



ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad



Sri Lanka



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EXPERIENCE SRI LANKA

2013 February Issue no 95

THE LAND LIKE NO OTHER

The Sri Lankan people are lovely!

My flight from Dubai where I had been staying with my son arrived in Colombo in the small hours of the morning – and I was without sleep for that night. Easy when you are young but not so great when you ain't! Met by Suranga skilfully negotiating his way through the three wheelers and taxis all determined to get business – we stopped to buy a phone and credit as mine seemed to be locked and useless to me as a result – my first shock was standing at the machine waiting – it seemed for ages – for my credit card to reappear – money first, credit card trailing after is the norm for here – but it causes me a momentary heart stoppage -

We seemed to drive for hours through a built up area from the airport to Colombo itself and it was all a bit of a blur to me – but I remember seeing a glimpse of the sea and some quite elegant buildings in the centre as we passed by. Then came my first real exposure to Sri Lankan traffic as it was building up – and cars were (literally) choking the roads with the three wheelers negotiating a suicidal path through and the bus drivers with their hands permanently on the horn. Chaos. But I have learnt now – one month on – that it is really amazingly orchestrated. The skill of the bus drivers and the three wheeler drivers I appreciate now – the breathtaking way they judge the tiny spaces between vehicles – terrifying their passengers – but seemingly on the whole escaping accidents and mishaps. Well – maybe those do happen but I didn't see any...

I was taken to the hotel to try and rest – and then on to my lodgings in Kalutara where the wonderful Malkanthi greeted

Message from the Editor

February – Sri Lankans started the month marking independence day on 04th. Projects Abroad | Sri Lanka has conducted all usual activities such as medical seminars, medical camps, outreach programmes and awareness programmes in this month. However, I would like to bring you two news items which is very interesting.

Projects Abroad | Sri Lanka has organized South Colombo Teaching Hospital as one of medical placements and now we have the green light to send volunteers to this hospital. This is the second largest hospital in the country. We never had an opportunity to serve neurology in our other placements due to different reasons and this obstacle is no more with the new placement. Also volunteer who prefer to live in Colombo have a better option if they are going to undertake a medicine project.

We are also planning and already had preliminary discussions to start wildlife and turtle conservation project in Bundala National Park. We had the Turtle Conservation project years before at this National Park and had to terminate due to changes in turtle migration pattern due to tsunami. However, now things are back to normal and probably we will have everything ready before April to start conservation projects in Sri Lanka.

Though it is not new, discussion are going on to start sports projects in government schools to develop sports and physical development of students. We managed to get a practical schedule for a sports volunteer at Tissa National School – Kalutara and soon we will be starting recruiting volunteers for this project.

We look forward to offer all these opportunities to volunteers whom would select this Tropical Asian Island for volunteering.

Gishan Perera

Desk Officer
Sri Lanka

me. She has a grand big house with a garden – huge rooms – and everything you could need. She and her daughters were truly wonderful during my stay– and Malkanthi excelled in producing a huge variety of Sri Lankan food – far too much most of the time. It was a short walk to the school – though if a door was put in the wall opposite you could be there in two seconds – its just across the lane. One of the first things in the morning was the sound of the 3500 children singing the anthem – thats after the 5.30 bread van and the dawn chorus of the neighbouring cock – and of course the dogs – there are 15 in all between Malkanthi's five and the rest nearby – sometimes at night they disagreed and the racket was intense – fortunately not every night.

I found the teaching very tough indeed at first. I am not a teacher- the classes were huge and the children knew nothing of the English language. and though shy and reticent could also be quite unruly and out of control and I got quite upset feeling that I wasn't getting anywhere – and started to question why I was here anyway as I really wasn't enjoying it. I felt that this was not the way to be a volunteer – that there was almost no point unless you were achieving something and were happy doing it – but when Jacqui, another volunteer, arrived to teach as well it was so much better. The children got to know us, and though progress is very slow I do think we managed to get somewhere – even if not far. It is so important for their futures that they have English as a second language and I hope the teaching programme will continue . Conditions at the school were tough – the fans don't work – and I had real trouble with the heat. Coming from Ireland to this is a big shock – and it is mostly the humidity that affected me – I seem to spend the entire time in a pool of sweat. In the afternoons I mostly ran for the Tangerine pool where at last I could cool off.

It was quite an experience. The Sri Lankan people are lovely. Helpful and charming – just as I had heard they were – I saw a little of the rest of the island and wished I could have seen more – but a bad knee prevented me from doing climbs and going to places such as Adams Peak and Sirigiyā.

