

# Current Activities of Oru Paanai in Sri Lanka

Oru Paanai was launched in 2008 with the aim of providing succour to children in the most needy parts of the northern and eastern provinces in Sri Lanka. We outline below the on going activities of Oru Paanai.

**The Oru Paanai Feeding Programme :** The Oru Paanai Feeding Programme is the main activity undertaken by Oru Paanai . When we became aware of the dire poverty prevailing in the more peripheral areas of the north and east of Sri Lanka,



which in turn was leading to starvation and malnutrition amongst the children living there, we set up Oru Paanai to help with ensuring that the children living there were provided a nutritious lunch time meal. We are currently supporting 402 schools to feed around 40,000 children.

Our current annual feeding cost is about £ 60,000, a part of which is borne by the One Child Foundation.

Early this year, four Oru Paanai trustees visited the schools at different times. School kitchens and cooking and serving of food was inspected. Conversations were had with headmasters, teachers and zonal directors of education. The work of Oru Paanai was overwhelmingly appreciated by everyone. It was brought to our attention that the amount of money given to each school has not been increased over the years despite inflation and increase in cost of living .It is our desire to increase the funding and this year we hope to raise £ 100,000 for feeding alone.

| ORU PAANAI Required Funds - June 2017 |                |              |               |           |              |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| S.N                                   | Education Zone | School Total | Student Total | per Day   | 20 Days      |
| 1                                     | Kilinochchi    | 59           | 6690          | 7,885.00  | 157,700.00   |
| 2                                     | Jaffna         | 45           | 5185          | 6,420.00  | 128,400.00   |
| 3                                     | Velikamam      | 12           | 1860          | 2,020.00  | 40,400.00    |
| 4                                     | Vadamarachchi  | 2            | 528           | 550.00    | 11,000.00    |
| 5                                     | Vavuniya North | 47           | 3318          | 5,945.00  | 118,900.00   |
| 6                                     | vavuniya south | 22           | 1066          | 2,225.00  | 44,500.00    |
| 7                                     | Mannar - Madu  | 49           | 4642          | 6,570.00  | 131,400.00   |
| 8                                     | Mullaithivu    | 34           | 6105          | 5,615.00  | 112,300.00   |
| 9                                     | Thunukkai Zon  | 43           | 3296          | 5,075.00  | 101,500.00   |
| 10                                    | Island         | 63           | 6001          | 8,515.00  | 170,300.00   |
| 11                                    | Mannar         | 26           | 1060          | 2,620.00  | 52,400.00    |
|                                       | Total          | 402          | 39751         | 53,440.00 | 1,068,800.00 |



**Oru Paanai Education Programme:** Oru Paanai has been providing support for the provision of remedial tuition classes in schools, mainly in the eastern province . The OP Batticaloa branch has undertaken a project to help Year 10 children from 2 very backward villages in rural Batticaloa and prepare them for the scholarship examination to be held on 27 th August. Success in this exam will entitle them to move to a bigger school in town, with facilities to study up to Advanced Level, thus giving them a chance to enter university.



The cost of these weekly special classes is RS 250, 000. Our aim in helping these children is to increase their chances in life and in so doing help the whole community , particularly if these children become graduates who will champion the cause of their home villages.

**Oru Paanai Wells Programme :** In 2015, OP undertook a pilot project to construct wells in the Wanni for people who were resettled after the war. Water at the time, was being supplied by bowzers and this was inadequate for the needs of the families and for home cultivation. We raised over £25,000 abd constructed 27 dug out wells and 7 tube wells. The pilot was an overwhelming success. The results were submitted to the Ministry of Resettlement and Rehabilitation. A promise was made by the



Ministry that match funding will be available if more wells were constructed. The further work needed to carry on the Water for Wanni as an ongoing project demanded greater financial and management commitment, which OP was was not realistically able to provide. A new charity, Well-Being Sri Lanka, has has undertaken Water for Wanni as a project, learning from the pilot carried out by OP.

The new and independent charity is being led by Bala Gnappagasam, Melvyn Sears and Paul David. In its first year of operation, in May/ June this year, 17 dug out wells were completed. We wish Well – Being Sri Lanka every good luck in their efforts in continuing the quest for Water for Wanni.

