



# ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad



*Sri Lanka*



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## EXPERIENCE SRI LANKA

2013 April - Issue no 97

**THE LAND LIKE NO OTHER**

# Sinhalese & Tamil New Year and Social with the girls at Anula Girls' Home.

Last weekend was the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year. They celebrate new year at this time of year because on April 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> the sun moves from Meena Rashiya to Mesha Rashiya (yer.. I'm not really sure either!). There were parties, and celebrations, across the whole island and everyone gives each other lots of sweets. It is Sri Lankan tradition to feed and give all year round, but during New Year it is twice as bad! Every day for a week I have been forced to eat these sweets.. Too many sweets! Anyways...I'm going off track.

The Projects Abroad Sri Lanka team couldn't resist the opportunity to get the volunteers in the New Year festival spirit, and we thought, what better way to celebrate than with the children at one of our many different placements?! After some discussion, we decided to arrange a day of sports and games for the girls at Anula Girls' Home. At around 9am last Friday, 25 volunteers were greeted by around the same number of girls at the girls' home. The girls were their normal cheeky self, but at the same time a little shy of all these foreigners! The main duty for the volunteers was to care for these girls, but we all got involved with the fun. The girls played so many different silly games, including bun eating competition and fancy dress parade...a personal favorite was the best cry competition (although mildly cringy). They also sung many traditional Sinhalese songs to the volunteers. The day ended with a Projects Abroad staff versus volunteers volley ball match. All of the girls picked a team and were giving us support and shouting 'service, service, service!' which made everyone twice as competitive (it ended in a draw). After this we had lunch and traditional New Year's snacks. Finally, these girls surprised us with a traditional dance. All of the girls put on a lovely dress and make up and did a synchronized dance in front of the very impressed volunteers. Some of the girls were crying at the end of the day, because they were looking forward to this for such a long time and saying good bye was too overwhelming! However the volunteers had to leave and celebrate the Sinhala New Year with their new Sinhalese families to eat more sweets and play more traditional games. **HAPPY SINHALESE AND TAMIL NEW YEAR PEOPLE OF THE WORLD!**

*Richard — Social Manager*

## Message from the Editor

The starting article of the newsletter by Rich speaks about Sinhala Tamil New Year in Sri Lanka, celebrated in the month of April - as Sun completes a round of its' journey according to astrology.

The New Year celebrations has a long history probably over thousand years and it is mainly related with fertility of the harvest. So essentially it is not just a celebration, but an event connected with every person of the country through various religious believings and cultural values as well.

In the present celebrations of New Year - it is obvious that event is filled with Buddhist traditions and also Hindu traditions. Regardless of the religion or religious teachings, both Buddhists and Hindus believe in Astrology and the event have a great impact of astrological concepts. That's how auspicious times are generated and the whole country follow those timings to do specific acts. I am sure volunteers experienced the sound of crackers from every corner of the island at every auspicious time. Since the event is planned according to astrology with a timing and an act, Sri Lanka could be the only country in the world people (every single person) do the same thing such as eating milk rise in the same time.

Apart from the main event of the year, this month Projects Abroad organized its' usual activities such as outreach programme and medical camps though it was difficult to find dates for these events.

Also one of our staff members (Shakya Lakmal) got married in this month and we wish the couple a happy married life!!!

*Gishan Perera*

**Desk Officer - Sri Lanka**



# Medical Camp





# ***Happy Wedded life Shakya & Dilum!***





Date : 09 - 10th of May, 2013  
Location : Red Cross - Kottawa  
Task : First Aid Training for Staff

# ***First Aid Training Workshop***



# MAKE IT HAPPEN!

From the moment you get off that plane, you notice the massive differences firstly as the blast of hot air hits your face as you walk down the stairs, then to the evergreen scenery you will pass as you get taken to your host family (who by the way will have spicy foods kept made ready for you to have). In most areas, a year-round “greenness” covers the land- herbs, medicinal shrubs, leafy vegetables, banana trees, palm trees and best of all the coconut tree (where at some point you will be given the peachy-orange colored King Coconut as a refreshment to cool you in the Sri Lankan heat).

You will notice how the house fills up with unfamiliar scents of the mixtures of herbs and spices that your host mum uses to make the food and that unusual nutty scent of the coconut oil when it gets heated up.

The children at your family may seem extremely shy and almost afraid to come anywhere near you, though you will see from the corner of your eye that they are pressed against the wall, peeking through the door crack to see what you are doing....give them time....as kids naturally are inquisitive little beings.

As you came along from the airport, did your heart almost stop as the driver whizzed past vehicles and what seems like a 2-laned road turns into a 4-laned road with a sign “KEEP TO YOUR LANE” advising lorries, cars, trucks, bicycles, motorbikes, scooters and best of all, those 3-wheeled terrors (called tuk tuk).

The Tuk Tuk's bolt past you in a constant race to get ahead of a stationary traffic jam, while the white and red monster buses honk, accelerate, slam the brakes centimeters away from the vehicle in front of it (all at the same time), making your heart pop out from inside and run for cover. So, you are sitting at the table with your host mum bustling around the kitchen trying to make sure you have everything she can possibly think of to get you to eat. And be it breakfast, lunch or dinner be sure to expect a variety of spicy/chili or milky (made from coconut milk-lentil curry being my best) dishes with rice, bread, coconut roti (flat bread made with ground coconut-I love this), string hoppars (stringy and tangled spaghetti-looking), egg hoppars (bowl-looking with a bull's eye egg in the middle...yummy)...and I cannot forget the milk-rice (kiribath) with the chillied onions (lunu miris). Of course if anything is too spicy or hot, or if you are allergic to anything and are a vegetarian or have special requirements, be sure to tell your host mum so she knows what you would enjoy. Meet up with a staff member who will come see you within a day to welcome you to this Jewel Island and give you a briefing introduction of the country, the family and the placement, and show you around briefly. But in the end with all this and more to tell you, it's all about how you MAKE IT HAPPEN for you. So come with an open mind, an adventurous spirit and a need to genuinely help, love to travel and gumption to try and you will have an amazing experience in Sri Lanka!



*Aruni Jayawardane*

**Teaching & Care Supervisor**



Date : 24 th of April, 2013  
Location : Panadura,Malamulla  
Task : New Year Celebrations for elders

# New Year Celebrations at Malamulla





# *My First Week*

Hi! My name is Bianca and I am a student midwife in Western Australia. I have just started volunteering with Projects Abroad Sri Lanka and I am working in the midwifery department in Nagoda Hospital, and living with a host family in Kalutara.

So far I have been observing and assisting in the labour ward and have seen a number of births. The doctors and midwives have been very interested in how different labour care is in Australia compared to Sri Lanka, while I am equally as interested in this!

I have learnt so much already (I have now been here one week) and can see many opportunities to practice and acquire new skills. I am also very glad that progress/patient notes are written in English so that I can have a quick read and know what the situation is with each patient, rather than trying to interpret Sinhalese. The doctors speak good English, but the nurses' English is rather limited. However we can communicate with laughs and smiles. Richie (a Projects Abroad staff member) advised me to bring a notepad and pen to work because, although the nurses can't speak great English, the majority of them can read English well. Therefore if something is lost in translation between the nurses and me, I will write my query on the notepad and show them. This usually works.

My host family is very friendly and also extremely helpful in guiding me to plan journeys and estimate times and costs of travel and activities. The food has been AMAZING and my host mother is very caring and hospitable.

During my first weekend I went to the beaches in the south of Sri Lanka. I learnt to surf and had extremely relaxing time by a beautiful beach.

I can't believe how quick my first week has gone! It has been very rewarding and I cannot wait for more!