

Anathi Project activities of 2005 (Precursor to the Sri Lanka Children's Trust)

The Kataragama Pada Yatra, an age old tradition of barefoot pilgrimage following the entire east coast of Sri Lanka to the Kataragama shrine annually in June-July, has attracted a few foreign devotees in recent decades. One of them, Patrick Harrigan, has walked twenty times since 1972, and almost every year one or two other foreigners participate. Dinah Barton of the UK, for instance, has walked three times since 1999.

After the Tsunami catastrophe of December 2004, Pada Yatra devotees including Patrick and Dinah raised funds through friends and family and rushed to the east coast to see what they could do to relieve suffering in the coastal areas known well to them from the Pada Yatra. Soon other foreign volunteers asked to join, on the understanding that they should be self-supporting and able to source their own funds for mini relief projects undertaken to help individual families affected by Tsunami. Our relief activity was unplanned, informal, and without an organization or bank account.

The work came to be known as the '**Anathi Project**'. It was an all-volunteer effort based in Batticaloa, whose principal aim was to help needy children on the East Coast. The work of its volunteers (coordinated by Patrick Harrigan and Dinah Barton) attracted the attention of individual donors and donor societies abroad in Germany (Homeopaths Without Borders, the City of Munich, Knorr-Bremse Global Care), the UK (Llanwyrdd Wells Tsunami Appeal), and Canada (Kiwaniis EE&C Division 18), who expressed interest in undertaking joint long-term projects to help children of the east coast.

The expressions of interest from foreign donors eventually resulted in the formation of a formal public trust, the Sri Lanka Children's Trust, in late December 2005 after it became clear that, for our work to continue and grow and comply with laws applicable to such charity work, it would have to become a registered society with a Board of Trustees, regular Board meetings, bank accounts, and regularly maintained and audited accounts. Our Board held its first meeting in Jan 2006, applied to be recognized as a local NGO, and opened our bank account (no. 3261940) at Bank of Ceylon in Batticaloa that same week.

Anathi Project (and now Sri Lanka Children's Trust) volunteers work closely with children's institutions to identify children's needs in the areas of health, nutrition, sanitation and education. The volunteers would then design small programs or mini-projects directed towards these needs, typically using funds that the volunteers themselves have raised abroad and brought to Sri Lanka, or by appealing to external donors for assistance.

Why help children of the east coast?

The children of the East Coast are amongst the most desperate in Sri Lanka. They are traumatized not only by the Tsunami but also by persistent conflict and poverty which hinders the growth of the entire society of the east coast—its education system, health system, economic activities, etc.

The Anathi Project (now the Sri Lanka Children's Trust) is the only volunteer organization dedicated to bringing children's homes of the East Coast to the attention of international donors. By facilitating coordination between donors and homes, the Anathi Project helped to improve the living conditions for hundreds of children. We also served as an oversight and administrative body for donors, ensuring that expenditures are carried out with transparency and accountability, and insisting upon financial transparency from the homes and any other institutions that we help.

Outside of the homes, our volunteers are also developing other child-focused projects: we found foreign partners who paid for and built our Visions of Hope Children's Center to rehabilitate 75 Tsunami affected children age 4-14 in Pandiruppu and sponsored numerous small scale child education and health care projects.

Our east coast office (earlier in Kallady; now in Pandiruppu) is an important East Coast resource for donors, corporate or individuals, who have no field office in Sri Lanka. Patrick's in-depth knowledge of the communities of the East Coast enables him to serve as a consultant advisor on a number of projects. He sources compatible projects for donors as well as project managers, contractors and to organise projects. His years of experience of living and working in Sri Lanka, and the respect villagers have for him, give Patrick a unique ability to bridge the cultural gap between the international donors and local needs.

Outputs since Project inception in 2005

The Anathi Project worked with nearly 25 children's homes, mostly in Batticaloa and Ampara districts, although our work has focused upon some homes more than others. These homes collectively house over 1,000 children. Our volunteers also helped to facilitate livelihood regeneration for about 350 individuals (donation of tools for masons and carpenters, sewing machines for women, rebuilding of fishing boats, etc.), health care (operations for children with life critical conditions), women's empowerment activities, etc.

