



Oru Paanai

Feeding hungry children in Sri Lanka

News from Oru Paanai

Issue 4: December 2014

www.orupaandai.org.uk



It is that time of the year when we report to you, the dedicated supporters of Oru Paanai (OP), our achievements of the past twelve months and outline what we hope to do in the coming year. The support we receive from you enables us to continue to deliver on the undertaking we gave to the heads, teachers and parents of the schools we look after. We therefore feel it is our duty to share with you our thoughts on our current position and the path we would like to follow in the next twelve months and beyond.

THE SITUATION IN THE NORTHEAST ...

Today there is an air of optimism prevailing in Sri Lanka, with the election of a new government, replacing an authoritarian regime that had ruled the country for over 10 years. In the northeast also, there is a glimmer of hope that the new government would adopt a more conciliatory approach to addressing the problems of Tamils, both political and economic. The replacement of a military governor with a civilian is one step taken so far that has fostered such optimism. However, a pragmatic point of view is that there is very little scope for any quick fixes for the economy of the region. The military still has a very tight control of day to day life, engaging in agriculture, and other businesses like running hotels to cater to tourists, and few locals are employed in all their enterprises. Access to lands that previously were tilled by local farmers is still limited and fishing is also restricted, partly

due to the territorial disputes with Indian fishermen who transgress into Sri Lankan waters. Military surveillance is very tight, which hinders the free movement of people. Thus, the local populace still has very few employment opportunities and dire poverty is as prevalent in the region now, as it was in 2008 October when OP was launched. There are few signs that things will change for the better in the near future. Briefly, then, the need for our help - your help - is still there and the work of OP goes on for now.

WHAT HAS OP FEEDING DONE FOR CHILDREN IN THE NORTHEAST IN 2014 ?

We started OP with the aim of ensuring that no child living in northeast Sri Lanka who goes to school hungry, goes home hungry. We have largely achieved that objective. Today, in collaboration with the World Food Programme, OP provides a nutritious midday meal to 43,000 of the poorest school children in 312 schools in the northeast. While we provide the funds, it is a joint effort between parents and teachers in these schools that translates the



funds into a satisfying meal for their children. Ms Anusha Devi, OP's local coordinator, who is doing sterling work in supervising the distribution of funds sent by us, has sent us a report, which we publish in this newsletter, in both English and Tamil (see pages 3 and 4), and it gives us a touching snapshot of how OP's funds are being used. The improved attendance in the schools, the happiness on the faces of the children there, their improved performance in class, the reduced drop-out rate – all are a reflection of the success of our programme.

WHEN WILL ORU PAANAI'S MISSION END?

Often our donors ask us this question, as they are entitled to do. We cannot answer at this stage, except to say that as long as the need exists – as long as extreme poverty leading to starvation and malnutrition prevails - we must go on helping these unfortunate children. We cannot ignore the situation, when such poverty exists in our land of origin. However, it is equally important that we do not foster a dependency culture and that we make every effort to promote self sufficiency in the region. It is not an easy call to make, but we must assure all of you that we will monitor the position

continuously and if we ever reach the stage where matters improve, either through economic development of the northeast or if the national government, through the provincial council, takes on the provision of meals, as is done elsewhere in the country, then we will reassess the need for OP to continue, and consult all of you on doing so.

AND, FINALLY, WHY NOT SEE FOR YOURSELF?

Many of you have been visiting the northeast since the end of hostilities 5 years ago. More may be tempted to do so if restrictions to travel are eased, particularly after the opening of the railway line to Jaffna. We would like to invite you to visit some of the schools benefitting from OP's support and see for yourself how well the scheme is functioning and the highly positive impact on the lives of the children in those schools. Just contact us and we will liaise with the schools in the areas you are going to, to arrange a visit. Seeing is believing, as the saying goes. If you would like to send us a brief report as well, we would be pleased to publish it in the next newsletter.



