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**ESTABLISHED JANUARY 2005**

**Newsletter 29: JUNE 2019**



**VANNAKAM  
AYUBOWANG  
WELCOME**



## LATEST NEWS

Immediate help offered to victims of Easter Sunday bombings in Batticaloa Sri Lanka.

Sunny-sid3up funds 50 food parcels to needy families in Batticaloa district and supports OST with their operations in Sri Lanka.

Fonthill Foundation funds 14 teachers' Pre-school Diploma courses and a 3-day Teacher Training event.

Teach Sri Lanka make their first visit to their link preschool in January 2019.

775 school uniforms distributed to preschool children and teachers at the beginning of the school year in January 2019.

Ocean Stars Lanka gains recognition as an All Island NGO in Sri Lanka.

Zeddy Kibet starts her post as Monitoring and Evaluation Manager for Ocean Stars UK and Sri Lanka.

## 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.**

**Sponsor a teacher for £25 per month and give hope and employment to a rural family.**

**Sponsor a sewing machine for £145 and provide a livelihood for a person.**

**OST Trustees met in March for their annual Away Day where our strategy was reviewed, our Theory of Change revisited and targets for 2019-2020 were set.**

## OST TRUSTEE AND TREASURER JOHN BUNTER VISITS SRI LANKA IN APRIL

Welcome to our latest edition of news from the Ocean Stars Trust. There have been many significant developments to report in the six months since our last publication, and I hope you will find all our news in the following pages of interest.

We have been blessed this year so far by the partnership of two UK charitable trusts - Glasgow's Sunny-Sid3up, and the Fonthill Foundation from Sussex, whose generous donations have enabled us both to complete several long-awaited capital building projects, and to hit our target in developing teaching and learning in our 21 OST-sponsored preschools. In addition, with committed new staff in our OSL team in Batticaloa, we feel we have good capacity on the ground to oversee these important developments.

I was able to observe for myself some of the progress made in these projects when I visited Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Yatiyanthota with Dilanee in April, and I was very impressed by what had been achieved, what with, for example, one school in Mandoor now no longer having to struggle with a leaking roof and lack of kitchen area, another with a good gate which now prevents animals from invading their premises. The advances that teachers had been making in recording children's progress we saw at one of the pilot schools was quite remarkable as the Child Development Project had only begun in the new year.

We returned on Good Friday to the UK, thoroughly unprepared for the shocking news of the Easter Sunday massacres in western Sri Lankan hotels and churches, and at the Zion Church in Batticaloa. OST launched the UK OST Easter Sunday Appeal. We have been able to make a real difference to the victims in Batticaloa thanks to the generous response to our appeal.

Our OSL team has shown amazing initiative and compassion in supporting victims at the hospital in Batticaloa, using monies we have sent from our recent Appeal to carry on the work of OST in spite of such atrocities, and we have been in constant touch.

With this in mind, I thank you, dear readers and supporters, for your continuing support for all our work. I have seen for myself the consummate gratitude from our target Sri Lankan Communities for this, and it is awe-inspiring.

John presenting a fishing boat from our Gift Catalogue to a family in Vellaimanal.



## OCEAN STARS LANKA APPROVED AS AN ALL ISLAND NGO IN SRI LANKA

We are pleased to announce that in February 2019 Ocean Stars Lanka was approved as a NGO by the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organisations in Sri Lanka. The process also involved getting approval from the Sri Lanka High Commission in London. This means that we will be regularly monitored by the SL Government to make sure that we are working within the framework of Government Policies. This endorsement is addition to Ocean Stars Lanka being registered as an NGO in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. This brings Ocean Stars in line with all other NGOs working in Sri Lanka as a partner in the development of the country. A big step for Ocean Stars UK and Sri Lanka.



## FONTHILL FOUNDATION PARTNERS WITH OCEAN STARS

Ocean Stars has linked up with Sussex-based **Fonthill Foundation**, who have generously funded three major developments in our work.

### EARLY YEARS CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

We have dedicated funds to employing Zeddy Kibet on a 12 month scheme to roll out from pilot schools, and eventually to all 16 of our Batti preschools, methods of assessing and reporting on the children's progress. The system, developed by OST staff in the UK, asks our teachers to observe children's progress more closely so they are able to assess that little bit more effectively. Teachers feedback has been positive so far as the assessment has led to a better understanding of the students' needs.



Sorruwamunai teachers Bavani and Pathini have found the Early Years assessment tool has contributed to a better understanding of students' needs and development.



