



Dear Friends,



Sasees helping Amudha,
teaching Sinhala

Thank you for all your wonderful support throughout this past year. This Newsletter brings you an update on all our current projects in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and West Africa. We also include photos of Sasees and Richard's time with us in Sri Lanka, and Keshav's visit from Nepal.

In addition we have news of Star Action ventures into Italy, Bangladesh and the hurricane-hit Caribbean Island of Dominica.

Wonderful news is that all six of our delightful little children from the tea plantations in India (who we told you about in June) now have a personal sponsor, so their future in our 'Bright Life' home in South India is secure.

We give you our warm Christmas greeting and good wishes for the New Year ahead.

On behalf of Star Action Trustees

Joan, Kate and Stuart



Hurricane devastation in
Dominica



Emergency medical supplies leaving Star
Action in Devon



New candidate for the Old
Age Home, India

Message from Sasees

In February we offered Sasees and Richard the opportunity to take their first ever holiday in the ten years since they have been running our STB (Bright Life) Childrens' Home. We invited them to join us in Sri Lanka to inspect all our current projects. A great bonus for us all was the discovery that their Indian version of the Tamil language is close to that spoken in East Sri Lanka, where many of our projects are now based.

Sasees wrote of their time there:

TRIP IN SRI LANKA:



Uncle Stuart & Aunt Jenny were tremendous hard working people in helping Srilankan people.

We had a good opportunity to join hands with them in their visit. We have given our little contribution along with them in helping poor & needy people.

We went to schools & distributed Star Action bags for the kids. We have taken measurement for their uniforms and made them to stitch by the lady tailors in the same village, so



Richard discussing new project ideas

that we have given job to the ladies, they can earn some money paid by our charity. We have provided 2 sets of uniforms for each child.

Then we went to a very remote village & saw many down trodden people who are suffering for electricity still now. In that village we bought them goats for ladies to have some income for their family.



Sasees with goat!

We have bought kattumaran for the men for their fishing. This would give them income for men. We met many people those who are seeking for help from us for doing small business & for their agricultural purposes.

We met old kattumaran hard working lady who is going for fishing in her old age. We met three nursing young girls who are interested in their jobs in serving sick people.

Then we went to near by one more village. We met young lady tutors teaching tamil & singalam language for 30 little kids. I & Richard were happy that we had a good chance to help our uncle & aunt in helping the poor people. We would like to make trip again with them in serving the people in Srilanka.

OUR BRIGHT LIFE HOME:

Now our Bright Life children home has good & clean sanitary facility & front lawn is decorated with parking tiles for the children to sit & have some fun among themselves. Garden on both sides have grown with beautiful shrubs & tall trees.

NEW COMERS:

We have 3 new comers to join with us along with our bright life home children. Aakash of age 5 studying 1 std , Rohit of age 8 of std 2, Prasanth of age 6 of std 1. All three are enjoying in our home & having lots of fun with other kids.

BADMINTON PLAYERS:

We have two badminton players who are going to training now. The two boys, Asik & Adash are going for training badminton sport.



ELDER BOYS:

Four boys are going to take big Government exams this year. Sanjay of std 10, Adash of std 10, Muthu of std 12 & Marcus of std 12.

ABOUT PADMINI & POPPY:

Padmini of std 9, Poppy of std 7. They are good athletes. Padmini has got first prize in Throw ball. Poppy has got second prize in 100mts running.

Our BRIGHT LIFE HOME has got five year registration from TAMILNADU GOVERNMENT which was a tremendous job done by us. First there were about 282 homes, but now there are only 84 homes. Ours is one of them . This is our great achievement for this year. This certificate is issued for us on the basis of infrastructure, discipline of our children, health & hygiene of our campus & well cared for our kids.



I N D I A

OUR NEW SPONSOR A CHILD SCHEME

In the last few years we have welcomed into our 'Save the Babies' Bright Life Children's Home in Tamil Nadu, South India, a number of children from very poor villages in the remote Manjolai tea plantations. The children's parents are illiterate, speaking their own local language. There are primary schools but very limited education opportunities. This means there is little opportunity to move out of the poverty trap for the rest of their lives.



When we can take a child into our Children's Home this offers them the possibility of a life beyond the tea plantation with all its limitations of language and income and the possibility of exploitation by owners perpetuating the situation generation to generation.

