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Dear Friends,

Shona and Dilanee have just returned from Sri Lanka and this letter is to update you on the work carried out by the Trust so far. During the first week the Ocean Stars Trust team visited the south of the island and the second week we visited the north and the east.

The purpose of our visit was to

- Provide an assessment of the affected areas 10 months post tsunami
- Visit the projects to which OST has already committed funds
- Visit other potential new projects for which funding requests have been received by OST.

ASSESSMENT OF AREAS 10 MONTHS POST TSUNAMI

It is quite clear to us that there is still a lot of work to be done on the ground. Several housing projects have been started but then left unfinished due to lack of funds. A lot of people are still living in camps on the east and the north of the island. There were however some housing projects which had been completed. There does not seem to be an organised system for allocating new housing and is largely done on which NGO was around at the time. We met several people living with their extended families in small cramped houses: typical example would be 10 people living in a two-bed-roomed house sometimes without electricity and running water.

We were totally overwhelmed by the resilience of the local people and found the whole experience very humbling. They are warm, kind, clean, hospitable and provide each other with lots of support. Materially they have very little if anything at all but were willing to share what little they had. In the north and the east of the island families living in camps had the very basic of houses. Yet they were so keen to welcome us in and offer us a drink and somehow managed to find plastic chairs for us to sit on. One lady did not want us to go into her house as a cow had come in and messed it all up. We told her we would like to anyway so that we can tell people what life really like was for her. They sleep on the floor and have no electricity or running water. But amidst all the despair of having lost parents, children, friends in the tsunami there was an overwhelming sense of community spirit and supporting each other.



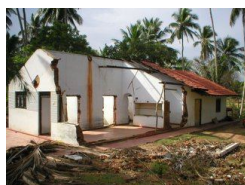
OST PROJECTS

As a result of our visit, OST has now been actively involved in 15 projects. For ease, we have split them up into 3 categories; completed, ongoing & future.

I Completed Projects

Ranna Housing Refurbishment Project

OST provided £1200 to refurbish 8 houses in the Ranna Housing Project. The Ranna Housing Project is a new purpose built post Tsunami village and rehouses the residents from two villages devastated by the Tsunami. The new village is situated on high ground about 500metres from the sea in a safe area. All the houses are complete and each has a large garden where the residents are able to grow their own vegetables.



Tsunami
damaged
home



New homes and
teddies donated by
OST

Diriya Lama Bima Playgroup Teacher Training

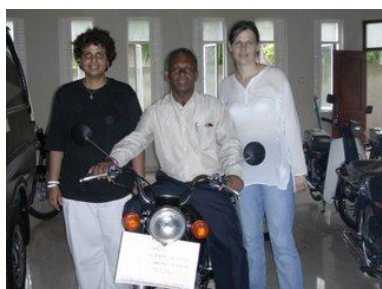
OST gave £330 to fund the Montessori training for one playgroup teacher. During our visit, OST met the student undertaking her training and viewed her coursework. The playgroup that she will work in has been completely refurbished and is now operational. This was pleasing to see as when OST last visited the playgroup six months ago, the children were being hosted in a cramped temple. It was also pleasing to hear that each child has a sponsor for their education from donors in France.



Hikkaduwa Internet Café business

OST gave £275 to help get an Internet café business back on its feet. During our visit we were able to see the equipment provided and viewed the business in operation.

Headmaster motorbike



In our initial newsletter, two of our donors were touched by the story of a headmaster who lost his motorbike in the Tsunami and who was now forced to walk several miles to school each day. They provided donations to cover the cost of a good second hand motorcycle. During our visit, OST went back to see the headmaster and took him to the motorbike showroom and purchased a new motorbike for him.

Nirasha Roof Project

Following OST's initial visit to Sri Lanka in March 2005, children at the Fleet Methodist Church Sunday School were touched by how many young people did not have a proper home and decided to raise funds to give one deserving individual a roof for his/her house. Prior to our visit they gave us £500 and we were able to give the money to Nirasha, a young girl who lost her mother in the Tsunami and is still hurting very much.



When the tsunami came, her brother told the family to run for their lives. However her mother ran back to save the only photograph she had of her daughter who had died when she was 5 years old. Unfortunately when her mother ran back she got swept away by the second wave and was lost.

Nirasha's father is a builder and has enough money to build the foundations and walls but not the roof. OST was able to give the funding for the roof and hopefully Nirasha's dream of having the house complete for the anniversary of her mother's death will be realised.



Weligama Fishing Boat Repair Man

This again is another touching story. During our visit we met up with the Tsunami Response Management Committee of Weligama Methodist Church who are charged with helping their parishioners to get back on their feet. One of the cases they put forward to us was that of a fishing boat repairman who saved the lives of the congregation of Weligama Methodist Church. When the Tsunami came, he jumped on his motorbike to warn the congregation of the wave. However in doing so, he lost the tools he used in his fishing boat repair business and now he can no longer work as he does not have the funds to buy new tools. OST was able to give this very deserving man the £45 he needed to buy his tools and get back in work.

Batticaloa playgroup drink & biscuits

One of our donors who has a young family provided a donation to fund drink and biscuits for 50 children for one year at a playgroup in Batticaloa. The funds were presented to the playgroup during our visit

. II Ongoing Projects

Thoten Health Programme

The Thoten Health Programme is run by Dr Pandu Wijeyaratne who is a doctor of tropical diseases and has worked for the World Health Organisation, US Aid and other large charities in over 55 countries around the world. Dr Pandu retired back to his native Sri Lanka in November 2004. However his retirement was short-lived as the Tsunami struck on the 26th December 2004! He felt compelled to do something to help his fellow Sri Lankans and used his skills to set up the Thoten Health Programme. He recognised that if steps were not taken to safeguard the environmental health, then there could be a potential larger disaster on the cards.