It was my first long time spent in Asia – and it was a shock in many ways. Some people here are very very poor – and the homes you see from the train going from Colombo to Kandy reminded me of the shanty towns in South Africa. I wondered did Projects Abroad have a building project here – as a wonderful builder from Ireland had in South Africa – but I suppose there is a limit as to how much they can do – and certainly the work PA puts into schools, hospitals and orphanages here seems to be so valuable. My day with the other volunteers cleaning the orphanage near Galle will remain in my mind for ever I know – heartbreaking – yet I felt we had achieved a lot when we left.

I go home with great memories. Of a really good organisation – I really didn't know what to expect – and a lot of people trying to make a difference. Funds probably won't allow me to do this again – unless I win the Lottery of course – but who knows – maybe I shall find myself somewhere else at some future point.

Fiona York

Basic Awareness

NEWS & UPDATES

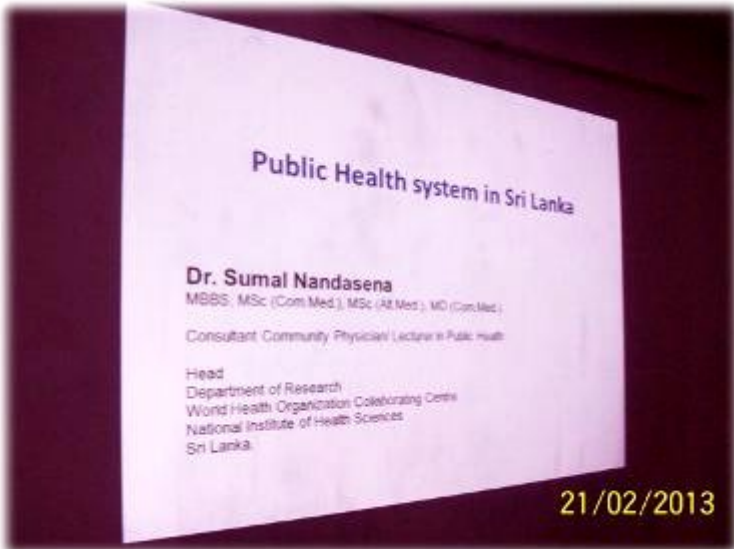
Date : 26 th of February, 2013
Location : Panadura—Tsunami Camp
Task : Teaching basic hygiene

programme



Medical Seminar

Date : 21st of February
Location : Sun View Hotel - Wadduwa
Task : Medical Seminar



Once again another month has flown by in Sri Lanka with the Projects Abroad team of staff and volunteers. As it is the end of the month it is that time to tell you about what we have been doing in the 'Island of Gems' throughout February. Now this is always a very hard task for me because every month there is a lot, in fact too much, to choose from! So for February's newsletter I have decided to approach this in a different way than normal. Instead of talking about the one thing I will give you some info about what our volunteers have been getting up to this month and how they have been helping less privileged people across Sri Lanka.

First of all I'll tell you about the different volunteers that have joined us this month, as they are a fundamental part of Projects Abroad. We have welcomed 30 new volunteers from Australia, New Zealand, UK, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, France, Ireland, Holland, Canada and Belgium (sorry if I forgot your country). Our youngest volunteer is 17 and the oldest is 75 and all of the volunteers have been working at a medical, teaching or care placement.

This month our medical volunteers have been assisting the doctors in the pediatric, surgical, mid-wifery, and general medicine wards, (additionally there are physiotherapy, OPD, ETU, burns unit departments for those wanting to indulge in this) in four different hospitals across Sri Lanka, while having the chance to see a number of autopsies, labour and delivery, caesarians a number of different surgeries etc. We have arranged a medical seminar and a medical camp for the volunteers. During this month's seminar the volunteers learnt about diabetes in Sri Lanka and tropical diseases (read our medical supervisor's blog for more details about this). This is great, because the medical volunteers will learn about the things that they will be seeing first hand in the hospital. Also the medical camp is a great chance for the volunteers to get some real hands on experience as we give free healthcare (cost is covered by Projects Abroad) to a community in a rural part of the country. Our teaching volunteers have also been very busy this month. Ten teaching volunteers have arrived in February and they are working in two government schools (with a primary, secondary and A level section). While at school they can be very flexible with what grades they teach. We have some volunteers teaching in the primary section (if they can handle the children's cheekiness!), some are teaching the secondary school kids and others are teaching the 16 to 19-year-olds, while one is teaching all grades! Whenever the volunteers arrive they are always the talk of the school and most kids want to come and say hello. After working for a day the volunteers will be bowed to and addressed as teacher, or 'teacher, teacher, teacher!'. This sometimes comes as quite a shock, especially for the volunteers that have never taught before.