### TEACHER TRAINING EVENT 17-19 JULY

This will take place at the training complex outside Batticaloa, Sarvodaya, where some 70 teachers from OST preschools will enjoy 2 days plus of residential training. It is absolutely purpose-built for our Training Days. The programme is being put together by Shalini from our OSL Team and Dilanee. Preschool teacher Bavani stressed how remote her school was, and how she and others have always loved sharing ideas with other teachers on the OST October "Friday morning" sessions. The teacher at Karaveddy, Theanmoly, mentioned the same point, but also added how she was looking forward to sessions on lesson-planning, sports, songs, making flashcards, etc.

The Training Days are seen as a huge step forward for our Preschool Teachers, and our OSL team will monitor afterwards the effect that the training has had, by visiting preschools.



The Sarvodaya Centre where the Teacher Training will take place from 17-19



### THE DIPLOMA COURSES – IN TRINCOMALEE AND BATTICALOA

A third strand of teacher development enabled by donation from Fonthill is for our teachers to complete a Preschool Diploma Course. We have supported the classes and 3 teachers in Vellaimanal village for 12 years and more but they now have started their Diploma course on 9 March in Trinco. It is every Saturday all day for 12 months. They are absolutely delighted with the funding that has allowed them to do this, and with what they are learning. They mentioned 4 areas in particular – Physical Education, Drama and Singing, Child Protection and Child Psychology. The notion of Learning Through Play rather than reading and writing has brought them a real change in approach, and the children are loving it. The 10 Batti teachers are very much looking forward to their course beginning soon.

Clearly OST is greatly indebted to the support of Fonthill Foundation to allow these three important developments to take place.

Our three Trinco teachers who have begun their Diploma course



## SUNNY-SID3UP GLASGOW PARTNERS WITH OCEAN STARS

Ocean Stars has partnered with Glasgow-based Sunny-sid3up.

Sunny-sid3up is a charity with past connections with post-tsunami relief in Sri Lanka. It is now donating funds to assist Ocean Stars UK and OSLanka in empowering children through education and relieving poverty in Eastern Sri Lanka. Our first collaborative project was the delivery of 100 Food Parcels which were donated to 100 Ocean Stars families living well under the poverty line. Sunny-sid3up also donated a bonus to each of our preschool teachers in January. On receiving the unexpected bonus the teachers expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Sunny- sid3up for making such a huge difference to their monthly income.

The food parcels were distributed to families from the poorest of our 16 preschools as identified by our livelihoods study. The parents were so grateful as this means they had food to sustain them for a month without having to worry about money. Sunny- sid3up also sponsors the teachers who work in our preschools that do not have sponsorship. We would thank Sunny-sid3 for their most generous donations.



## TEACH SRI LANKA AND THEIR LINK PRESCHOOL NARIPULTHOTAM

In January, Dimithri from Teach Sri Lanka visited the preschool that they sponsor in Naripulthotam, Eastern Sri Lanka. Pooja, Chitra, Shalini and Dharshan from Ocean Stars Lanka welcomed Dimithri to Batticaloa with traditional welcome garlands. He thanked the OSL team for their warm welcome. Dimithri commented on the remoteness of our preschools, the difficulties accessing them and the commitment, dedication and hard work of our preschool staff. Dimithri also visited our OSL office where he noted how impressed he is with the team's effort in managing 16 schools in the Batti district, as well as all the other work they do.



## CALTHORPE PARK SCHOOL AT CHENKALLADY



"We the teachers at Chenkallady 1 preschool would like to thank our sponsors Calthorpe Park School for providing us with a new preschool building, our wages, the children's uniforms and school bags. Thank you for coming to visit us last year and we look forward to seeing you again soon."

Teacher sponsorship from £25 a month. Sponsor a teacher and transform 50 children's preschool education.

## OCEAN STARS TRUST UK and OCEAN STARS LANKA RESPOND TO EASTER SUNDAY EXPLOSIONS IN SRI LANKA

Ocean Stars UK and Sri Lanka would like to say a big thank you to everyone who responded so generously to our appeal following the Easter Sunday explosions in Sri Lanka. It has been a sad and difficult time for our staff in Sri Lanka. Whilst all the other explosions took place in Western Sri Lanka, there was one incident in Eastern SL at the Zion Church in Batticaloa where 35 children and adults died and over 100 people were injured. As our office is based in Batticaloa and because we are a Nationally Registered NGO we were able to gain immediate access to Batticaloa Teaching Hospital. Our staff comforted the wounded and responded to the needs of the hospital staff. Food bags were distributed and medicines that were needed especially for burns victims were ordered and distributed. The hospital staff and Minister of Zion church have expressed their thanks for the help and support provided by Ocean Stars to the people of Batticaloa following these dreadful events. We in turn would like to thank those who donated to the appeal and made it possible for us to provide immediate aid to those affected.

Bags with food and toiletries were distributed to 50 families.