- ★ They attend excellent schools, quickly learning to read and write in Tamil and the bright ones learn English too.
- ★ They can stay on at school for higher education, instead of working in tea plantations from as young as 8 years old.
- ★ They are taught good moral values and skills equipping them for life.
- ★ They are part of the Save the Babies happy family life, yet retain regular contact with their own families in the tea plantations, returning if they wish in holiday times.
- ★ Their own family religion is respected with daily devotion in their own tradition.

We are delighted that all 6 children now have sponsors. Thank you so much!

VELAMMAL



Trainee Acupuncturist

Now qualified as a Nurse with speciality in treating eyes, Velammal is continuing her studies and has embarked upon a Doctorate course in Acupuncture. Acupuncture is widely practiced in India as it is in many other Far Eastern countries. We are grateful to 3 supporters from the USA for their continuing sponsorship of Velammal, who plans to stay and practice amongst the needy in South India.



Sasees - Cook, Teacher, House Mother, Government Negotiator ...

SRI LANKA

COMMUNITY PROJECTS



Anandan and his groundnuts

Rice and Groundnuts !

Anandan has been working in his home village Muruthana to grow rice for his villagers to buy direct (rather than to sell all to wholesalers and 'buy back' anything they need themselves). We told you about this idea last time, how we helped him get started with a capital sum. We are happy to report the plan has worked well in the first year. Half his crop was sold at cost price to his own village people, so really helping many very poor families. We also gave Anandan money to grow ground nuts on his own farm land in Kayankerny. We saw and tasted(!) the result of this on our last visit and we are now extending the ground nut growing for a number of ladies *on their own land* in Muruthana.

Goats

In February 2017 we arranged for our sixth family to receive two mature female goats. We were pleased to visit one of the first recipients of a gift of a pair of goats and find that this pair have now increased to eight!

MEDICAL BILLS

Another very important aspect of our work is giving financial support for families, often in



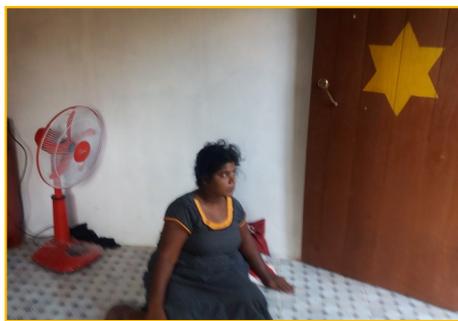
Juwadika (on the right)

quite desperate situations, struggling to pay medical bills.

In our last Newsletter we wrote about seven year old Juwadika who cannot walk. Sadly the herbal treatment we sponsored has not helped, so we investigated other options and have now been able

to arrange for Juwadika and her parents to travel to see a specialist consultant in Colombo, with much help from Rohan. The assessment is currently in process.

We also wrote about Naranjeni, severely disabled since birth and now in her thirties, and has never walked. Happily—again through your generous gifts—we were able to build Naranjeni her own little house with accessible shower and toilet. Now we have found her a wheelchair and our builder Surangi has made a pathway from her house to the nearby road—so for the first time ever she can leave her home and explore. On this trip we were also told about poor little Vinoj aged 6. He has a deformity of his foot and we have paid for a bone graft for him and further consultant visits. This has been a great success and he can now walk. He also has a physically deformed right ear which it may be possible to rectify. We are looking into this now.



Naranjeni's new accessible little house with ensuite toilet and showerand a shining star on her door!

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES

Over the years Star Action has given money on a number of occasions to people who have wanted help in getting started with small business enterprises, often having lost everything through the war/tsunami tragedies. On this visit an enterprising neighbour of Lal, who can no longer fish, asked us for help in getting started with his little teashop for fishermen passing to and fro for their daily work. He was able to make a substantial down payment, and we have lent some more (with a monthly repayment scheme) and hope to find on our next visit that he is able to keep to this. We saw the frame for the teashop he had built before our arrival—hopeful of the money to complete it and stock his shop! (This project has an ulterior motive for Jenny as it is next door to the area that all the applicants come to meet 'Auntie Tea' from England).

EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP



This has been a part of our work for some time, as the poor people of the area have little opportunity for further education. We are continuing to help our three bright teenagers with their nursing assistant training by paying their daily bus fares to the main hospital in Batticaloa. The latest news is that they are doing very well.

Also, thanks to generous personal sponsorship, our bright young lad Thisonayagam is continuing his university degree in Business Management, studying in Jaffna, the former war torn civil war city in North Sri Lanka.

