

Oru Paanai

Feeding hungry children in Sri Lanka



News from Oru Paanai
Issue 2: December 2012

It gives us great pleasure to provide you with an update on Oru Paanai (OP) activities in the ten months since we published the last newsletter. A lot has happened since then, but OP has been able to sustain its ever expanding programme of providing lunchtime meals to the most needy children in northeast Sri Lanka.

Although hostilities ceased over three years ago, and the camps for IDPs have now all been closed, life has not returned to normal in many parts of the region. Widespread poverty - due to a variety of reasons, including tardy progress of reconstruction efforts, lack of employment opportunities and poor infrastructure - is still very evident. In this prevailing situation, the need amongst local communities for

continued support from OP is still as great, if not greater, than ever before. With your continued support, we hope to deliver on our undertaking to ensure that children in the schools we assist will receive at least one nutritious meal a day on every single school day.

The number of schools under our wing has increased in these ten months to 311, and the number of needy children we support currently stands at around 33,000. While it is gratifying that we are able to help such large numbers of children, this also means we have to work even harder to be able to continue to provide such support until the day arrives when the region has recovered its economic stability, and poverty and starvation are no longer prevalent.

Suffer little children



Oru Paanai has diversified its scope of activities in this period to undertake another project - that of promoting education in the northeast. This activity, which is being undertaken under the title **Oru Paanai Education (OP Education)**, was the brainchild of Ram Subramaniam, one of our members, who was very keen to provide active support to various initiatives which had been launched in the northeast by civil society organisations there. (Details of these initiatives are given elsewhere in this newsletter).

Just as our involvement in promoting education in the northeast was gaining a sound footing, OP Education suffered a significant blow when Ram passed away suddenly (see tribute). Education has always been valued highly in our culture and in our opinion, it will always provide the path to rebuilding the war-torn regions.

The OP Committee is keen on continuing Ram's pioneering efforts, in addition to maintaining our commitment to providing lunchtime meals **which will always remain our primary purpose – our raison d'être**. Some of our members have expressed a wish to mainly sponsor educational activities and we will ensure that their donations are spent on OP Education projects.

Fund raising for OP Education will be done separately, as far as possible, and the monies spent according to our members' wishes, whether it be on providing meals or supporting educational activities.

Another project that has come under



We can

the wing of Oru Paanai is one involving the well known Nuffield School for the Deaf and Blind in Kaithady. This excellent institution, which has rendered invaluable help to the less able in the north for many, many years, was partly destroyed by bombs and virtually ceased to function during the latter war years. It has now been rebuilt, with government funding and help from national and international aid organisations. Several groups and NGOs are involved in the drive to revive the Nuffield School, including the World Health Organisation. One such group of doctors and other professionals associated with audiology and otolaryngology in the UK, have begun a programme to organise high quality training for staff working in Kaithady, in addition to providing equipment which had been donated by different hospitals

and other institutions in the UK. OP was approached by this group to affiliate themselves to OP, and function under the title **OP Kaithady**. As we felt that our common aim, after all, is to help rebuild the war-affected northeast in whatever way we can, we agreed to their proposal, and this has proved a mutually beneficial partnership.

Even though it may appear that OP is expanding in different directions, in fact all the projects we become involved in are geared towards helping to revitalise the most severely affected sections of society

in the northeast. Providing a mid day meal to the 33,000 children we support will always remain our primary goal.

We remain a very small group of individuals, working shoulder to shoulder, and, with your generous support, we are confident that we can keep up the sustenance we provide to our less fortunate children. We are deeply indebted to all of you for the monthly contributions you give us, which is the bedrock of OP's funding. We look forward to working with you in the future and may God bless you all in this season of goodwill and cheer.



Our children

OP FUNDRAISERS IN 2012

The Radlett Team's Kilimanjaro Expedition

The fundraising walk up Kilimanjaro undertaken in early February by the Radlett Team, led by our most active fundraiser, Prof. Swaminathan, and accompanied by his son Ramesh, nieces Krithika and Sumithra, nephew Theepan (Canada), and Dr. Ambikapathy (Kent), raised the colossal sum of £6,000 for OP. We salute this entire team for their magnificent gesture in taking on one of the tallest mountains in the world, often referred to as The Mountain of Death for obvious reasons, for their supreme act of selflessness in aid of OP.

