

Newsletter March 2010

We would like to inform you of the current situation at the Milhous Jayakody Children Home in Sri Lanka. It is now been more than half a year since it was opened and we as a board were very curious as to what goes on in the children's home. The modern means like e-mail do supply good contact but nothing compares to seeing, experiencing, feeling and smelling it all yourself. So the board went to see the children's home "in full business" on 1st February and what we saw surpassed all our expectations in a positive way. We spent the entire time we were in Sri Lanka in the children's home and experienced all aspects of daily life. We were warmly welcomed by the sisters and the children with flower garlands and dances. Many children were happy and gave a sign of recognition even though we only saw them briefly in July. It is a pity that the language is still a big barrier. We had brought, as we do every time we go to Sri Lanka, clothes with us and this time we also brought lots of shoes which was absolutely appreciated and they were immediately fitted. We had also brought drawings with us from the children of the school "'t Noorderlicht" in Goes, The Netherlands. We split them among the children and they were very pleased. We saw how the children feel completely at home and safe in the children's home. The sisters are sweet, friendly and cheerful. They cook deliciously and they give the children love and security. The sisters told us that there are now 24 children living in the home. There is much need and who to refuse? We agree with this, but we have stated that every child must have their own bed and that no beds are allowed to be placed outside the dormitories.

We have seen how the children eat, do homework and are also helped by the management, in the shower and going to bed, also how the children help washing dishes and falafel baking, in short we have lived among the children.

We also discussed a lot of material issues with the sisters and after inquiries from us and after they finally dropped their shyness and modesty, they still had a few wishes. So on Saturday we went with two sisters to a large department store and we bought a lot of household items. Such as cutlery, plates, washrooms, buckets, pillows, a shovel, brooms, tea towels, drying racks, a flycatcher, and closets. In short, it was a whole van full of practical things. Theo went to the store manager and got a 10% discount on the spot for our "social work" for their own country. It was endearing to see how the sisters bought the necessary things with hesitation and caution. We also bought toys like a slide, a go-kart, badminton and balls. When we returned to the children's home, the slide was immediately put into use by the children and there was a queue for its use. We also bought a bicycle for the sisters because going to the store for groceries is far and the bags of rice for so many people are heavy, the sisters were very happy with it.

During our visit we also discussed the reporting. There were some small things in the house that needed to be repaired and we told the sisters to write a report. They can then discuss this with us and after a quotation these items can be repaired.

In connection with the health of the children, we set up a report. Dick, a former family doctor, prescribed medication for a few children because there were children with an infection, such as an inflamed finger, throat, leg and skin. We told the sisters that soda baths are effective to clean wounds. The use of Betadine Iodine was also discussed. Furthermore, we explained the usefulness of producing a report of such matters. The sisters greatly appreciated our advice and immediately started working on it.

Furthermore, we as board also "let ourselves be shown" in the village. On Sunday we went to church, all the children came in a row with the sisters and with great glances of recognition to us, they walked to their place. After the service we spoke to the priest. We also visited the school the children go to. The lowest grades classes 1 to 5 are situated in a large open building, where the classrooms are divided with screens as walls. This school accommodates 550 children and 40 teachers. Between the crowd of children and parents, "our children" came to us for a greeting; at such a moment you realize that these children have no father or mother to come to see them at school. Currently 12 children are going to school; the others are still too young. We noticed that people appreciated that we showed ourselves with and around the children.

We also experienced twice that people from the village came with "almsgiving". This is a treat for the children because of a birthday or a jubilee in their family. The children danced for the 15 year old boy who came with his parents and sisters and then gave him a kiss! Heart-warming to see this.

During our visit we also spoke with a Sri Lankan child protection official and we had business discussions with the notary and the Land Registry concerning the ownership of the land and with the bank on financial matters. It was a short journey, On February 11th we returned to Holland but we look back with gratitude on what we saw in the children's home. It is always exciting for us because it is volunteer work with money donated by good people. We are very grateful to our donors for that.

We have faith in our project and we are happy with the sisters who do their work with love and no self-interest whatsoever. We trust that with your help we can continue to support these children and secure a good future for them.

Finally, we would like to inform you that we have received notice from the tax authorities that our foundation meets the new conditions set for a Public Benefit Organization (ANBI). This means that your donations will remain tax deductible on your taxable income.

Our website www.netherlandssrilanka.nl contains photos of our trip.

Yours sincerely,
The board of the foundation "Stichting Netherlands Sri Lanka"
Ria Milhous-Willems
Theo Schouwenaar
Dick Keizer
Elsbeth Sanderse-van den Berg