FIELD REPORT FROM THE NORTHEAST SENT BY MS ANUSHA DEVI, OP CO-ORDINATOR

*Oru Paanai Charity Field Report
submitted by Ms. Anusha Devi,
Oru Paanai Co-ordinator, Jaffna.
The original version appears, right.*

I was requested by Dr. Dan Muthuveloe to arrange a special meal on 21.01.2015 for all the children in schools in the Jaffna district supported by OP, at the request of Ms Abirami Vallal, who was meeting the cost of providing the treat. I then informed the education officer in charge of the Food Programme of this plan.

*On the day, I turned up at 9 a.m. at **Parameswara Vidyalayam in Tirunelveli**, without prior notice. Having obtained the permission of the head teacher, I inspected the kitchen facilities in the school. At the time, the teacher in charge of procuring vegetables for the children's meals was inspecting the provisions, while two parents were preparing to cook the meals. After conversing with them, I proceeded to another school under the aegis of OP, and returned to the first school at 11 a.m, to find that the meal was already prepared and the children were about to be served their food, which was served by their teachers. I also tasted the meal, which was very tasty and it was not surprising to find some children asking for second helpings. The head, other teachers and parents all cooperated in a sincere effort to provide a nutritious and tasty meal to the children, and it was very satisfying for me to observe their joint endeavour.*

Kalatty Methodist Mission Tamil Mixed School

By the time I arrived at this school, the cooking had already finished. The parents of the children in this school are

mostly low paid manual labourers, who do not always turn up in time to cook the children's meals. Hence the teachers had themselves done the cooking on electric stoves. I was unable to take photographs of the children eating at this school due to time constraints. However, I did taste the food myself, and once again found it to be tasty.

Muthuthamby Maha Vidyalayam

The children attending this school come from the poorest segments of society and include children from the Hindu Children's Home and some who are wards of court. The head teacher and other teachers embrace these children and educate them, overcoming huge challenges. When I arrived at this school the meal was being served, and I managed to take some photos. I also consumed some food in the kitchen and found the meal to be very palatable.

I was very happy to have been able to visit some of the schools at meal time and see for myself how well the project is functioning. Having seen at first hand the beneficial effect of the OP programme on these children and how the children's teachers and parents were working hard together to foster their children, I felt greatly encouraged and the visits increased my enthusiasm to support them further in 2015, with the help of Oru Paanai.

Opinion of Teachers: 'We are able to purchase nutritious vegetables and other provisions, thanks to the support received from Oru Paanai. The meals provided to our children are nutritious and more appealing, and to many of our children it is a great incentive to attend school. Drop-out rates from our schools has also decreased as result. We would like to thank all the donors for contributing to Oru Paanai.'

See the back page for a picture of the food being prepared.

20.01.2015 ம் திகதி அபிராமி திருவள்ளல் அவர்களின் பிறந்த நாளை முன்னிட்டு சிறப்பான உணவு வழங்களை யாழ்ப்பாணம் பாடசாலைகளில் செயற்படுத்தும்படி எனக்கு வைத்திய கலாநிதி டான் முத்துவேலு அவர்கள் தெரியப்படுத்தியிருந்தார். நான் இவ்விடயத்தினை உணவுத்திட்டத்திற்கு பொறுப்பாகவுள்ள உத்தியோகத்தர் ஊடாக பாடசாலைகளுக்கு தெரியப்படுத்தியிருந்தேன்.

