

# Oru Paanai: Newsletter 2023

## Third quarter

*Dear Oru Paanai (OP) supporters and well-wishers*

*Greetings from the OP Trustees*

We write to bring you up to date with the activities of OP in the past 4 months. As promised earlier, we will continue to provide a quarterly version of our newsletter.



This newsletter is being published at a time of great uncertainty in the Middle East, with the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel threatening to escalate into a much bigger conflagration. It is our fervent hope and prayer that there will be an imminent truce with all parties recognizing the futility of a war which has already led to the death of many civilians, sadly including the death of many innocent children as well.

The economic situation in Sri Lanka remains uncertain, with the temporary relief from the first tranche of aid from the IMF running out and the next tranche being delayed until the country's debt restructuring is completed. Poverty levels are very worrying and the younger generations, both from the northeast as well as the other parts of the country, are looking to emigrate from Sri Lanka as they perceive the future as offering them little hope of improvement.

## *Ongoing activities of OP*

### **◆ Dry Rations Program**

**Five years have elapsed since OP launched a program of providing sustenance to a subgroup of the population which has been hit hard by the societal changes in northeast Sri Lanka.**

The emigration to foreign countries of the physically able younger members of society, coupled with their inability to engage in gainful employment due to the ravages of advancing age as well as extreme poverty, meant that the elderly were on the verge of starvation.



Having recognised their need, OP initiated a program of providing 4 weekly supplies of basic foods – rice, wheat flour, dhal and sugar – to some 500 elderly men and women in the Wannai, who had been carefully chosen on the basis of need. This program proved a great success and OP extended the program to villages in Jaffna, Batticaloa and later to areas in the upcountry as well.

***Currently, OP provides dry rations to 1,500 elderly.***



**Dry ration distribution**



In June this year, we expanded the program to include some mothers - woman led families with small children. Once again the selection of recipients is being done in consultation with the Grama Sevakas and Social Services of the area.

**Fifty young families are being provided with such support at the time of publication.**



*1 Mother with young family and pumpkins*



*2 A pumpkin harvest - home gardening*

### ◆ Sathu Maa to the Malnourished children

**Malnutrition in pre-school children, which was endemic in Sri Lanka, has become a much greater problem in Sri Lanka in the past 2 years.**

At the request of the MOHs in Jaffna, OP has been sponsoring the provision of Sathu Maa, a nutritional supplement for severely malnourished children.

**Over 1,000 children from 7 MOH areas, receive Sathu Maa through this program, which is at present, the second largest item of expenditure for OP.**



*Woman headed household in food poverty*

## ◆ Provision of wells in arid zones of the north

The northern province of Sri Lanka does not have any rivers running through it. Thus, it is heavily dependent on well water for personal consumptions as well as for irrigation.

But wells are expensive to construct and well beyond the means for most residents of the north. In 2014, OP initiated a program of constructing wells for individual homes, mostly in the Wanni area, but also in some of the neediest villages in Jaffna. These wells provide much needed water, not only for personal needs, but also for home cultivation. Many of the recipients of wells have been engaging in home cultivation, which provides an extra source of income for these families. OP is delighted that we have been able to empower them in this manner.

Most of the wells we construct are conventional wells, but OP has also helped villagers with tube wells where, for practical reasons, conventional wells cannot be dug. **Thus far, OP has constructed 202 wells and 4 more will be completed in the current year's program. The cost of constructing the wells has risen considerably in recent months due to the increased cost of cement and other materials, and each well costs OP 400,000 rupees.**



1 & 2 Well under construction  
3 We built a well for them  
4 Completed well with proud owner



## ◆ Assistance for educational needs

From April 2023, OP has been contributing 75,000 rupees per month to a project initiated in Batticaloa by Science Navigators, the brainchild of Dr. Arulnithy, Consultant Physician, whereby 18 deserving students from rural areas in the province are facilitated to live in the town and all their personal and educational needs are met. This project is progressing well, and OP are committed to continue their support till April 2024.

In July, OP responded to an urgent appeal from the principal of Uthayapuram Tamil Vidyalayam, Kallaru, an economically disadvantaged area, for assistance with purchasing desks and chairs for use by the boys and girls attending the school. Although such provision is outside the remit of OP, the trustees were moved by the harrowing description of how the children were struggling to study under the existing conditions, and decided to fund the purchase of furniture for the school to the value of 280,000 rupees.

These items were handed over to the school in a special ceremony in September, attended on behalf of Oru Paanai by Mr. Sairajan and Mr. Rajathurai Murugathas.

