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**AYUBOWANG**

**HELLO**

**VANAKKAM**

**REGISTERED CHARITY: 1110022**

**NEWSLETTER 4: November 06**

Dear Friends,

Firstly the trustees of Ocean Stars Trust (OST) would once again like to express our gratitude to everyone for their continued support of our efforts to assist with the rebuilding of Sri Lanka (SL) following the tsunami.

It is hard to believe that it is almost two years since the tsunami happened. We can all be proud of the difference we have made to so many people's lives. However despite significant progress being made, our efforts are being hampered by the escalating civil violence, which you will no doubt have heard about in the media.

In August, the Bunter family travelled to SL in August and witnessed first-hand the devastating impact that the violence has had on the lives of the very people that we are trying to help.

In this edition of our newsletter we aim to

1. Give you feedback on the Bunter Family visit to SL in August including an update from John on how things are "on the ground" in SL.
2. Outline progress which has been made since our last newsletter
3. Detail current project requests which we have received from SL
4. Give you a brief overview of how Ocean Stars operates as a charity.



**POLITICAL SITUATION and UPDATE ON LAST OST VISIT, written by TRUSTEE JOHN BUNTER**

*Our travelling took in a great number of projects where OST money is being put to very good use. Our first port of call in this respect was Weligama, site of the first Methodist missionaries on the island, in the South. Here we attended a church service in Sinhalese in the open-air by the manse, with the rain beating down on the corrugated iron lean-to roof. The church itself was being renovated. We saw later at the Sunday School the range of gifts donated from OST funds – including a whiteboard, books and stationery. Our own children stayed with the local children for a couple of hours as Dilanee and I saw progress on projects nearby. We saw the sewing machines being used in their new premises, and the*

various items being made - clothes, bags, etc. Then we went to a location where local ladies were being given grants to collect fish and mushrooms for sale to outsiders. The sales enabled them to pay their bills more easily and feed their families. Just nearby we found the local man, whose boat, now named "The Ocean Star", as it was renovated from OST funds, proudly brings work and sustenance to 10 families.

Here also we received a joyous welcome at the local school, especially from the children who received English lessons from a teacher funded by OST. Here we also distributed some of the many items of stationery we had been given by Fleet schoolchildren.

Further south we were invited into the home of some village fishermen, whose original houses were washed away as they were situated close to the shore. The inhabitants showed off their beds and chairs that had been bought with vouchers given by OST.

Our original next destination was to be to the East: Trincomalee and Batticaloa. However it was made clear to us, through messages from the British Embassy in the newspapers, that these were territories too dangerous to visit. We were however grateful that our contact Janabdeen was able to visit us in Dambulla in the centre of the island, as he was on his way westwards to Colombo. We were able to pass on some gifts and messages for sponsored children in Trinco to Janabdeen, as he told us of living conditions for the families OST are sponsoring. They still live in a Tsunami camp, but the difference the war makes now is that the breadwinners of the families – fishermen and wood-gatherers - are not allowed out to earn their money. Thus OST sponsorship money is for many the only income of any sort the families are receiving.

*Meeting  
Janabdeen in  
Dambulla*



Back in Colombo (on the western coast), the annual Sri Lankan Methodist Conference was taking place. Rev Ranchan, with whom we had been working with child sponsorship schemes (and whom for above reasons we were not able to visit personally) filled us in about the situation in Batticaloa, further south from Trinco. Sadly, warring factions bring real horror-stories of inter-factional murder and mutilation. In amidst this Rev Ranchan is able to keep his faith. It was however frustrating that we could not make the 50 miles or so from the centre of the island to see the situation for ourselves, and to view how our many generous sponsors' money is being spent.



*Meeting Rev Ranchan in  
Colombo*

This being my first post-Tsunami visit, now 20 months on, it was clear to me that much good progress has been made towards rebuilding Sri Lanka. Much housing had been built, there had been some real job creation, and many, many businesses were back on their feet. But where there is most need is in those places where racial strife has re-emerged. People cannot securely rebuild when one side is sniping and another side is bombing.

But I was left safe in the knowledge that, with the checks and balances that the OST trustees put in place, all OST funds are put directly to good use. Furthermore, there is still a huge need for these funds in the Tsunami-affected areas of Sri Lanka.

## **PROJECT UPDATE**

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

### **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 is privileged to be involved with the project.

Thoten Team gather for their daily Briefing.



#### **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 the company Singer.



English Language teacher sponsored by Ocean Stars in Well-Being Village.

#### **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.

During our last visit in August 2006 we visited the sewing project and met the women whose lives have been helped by this project. We were pleased to see that the women were getting orders from other local organisations and were being kept busy.



Weligama sewing Project team

#### **1. 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.

Our support for these two playgroups is ongoing.

## **2. 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 regular contact with Yasmin regarding the families in Trinco. All the families are incredibly grateful for the support that OST has provided them with.

We were unable to visit the camp in August but met up with Janabdeen, our contact in Trinco. He said that the families lived in fear, as their camp is close to a naval base. They had asked Janabdeen to pass on their sincere thanks to all their UK and French sponsor families. Your help has been truly appreciated at this very difficult and tense time.