Clinical Society of Sri Lankan Doctors & Dentists (CSSLDD) Dinner Dance

The VIP Lounge in Edgware was the venue for the annual dinner dance of the Clinical Society of Sri Lankan Doctors and Dentists, which was held on the 22nd of April. The committee of CSSLDD had chosen OP as the charity to donate the profits from the 2012 dinner dance, and the regular supporters of OP turned out in full force to support the event.

The two presentations from Dr. Janani Shah, a young GP and Prof. Ram Chitramohan, Consultant Psychiatrist were well received. Dr. W.T. Maheswaran compered the event ably and Dr. Deutram Thambapillai proposed the vote of thanks on behalf of Oru

Paanai. The large crowd present, including a fair number of the younger generation, enjoyed the occasion and a large sum of money was raised for OP, mainly from the advertisements in the Souvenir published for the occasion.



Southgate Delivers Again

This year's event in Southgate, the second one of its kind, which was held in the Methodist Church Hall, was a great success. It was attended by a capacity crowd of over 100 people. The OP Committee wishes to extend its sincere thanks to Sam Jeyapalan and his dedicated band of friends and family, for all their efforts in making it happen. Sam wishes to thank all who helped him, and in particular the performers at the variety show, including the Bharatha Natyam dancers and Dr. Freddie Jurangpathy and his daughter. A handsome sum of about £1,500 was raised for OP from the event.



OP Sports Club vs Yarl CC cricket match

The annual 30 over cricket match between OP Sports Club and Yarl Cricket Club, which was initiated last year as a fund raiser for OP, was played on Saturday, 26th of May 2012 at the West Harrow Recreation Ground. OPSC was captained by Dr. Deutram Thambapillai and YCC by Dr. D. Anandanesan. OPSC batted first, and amassed a massive total of 212 for the loss of 8 wickets in their 30 overs, with M. Azhan top scoring

with 72 not out, and Mohan Rajadurai contributing a useful 32 not out.

In reply, YCC found things difficult due to some fierce and accurate bowling by young Vithulan who captured 3 wickets for 3 runs in his 5 overs and he was adjudged man of the match for this excellent spell of bowling. YCC were all bowled out for 67 runs, with OP winning the game by a massive 145 runs.

Dr. Dan Muhuveloe awarded the DANIEL MUTHUVELOE CHALLENGE TROPHY to the OPSC skipper Dr. Deutram Thambapillai. Dr. Freddie Jurangpathy provided the music on the day and all present very much enjoyed the singing by his very talented daughter. After the match, the guests enjoyed an excellent Sri Lankan meal and the proceeds from the sale of the dinner tickets will be used for OP work.

It is yet another innovative way in which funds are being raised for OP, while having fun in the process!

The OP Committee wishes to thank all the players, spectators and organisers, in particular M. Mahendran of Yarl CC, for making the event a great success.

Visit

www.orupaanai.org.uk

for the latest news,
event information and details
on how to make donations

OP FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Eastern Region Educational Society (ERES) / Clinical Society of Sri Lankan Doctors & Dentists (CSSLDD) Annual Christmas Meeting / Dinner Dance 15 December 2012.

The second joint meeting / dinner dance of ERCS and CSSLDD will take place on the 15th of December at the Sattadis Pativar Centre in Wembley. The speakers at this meeting will be Dr. R. Mathialagan, Consultant Gastroenterologist, Dr. Aruchuna Mohanaruban, 2nd Year SpR in Gastroenterology and Miss Nikini Jayatunge. The presentations will be followed by a dinner dance. The evening's events will be compered by Prof. Ram Chitramohan, Consultant Psychiatrist from Birmingham and a Vote of Thanks will be proposed by Dr. Aarthy Uthayakumar. The organisers have very kindly decided to donate the profits to Oru Paanai and OP Kaithady. We are indebted to them for their generosity.



***1940's Musical and Dinner - Stourbridge - January 11th, 2013
Details to be announced.***



Canberra to chip in

Canberra Tamil Association held its annual function on December 2nd 2012, including a raffle in support of OP. Chelva (Kumar) Kumaranayagam, who has helped OP in many ways in the past, both by way of personal contributions and also giving publicity to OP in Canberra, gave a presentation on

OP activities on the day. We greatly appreciate his invaluable help.

OP EDUCATION

OP Education has been involved with three initiatives in the northeast. Our involvement was a consequence of us recognising that the prolonged war in the area had impacted adversely on the education of children there in many ways. Some schools had ceased functioning altogether, others had been destroyed by shelling, and even in the schools that had been functioning children often kept away as they were afraid of being caught in the cross fire. Many of these children had fallen so far behind in their educational standards that they are now struggling to catch up.

