



Dear Friends of Star Action,



Our Sinhala teacher and new baby



A happy mother receives her child's uniform material in Ghana

One of the most heart-warming things about our work with Star Action over the past thirteen years since we started our little charity has been the appreciation we have received from people we have been able to help - thanks to your support. As you may know, we began our work in Sri Lanka just after the terrible tsunami wave devastated parts of the south and east coast of this beautiful little island, which was also still suffering from years of civil war. Now, thankfully, the war is over but there remain many repercussions from this time, many bereaved families and traumatised people. The Tamil people in the war-torn area are still suffering inequality of opportunity, and lack of education, even in the basics of the language of the whole country (Sinhala), and this is one reason why we have been focusing recently on our education projects, as well as helping particularly sad and broken families and individuals in need of urgent medical help. (No National Health service or health insurance schemes for the poor here!)

When Stuart and I were in Sri Lanka in February, we were particularly touched by the people who came to see us this time, not to ask for more help (although there were plenty of those too!) but simply to say 'thank you' and share what a difference Star Action's help had made to their lives. You see, with a little charity like ours, there is a personal link with individuals - some of these dear people feel almost like our own family, as we have met them now on a number of visits. They also appreciate the continuity of seeing the same faces.



6 SA pupils. Behind Hamida is the school education adviser & member of the board



Peaceful ambience for one of our Sinhala schools

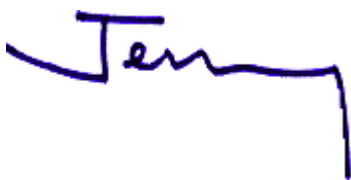
This is also true of our children's home in India, now called 'Brighter Life', but originally founded as 'Save the Babies' right back in 1996 by our Trustee Kate. Right from the beginning she did not want the home to be too big, so there would always be a family feeling. She has achieved her goal, with the help of our wonderful houseparents, Sasees and Richard.

As you will read, we are so happy that at last her family commitments at home (with help from me and Stuart in caring for her five-year old twins) are allowing her to return to her Indian family. She will be writing all about her visit in the next newsletter.

This time, you can read more about the help Star Action has been able to give in Nepal. This is a country which we know has a special place in many of your hearts as it does in mine, since my trekking days there and, latterly, my visits following the devastating earthquake. Keshav, our good friend now, also brings the 'family feeling' to all his work, both for Star Action, and as Deputy Headmaster of a large school in Kathmandu. The same is true of Hamida and Fred, whose latest report on our Community Centre school in Ghana is included here.

So, dear friends, we thank you very much for all your generous support which enables us to continue this truly worthwhile work. We know it is just a 'little drop in the ocean of need', but the smiles on the faces of the people and children whose lives have been touched tell their own story.

With love from,



On behalf of all our Trustees,

Joan, Kate and Stuart

PS I first drafted this letter just before the tragic bombings in Sri Lanka. We are glad to report that no one involved with our Star Action work was killed or injured, but our latest reports from Rohan are that the whole country is still deeply traumatised and the income of many is affected by lack of tourist visitors, so our prayers and continuing support of all our projects are very much appreciated.



Happy play time



Hardworking pupils at our Sinhala school



Elderly widow and daughter



Nepal Blankets for the Blind



## SRI LANKA OUR NURSERY SCHOOLS



Happy teacher and pupil in one of our Nursery schools

Jenny writes: I always especially love our visits to our nursery schools. We are currently helping three schools. In **Selvapuram** (a very poor village near Kayankerny where Lal lives) there are sixty children (age 3-5). Last year we arranged for our dressmaker Sudarsini to make uniforms for the new children and also set up a 'school lunch' programme. We provide money for the food which the mothers take turn to prepare. We also pay salaries and bus fares for the teachers, Selogeni and Pushpulati. (Without the help of Star Action this school would close.) You can see in the photos the happy faces of the children.