Help at a New School – Mailankarachi



Mailankarachi school children

When we delivered school bags to the little village of Mailankarachi last February we discovered that fifteen orphans there had no school uniform (eight boys, seven girls) so we arranged for our Kayankerny dressmakers to visit, measure the children and make the clothes for them. We also had a request for umbrellas for all the girls (to help in their long walk to school in Monsoon time) and caps for the boys. (See photos of Jenny and Sasees with the children on page 2.)

While at this village we met the Buddhist priest who was very interested in our Sinhala teaching project and offered his premises for us to start classes. These have now begun—see next section.

SINHALA TEACHING

This project is continuing well. Amudha in Kayankerny has successfully trained our bright and beautiful Nirojeni (from Vakari)—we paid her daily bus fares to Amudha’s house—and she has begun ‘after school’ classes in her Vakari home (where earlier we paid

for electricity connection). The classes are going well with fifteen regular pupils.

We are now supporting classes teaching the Sinhala language in four villages, and paying a small salary to seven teachers. Included now is Mailankarachi. Here we have thirty children attending the new classes arranged by our Buddhist priest, who keeps a keen eye on the village school next to his Temple, and offers prayers and support.



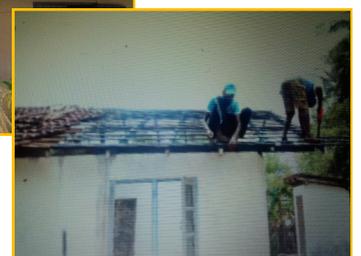
Nirojeni

HOUSES AND TOILETS

Thanks to the hugely generous gifts of many wonderful supporters we have been able to follow up our very successful toilet project on the West Coast with more toilets and houses in very poor East Coast Villages. Although there have been many new little houses built by both government and other large charities since the tsunami and war, some families ‘missed out’ for varying reasons and we have been able to help ‘fill the gap’. Now, something else is coming to our attention: some of the houses were very poorly built with sub-standard materials and on this and previous visits we have been shown houses with dangerous roofs about to collapse on the families inside.



Damaged roof with a snapshot of repairs under way!



We are again sending our trusted builder friend Suranji to the East to replace the timbers of 12 roofs. To date he has completed 7 of them.



Sasees, Selverani and Nirojini (new Sinhala Teacher)

Suranji has also built a toilet for our brave fisherwoman Selverani (featured in previous Newsletters). It was only on our last trip that we discovered that she had no toilet herself. Although she had brought to our notice on other visits the plight of neighbours (including Karuppirani, who had a new house, well and furniture donated by supporters in the North of England), and our gallant granny,

Michel Arasoma, who at last has electricity connected to her new house, Selverani had kept very quiet about her own needs, so we are putting this right now.

BANGLADESH/Sri Lanka

Shakeenah is the middle child of three in a poor family in Sri Lanka. She has excelled at school and passed into Chittagong Medical College, Bangladesh to study for MBBS.

The Sri Lankan Government pays her tuition fees and her Father has managed to find \$130 (£100) per month to



Shakeenah (centre front)

pay for her accommodation, food, and living expenses for the last two years.

Mother has bad arthritis and the family are struggling to find this essential money to keep her at the College for another (minimum) two years.

Star Action is keen to pursue this support, not only for the prospect of another much-needed doctor to practise in the Sri Lankan Muslim Community, but also because the College is close to the massive recent influx of Rohingya refugees (mainly Muslim) driven out of Myanmar. Shakeenah and the other training doctors are likely to play a valuable part in treating these homeless refugees in the next months.

N E P A L

We are delighted to tell you about Keshav Adhikari's visit to spend time with us in the UK in October, and give us personally his report of the current situation and the best ways in which Star Action can continue to offer help to this very beautiful but very poor country.



Our Haven on Earth Orphanage

We continue our support of the Haven on Earth orphanage in Kathmandu (which we helped to open in 2014). We are considering the possibility of Star Action sponsoring one or more children. (There is capacity to take on more children, but help is needed for the cost of ongoing care of all the existing ten children too.)

Please let us know if you are interested in sponsoring

a Nepalese child. (the cost is £30 per month to include accommodation, food, clothes and education fees)

Tokha Home for the Blind and Handicapped

Jenny writes: On my last visit to Kathmandu I was happy to visit this home again and help distribute food and blankets.



Jenny visits the Tokha home

After the terrible earthquakes of the summer of 2015, Star Action passed on some of your generous donations for relief work in this area, including the much needed blankets, sacks of rice and other staple food items.