Examples of Anathi Project volunteer activities in calendar year 2005

Hybrid Milk Cow Scheme

Schools, societies, individuals in Germany, USA, and the UK sponsored the donation of ten hybrid milk cows (purchased in June 2006 from the National Livestock Development Board) to five children's homes of Batticaloa District. We arranged for purchase and delivery of the cows to rural children's homes, helped them to build sheds to shelter the cows, and thereafter continue to visit the homes monthly to ascertain the health of children and cows. See below for financial details of this, our first planned project with multiple donors.

Milk Cow Project Donations 2005-2006

Cow No	Individual Name	Donor Society	Amount	Date	SL Rupees
1	Ms. Sherin Brook	Employees of the City of Bath, UK	£300	26.04.2006	52,395.00
2	Ms. Praemini	Berlin kindergarten	640 euros	25-Jul-05	67,670.00
3	Ms. Praemini	Berlin kindergarten	Rs. 11,710	25-Jul-05	11,710.00
4 - 5	Dr. Nilufer Clubwala	MOMS Club of Monroe NY + Beth Mindes	825 USD	21-Feb-06	83,051.93
6	Dr. Nilufer Clubwala	Carole Kahn of USA	500 USD	Jan 2006	50,334.00
7	Dr. Nilufer Clubwala	Nilufer et al of USA	300 USD	Jan 2006	30,200.00
8	Ms. Robin Mallor	Columbiaville Organic Cooperative USA	400 USD	Nov 2005	40,268.00
9	Ms. Kerstin Bartesch	Rudolf-Diesel Realschule of Munich	330 euros	21-Feb-06	39,308.12
10	Ms. Katherina Hess	Katherina Hess of Munich	350 euros	21-Feb-06	41,690.42
Total					416,627.47

Note that the project was announced in mid-2005, and the foreign donors mostly either pledged donations, or sent cash in euros or dollars that we encashed only in February 2006 after opening our Trust's bank account. Balance funds received in 2005 for the project were carried over and deposited in our account upon opening it in January 2006.

Computers for children's homes

By working closely with foreign relief societies, we advocate the needs of children's homes on their behalf and source assistance directly from donor NGOs. For example, we worked closely with the Australian Federation for the Peoples of Asia & the Pacific (AFAP) and successfully lobbied them to donate complete multi-media desktop computer systems to several children's homes (see below for details). Our volunteers also provide homes with their own Internet homes pages and technical assistance, setting up and configuring computers and teaching basic computer operations. Internet access enables Sri Lankan homes to be in direct contact with foreign donors, reducing their dependence upon local communities, especially in impoverished rural areas.

Solar cookers for children's homes

EMACE of Moratuwa, in collaboration with EG-Solar Altoetting of Germany and, donated ten solar cookers that we in turn distributed to seven children's homes in Batticaloa District, and trained staff to set up and use the cookers.

Arudpany Girls Home, Navatkudah

Arudpany Girls Home was struck by the Tsunami while all its children and staff were fortunately away attending church service that morning. Our volunteers have helped this home steadily since April 2005. Some volunteers have made direct donations of clothing, toys, etc. or have donated their service as carpenters, but our big help has been to direct other donors and NGOs to this home. For instance, in 2005 the German NGO Arche Nova on our request:

- rebuilt the home's boundary wall;
- dug a new well;
- built four sanitary toilets; and
- provided a drinking water purification system.

Other examples of help that we arranged for this home in 2005:

- Presbyterian College of USA \$5,500 donated to settle the Home's debts;
- City of Bath, UK, volunteers rebuilt the home's destroyed chicken coop;
- Knorr-Bremse Global Care pledged 15,000 euros and sent in year 2006-7

Art Project

We also conducted an art project in which we provided bulk art supplies to school principals and art teachers in Kalmunai, Batticaloa, and Chettipalayam, together with cash incentives for participating teachers, to let children express themselves artistically, release pent up emotions, and educate others about children's experience of the Tsunami. Costs (ca. 1 lakh) were borne by UK and USA donors.

Dental care for orphan children

One of our 2005 volunteers, Bridget, was a German dental professional. Bridget and another volunteer conducted dental examinations for 80 orphan boys and girls of Sittandy, and found that most of them needed urgent dental work. Bridget provided professional dental records to the government dental clinic in Eravur, purchased and donated a bulk supply of dental amalgam that the clinic needed, and arranged for all of the children to visit the dental clinic to have the necessary dental work done.