OP has very recently become involved in awarding bursaries to needy undergraduates studying in Jaffna University. We plan to provide 10 bursaries to medical students and 10 bursaries to Arts students, beginning in November 2023. The selection of students will be done by the University authorities. Our support will take the form of monthly stipends which will be channelled through the University administration.

In the Batticaloa area, we plan to support a soft loan scheme 'Eahaai' for 5 medical students and again, the local authorities will administer the scheme.



*1 Sairajan and Rajathurai presenting furniture on behalf of Oru Paanai*

*2 School furniture to Uthayapuram Tamil Vidyalayam*



## ◆ Bharatha Natyam Concert for Oru Paanai

A capacity audience enjoyed a high-quality Bharatha Natyam concert which was staged at The Bhavan in West London on the 16th of September to raise funds for OP.

The highlight of the show was the performance of a father and daughter duo, Suresh Swaminathan and his daughter Sashvita, who danced both singly as well as in conjunction. Suresh's dancing was spectacular and reflected his considerable experience in staging Bharatha Natyam shows.

Sashvita also showed great promise and we will undoubtedly see more of her dancing in coming years. Two other accomplished dancers, Abirami SriPathmanathan and Jasline Antony, completed the quartet who presented this brilliant show, which drew high praise from dance aficionados who attended the concert.

The accompanying artistes were led by the well-known Pushkala Gopal who had trained all the dancers and was assisted by four other artistes of renown who complemented the dancers' performance.

**We are very grateful to all the performers for their support to Oru Paanai.**



**1 Suresh Swaminathan with daughter Sashvita, Abirami and Jasmine**

**2 Suresh and Sashvita**

**3 Shasvata Swaminathan in fine performance**

**4 Prof. Sreeharan delivering keynote speech**

**5 Dr. Devendra delivering vote of thanks**

**6 Jasline Antony - Dancing the Bharatha Natyam**

# Forthcoming fundraising event

The OP Trustees are planning to host a lunch / dance event in May 2024. Details will be circulated when they become available.

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## Thanks a million ....

We wish to thank the following donors, whose generous donations enable Oru Paanai to continue our charitable work in Sri Lanka ....

- Serendip Foundation from the US, whose donations are substantial
- Our regular contributors, numbering around 130, who have stayed the distance with us for 15 years since OP was launched
- Canberra Tamils, who have been sending us regular contributions for many years. Their donations are divided equally between dry ration distribution and educational initiatives, as requested by them
- The Church of St Michael and All Angels in Stourbridge who have regularly supported us from their annual donations to charities.

If we have inadvertently left anyone out in this list, we extend our sincere apologies to them.

We would be happy to hear from you. Contact us via the email address below, or via the web site: [www.orupaandai.org.uk](http://www.orupaandai.org.uk)

Positive words of encouragement will enthuse us to pursue our work with vigour. Your observations and comments will help us to amend what we do and strive to improve our services to the poor.

We wish you all good health and happiness as the cold winter season envelops us.

## Best wishes from the Oru Paanai Team

### Oru Paanai

58 Hungerford Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 3AB

Registered Charity No. 1136376

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[secretary@orupannai.org.uk](mailto:secretary@orupannai.org.uk)

Thank you



## Standing Order Mandate



Your name .....

Address .....Post code .....

### Your Bank details

To the Manager .....Bank, plc

Branch address.....

Sort code..... Your Account Number.....

Please pay **monthly / yearly** [delete as appropriate], until further notice

The sum of **£**..... Amount in words, **Pounds**.....

Starting on [date of first payment].....

Beneficiary's Name **Oru Paanai**

Beneficiary's Bank **Barclay's Bank, plc**, Stourbridge Branch  
81 High Street, Stourbridge, West Midlands  
Bank Sort code **20-82-70** Account Number **53279685**

Reference.....[ your name ]

Please cancel any previous standing order in favour of the beneficiary

Your Signature[s] Date .....

.....

*Cut here*



*Please send this portion to your bank*

*Please return this portion to Oru Paanai*

**Treasurer – Oru Paanai**  
**c/o 58 Hungerford Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 3AB**

### **Either**

I have instructed my Bank to pay my donations by **S/O** [amount £..... monthly/yearly].

### **Or**

I do not wish to pay by **S/O** and enclose a cheque [amount £.....] made payable to 'Oru Paanai - Feeding The Hungry in Sri Lanka'

Your Name and Signature .....

Tel Number ..... E mail: .....

**Gift Aid:** I would like to GiftAid my giving and confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities and community amateur sports clubs that I donate to will reclaim from my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax for every £1 that I have given.

*Please inform us if you have any changes in your address details, want to cancel this declaration or no longer pay sufficient tax.*

**Oru Paanai Registered Charity No. 1136376**