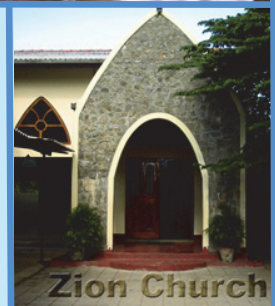
Medicines and bandages provided by Ocean Stars to the hospital in Batticaloa.

Dhyan needed special medicines to help him heal and we were able to order them from Colombo and get them to the hospital in Batticaloa.



We received the following message from the Zion Church in Batticaloa:

“ Dear Ocean Stars Lanka Batticaloa and OST UK, We at Zion Church would like to express our thanks to you for coming forward and distributing dry ration packs and in looking after the medical needs of the victims of Zion Church Batticaloa who were injured by the Easter Sunday attack on 21st April 2019. May God Bless you all. Thank you and Blessings,” - Prashandt Manickarajah, Easter Sunday Attack Relief Committee, Zion Church, Batticaloa.



### NOTES FROM AILIDH WATSON, INTERN FOR OCEAN STARS UK SINCE SEPTEMBER 2018.

I wanted to do an Internship with Ocean Stars so I could see first hand how a charity works. This is something I have never done before and I feel I am doing something useful. I have learnt a lot about what goes on behind the scenes of the charity. The Trustees all have responsibilities and there is a big team involved in the daily running of the charity. The organisation of volunteer trips for example involves a lot of work. I have had the opportunity to spend time with different people involved in the charity and attend different types of meetings and visit schools. I have improved my Excel skills and learnt about charity finances. Every day I am doing something different. A lot of people visit the office and no day is the same. I am amazed at the vastness of the work done by OST, the preschools, link schools, supporting a children's home, sewing projects, teacher training programmes and sponsorship schemes. I have helped with marketing of fund raising events organised in the UK. I have been able to be creative in all I do and manage my own time. I would recommend anyone who wants to volunteer as an Intern to do so as it is a great platform to acquire skills that will help you for life. I feel I am making a difference and that is amazing!



### FAITHS IN SRI LANKA

The population of Sri Lanka is approx. 21 million. 70% of the population are Buddhists, 12.6% are Hindus, 9.7% are Islamic Faith and 7 % are Christians, mostly Roman Catholic. Sri Lanka is a country rich in religious diversity and traditions.

### OCEAN STARS LANKA COMMITTEE



Ocean Stars Lanka Committee meeting discussing strategy, finances and reviewing day-to-day operations.

## Freya Innes, Head Girl of Calthorpe Park School, Fleet, reflects on her trip to Sri Lanka in October 2018 with Ocean Stars Trust

I first came across Ocean Stars when I was 7 years old and I took part in the Ocean Stars Variety Show. I was involved in the show every year I was at Junior school and always thought of the children that Ocean Stars were helping so many miles away. I also saw students from Calthorpe Park school who were about to go to Sri Lanka as the variety show is in October.

I moved to Calthorpe Park School and I was lucky enough to go on the Sri Lanka trip in October 2018. I managed to experience how incredible, beautiful and interesting a country it is and I was welcomed by the people most warmly and felt safe and calm throughout the entire trip. We visited our link schools in the town of Batticaloa. We spent the majority of our time working in the local schools. There is nothing there. The people live basic lives and many are still affected even today by the 2004 tsunami and the civil war. Despite this, the people are friendly, loving and more spiritually rich than any of us in the Western World could become.

Whilst preparing for the trip our Team raised over £11,000 for the work of Ocean Stars. Some of that money went to building a new preschool building for the children of Chenkallady 1 preschool. That was really special for me to be there the day the preschool was officially opened. The children put on a show for us with their traditional dancing and beautiful costumes. It made me feel very special. We also visited a school for deaf children and it made me really understand how disadvantaged this community is in Sri Lanka and worldwide. The children taught me how to sign the English alphabet and that was a very special moment. I also enjoyed the visit to the tea plantation. I love drinking tea and to see the process from plucking the tea leaves to the tea being packaged was really interesting.



The trip had a real impact on me and the team. We appreciate what we have far more now and realise how it is possible to be happy without any material possessions. I feel more connected with the world after this trip.

I am truly devastated by the Easter Sunday events in Sri Lanka. The school is strongly linked with Sri Lanka and we had a Minute's Silence in school as an act of remembrance. The atmosphere in school was palpable as 1500 students stood in silence to connect with our friends in Sri Lanka.

I plan to return to Sri Lanka one day soon with others from my school team.

Freya Innes

Head Girl Calthorpe Park School and member of Calthorpe Park Team 2018

### Ocean Stars Lanka Team



From left to right: Sutharshan: Director, Dharshan: Project Manager, Chitra: Office Manager, Shalini: Finance Manager, Pooja: Sponsorship & Preschool Manager, Zeddy: Monitoring & Evaluation Manager.

### Founder and Trustees of Ocean Stars Trust UK



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

We thank you for your continuing support.