In an even more remote location where memory of the civil war devastation is vivid, we are so happy to be able to help two more small nursery schools—in **Vakaneri** (currently 26 pupils) and in **Kudamumakal** (25 pupils). In both schools we pay the teachers' salaries and this time were able to take gifts of toys, shoes and clothes. (Again thanks to the generosity of well wishers.)



A happy nursery school pupil

## DEVELOPING OUR SINHALA TEACHING PROJECT

Jenny writes: We are truly delighted with the way our pioneering Sinhala Teaching programme in Eastern Sri Lanka village schools

has developed over the last few years. We now have more than two hundred children of all ages from 5-14 years benefitting from our after school classes. Rakshana (shown in cover photo with her husband and baby son), one of our pioneering teachers, was going to give up following the birth last April of young Kristi. But encouraged by her fisherman husband (and the thought of regular, sure to be paid, salary) during our February visit she agreed to re-start her classes in her home. Even before we left Sri Lanka we received the good news that fifteen children had already started and more pens and exercise books were urgently needed!



An eager Sinhala pupil

In the latest village to begin our Sinhala teaching, Kudumamakal (right in the heart of the former civil war Tamil Tiger area) our discovery last February (2018) of Malav has proved an asset! She has done so well she is asking for help to repair the 'open to the elements' church hall which is only used on Sundays, so she can teach her growing number of students in greater comfort than in her own home.

At our Buddhist school, our three teachers continue to be very enthusiastic, headed by a formidable lady, Sisilia, who is truly committed and enterprising. We were greeted with handmade craft gifts and agreed to some extra funding for the craft work



Our Buddhist School teachers

which is much enjoyed by the children as a relaxation after all their efforts to learn a totally different script and language from their native Tamil.

## OUR COMMUNITY FISHERMEN'S SUPPORT IN VAKANERI

It was heart warming to receive a personal 'thankyou' from Kanawachpulla Kasinanan, the Fishing Society secretary, for our help in building the shelter by the lagoon where the fishermen sort their daily catch and mend their nets. We were told that Star Action has directly supported *thirty-six* families.

## HELPING INDIVIDUALS IN NEED OF MEDICAL HELP

### *Our Little Juwadika*



Juwadika

We are delighted to report our little Juwadika has made further progress in her efforts to walk. (When we first met her two years ago, she was hardly able to stand, let alone walk.) this time she took better (albeit staggering) steps towards me as we met again, trying so hard. She really is a brave, determined little

soul, and always cheerfully smiling! Her improvement really began after we were able to arrange three visits to see a specialist in Colombo. Our Rohan supervised these, looking after her and mum. Now the next phase is a visit to a specialist Ayurvedic doctor in Anduradhpura, and a series of physiotherapy sessions to help her little wasted muscles grow stronger. Her whole family greeted us with delight and great thankfulness.

### *Eye Problems*

On this visit we had a number of requests for financial help to go to hospital for eye operations. How fortunate we are in the UK! We tend to take our wonderful NHS for granted—here in Sri Lanka it is a very different story.

## SPONSORING FURTHER EDUCATION

Delightful Jensi is another teenage girl we are sponsoring for her A Level studies to give her the opportunity of a better life than clothes factory work or early marriage!



## OUR GOAT MILK PROJECT

Good news! We have received sponsorship for this new project, so we can start further investigations about the best possible way to move forward.

## ONE VERY NEEDEY FAMILY



The poor family

During this trip we were taken to another very poor village to see an absolutely destitute family, with broken down home, so poor they had to sell their only asset, a goat, to pay for uniforms for the two youngest children to start school. In addition grandfather has a serious eye condition and mother and one other child are mentally retarded. Oh dear! Thanks to wonderful offers of help, we have already given a replacement goat, new clothes, offered medical treatment, and melon seeds to grow a cash crop on their land.





