

Report on working visit Netherlands/Sri Lanka Association – January 2014

Opening of the 'Sister Mary Immaculate Child Care and Development Center'.

After a year of intensive work it is now complete... the SMI Child Care and Development Center in Kelaniya, Sri Lanka was officially opened on 11th January 2014.

Following a long flight, Theo Schouwenaar, Elsbeth Sanderse and Dick Keizer arrived just on time to take part in the opening ceremony. The children from the orphanage presented garlands, and after Mgr. Gomes, Emeritus Archbishop of Colombo had hoisted the national flag of Sri Lanka and the national anthem was sung, Theo raised the Dutch tricolour. The Lord Chief Justice of Sri Lanka, Mr. Mohan Pieris then unveiled a commemorative plaque, and this was followed by speeches including one by Dick on behalf of our Association. Between the speeches all those present could enjoy demonstrations of singing, dancing and violin playing by the children. The complete ceremony and associated activities were expertly organized by three girls from the Child Center, and the opening was made official when Elsbeth cut the red, white and blue tape.



Invited guests and all others present could then walk around and admire the new Child Care Center under the guidance of the children themselves. Visits were made to their bedrooms, the kitchen, the library, showers and playground etc.. It was clear to see how happy they were with their new home... in a room for four people, they each had their own bed and their own drawer in a chest. We too felt happy and grateful as we looked back on a wonderful day... because now there are 50 children with a safe and secure place to live, and there are food, drink and clothes, as well as the opportunity for education.



As a token of thanks, each committee member received a mounted plaque with photographs of the three Child Centers and a personal photograph with the children carrying the caption...

'We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give'

BANANAS

During this working visit there was also the opportunity to go to the existing orphanages in Pamunugama and Katupotha. For this, we made sure that we had brought with us some essential additions for the household inventory, stores and supplies! In Katupotha we also tasted the results of the banana trees which we planted in 2011!



ELSBETH IN CONVERSATION WITH AN ORPHAN

“At the opening of the first orphanage in 2009, I remember seeing a little girl of 4 years old who was very withdrawn. She hardly reacted when spoken to, and did not play with the other children. She just sat quietly against the wall. The sister who was present, told me that she had lost both parents as well as her sister in the tsunami. The police brought her to Sister Amatha. Every year when I have visited, I have spoken to her and she now lives in Kelaniya in the new Child Center. During our conversation following the opening, she told me that after the tsunami she realised that she had nobody any more. But now, she said that there are so many girls around her and the sisters take good care of her, and she can also go to school. She shares a very nice room with three other girls in the beautiful new Child Center. “Here, I feel just like a princess” she says with a happy laugh... and then goes off to play with her friends”.

“FROM CHILDREN FOR CHILDREN”.

Every Monday, children from the Prinses Beatrix School in Goes, take some money with them to school for the orphans in Sri Lanka, Last October they also organized a big sponsored run and the with the sum that they collected from this initiative, during her Christmas holiday visit to the new orphanage, their teacher Tanja could present Sister Amatha with a cheque for 575,000 rupees!



In agreement with Sister Amatha we have been able to purchase new bookcases for the library, 4 pc's with computer tables, 2 desks and chairs, a radio/cd player and a genuine new tuk tuk! With this amazing form of transport shopping can be done more easily and quickly, and the children can be brought to school, the doctor or the hospital. From all these activities it is clear that we have fulfilled the meaning of the motto...



'from children for children'.

THE FUTURE

At the moment there are no plans to build a new orphanage. What we intend, is to concentrate on contributing towards the good care and upbringing for the orphans in the three orphanages through enabling them to go to school, giving extra lessons in English, and helping them gain computer experience with the help of the 10 pc's that we have acquired. In addition, together with the sisters we are developing a plan which addresses the further upbringing of the children for when they leave the orphanage and have to start to take care of themselves. In general, they leave the orphanage at 18... the one carrying on with studies and the other seeking a suitable job or even getting married. It is our aim to help the orphans not just with advice, but also with financial support by (for example) opening up a savings account in their names and regularly making deposits. In this way we can keep giving active support to Sri Lanka's orphans.

BECOME A DONOR FOR JUST 5 EUROS PER MONTH!

'WHOEVER SAVES A CHILD SAVES THE WORLD'

That's why we ask that you give us your kind support. All gifts are tax deductible because we are an ANBI recognized association. We keep nothing back... every euro we receive goes directly 'onto the plates' of the orphans.



THANK YOU SISTER AMATHA!

A number of days after the opening we received the following e-mail from Sister Amatha...



"I want to thank you sincerely for your great dedication for the children, because yesterday after the opening the children who were at Kelaniya I saw they were so happy running around the building, laughing, playing and they told me that they feel at home. So children smile is our smile, I shed joyful tears with the children, we could realize this thanks to your kindness and love".