நான் பாடசாலையினை பார்வையிட வருவேன் என்ற தகவல் யாருக்கும் அறிவிக்கவில்லை திருநெல்வேலியிலுள்ள பரமேஸ்வரா வித்தியாலயத்துக்கு(பழைய பெயர் திருநெல்வேலி இந்து தமிழ் கலவன் பாடசாலை) காலை 9.00 மணிக்கு சென்றேன். அதிபரின் அனுமதி பெற்றுக் கொண்டு சமையலறையினை பார்வையிட்டேன். அங்கு சமையலுக்கு கொள்வனவு செய்யப்பட்ட மரக்கறிகளை பொறுப்பான ஆசிரியர் பார்வையிட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தார். இரண்டு பெற்றோர் சமைப்பதற்கான ஆயத்தங்களை மேற்கொண்டனர். இவர்களுடன் கதைத்துவிட்டு சமையல் முடியும் நேரத்தை அறிந்து கொண்டு இன்னொரு பாடசாலையை பார்த்துக்கொண்டு மீண்டும் இங்கு மு.ப 11.00 மணிக்கு வந்த போது சமையல் முடிந்து விட்டது. மாணவர்கள் சாப்பிடுவதற்கு ஆயத்தமாகின்றனர். ஆசிரியர்கள் மாணவர்களுக்கு உணவு பரிமாறினார்கள். நானும் வாங்கி சாப்பிட்டு பார்த்தேன் மிகவும் ருசியாக உணவு தயாரிக்கப் பட்டுள்ளது. மாணவர்கள் இரண்டாம் தடவையும் கேட்டுவாங்கி சாப்பிட்டார்கள். அதிபர், ஆசிரியர்கள், பெற்றோர்கள் ஒன்றினைந்து சுத்தமாக பொறுப்புடன் நேர்மையாகவும் மாணவர்களுக்கு உணவு அன்பாக வழங்கினார்கள். இதை நான் நேரடியாக பார்வையிட்டது மிகவும் சந்தோசமாக இருந்தது.

கலட்டி மெதடிஸ்த மிசன் தமிழ் கலவன் பாடசாலை

இப்பாடசாலைக்கு சென்ற போது சமையல் முடிவடைந்துள்ளது. இங்கு கல்வி பயிலும் பிள்ளைகளின் பெற்றோர் அன்றாடம் கூலி வேலைக்கு செல்வதாலும் கல்வி அறிவு குறைந்தவர்களாக இருக்கின்றபடியால் சமைப்பதற்கு ஒழுங்காக வருவதில்லை. பிள்ளைகளுக்கான உணவு தயாரிப்பதை ஆசிரியர்களே மின்சார அடுப்பில் தயாரித்திருந்தனர். மாணவர்களுக்கு வழங்குவதற்கான நேரம் இருந்தமையால் அவர்கள் உணவு சாப்பிடுவதை படம் எடுக்க முடியவில்லை. சாப்பிட்டு பார்த்தேன் சமைத்த உணவு ருசியாக உள்ளது.

முத்துதம்பி மகாவித்தியாலயம்

இப்பாடசாலையில் கல்வியயிலும் மாணவர்கள் சைவச்சிறுவர் இல்ல விடுதியில்(இவ் விடுதியில் தங்குபவர்கள் மிகவும் வறுமையிலையில் உள்ள பிள்ளைகளும்,நீதிமன்றத்தினால் விடப்படும் பிள்ளைகளும் உள்ளனர்) இருக்கும் மாணவர்களும் ஒதுக்கப்பட் சமூகத்திலிருந்து வரும் மாணவர்களும் கல்வி கற்கின்றார்கள். அதிபர் ஆசிரியர்கள் பெரும் சவாலுக்கு மத்தியில் இம் மாணவர்களை அன்பாக அரவணைத்து கல்வி புகட்டுகின்றார்கள். நான் பாடசாலைக்கு செல்லும் போது உணவு பகிரப்பட்டுக் கொண்டு இருந்தது. நான் தரம் 11 வகுப்பறைக்கு சென்ற போது ஆசிரியர் உணவு பரிமாறிக் கொண்டிருந்தார். அவரிடம் அனுமதி பெற்று படங்கள் எடுத்தேன்.

சமையலறைக்கு சென்று உணவு வாங்கி சாப்பிட்டு பார்த்தேன் நன்றாக சமைத்துள்ளனர்.

இன்றைய நான் நான் பாடசாலைகளுக்கு உணவு வழங்கும் நேரம் கலந்து கொண்டது மனநிறைவாக உள்ளது. ஒருபாணைத் திட்டத்தின் கனதியையும் பயனையும் உணரக் கூடியதாக இருந்தது. 2015 ம் ஆண்டு காலடி எடுத்து வைத்த போதே பாடசாலைகள் உற்சாகமாக தங்களுடைய பிள்ளைகள் என்ற உணர்வுடன் சிறப்பாக செயற்படுவதை கண்டதும் எனக்கு இத்திட்டத்தினை இன்னும் சிறப்பாக செய்து சிறுவர்கள் நல்ல பயன் அடைய ஒருபாணை அமைப்பின் ஊடாக இயன்ற உதவியை செய்ய வேண்டும் என்ற ஊக்கம் கூடுதலாக ஏற்பட்டுள்ளது.