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### Current Activities of Oru Paanai in Sri Lanka (contd)

**Sathu Maa programme** : The 'Sathu ma' programme was started in April 2015 in order to help underweight pre school children in the Islands off Jaffna. It was reported by the Medical Officers of Health that about a thousand pre school children in Velanai and Oorkavat-thurai were underweight due to poor nutrition. 'Sathu ma' is a nutritious supplement made of powdered grain and lentils, which mothers could with ease prepare a meal for their children. Sathu ma was prepared by volunteer mothers under the supervision of the M.O.H. staff and distributed free of charge to the families of affected children. Oru Paanai has so far helped only 1 50 malnourished children from the islands of Mandaithivu and Nedunthivu. Last year a sum 190, 500 rupees was spent . We expect to expand this project to include more malnourished preschool children from the islands. Your generous help to provide more 'sathu ma' will prevent, malnourishment and permanent growth retardation in these children.





# Oru Paanai Kaithady

## Audiology Project - March 2017

Dr Ranjit Thambyrajah

The Oru Paanai Kaithady project was launched in 2012 with the aim of improving the educational opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing children at the Nuffield School for the deaf and blind, Kaithady; and to establish the School as a Centre of Excellence for both audiological assessment, management and training of teachers for the hearing impaired children.

A team of professional from UK visited the Nuffield School in March 2017 to provide help and assistance to the local audiological services. The team included Dr Dan Muthuveloe, Dr Elmo Thambapillai, Dr Deutram Thambapillai, Dr Ranjit Thambyraja and Ms Shami R Devan (Audiological Scientist).

The team was able to offer 122 hearing impaired children at the school both Paediatric and ENT assessments. Four young adults in Vocational Training and four blind children were also assessed. All children with waxy ears had syringing of ears done prior to being tested,

Ms Shami R Devan carried out the Audiological assessments on all children. Following the assessments, the children who needed hearing aids were fitted with Digital Hearing aids. The Hearing Aids that were fitted are the high powered aids suitable for profoundly deaf children. This was made possible thanks to Dr Tony Sirimanna and Ms Brin Ananthanadarajah of Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and Ms Laura Wright of Northern Lincolnshire Trust.







The rest of the children will be fitted hearing aids once they have been issued with new soft moulds, New Mould Fitting Machine has now been bought from India for Rs 3,500,000, which was funded by Oru Paanai Kaithady from donations received particularly for this purpose.

Oru Paanai Kaithady also donated two Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) machines to carry out new-born hearing screening to the General Hospital, Jaffna and one OAE Machine and a Diagnostic Brain Stem Response Audiometry Machine (costing over £25,000) to Dr A. Drahaman, Consultant ENT Surgeon at the Killinochchi District Hospital.

Many children with profound hearing losses were also offered hearing aids to give them vibro-tactile sensation, which made them feel that they are in a "world of noise" rather than a silent world.

The smiles and on the faces of the children and the ecstasy felt by them after they were fitted with hearing aids made it all a worthwhile exercise for the visiting team. The teachers at the school confirmed that the students fitted with the aids responded well when called and this had an obvious beneficial effect on their learning.

Oru Paanai Kaithady wishes to thank all who have made immense contributions to make this a successful exercise and wishes to offer a very special thanks to Shami Devan, Audiologist, who made the biggest contribution to the hearing tests and fitting the hearing aids, as well as training the local staff.





# Restoring Sri Lanka - Charity and Rehabilitation

Dr Anton Sebastian



Charity can bring a new perspective to one's purpose of life and can be rewarding in terms of self-gratification. However giving is not about granting a donation and going away, but rather knowing what difference it makes to another's life. To see a starved person revive is akin to watering a wilted plant back to life. Offering shelter is like holding an umbrella to another human in the scorching heat. Educating children is to sow the seeds of knowledge in young minds so that they would intellectually blossom out in the society.

Food, shelter and education are the basis of the health of a Nation without which the society will descend to sickness, crime and ignorance. It is the responsibility of the state and its leaders to provide these essentials with equality and equity. Sadly in society, we often see partisan politics derailing the programs for the needy. The moral obligation to the people is buried in politics and corruption, while those in need go on suffering. Building houses for those who lost their homes after a war or natural disaster is not rehabilitation but justice. Feeding the young, old and needy is not to be looked upon as charity but as love to human kind particularly when the state has failed in its obligation and they have nobody else to turn to. Education should be treated as the essential key to a wise, enterprising and educated society. These essentials are taken for granted in everyday life, but to the less fortunate these fundamentals are beyond their reach. Unless our social and moral responsibilities wake up to this disparity the needy will always remain in need.