A sponsored child receives his saving book.

## **6. 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

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

OST was 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



## **8. 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

## **9. KALLADAY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME**

This programme has been up and running since June 2006. Rev Ranchan of Kalmunai Methodist Church Batticaloa asked us to fund this programme for 18 families where the parents are deaf and dumb and so the children already poor are doubly disadvantaged. We have 10 families in the UK who have sponsored a family and made a difference to the lives of these families.

### **PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE THAT NEED FUNDING**

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

Eight more families are needed to complete this programme. If you would like to sponsor a family for £10.00 a month then please do not hesitate to contact us. The parents of the children of each family are deaf and dumb and therefore very disadvantaged when it comes to employment. Ocean Stars has funded the scheme from our central funds and would like to find the remaining eight sponsors as soon as possible.



Kalladay sponsorship families

#### **2. 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.

#### **3. THOTEN WELL-BEING VILLAGE: REBUILDING OF BAKERY**

During our visit in August we met a lady who had a thriving bakery business before the Tsunami. Her bakery was destroyed by the wave and she has asked for funding to help rebuild and re establish her business. The cost of this project is £1500.00. The market for bread and other bakery products are secure, as the produce will be sold within the village. A donation of £125.00 per month over a 12 month period will mean this project can go ahead.



Bakery awaiting funding to be rebuilt and help the local economy.

#### **4. THOTEN HOME-GARDENING PROJECT**

The idea behind this project is to encourage the villagers to grow their own vegetables and fruit. A lot of work needs to be done in educating the local people because they do not view gardening as a viable means of income and nutrition. The THOTEN project hopes to change attitudes by demonstrations, workshops and house-to-house help. A request of £500.00 has been made for the cost of workshops, instructors and purchase of produce for the householders over the next 12 months. To fund this project we require £40.00 per month for one year.



Example of a Home Garden  
Growing fruit and vegetables

#### **5. COIR (COCONUT FIBRE) MAT AND OTHER COIR-BASED PRODUCTS**

We visited a project where some local women are producing mats made of coconut fibre. The THOTEN project would like to empower these women with the management skills needed to generate a business using their skills. Book keeping, marketing, product development are all skills which OST would like to help these women develop. The cost of funding this project is £500.00 over the next year.

#### **6. NAVATKUDAH CHILDREN'S PLAYPARK**

We have received a request from Rev Ranchan to help 80 children who attend a Children's Club. They have no play equipment and would like to purchase equipment for a play park. The cost of swings, slides and a merry go round comes to about £50.00 a month for 10 months. If any one would like to contribute toward this project then please do contact us.

#### **7. SELF-EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS**

Rev Ranchan would like us to fund this project to empower 10 widows to get back on their feet. Each family will get £143.00 to start up a home business such as sewing and handicrafts. If you would like to help a family please let us know.

#### **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. The project was completed in June 2006 and some of the team members have moved on to permanent jobs with other local charities. Some are continuing with their university education. Dr Pandu Wijeyratne who runs the THOTEN project thanks OST for the help the young people have received.

Sangeeth used his funds to do a catering course at an International Hotel School in Galle. He now works at local hotels at the weekend and is able to contribute to his family finances as well as save up towards rebuilding their home, which was damaged by the Tsunami.



Sangeeth proudly shows us his  
certificate in Catering.

##### **4. FLEET METHODIST JUNIOR CHURCH**

Funds raised by Junior Church have helped Nirasha with the rebuilding of her home, which was destroyed by the Tsunami and also killed her mother. As Nirasha's father works in Colombo and she is living with relatives, the progress of the building is slow. We saw the house, which is in the process of being built. Funds have also gone to help the Junior Church at Weligama Methodist Church.

## 5. 2<sup>ND</sup> FLEET GIRLS BRIGADE

Many thanks to 2<sup>nd</sup> Fleet Girls Brigade who are sponsoring a child in our Trinco sponsorship scheme. They are also paying the wages of two teachers. Yasmin our contact in Colombo extends her thanks to GB for their support for this project.

## 6. WELLIGAMA FISHING BOAT

Sunil has been back fishing in the sea with his boat the “Ocean Star.” He is able to offer employment to 10 local men, which means that 10 families now have an income.

## 7. GRACE CHILDREN’S HOME



Heatherside Infant’s School in Fleet has raised funds for Grace Children’s Home in Vavuniya. Over the past 18 months 25 new mattresses, 25 desks and chairs for the children as well as wardrobes have been purchased. A new floor has also been put down in an extension being built for the home. Following a recent request OST sent money for the purchase of a fridge for the Home.

## 8. POONCHIMUNAI PLAYGROUP BATTICALOA

St Luke’s Infant school in Brighton has raised funds and helped this playgroup. Thanks to their kindness the playgroup now has new chairs, tables as well as some new playground equipment. An extension building has also been completed. Funds were recently given towards the building of a fence around the playground to improve security



Enjoying the new tables and chairs.