Tools for 28 masons of Karaitivu

In 2005 our livelihood projects were in most instances individual volunteers who decided to help a local needy family or individual. But we also undertook small scale projects to help whole communities to rebuild, as in Karaitivu where we spent Rs. 92,075 on masonry tools so 28 masons could return to productive work.

Rudolf Diesel Realschule of Munich Germany

Although we had few volunteers from Germany, German societies contributed generously to project that our volunteers were associated with. A school in Munich, Rudolf-Diesel Realschule, started raising money for needy Sri Lankan children in 2005 and are still among our regular donor societies in 2007. Their first project in 2005 raised 600 euros that was hand delivered to Patrick Harrigan in August 2005 by a visiting delegation, encashed on 9 August as Rs. 72,504, and dispersed to fund projects as follows (balance costs met by other donors):

11-08-2005	Water pump for donation to Palugamam Girls Home	Rs. 10,000
24-08-2005	School shoes for Chettipalayam Girls Home	28,224
24-08-2005	Suitcases, pillows, & hygiene items for the " " "	43,840
24-08-2005	Transport of goods – Kattankudy to the " " "	1,500
29-08-2005	Additional children's clothing items for the " " "	3,990

Support of 2005 Kataragama Pada Yatra

Despite the Tsunami's ravaging effect upon coastal communities, those villagers still urged us to conduct the 2005 Kataragama Pada Yatra. This we did, since it was not a period of conflict, all the way from Jaffna District down the whole east coast to Kataragama, helping to raise the spirits of villagers who had seen nothing but disaster and tragedy. Some volunteers from Europe also participated, and part of the cost of the Pada Yatra was borne by them.

Lifesaving Medical Operations

Anathi Project volunteers work to identify donors to assist in funding life saving heart operations for young Sri Lankans of the east coast. Already one 20-year old woman, Mufeetha of Palamunai in Ampara District, has had a successful heart operation with help from a German donor when doctors warned that without the operation she had only a short time to live. Volunteers also identified life-threatening conditions of two infants and arranged for their evacuation to hospitals in Ampara and Colombo where doctors managed to save the children's lives.

Highlights of the Anathi Project operation period in 2005:

- Recruited and deployed 40 self-supporting volunteers from 11 countries, including:
 - English, special education, and computer teachers
 - Construction team
 - Doctors, nurses, and dental personnel
 - Social workers
 - Business and office administrators
 - Project administrators
- Purchased and donated 10 hybrid milk cows to five rural children's homes of Batticaloa District, helped them to build cow sheds, and continue to monitor the health of the cows and children alike.
- Sourcing of funding and infrastructure work to:
 - Bethel Arutpany Girls' Home, Navatkudah (33 girls)
 - Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home, Sittandy (38 girls)
 - Thilgavathiyar Girl's Home, Chettipalayam (75 girls)
 - Thiligavathiyar Girl's Home, Palugamam (80 girls)
 - Tirunavukarasu Nayanar Boys' Home, Thambiluvil (35 boys)
 - Nava Shakti Educational Centre, Pandiruppu (58+ children)
- Donation of desktop PCs arranged (directly through AFAP partner NGO) to:
 - Tirunavukarasu Nayanar Boys' Home, Thambiluvil (1)
 - Nava Shakti Educational Centre, Pandiruppu (1)
 - Thiligavathiyar Girl's Home, Palugamam (1)
 - Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home, Sittandy (1)
 - Yogaswami Boys' Home, Chenkalady (1)
 - Our walk in community center, Kallady (1)
- Helped facilitate construction of 32 fishing boats employing 96 wage earners for cooperative fishing societies of Karaitivu and Palamunai, Ampara district, by directing INGOs Knorr-Bremse Global Care of Germany and AFAP of Australia to conduct their livelihood projects in these communities.
- Life saving medical operations facilitated for 4 young people age 7 mos to 20 yrs.
- Livelihood regeneration for 29 masons and 24 carpenters of Karaitivu, Ampara dist.
- Rehabilitation program for 75 tsunami affected children of Pandiruppu (successfully conducted since 2006)