During the past three decades of bloody war in Sri Lanka, people have endured untold suffering through starvation, injury, deprivation, indignity, inhumanity and death. The aftermath of the war has left us with widows, orphans, and the homeless. Suffering is not only just physical. To see your child dying, husband being maimed, sister being violated, brother being killed are scars that can never heal in the minds of the victims. One of the worst tragedies that will haunt the rest of one's life is not to know whether your loved one, son, daughter, mother or father is alive or dead. We forgive as good humans but to forget is the most difficult challenge to the human mind.

The suspicious and repressive political mood that prevailed after the war was greatly transformed with a regime change through democratic means in 2015. Since then the remarkable resurgence of charities among individuals and groups demonstrates that humanity and humanism are still not dead in the island.



When it comes to charity why should we mostly imply the north? Is it not being partisan in delivering benevolence? When a famous bank robber was asked 'why do you only rob the banks?' he answered 'that's where the money is'. His logic is similar to many charities that are operative in the north. The war has left the north with more orphans and widows than in other part of Sri Lanka. Once upon a time, Jaffna was a proud region where receiving charity was as inglorious as begging. It is not charity that the people of the north are looking to, but rather what was taken away from them; homes, agriculture, education and dignity. We must strive to give back their destroyed homes, we must fend them from starvation until their agriculture that was destroyed in the war resurges, and we must revive the education that was lost to a whole generation. Sadly we cannot bring back those lives lost in the war, but at least we can look after their families and protect their children from the atmosphere of fear and violence that they have been exposed through the last three decades.

In the same breath we would be failing in our duty by not to recognise the morbidity and mortality caused to the communities in other parts of Sri Lanka. The maimed soldiers from the army, the victims and their families of the bombing campaign of the Tamil militants, and many other related issues have to be addressed and helped equally as any other victims of war. Likewise, we are bound to do whatever we can to remedy their suffering on the principle that charity has no caste, creed or religion. Charity is a manifestation of moral sensibility not only to your race but to the whole of the human race. A charitable eye should stop looking at the cause and attend to the needs, lest charity becomes politicised. The test of our own social refiness and culture is the way we care for the others in their need. Should our resources become limited we must then strive to prioritise the most endangered regardless of gender, race or creed.

We are proud of the vast number individuals and groups who have taken it on their hands to prescribe remedies for the morbidities of war. Just to mention a few, 'Oru Paani' has come to the rescue of tens of thousands of school children to relieve their hunger so that they may have a healthy body and mind to maximise their education. 'One Child Foundation' has come to the rescue of the orphans and disadvantaged children so that they may have a roof over their heads and concentrate on education without hunger. Likewise the 'Foundation of Goodness' has crossed the borders to empower the under privileged children and women in the villages of Sri Lanka. Innovative socially interactive schemes such as 'Tree Planting' program between the north and south has brought combined benefit of racial harmony and at the same time revival of nature that was destroyed by the war. We must in no way under estimate the thousands of individuals who have done 'good' by stealth, and shunned fame. Their own individual projects aimed to revive the island from the aftermath of the conflict, are like streams that can collectively become a river of benevolence that can out do the state.

There are many facets to the joy of giving, but seeing your contribution making a change in a person's life for better gives the most pleasure. One can generate more joy out of giving by continuing to be involved with the group or the project that you are helping so that you can see results as they unfold. To assist a starved child revive, study, grow and become a respected member of the community is like rejuvenating yourself.

Give with a heart that does not count what you give, but only the souls and bodies that you have salvaged from the wrath of man's inhumanity to man.

## **Dr Anton Sebastian**

*[Anton Sebastian is a doctor of Medicine and he has authored many books including **A Complete Illustrated History of Sri Lanka**, Vijitha Yapa Publications, Sri Lanka; **A Dictionary of the History of Medicine**, Parthenon Publishing, New York & London; **A Dictionary of the History of Science**, Taylor Francis, New York, London; **Dates in Medicine**, Parthenon Publishing, New York, London—Editor]*