அதிபர்,ஆசிரியர்களின் கருத்து.

ஒருபாணைத் திட்டத்திலிருந்து கிடைக்கும் நிதியினால் மேலதிகமாக மரக்கறிகளை சேர்த்து உணவு தயாரிக்கின்றோம். கூடுதலாகவும் ருசியாகவும் உணவு வழங்கக் கூடியதாக உள்ளது. மாணவர்கள் இவ் உணவை நம்பி பாடசாலைகளுக்கு வருகின்றனர். பாடசாலை கல்வியிலிருந்து மாணவர்கள் இடைவிலகுவதை தவிர்க்கக் கூடியதாக உள்ளது. இத்திட்டத்தின் நிதி வழங்குனருக்கு நன்றி தெரிவிக்கும்படி கூறினார்கள்.

பாடசாலைகளின் விபரம் இணைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது.



மு.அனுசாதேவி

திட்ட இணைப்பாளர்

யாழ்ப்பாணம்.

The original Tamil version of
Ms. Anusha Devi's report



Feeding the hungry is a greater work than raising the dead.

Chrysostom, St. John

A. D. 349 - 407

Archbishop of Constantinople



ORU PAANAI FUNDRAISERS IN 2014

Pedalling to Gay Paree

An intrepid quartet of young men – Andi Tomkinson, Chris Candfield, and Nat Young, led by Tim Swales – took to the road over 2 days on the 23rd and 24th of August 2014 to raise funds for OP. They undertook a bicycle ride from Greenwich to Paris, covering a very impressive 214 miles in the process, with a gruelling 136 miles being covered on the second day. A magnificent sum of £ 4,237 was raised for OP by these gallant young men, with an additional sum of £ 981 being added from Gift Aid. We in OP salute them for this wonderful effort. We also wish to acknowledge the quartet of women – Meera, Abi, Danielle and Becky – who provided much needed support to this team .

Cultural Evening in Ruislip

Many amongst you may recall that the very first programme to fundraise for OP was a Carnatic Music event that was staged at the Winston Churchill Hall in Ruislip in June 2009. It was a very successful programme that raised over £9,300 for OP and convinced those of us in the OP committee that the task of sponsoring a feeding programme was indeed achievable, given this kind of support. In 2014, we returned to Winston Churchill Hall, on the 21st of June, where many of the young people and their parents involved in the first event 5 years ago, staged another wonderful cultural show which was organised entirely by the young people, prominent amongst whom being Dr Atchuthan Sripathmanathan, Miss Meenachchy Premakumar, Mr Senthuran Premakumar, and Mr Yatheesan Selvakumar. They planned the entire programme, booked the hall almost a year in advance, and delivered an exhilarating performance on the day. The packed audience present was enthralled by the quality of the music and dancing that they enjoyed on that June evening.

The first half of the programme was Carnatic Vocal music by Miss Meenachchy Premakumar, a university student accompanied by the following young artistes: Achchuthan on violin, Janakan Sri Rangan on miruthangam and Miss Shankavi Sri

Rangan on thambura. The second part of the programme was Bharatha Natyam performed by the senior students of Mrs Uma Chandratheva, a senior Bharatha Natyam teacher of Salangai Oli fame. The following students performed in the dance: Miss Ramiya Arnold, Miss Revathy Selvarajah, Miss Nirupy Shanmugathas, Miss Dhanusha Thayaparan and Miss Brinda Nanthakumar.

The vocalist for the Bharatha Natyam was again a young singer, Miss Sinthuja Shriananda.

All the cost of staging the event, including hall hire and provision of food and drink was met by these young people and their parents. OP, as well as CANE, another well known charity working in the northeast, were the beneficiaries of their largesse. The total donations to OP from this cultural programme

was about £19,400, which included two large donations of £750 and £10,000 from two very generous donors, who wish to remain anonymous. CANE also received excellent support with the donations to them amounting to about £9,000. All the youngsters who undertook this mammoth task, and gave freely of their time to ensure that it was a great success, and their parents (Mr & Mrs Sripathmanathan, Mr & Mrs Premakumar and Dr & Mrs Selvakumar) deserve our heartfelt gratitude.



