

# Newsletter March 2023



From 27nd.March to 9th. April Theo was back in Sri Lanka to continue work on the current projects. Although the situation in Sri Lanka is slowly improving inflation is approaching 50%. All goods being imported are expensive or are in short supply owing to a lack of foreign currency. In March the IMF decided, after some debate, to grant a loan to Sri Lanka which should bring some relief. One example is the fuel costs which have tripled and supply is still sporadic. All residents have received a QR code which allows them to obtain 20 litres of petrol per week per vehicle. For a Tuk Tuk this is 5 litres per week.

Although Tourism is slowly returning it remains at only 40% of pre-corona levels. Much will have to be achieved to return to pre-covid normality.

## Students

Currently we are supporting 43 students who attend various schools and universities. These students are from poor families who would otherwise have no chance of furthering their education. Although most schools and universities are free, most of our students live at home and rely on public transport to attend their schools. We are able to contribute to these costs, for the purchase of the required study books and a small contribution to meal costs. This relates on average to euro 40 per month (15.000 rupees). For some students living a long way from their schools and can have up to 6 hours travelling time it is necessary to fine suitable accommodation in the proximity of the university. We also cover these costs and a slightly larger amount for meals which relates on average to euro 75 (26.500 rupees) a month.

Life in such a hostel is pretty basic , 2x2 bunk beds so 4 students to a room, no chairs, cupboards or private space and shower and toilet facilities are shared with 20 others. The students remain on campus for the whole day with classes and study.

Three of the students we support



This is Udeshi, she is in her fourth year studying to be a doctor and she lives in one of the hostels with 3 other students.



This is Shehan, he is studying software development, has one year to go and complete his study with a 6 month work placement. He is studying in Trincomelee and also lives in a hostel. He proudly showed us his grades, of the 8 subjects he achieved 6 x A's and 2 B+'s.



This is Nuwani, she is studying geography and hopes to complete her studies this year. Her grades were also fantastic and we have no doubt of her success. She would like to become a disaster manager for the government.

## Prison

During each trip we make a point of visiting the prison. This time there were 8 children living in the prison with their mothers. Together with Ria and Rob (good friends) we first determined their needs and then went out to do some purchasing. We are deeply affected every time we are confronted with this situation and how the children live within the prison and being able to offer some tangible help is most rewarding.



## Uniforms, satchels and school books



Once again we have been able to send 200 children to school by supplying them with uniform, satchel and school books and some children received new shoes as well. We do not make the selection of the children ourselves. This is organised by the local social worker on the Kalapuwa Peninsular together with two social workers from the nearby districts who have intimate knowledge of the poorest families in the area and they invite the children. The selection process is strict which allows us to be sure that only the most underprivileged children, who would otherwise not be able to go to school, can be helped.

## Meals on wheels

Under normal circumstances the meals are delivered to the homes but on this occasion we wanted to do something slightly different. This time we invited all those mobile enough to attend, to come and have a meal with us at the hotel on the beach. Socially important and well received. The request was made to make this a monthly occasion. The photo shows the people enjoying the meal at the hotel.



# The Walikuku project



The Walikuku Project has now definitely started with our first two students, Kavya and Dilsha starting on Jan.1st a six month work placement with a Dutch company. I talked extensively to both about their experiences so far and having the Team contact with their assignments has proved most successful. Language improvement and social environment understanding of a different culture has proved most beneficial. The immediacy of the Dutch approach has obviously taken some getting used to. Following the completion of their training they will have to return to the university to finish off their studies but are then assured of suitable employment.

## Doctors



Standard health care in Sri Lanka is just too expensive for most people. If no money is available then they simply cannot go to the doctor. One of Nilantha's friends is an internist in Colombo and has shown a great interest in the aims of the project and has assembled a team of 5 doctors and 3 nurses who have made themselves available to spend one Saturday a month on the Kalapuwa Peninsula to hold free medical consultations for those people financially unable to access medical aid. This has been an enormous success and no less than 156 people have attended.

To show our appreciation we invited the doctors and nurses to a curry and rice meal at the hotel.



## Book funds

One big problem is that the cost of school and text books has risen beyond all expectation. Two years ago a standard exercise book cost 120 rupees and is now 310 rupees. Children find themselves in the situation of not being able to afford exercise books for their lessons. Together with a number of sponsors and a sympathetic organisation here in the Netherlands we have established a Book Fund to help these children with a book packet for at least 6 months. Once again the children are indicated to us by the social workers and we have established a collection point and central administration.



## Our super team in Sri Lanka

We are able to operate our projects so successfully in Sri Lanka thanks to a fantastic local team. From left to right;

**Kanishka:** Our financial man who leads the group and organises the distribution of the school packets to the children.

**Tharanga:** English teacher at our school and first point of contact for all our students and the activities concerning the orphanages.

**Nilantha:** Our eyes and ears for all the projects in Sri Lanka. He has an amazing network of contacts which open many doors for us.

**Buddhima:** responsible for the student administration and their go to person for computer questions

In October/November 2023 we will be back in Sri Lanka. If you would like to help and support us in any way this would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Theo



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