Mr Saleem and his wife, and Mr Youssuf

## NEW - OUR MUSLIM FRIENDS

One of the challenges for Sri Lanka, as well as for many countries, is the different religions and cultures co-existing in friendly harmony side by side. In Sri Lanka there are four major religions, with Buddhism having the most followers, but there is a strong Muslim community and through our travels across the country we have met Mr Youssuf, a wonderful philanthropist, who is helping the very poor in his area in central Sri Lanka. On this visit we were invited to meet his delightful family and learn more of the community work they are doing. Star Action has supported their endeavours, giving help after rival religious gangs caused considerable damage to Muslim homes and businesses .

## INDIA

The sole activity we operate in India was the first of the many projects begun by Star Action. Starting in 1996 The Brighter Life Children's Home now cares for over 30 underprivileged children in the southernmost state of Tamil Nadu.



Boys at Brighter Life Children's Home

The children join a 'family' and our commitment to each one is long term, the home remaining as a refuge long after they have left us to pursue careers and raise their own families.

It costs in the region of ten thousand pounds on average to care for each child for the duration of their time with us, (until the end of their education) – far below costs in the West, but a lot for a small charity with no government or corporate assistance. Those, who arrive as babies, could be with us for 20 years before they are qualified to enter into the job marketplace.

We are, of course, totally committed to keeping and supporting each child to his/her maximum potential, and this is a priority use of our resources. Second only to this is the education of other young people, and we continue to underwrite the costs of each of our poor students for school or university courses in a number of countries.



Muthu and Marcus - now at College



Shakeenah at work in Bangladesh

Some have come through the Brighter Life Home in India. Others are living or studying in Nepal, Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco, many recommended by Mr Youssuf .

Unlike most charities providing education in these territories we do not specifically only support those from a particular religion. Our students are a mix of Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist.

In our eyes their chosen belief system has no relevance to their need or the backing from Star Action.

The children at Brighter Life have to pass an

annual exam, at the end of each school year, in order to progress to the next school year.



New arrivals at Brighter Life

All are currently awaiting the results of the latest tests whilst enjoying their 'summer' vacation. Most pass their 10<sup>th</sup> Standard (the old Matriculation – five subjects at the age of 15/16). This gives them the option of progressing into College or Trade Training.

## AFRICA



Observing a teaching session

## OUR COMMUNITY CENTRE SCHOOL IN ASIAKWA, GHANA

We have happy news from Ghana. Fred and Hamida (our Star Action representatives there) have visited recently and are really pleased with the school which is renting (for a small rent) our Community Centre situated just outside Asiakwa. Already they are putting the building to good use and have partitioned the very large main room into individual classrooms. It is a private fee paying school but Star Action are sponsoring nine pupils from very poor families who could not afford



Hamida's little angel's got her uniform material

to pay anything for their children's education, and we are also paying for uniforms. The great need for the school now is a bus for transporting the children as the school is situated a little way outside the town. If any reader has a special love for Africa, this may be a thought for a specific donation! Thank you.

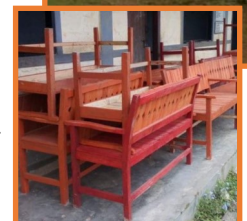
## NEPAL

The only news we hear of Nepal seems to be the traffic jam of climbers on Mount Everest. The effects of the two devastating earthquakes of 2015 have disappeared into the depths of the world's memory. Except, that is, for the hundreds who lost relatives, friends, homes and local facilities such as schools and hospitals.

Star Action managed to help four families by arranging for men, working in the Gulf States, to return home without losing their jobs or contracts. These four went back to the loss of close relatives or the destruction of their homes. We were also able to put others' minds at rest with information that their families were safe. Much of the communication structure had collapsed outside the capital city.

We were pleased to receive an accolade from the Nepalese Charge d'Affaires in Doha in August 2017 for our actions two years earlier made possible by your generous assistance and the co-operation of Qatar Airways.

Currently we are investing some of your money in restoration of a school library with books and furniture organized by Keshav Adikhari, whom some of you were able to meet during his recent visit to England.



The school in a little village near Pokhara suffered during these same 2015 Earthquakes.