Dr Pandu recruited 15 bright young people in their early 20s to work on his environmental health programme. They initially were involved in assessing the needs of eight Tsunami affected villages. As a result of the data gathered they have been able to provide immediate data to local authorities of where the mosquito breeding sites are so they can direct their spraying efforts in the correct places. They are also involved in a large marketing campaign to educate the villagers about the importance of washing hands and other personal care habits. Diarrhoeal disease is a big issue, especially as most people still eat with their hands.

Thoten Education Project/ Thoten Computer Project

During our visit we were struck by the young people who Dr Pandu has working for him. They are clean, bright, well-presented and have a wonderful manner. They also had a great hunger to learn everything they could about us and how we live our lives. These people are all educated to A-level standard and two of them have degrees. Some of them took us to see their homes and meet their families. The contrast was so stark as their homes were nothing more than a hovel and most stayed with their extended families in small houses, as their new homes were unfinished. They all had a need for direct aid – albeit at various levels. OST wants to all help these individuals in a fair way. We have now set up an education programme to help them.



We would like to fund these disadvantaged youngsters with a course in say English, computing, etc, so that they can get themselves a better job at the end of the Health Project. The cost of a course is typically £200. In addition we would like to provide them with a computer at the end of their studies. We do not have funds for this project at the moment but we would like to fundraise for this cause in the future.

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Trincomalee Playgroup Project

This is a playgroup in the east of the island, which was devastated by the Tsunami. The playgroup is in the process of being rebuilt at the moment and the building is expected to be complete by the 25th November. We have now managed to link Buttercups Day Nursery in Fleet with this playgroup. Prior to our visit Buttercups raised £200 to provide playground equipment for the new playgroup.



Grace Children's Home

Grace Children's Home is located in the north of the island and we have linked Heatherside Infant School in Fleet to the Children's Home. Prior to our trip the Heatherside children raised £406 to fund mattresses and linen for all children. During our trip we went and physically bought the mattresses and linen. The children jumped for joy on their new mattresses, as they were SO happy to receive them.



Weligama Sewing Machine Project

Through the Tsunami Response Management Committee of Weligama Methodist Church, OST has provided funds for 14 sewing machines and one lock machine at a cost of £1240. These machines will be used to provide employment for the women of Weligama in a new textile organisation. OST has also provided £500 to pay for the first 5 months' operating expenses of the new venture. In addition, OST has placed an order for 100 clothes peg bags in order to provide the venture with its first order and get the business up and running!

III Future Projects

Trincomalee Child Sponsorship Project

Following on from the Trinco Playgroup Project above, we would like to gain sponsorship for the 40 children who attend the Trinco Playgroup. We have linked up with Yasmin Rajapakse from the Diriya Lama group in Sri Lanka who has set up two similar schemes at playgroups in the south of the island. For £10 per month, an individual can sponsor a child. We will send all the money to Yasmin's group who will set up a bank account in each child's name to be administered by the mother. Only 1500 Rupees /£8.50 can be withdrawn per month, the rest (£1.50 or more if the donation is gift aided via OST) is kept in the bank account and will be used to build up a fund for the child which he/she can draw when aged 18. Details on the bank accounts will be given to the donors to verify that the scheme is working, as it should.



Weligama Fishing Boat Project

The Tsunami Response Management Committee of Weligama Methodist Church also told us about a local fisherman whose boat was badly damaged by tsunami and now he together with his 10-crew members can no longer work. I am pleased to say that OST has now secured £1200 sponsorship from BP Shipping to fund the purchase of the new fishing boat. This will now provide an income to 11 eleven families and will indirectly help 60 people get on with their lives. The boat will be named the Ocean Star.



Tsunami damaged boat



New boat under construction

Trinco Lunch Project

We visited a playgroup set in the slums of Batticaloa and run by the local Methodist church. The Minister was very keen that the children stay for lunch and have a cooked meal once a day. As there are 100 children at this playgroup it would cost us £200.00 per month to fund this project.

Thoten Well-Being Village: English Language Project

The women of the villages have requested English Language lessons to help them move into the world of work. These are all women whose lives have been shattered by the Tsunami. An English teacher has been found and it is hoped to start lessons in January 2006. The cost for 2 lessons a week for a month would be £40.00. OST are hoping to raise the funds to get this project started.

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS REQUIRING FUNDING

1. THOTEN PROJECT: £40.00 a month to pay the wages of an English teacher for the Well-Being Village project. This will enable women whose lives were shattered by the Tsunami to learn English and be in a better position to seek employment.
2. Funding disadvantaged young people on the THOTEN team on part-time higher education programmes. This would enable them to earn the funds they need to repair their damaged homes. The cost of a course is around £200.00. We have helped 3 team members and there are 12 more in the team.
3. Weligama Sewing Machine Project: 24 machines are needed at a cost of £80.00 a machine. OS have funded 14 machines and one over lock machine so far.
4. Trinco Child Sponsorship Programme. £10.00 a month would make a difference to 38 children on this project. At the moment their families have a monthly income of £10.00-£15.00. Please do contact us if you would like to sponsor a child.
5. Batticaloa Lunch Project: To provide lunch for 100 children from the very poorest slums of Batticaloa who attend a playgroup run by the Methodist church. It would cost £200.00 per month to fund this project.
6. Wages for teachers at 5 playgroups. A typical wage is £20.00 a month.

www.buy.at/Oceanstars Webshop

Doing any on-line shopping this Xmas? Then why not use our very own Ocean Stars Webshop. All you have to do is log on to our webshop at 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 webshop 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.

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

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