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An impression of the working visit in January 2019

MARCH 2019

In January this year, two board members went on a working visit to Sri Lanka (the trip, of course, was paid for by ourselves). First stop was the new orphanage in Ja Ela, which currently houses 10 older girls who are attending high school, the university, the hotel school or following a course in hairdressing. Sadly, the new premises are not yet connected to the main water supply – this is scheduled to happen in 2020. So for the moment, we have to rely on our water through the goodness of the local church. It is in fact quite common that for a half- or sometimes a whole day there is no water available. And that is also the reason why there are currently only 10 girls living here instead of the planned 16. We are now investigating the possibility of installing a water pump in the garden which would give us more independence. Nevertheless, just like all the other orphanages, there is above all a cheerful and cosy atmosphere.



In all the orphanages, during our visit, we were warmly and enthusiastically welcomed. The buildings themselves are looking good, and the gardens are full of mango and banana trees plus palm trees full of coconuts! The coconuts are used when cooking and baking. Taking care of the plants and flowers is done by the girls, and of course they also learn how to cook and clean!



In the Katupotha orphanage, two new girls – 5 and 6 years old – have arrived. In Kelaniya twins aged 4 have also been taken in. It is good that they could be accommodated, but the reasons behind this need are always very sad. The Child Protection authority in fact keeps in regular contact with Sister Amatha. On the positive side, a couple of the girls have left us because they have been able to find a job with suitable accommodation. It is good to see them 'stand on their own two feet'. Nevertheless, they keep in regular contact with Sister Amatha and the orphanages are still seen as their homes.



We had plenty of time to chat to everybody and also to join in their games. We also got involved in their handicraft hobbies as well as singing and dancing! We brought the two popular games Memory and Domino with us which the children really enjoyed. Needless to say, they also had their homework to do, and they really appreciated our help when we rehearsed the English words. They had lots of fun when they tried to teach us some Singalese words and even more when we had to pronounce them out loud! By the end of the visit however, we could count from 1 to 10 in Singalese!



Finger crocheting was something we taught the younger girls, while the older ones learnt how to crochet with the special needle. It was great fun to be able to do things together, and pretty soon a number of necklaces and armbands were made!





In Katupotha we went walking with a group of the girls along pretty paths surrounded by palm trees. We came upon an old Buddhist temple and a beautiful lake. It was very enjoyable and many photos were taken – of course, with the girls in the picture too! They like being photographed. On arrival back home, they all carefully put away their pretty 'going out dresses' for another occasion.



School visit

At the start of the school year, the new children receive a festive welcome. All the students stood outside waiting, while the new ones came neatly – two by two – and received a pretty bunch of flowers. Together with the parents, we all then went into a large hall and following a few words of welcome from the headmaster, candles were lit in the Buddhist 'candelabra' – in fact we too were permitted to join in this ceremony and we also lit a candle. Then followed dancing by the older girls, and then by the youngest. The headmaster asked us if we could sing a 'Dutch song'... and so, of course, we did (a bit nervously)! We then gave a hand distributing all the bags with books etc. to the children. Then... and totally unexpected, we were asked to 'cut the ribbon' to officially



open the classroom. Later, in the office we enjoyed some milk rice, a banana and some tea. We were heartily thanked by the headmaster for our visit. What a wonderful, very special morning.



Power Point Presentation:

We would be happy to present you a Power Point Presentation. We will tell about the origins of our four homes. We will also tell noteworthy things about beautiful Sri Lanka. Are you interested? Then please contact us. We would be happy to come!

Goodbyes

All too soon our last day arrived. For our farewell 'party' we bought plenty of chips, biscuits and pretty bracelets for the girls and chocolate for the sisters. We were also enthusiastically greeted by all the sisters and children from the other orphanages, who had made the trip especially to say goodbye to us. We found this very moving. The party started at quarter past four, and outside, all the benches and chairs were prettily decorated. We also each received a beautiful flower garland for around our necks. Then, once the candles were lit the 'show' began! Beautiful singing and gracious dancing, with all the girls in their best dresses – it was so enjoyable. At the end of the performance, one of the girls gave a speech in English! She thanked us for our work and also gave special thanks to Theo, our treasurer, (who unfortunately had not been able to accompany us). We also received some very beautiful handmade cards, to round off a wonderful and moving farewell party. What a delightful visit!



An extensive report, together with very many photos can be found on our website: www.stichtingnetherlandssrilanka.nl



With kind regards,



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Our four children's homes
in Sri Lanka are in