Marathon from Lands End to John O' Groats

Prof. Ram Swaminathan, as we all know, has done more than any other individual to raise funds for OP in the 6 years of our existence. He has climbed mountains (Kilimanjaro), organised concerts (on more than one occasion) and ridden from Whitehaven to the east coast - all in the cause of supporting OP. This year, he undertook a bicycle ride from Land's End to John O'Groats, a very

popular fundraising route in the UK, from the 19th of July to the 10th of August 2014. He covered a distance of 1054 excruciating miles, averaging 50 miles per day. A magnificent sum of £7,200 was raised for OP, thanks to the remarkable generosity of Swami's many friends and family. We wish to reiterate what we have said before – that Swami is the very bedrock of our fundraising, and we are humbled by the magnitude of his efforts on behalf of our charity.



OP Forthcoming Events

There are several fundraising ideas that are under consideration, but details such as dates and venues are still being finalised. We will communicate them to you by email or direct contact as soon as we have the details to hand. For the moment, all that we ask of you is to watch this space!

OP FINANCIAL POSITION

Our aim is to raise about £100,000 in the coming year. The main activity of OP, the raison d'être for its existence, is to provide a lunchtime meal for the most impoverished children in the worst affected parts of the northeast. This requires about £70,000 this year, due to the increased number of schools coming under our umbrella. We estimate that OP Education will cost about £15,000 this year, to cover the planned remedial classes in Batticaloa and surrounding areas (OP Education - vide para elsewhere). In addition, we plan to spend about £15,000 on the provision of Saththu Maa – a specially prepared nourishing food powder – for pre-school children in the islands off Jaffna (Theevaham). Although this activity is outside our initial remit of feeding school-going children, we in the OP Committee feel that it is an equally deserving cause and should be supported by OP.

The bedrock of our income is the regular monthly / annual subscriptions

from a modest number of well wishers. Monies raised from fundraising activities like dinner dances and generous donations from members of the diaspora on a sporadic basis constitute our other sources of income. In this respect, Canberra Tamil Association, which gives us a regular contribution each December, deserves special mention. In the UK, the One Child Foundation, which has taken on the funding of children's meals for all the schools in the Kayts area, has helped greatly to reduce our burden.

OP's accounts, as before, were audited in 2014 by A.G. Sarma & Co., Chartered Accountants in Sri Lanka and by Crompton & Co. Chartered Accountants, Coventry UK, and are submitted to the authorities in Sri Lanka and to the Charity Commission in the UK. If any of you wish to have sight of them, we will be happy to send you a summary of our accounts for 2013.



OP EDUCATION

OP Education was initially set up to enable OP to provide help with the provision of remedial classes in the Batticaloa area, as the educational authorities there felt that this was their greatest need at the time. They stated that they did not need much help with feeding children, as that aspect was being addressed by national institutions. We provided funds to run remedial classes for about 2 years, but in 2014, there were some hitches in setting up a bank account to send funds for this purpose and we were unable to fulfil our undertaking.

We are pleased to record that these problems have been resolved and OP Batticaloa has been functioning since December 2014. The main office bearers of OP Batticaloa are:

Dr. M.Thirukumar (President), Dr. P.Judy Ramesh Jeyakumar (Secretary) and Dr. K. Aulnithy (Treasurer). A committee of 11 members, including Mr. M.Baskaran, Zonal Director of Education, has also been formed to assist the main office bearers. The OP Committee in the UK will be liaising with OP Batticaloa on how best to assist in running remedial classes in the more remote and impoverished areas in the east.

