

Asha Trust (Sri Lanka)

Local Solutions . Tackling Poverty.



AshaTrust is a registered charity supporting a number of projects in Sri Lanka including Athidiya, Colombo, and the tsunami effected areas. The trust supports local community workers who run activities including day centres for pre-school children, young people's programmes, elders' projects and business start-ups. We work in communities where often the housing and facilities are basic. Securing work is a daily struggle and many earn less

than £1 per day. Asha Trust is actively working in these communities to restore hope and rebuild lives.

You can now view the work of Asha Trust on www.ashatrust.co.uk

Asha Trust Projects

In January Steve and Tony travelled to Sri Lanka to meet the local workers and see how the projects are progressing. It was very encouraging seeing how the projects are growing in strength and confidence. Here's a snapshot of the projects.

- **After School Classes**

Asha Trust enables young people to attend after school tuition in English, Sinhala, maths and science. Tuition is a routine feature of education in Sri Lanka, and is accepted as the only way to pass exams. Exam success will significantly enhance employment opportunities for these eager pupils. This project promotes equality of opportunity amongst a group of highly disadvantaged young people .During our trip we visited a number of the young people who have been supported. It was encouraging to meet them and to hear how they have grown in confidence. Several have passed their exams and are now looking for a job, while others are planning to continue their education further. I met Jerome and Sam who are now doing an IT course, and Usha (pictured right with Lena and Murali) now doing A levels. They all seem extremely focused and hard working – it's an inspiration.





- **Sioll Day Care Centre**

This centre provides a pre school nursery which is a lifeline to many families as it allows the mothers to work. We provide funds for three workers. In addition we have provided seed money for a small business enterprise run by local women who prepare and package spices. In recent months other small businesses have started, including a small team producing bags and other handicraft and the packaging of loose tea. In November 2005 Asha funded the

refurbishment of the nursery and now just 3 months later the building has been transformed. It has better toilets and kitchen, with two extra rooms which makes it more versatile. Much of the work was undertaken by the parents of the nursery children, which saved money but also built a greater sense of community. The final phase is a new roof which we hope to fund in the near future. (Although the Sioll team are already discussing how they would expand the service if there was a second floor – watch this space)



- **Elders Project**

This project continues to support isolated frail elderly people with a befriending service, providing access to health care and food packages. Crucially, this service provides older people with regular friendship and support. This service was expanded in November 05. The workers are now wishing to expand the service further in order to provide support to a number of disabled children and their parents.

School Support.

Asha Trust has established a partnership with a local school in Athidiya. Many pupils live in the 'polythene area' of Athidiya and are extremely poor. The school has few resources, without enough desks and chairs for all the pupils, only two toilets and almost no equipment. We have been discussing with the head teacher how best Asha might support the school. One of her concerns was the high number of pupils that arrived hungry at school each morning.



During our recent trip in January we were able to explore further how we might assist the school to remedy this. As a result the school has now started a 'breakfast club' benefiting 40 pupils. We are very excited about this as not only is this contributing to the children's physical health but in the longer term their educational achievements and subsequent life chances.



In addition, the school has agreed to pilot a new project to link school in the Sri Lanka with schools in UK. The project aims to promote global citizenship and enable our children from both communities to gain awareness of each others lives. We are very pleased to have two UK school, Beal High and Uphall Junior, willing to link with the school in Sri Lanka.

Tsunami Projects

Following the events of boxing day 2004 Asha Trust has been supporting projects in Galle and Hambantota. This support has moved from providing 'relief' and essential items to assisting people to regain new skills for employment opportunities. In Oct 05 Asha Trust provided training costs for 25 women to participate in an accredited sewing and needlework course and to provide each student with a sewing machine. They have now completed the course and a number are now embarked on a small enterprise while others are now teaching, passing on their skills to new students.



In Hambantota Asha Trust have been supporting 32 young people and their families over the past year. This has provided a breathing space for these families to grieve and to start to rebuild their lives. In October 05 we provided a fund to be used as seed money for business start-ups. It was so encouraging to visit some of the beneficiaries.

People like Selma who received a small grant to purchase stock for her stall in the fruit market. Another, bought a fridge, she now makes traditional sweets and ice-lollys that she sells in her neighbourhood. We met 5 women who have started small businesses all of whom were thrilled that they are now able to earn something towards the family income, but more than the money these women have regained their self respect.



For more information or to support the work of Asha Trust please contact:

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We were saddened to learn of the death of 'Adeline Aunty' who was tragically killed in a road accident shortly before Christmas.

We got to know her during the Asha Trip last summer. She was extremely open and generous to us and couldn't do enough to help. She had spent many years working within her community at Athidiya and we know she will be missed by everyone who met her.

Asha Trips - working holidays

A trip to remember

Asha Trust supports local workers who are making a difference in some challenging communities in and around Colombo.

These include nurseries for pre – school children, a nutritional program for under5's, providing educational support to young people, supporting frail and disabled people. (check out our website www.ashatrust.co.uk to see what we do)



We are organising a working holiday in the autumn of 2006. Participants will assist with community based projects, working alongside local workers, as well as have a chance to experience the beautiful island of Sri Lanka

Activities would include;

- Working alongside children with a disability and their parents
- Working alongside local staff in pre-school nurseries.
- Teaching English
- Decorating and simple building work within a nursery.
- Practical tasks in community facilities
- Plus so much more.

Dates ; 15 Oct 2006 until 29 Oct 2006

Cost £1100. (This includes return flights, all hotel accommodation breakfast and evening meal, transport, and pre-trip induction.)

But it's not all slog, you will also visit the temple of the tooth at Kandy, a tea estate and the famous Elephant Orphanage at Pinniwela.

The trip will end with a well earned rest at a comfortable hotel in the south of the island situated next to the blue Indian ocean.

If you wish to express an interest or receive information concerning Asha's trips please call Steve or Radhika on 020 8553 9175 or click info@ashatrust.co.uk

Nice things said about Asha's trips

'I feel really privileged to be part of this experience. Given me loads of ideas about my future'

'This was one emotional experience but one that should happen again.'

'My highlight...being part of a very supportive group. Having great leaders'

