, providing research reports and evaluations on OST's current outputs. The charity has approved a very exciting and ambitious project plan which includes a baseline assessment on the Communities and Livelihoods of preschool locations, research into child development, and working on business skills with the Hope House projects.

I am very excited to be going back to Sri Lanka with my girlfriend Zeddy and to work with the amazing Ocean Stars Lanka team on the ground in Batticaloa.



So far we have really enjoyed the interviews with parents of pre-school children for the Communities and Livelihoods Study. One interesting example is that in the village of Kurumanvelly, despite the majority of interviewees having stable incomes, more so than other OST pre-school locations, these stable incomes are enabled through their male family breadwinner working overseas.

From a gardener in Qatar, to a driver in Saudi Arabia, to a manager of a corner shop in Manchester, family life seems stable but distant in Kurumanvelly. This was by far the highest percentage of families with husbands working abroad in our interviews so far.

It made us reflect on what seems a very real family dilemma in communities where OST operates. The absence of local secure employment attracts some to the lure of a stable salary abroad. And the cost for a stable salary abroad? See your family once every two years.



One interviewee in Kurumanvelly spoke of how her husband was working in construction in Qatar. We couldn't help but think of the horror stories emerging from the construction of World Cup stadia in Qatar that is reliant on exploitable foreign labour from developing countries such as Sri Lanka, and wondered whether this was the 'construction' job her husband was working on.

This is the dilemma. Despite relative financial security, the children of these families know their fathers only through the vibrations of a WhatsApp call.

Please do keep in touch on our blogspot 100daysinsrilanka.blogspot.com to follow our progress.

Founder and Trustees of Ocean Stars Trust



From left to right: Dan: Trustee, Dilanee: Founder, Danny: Trustee, Jennie: Trustee, Kate: Trustee, Jo: Trustee and Secretary, John: Trustee and Treasurer, Maureen: Trustee and Chair

We thank you for your continuing support.