Oru Paanai

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Oru Paanai Sri Lanka

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OP KAITHADY

OP Kaithady continued to provide vital support to the Nuffield School for the Deaf and Blind in Kaithady in 2014. In a report submitted to the BMA, Mr. Ranjit Thambirajah, the Project Lead, outlined the following achievements of OP Kaithady last year:

- Medical assessment of all 186 children at the school
- ENT & audiological assessment of all children with hearing impairment
- De-waxing of children including syringe waxing
- Hearing tests on all children
- Fitting of digital hearing aids to 58 children and 4 members of staff
- Trained three members of staff to perform hearing tests
- Trained one member of staff to programme the hearing aids and fit them
- Trained staff to make impressions for hearing aid moulds

A number of items were also donated to the school by OP Kaithady including, amongst others, an audiometer, 131 hearing aids, material to do impressions to make ear plugs for hearing aids, and hearing aid batteries.

The stated aims of the project are to improve the educational opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing children at the Nuffield School for the Deaf and Blind, Kaithady, Jaffna. Sri Lanka; to establish the Nuffield

School as a centre for audiological assessment, management and training of teachers for hearing impaired children; and to extend the project to include schools for the deaf and hearing impaired children in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka.

Anne East, a Special Needs teacher from the UK, who has done a tremendous job of helping the Nuffield School for the past 5 years, visited Kaithady again in August 2014, along with Liz Barton, and conducted a training camp for all the teachers at the school from the 18th to the 22nd of August. The aim of this course was to train 10 specially selected teachers as Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs). Anne, in her report on her visit, commends all these teachers who had demonstrated their commitment and dedication by giving up their free time to attend the course. She also noted that the trainees had grown in confidence as the training went along. Anne concluded that 'the children at Nuffield School, Kaithady have significantly improved educational opportunities and the teachers are confident and motivated. The school is fast becoming a centre of excellence for specialist teaching in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.' (If anyone wants to read Anne East's full report, please contact OP for a copy).

OP Kaithady is providing invaluable support to the Kaithady Nuffield Schools and the main facilitators of this project, namely, Mr. Ranjit Thambirajah, Dr. Augustus Thambapillai, Dr. Tony Sirimanne and Anne East deserve to be congratulated on their achievements.

OP SRI LANKA

OP Sri Lanka, headed by Somasunderam Skandakumar, is doing a great job in raising the awareness of OP in the country. The tireless efforts of Skanda, who has approached his wide circle of friends and associates for fundraising, have borne fruit and we greatly appreciate his commitment to our charity. The funds raised have been spent partly on the feeding programme and also the OP Education programme.

OTHTHULAIPPU

As most of you are aware, there are quite a few organisations and individuals currently working separately to improve the living conditions in northeast Sri Lanka and help rebuild what can best be described as a broken society. Oththulaippu (Cooperation) is an umbrella organisation that is being formed to bring together charities that are involved in the northeast so that their work can be coordinated and that they have a forum to exchange ideas and to support and encourage each other. Miss Thilaka Moorthy has worked very hard to set up this forum. These are initial and formative days and so far, four organisations have shown some interest in such a forum, including OP. Two concerts, featuring Sudha Ragunathan, the well known carnatic vocalist from South India, were held in October 2014 as curtain raisers for Oththulaippu and to fundraise for the four participating charities. It is hoped that more charities working in SL will join as members of the Oththulaippu forum in the coming year.

EVERY LITTLE COUNTS...

As mentioned above in the Financial Position section, a lot of OP's income is from the regular donations from a group of well wishers, supplemented by occasional contributions from others who have heard of our charity and make a contribution to us to mark special birthdays, wedding anniversaries etc. We wish to thank all of you most sincerely, as it is your help that enables us to meet our aspirations.

As welcome as all the help we receive is, in reality, we need much more funding to feed the 43,000 school children in the northeast that we help feed every school day. May we urge you to help us in one of the following ways:

- if you are a regular donor, consider increasing your contribution by £5 per month

- if you are not a regular donor, consider becoming one
- if any member of your family is looking for a charity to support by doing charity rides or running a marathon, suggest OP as a deserving cause
- host a coffee morning to raise funds for OP as we welcome all contributions, small or large

We wish to end by thanking you, on behalf of the grateful children living in northeast Sri Lanka who have been helped by Oru Paanai. May God bless you for helping them to survive the ravages of hunger and malnutrition.

**Visit www.orupaandai.org.uk
for the latest news, event information
and details on how to make donations**



*Preparation for the
special meal on
21 January 2015 -
see the full report
on page 3*