The initiatives we are supporting are aimed at remediation - additional tuition classes in the more important subjects, mostly undertaken by volunteers.

The initiatives OP has supported are as follows :

1. RHYTHM – Batticaloa: extra English classes in Kannagkudah Maha Vidyalayam for 84 students; classes in English, maths and science for 75 students in Karadiyanaru Maha Vidyalayam; and classes in English, maths and science for 25 students in Illupadichenai Ambala Vidyalayam.

2. Siva Tamil Manida Vidiya Kalaham STMVK (Dawn of Humanity of Siva Tamils) was started in 2003 by Jaffna University medical students. It is popularly known as Mahadeva Padippaham, named after an inspirational chemistry teacher. Their aim was to provide not only educational evening classes in maths, English and science, but also focus on cultural and spiritual welfare. Initially their activities were focussed on displaced children in Chunnakam,



One pot rice

shared heritage
humble beginnings

a sense of
communal
responsibility in
sharing life's
most basic
need - food -
our food, from
OUR PANAAI
(pot), with
those who are
less fortunate

but now they work mainly in Mullaittivu and Kilinochchi.

3. AUSDA (All University Students Development Association) -

Vavuniya District – which provides financial support to impoverished students from Vavuniya who need assistance to continue their university studies and also provides remedial tuition classes for ‘O’ Level students in remote areas in the district.

All three projects are closely monitored by OP Education and provide quarterly progress reports as well as financial reports on how the money is being spent. If any well-wishers would like to contribute to these educational activities supported by OP Education, we would gladly accept contributions and ensure that they are spent appropriately.



OP KAITHADY

OP Kaithady - which conducted a highly successful camp in the Nuffield Deaf and Blind school, Kaithady in February this year, where over a hundred children were examined, and many fitted with modern hearing aids - is currently engaged in formulating a Project Proposal to define their plans for the future. Drs. Tony Sirimanne, Deutram Thambapillai and Ranjit Thambirajah hope to present this Proposal to potential donors soon and seek their help in implementing their plans for Kaithady. It is our fervent hope that OP Kaithady would be successful in their endeavours to help some of the most disadvantaged children in northeast Sri Lanka.

ORU PAANAI - SRI LANKA

The Sri Lankan branch of Oru Paanai, which was formed shortly after the launching of OP in the UK, has gone from strength to strength in the past 2 years, under the stewardship of Somasundram Skandakumar, its erstwhile chairman. The fundraising efforts of Skanda, as he is known to his wide circle of friends, has resulted in nearly Rs 2,000,000 being raised for OP – SL in a relatively short time.

Contributions have been coming in not only from Sri Lanka, but also from Skanda’s friends and family in the US and Australia. OP – SL has spent most of the monies raised on supporting the OP Feeding programme, and some of it in funding OP Education, in keeping with the wishes of the donors.

Skanda, who visits the UK once or twice a year, was in reminiscent mood when he spoke at the OP fundraising event held in Southgate on the 6th of October. We reproduce in full here his eloquent and moving speech, delivered in the dulcet tones which made him one of Sri Lanka’s most famous cricket commentators of an earlier era:

‘Ladies and Gentlemen, I once read the lines “Some people never lose their beauty; they merely transfer some of it to their hearts and remain beautiful forever”.

Standing here before you, I am reminded most emphatically of those words. I have lived the entirety of my life in Sri Lanka and have consequently seen it at its best and its very worst. I had the privilege of devoting my working life to the oldest business house in Sri Lanka viz George Steuarts, established in

1835 and was its Chairman in my last eight years of service from 2000 to 2008. Upon retirement I walked away from commercial life and bought myself a modest little home in the hill country to engage in some meaningful work for community.

A year and half ago, Dr Daniel Muthuveloe, the prime initiator of Oru Paanai, asked me if I would chair the Sri Lanka branch of this approved UK based charity designed to help provide a single nutritious midday meal to children in schools in the north and east of Sri Lanka that were affected by, and were recovering from, the consequences of a brutal 27 year conflict. I hesitated only because of my commitments to ongoing causes, but when I realised that it was to alleviate hunger for under nourished and underprivileged children, I hesitated no further, and so here I am!

Most of us gathered here today are into the reflective phase of our lives rather than the reactive one. In those reflections we will recount times of extreme happiness, high achievements, seemingly insurmountable hurdles and even depression. Through them all we have never hesitated to thank God for his blessings in the happier times and his support and guidance through the difficult ones.