## 9. VELLAIMANAL PLAYGROUP

Buttercups Day Nursery in Fleet has raised funds to buy equipment for the playground at this new post Tsunami playgroup. The children who attend this playgroup are very happy playing on the new slides, merry-go-round and swings. The present war in the east means these children’s lives are very restricted, so the opportunity to play in a safe environment is especially important for them.

## 10. KOMARI SCHOOL

The Connaught School in Aldershot had a mufti day and raised £625.00 for the Komari School, which was completely destroyed by the Tsunami. The Italian government is building a new school. The Headmaster said that his wish list for the new school would be a photocopier as textbooks are difficult to obtain. The funds from The Connaught School have gone towards the purchase of a photocopier, a digital camera as well as general equipment for the school.



## HOW OCEAN STARS OPERATES

Ocean Stars is a small UK registered charity and comprises of 5 trustees,

Dilanee Bunter - Founder  
John Bunter – Chairperson  
Shona Holroyd – Treasurer  
Jo Barton – Secretary  
Janaki Jayasuriya – Trustee

We are regulated by the UK Charities Commission to whom we are required to submit an annual return, accounts (which have been independently reviewed) and trustee annual reports.

Our trustees participate in the charity on an entirely voluntary basis and receive no remuneration for their services. However we do reimburse agreed expenses incurred in carrying out duties on behalf of the charity.

We believe that our key strength as a charity is our transparency. We aim to ensure that all income received is spent on the beneficiaries we have identified and that our donors know where their money has been spent. We communicate to our donors via direct contact, newsletters and through our website.

The trustees hold formal meeting at least every two-month where we discuss funding requests, finance, annual plans and future visits amongst other things. We also hold an AGM once per year.

If any of our donors would like to organise 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.*

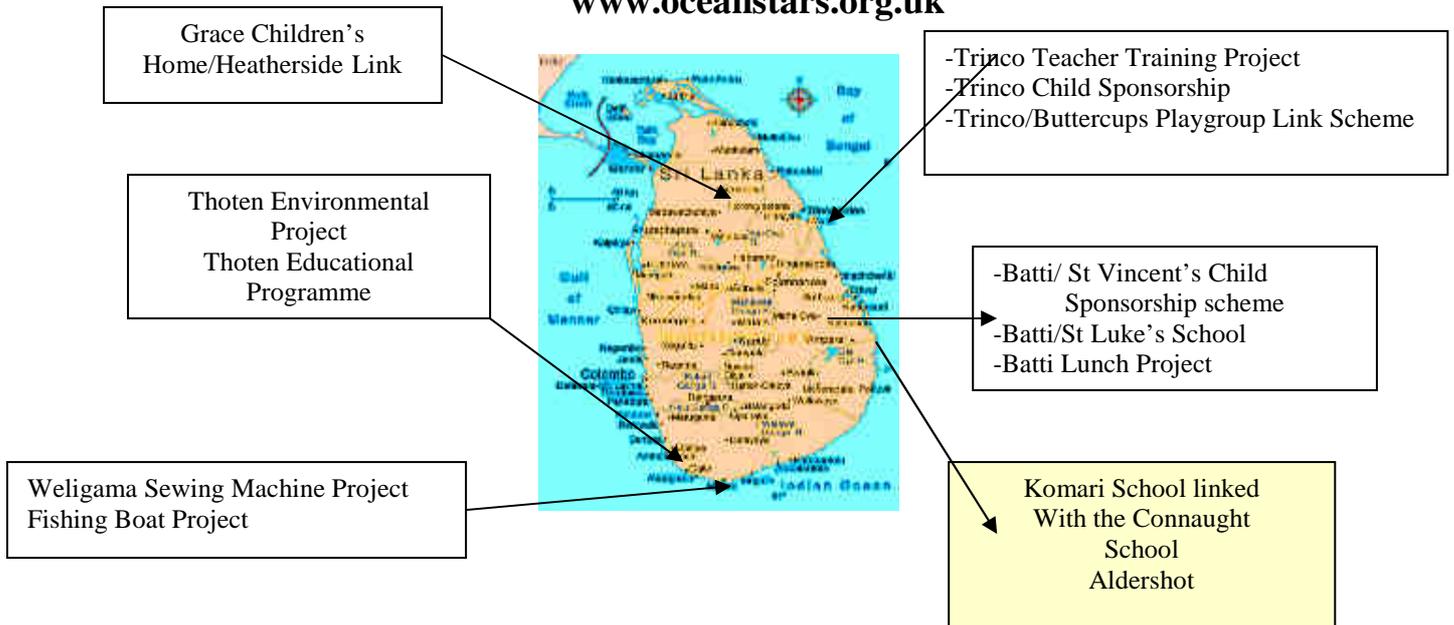
If you are a new donor please contact us about receiving a Gift Aid form, as we can claim tax back on your donation.

May God Bless you. Budhu Saranay.

Dilanee Shona Janaki Jo John

Trustees of the Ocean Stars Trust, Registered Charity 1110022

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