

Asha Trust (Sri Lanka)

Local Solutions . Tackling Poverty.

Asha Trust is a registered charity supporting projects in Sri Lanka including Athidiya, Colombo, and the tsunami affected 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 the housing and facilities are often basic. Securing work is a daily struggle and many earn less than £1 per day. Asha Trust is actively working in these communities to improve life chances and increase people's capacity to solve their problems .



Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.

And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.

Nelson Mandela

In July / August 2007 a team of 24 people travelled to Sri Lanka to support some of the projects that Asha Trust has been supporting. The team had a range of skills including primary school teachers, children's workers, care workers, engineers. Painter and decorators, actors and play workers, a skilled seamstress. Above all they had energy and a huge respect for the people they worker with.

Here's a snapshot of our activities.

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Asha Trust Projects

- **School Support.**

Sri Punyakami Vidyalyaya Asha Trust has been supporting this school for the past two years, many of the pupils live in the 'polythene zone' of Athidiya and are extremely poor. We support a Breakfast club for 40 children who had previously come to school hungry and have funded a learning support teacher who assists a number of students who are struggling academically.

During our recent trip we were able to support the school with English language teaching. Working with small groups the team used games and other interactive techniques to assist the children and young people improve their English conversation skills. We also organised drama workshops as an after school activity. This was not only great fun but proved to be a creative way of encouraging the young people to speak English.

In addition we had a small team of dedicated volunteers who provided practical support by decorating a couple of classrooms and the staff room. The school is very under resourced and looks generally run down, a fresh coat of paint has made a massive difference. In addition Asha Trust has funded the building of an addition classroom and for two computers to be installed.

Principal Silva recently wrote "***you all did so much for our poor school.. it will stay in our minds forever, so we again thank all Asha Trust members for helping us***"



RICC



RICC is a school for the differently abled children, many from poor families or where the family have been struggling without any additional support. This is a wonderfully happy school; all the teachers are dedicated to their children who clearly have a great time. We were fortunate to have had team-members with skills in this field who supported the staff, organising activities and engaging with the children. We also organised English classes after the school

day. The teachers were so keen to improve their English skills that that all stayed for at least an hour at the end of a tiring day.



Nurseries

Once again we were able to support Athidiya Nursery as well as the Empire Nursery at Torrington in the heart of Colombo. Each day members of the team supported the staff in their normal activities as well as preparing and leading on craft activities during the day.

Follow up of Differently Abled Children



In Nov 06 a team of health worker travelled to Sri Lanka who worked with a number of children with disabilities and their families. The team made a number of health recommendations and worked with some of the parents providing new ideas or exercises that they could practice with their children. We had the privilege of following up these children and almost without exception they have made great progress,, both physically and emotionally. The families also seemed to have greater confidence in caring and

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encouraging their children. It was truly heart-warming to see such progress.

Sewing

We were very fortunate to have had people with textile and sewing skills in the group. They were able to support 3 sewing groups, bringing fresh ideas and assisting with technical aspects of the craft. Sewing and textiles are very popular in Sri Lanka and for many it is a way of earning an income, either as a main occupation or as a supplement income. At the very least it is a skill that reduces families' expenses, producing the families' clothes and other household items. All the groups enjoyed the workshops we organised and would have loved to have had many more sessions.

In addition the hotel in which we stay has agreed to allow a display cabinet to be put in the reception area in which we can place items that have been produced by these women. We hope that this will contribute to the local incomes of some of these talented women.



For Asha Trust these activities are important and they do have an impact on peoples lives. Yet just as importantly is the message that it gives, a message that says 'you are not forgotten, your important too'. A big thank you to all those that travelled to Sri Lanka, and those who support these projects in other ways.

If you are interested in similar volunteering opportunities in Sri Lanka please contact us or log on to



www.tuktuk.org.uk

Asha Trust continues to support a number of projects including :



Elders Project

This project supports 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.

- **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.

- **Sioll Day Care Centre**

This centre provides a pre school nursery which is a lifeline to



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many families as it allows the mothers to out to work. We provide funds for three workers. In addition we have provided seed money for a number of small business enterprises run by local women. . As well as generating an income , this project has given these women many new skills and greater confidence. Asha has funding the complete refurbishment of the centre including a solar panel which enables activities to continue into the evening.

New project



Asha Trust has recently funded a new project working with **Teenage Mums**. We will initially work with 15 young mums and their families, providing nutrition supplements, health information and life skills. These young womens own life chances are low at present and they children perhaps even less, we aim to improve these. These can be small steps such as improving hygiene in the home which not only improves the families health and well-being but will also enabling them to be economically active..

Tsunami Suvivors

Asha Trust continues to support communities that were devastated by the Tsunami in Dec 2005.

Hambantota: we have supported this community in the south-east of the island which was particularly badly hit with at least 4500 people being killed. We continue to assist with grants for business start ups through a mirco-credit scheme; over 100 people have now received loans enabling them to restart businesses that were swept away with the waves. Asha Trust also supports a training programme for school leavers providing training on pre-job skills such as writing a CV and interview skills, it is aimed that a minimum of 100 young people will receive this valuable training.



The Forgotten Eighty: I wrote previously about a group of 80 families who had seemingly been forgotten no assistance. I'm please to support that approximate 36 of these families have now been resettled. However we cninue to support the remaining families providing food and basic provisions, and medical check-ups and follow up.

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

Asha Trust. (Sri Lanka)
141 Capel Road, Forest Gate, London. E7 0JT
Tel. 020 8553 9175 Fax. 020 7278 8567
Email. info@ashatrust.co.uk
www.ashatrust.co.uk