We have decided to give a warm woollen scarf and a Christmas Lunchbox to each of the 130 residents and daily blind visitors. Keshav will organise this in conjunction with Krishna's school (where he is Assistant Headmaster). The school (for fee paying children) has an ongoing programme encouraging their children to save their own money and engage in fund-raising projects, and join in the programme of helping the Tokha residents. (Some of the children came with me for my last visit.)

House Repairs (following the earthquakes of 2015)

- ★ We are very happy to have given help with house repairs in the remote mountain village of Syangja where Krishna was born.
- ★ We are now planning more house repairs in villages around Pokhara where Keshav was born. He is currently ascertaining the most needy families for Star Action help.

A F R I C A

Our latest news about the use of our beautiful Community Centre just outside the town of Asiakwa in Ghana:



Little Temple for World Peace, Aburi, Ghana

Hamida (our Ghana representative) writes: "We are presently in negotiation with a local investor who has shown interest in the school. He wishes to use the building as a private ICT (computer training) school for young people. Graduates from such school will therefore be better equipped for jobs.

"Our conditions to his use are:

- ★ He should give scholarships to four children from poor families in the local community. (This is consistent with the objectives of Star Action.)
- ★ To include a personal development programme in the school curriculum. This will include basic education in personal

welfare, how to manage a business, etc

- ★ Star Action representatives will be on the board of the school's governing body.”

We were very pleased to receive Hamida’s recommendations which will secure longer term the future of our Centre.

A supporter we met earlier this year has committed to a regular monthly donation and wrote:

I am so pleased to learn about the wonderful work you have been doing through Star Action. Thank you for inviting Lucia and I to hear about some of the ways you are positively changing people’s lives. Your love and passion for “hands on service” is palpable and contagious. You are all doing an incredible job!

OTHER STAR ACTION ACTIVITIES THE 2016 EARTHQUAKES IN ITALY

Stuart writes:-

Many of you will remember my wife, Bobby, and that she was petite – 5ft 2ins tall, size 3 feet etc. After she died it seemed like a good idea to send/take her clothes to a country in which the people were equally small. So, in November 2016, I borrowed a 4x4 and filled it with her clothes, children’s toys and boxes of outdated medical equipment and supplies that Star Action had collected from GP surgeries and hospitals in Ottery St. Mary, St. Austell and The Isles of Scilly. Friends helped me connect a large trailer with 27 boxes of camping and survival essentials before I boarded a ferry to Northern France.

It SEEMED only a short distance on the map to the Central Apennine Mountains in Italy, across France, under the Mont Blanc tunnel and through Italy, but it took almost three days.



Ancient Norcia - Before
Sept 2016



Ancient Norcia - After the
earthquakes

The weather was kind until I reached the foothills of the mountains where heavy rain, landslides and narrow roads, fractured by the 4 recent earthquakes, made driving a little tricky. The exhausted staff of the little hospital in Castelluccia were pleased to see the medical goods and the Italian Red Cross in Norcia took over the distribution of the clothes and toys. It was an experience sharing a dormitory with 15 Red Cross workers for a few days harbouring an atmosphere of oxygen, perspiration and garlic in equal proportions. However, I think St. Francis may have nodded approval as I drove home through Assisi.

CARIBBEAN HURRICANES 2017

For the last 5 years we have used a little of your donated money to buy small tools (carpentry, DIY, garden etc.) from auctions and collected from friends - children's toys, baby bottles and general household items (filling my garage) with a view to sending

these to a needy country. In September we were able to add these to more boxes of medical supplies and outdated medical equipment, palletise and fill a container funded by the Consulate of Dominica. Dominica is a little island between Guadeloupe and Martinique and was ravaged by Hurricane Maria. As I write, 4 weeks later, they still have no electricity and water is scarce. Our container ship is two days from Roseau Harbour. We have received a message of thanks already from the Dominica Consul in London and she has asked us to make up another load to leave the UK on October 26th.



No electricity, no water supply

...Stop Press...

News has reached us of a poor 36 year old mother of two in Nepal, Bir Laxmi Shrestha, whose kidneys are failing.



Bir Laxmi Shrestha

She is receiving dialysis, but the situation in Nepal is such that only limited dialysis treatment is available, most of which she has used up. She urgently needs help with her rising medical costs and has approached Star Action for assistance.

Value for Money

Due to the reduction in the exchange value of the British Pound since the 'Brexit' vote it is costing approx. 15% more to support each of our projects in Asia. Your generous donations have been invaluable in making all the above possible. Thank you.



Princess Margeret Hospital, Roseau, Dominica—to receive our supplies



Kirthick - now supported to study Law at Chennai University