Ladies and Gentlemen, out there in the north and east of Sri Lanka there is a category of innocent men, women and children, who have endured so much suffering, pain and trauma over those 27 years that they are looking to the heavens and asking the question: "Is there a God!!" It is to them that Oru Paanai has dedicated itself and whilst I know that each and every one of you is already committed to causes in the name of God and Charity, I sincerely hope that you will add this very worthy one to them as well.

Thank you and may God Bless you all.'

Oru Paanai

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Ram Subramaniam - A Tribute

Ram Subramaniam, one of Oru Paanai's most valued and respected members, was cruelly snatched from our midst in August. When we set up Oru Paanai in 2008, our sole aim was to provide a lunchtime meal to some of the most needy children attending the worst affected schools in northeast Sri Lanka. It was Ram, who had a great passion for supporting educational activities in the Wannai, who drew our attention to another pressing need of children there, who were struggling to attain the required standards in English, maths and science and needed urgent assistance with additional tuition classes.

Although there were many idealistic individuals living in the northeast who were very keen to run these classes, their efforts were hampered by a lack of resources. Ram, with his easy charm and sincere approach, managed to persuade the Oru Paanai committee to take on the worthy cause of supporting these deserving students, under the banner Oru Paanai Education. As it was evident to us that Ram was the ideal person to lead on this project, we appealed to him to take on OP Education as his remit and supervise the allocation of the funds raised for the purpose and ensure that the funds were utilised properly and regular reports obtained from the volunteers in Batticaloa, Vavuniya and Jaffna.

He set about his task with great enthusiasm coordinating the work of OP Education and how the monies

were being spent on diverse and very deserving educational support activities in the north east. We felt that we could now rest easy as OP Education was in Ram's very capable hands, but Fate has decreed otherwise.

Ram Subramaniam was associated with OP for a relatively short time, but it was only the latest charity that Ram has been involved with. He had a long track record of helping the less privileged in society in many different settings, both in England and Sri Lanka. He has also inspired other members of his family to follow in his footsteps and his two daughters, Krithika and Sumithra, climbed Kilimanjaro along with their uncle, Prof. Swaminathan, one of our

keenest supporters, to raise funds for OP, and their combined efforts resulted in over £6,000 being raised for our charity in February this year.

The Oru Paanai committee feels very privileged to have been associated with Ram in the past two years, as he was a visionary who threw himself into every task with great enthusiasm.

Although Ram is no longer with us, his legacy will live on in the form of Oru Paanai Education, and the best tribute we can pay Ram, who was so committed to uplifting educational standards in the northeast, is to ensure that his dream lives on into the distant future.



The school

OP INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2012

Income by Gifts and Donations £25,459

Income from Fund raisers £4,692

Money sent to Sri Lanka for Feeding Programme in 2012 £29,695

Estimated sum required in 2013 £60,000

We have to double our efforts in supporting the work of Oru Paanai in order to sustain our commitment to feed 33,000 children in the New Year. If you are not a regular donor please join us by setting up a Standing Order. The S/O form and details are available on www.orupaanai.org.uk

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP ORU PAANAI?

The most helpful step you can take to help us to meet our commitments to the 33,000 children we are currently feeding every single school day, is to become a regular donor. If you join the 100 or so individuals who do so at present, we can be confident of meeting our obligations.

We will gladly accept any sum, as little as £5 per month, or as much as £50 per month which a handful of friends give us monthly. Every donation of £5 per month will enable us to feed 40 children for a month, as

Daily provision of food



money goes much further in Sri Lanka. Wouldn't it be a wonderful feeling to help that many children in your country of origin, with such a small sum of money?

You can organise fundraising events in your own areas for OP. We will be happy to help you in organising them - it may only be a coffee morning or a cultural event / dinner dance. However large or small the sum of money raised, all help you give us will be gratefully received.

If some generous friend or relative is looking for a charity to give money to, instead of accepting gifts for a milestone birthday or wedding

anniversary, please suggest OP as a deserving cause for them to consider. OP has in the past received donations of up to £500 from some well wishers who thought on these lines. We are sure you can think up even more ways of supporting OP.



Remember, this is your charity, not ours – please help us to keep it going.

Working shoulder to shoulder, we can reach our objective.

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

*Chrysostom, St. John
A. D. 349 - 407*

Archbishop of Constantinople



Vanni children