Our care volunteers have been equally busy! We have many care placements in Sri Lanka, but this month we have seven care volunteers working at DayaNivasa in Kandy and Ruhunu Orphanage in Galle. Our care volunteers in DayaNivasa are looking after approximately 130 children and adults (age three to 80!) with mild to severe learning difficulties, while our care volunteers at Ruhunu Orphanage are working with babies and toddlers aged 0 to five.

Therefore another action packed month for everyone who is involved with Projects Abroad Sri Lanka! Looking forward to the shenanigans of March!

Rich Liam Egan



Awareness programme for mothers

Date : 26 th of February, 2013
Location : Dutch Annes' Montessori - Panadura
Task : Teaching baby care



Kalutara

Kalutara is in Kalutara District, Western Province, Sri Lanka. It



is also the third largest city in Western Province after Colombo. It has all the necessary facilities from banks, a market, hospitals and pharmacies to a busy bus and train station, lovely 5-star hotels— all in near proximity to each other. Kalutara to Colombo is 40km at Rs120/person on an air-conditioned bus, 17km and Rs60 from Panadura and 8km paying Rs40 to Wadduwa.

Sukitha Childrens Orphanage

The Sukitha Welfare Society run a home in Sri Lanka for girls of different ages with varying disabilities from physical, emotional and learning disabilities. The girls come from deprived backgrounds and there are some residents with no family to take them in and give them the chance of a better life. Some of the more heavily disabled residents cannot leave the home so they remain living at Sukitha until old age.

SukithaChildrens Orphanage is in the town of Galpatha on the Horana road, around 10km from Kalutara's main town area. It was founded in 1976 and is one of the few special schools for differently abled girls and women in Sri Lanka. This home caters for girls of various ages with different physical and emotional abilities as well as special learning needs. The centre also holds two differently-abled resident males. Like any child, it is their right to be happy, learn, grow and lead a healthy, fulfilling life and so working with the residents requires that you take the initiative to use whatever skills and knowledge and enthusiasm to expose the residents in a positive manner and stimulate them to help improve their abilities. You are the extra pair of hands and that extra bit of love and attention, which the staff who work hard to take care of the residents, cannot give.

In all honestly if you can learn a bit of the basic Sinhala words like: "how are you", "come", "sit", "are you well/ok", "that's beautiful"...and can be creative....you're all set. If you can help in any way to provide care work, cleaning, maintenance, organizing trips, having interactive sessions playing with the residents to help stimulate their minds and exercise their limbs, you would be greatly helping them.

Next door to the home is a school which caters for differently-abled children and begins at 8am. Here the children are taught a variety of school subjects and have creative lessons such as music and art and games. It would be helpful to be prepared with materials for stimulation activities as the school and the home are greatly in need of any assistance you could provide. They depend on donations from local benefactors and donations. The government pays a small amount enough to pay salaries and barely meet all the daily expenses. The main need here is for physiotherapy equipment that can be used for purposes of strengthening, balance, joint and muscle control, etc and any help here would be wonderful for the residents!

Aruni Jayawardane

Social Outreach!

Date : 15th of February, 2013

Location : Panadura—Sri Seevali School

Task : Painting



De Voyage

Après une quinzaine d'heures de voyage, me voici enfin arrivé au Sri Lanka. Première sensation sorti de l'aéroport de Colombo, le temps est très lourd pour un mois de janvier. Et même si il n'est que 4 heure du matin et la circulation est déjà infernale. Mon premier trajet sur les routes sri-lankaises aurait pu être le dernier. Ils ont une étrangère manière de circuler, que ce soit en ville ou en dehors, vite et en klaxonnant. À mon arrivée à l'hôtel, j'ai enfin pu me reposer de mon voyage. J'ai ensuite passé l'après-midi à visiter Colombo en compagnie de mon futur colocataire et collègue, Emil qui vient du Danemark. Le soir, Richy est venu nous donner quelques informations sur le Sri Lanka et notre placement.

Le lendemain, deux personnes (Gishan et Aruni) de Projects Abroad nous accompagnent à Don Bosco Sevena, l'orphelinat dans lequel je vais travailler pour les 30 prochains jours. C'est un endroit qui accueille une cinquantaine d'enfants qui ont subis des sévices sexuels ou des violences au sein de leurs familles. L'orphelinat est un lieu tout à fait agréable où il y a deux bâtiments principaux et une aire sableuse qui peut accueillir les compétitions sportives quotidiennes.

Après notre rencontre avec le Père responsable et la visite de l'orphelinat, nous reprenons la voiture pour nous rendre chez notre famille d'accueil. Mac et Marian nous attendent et c'est avec le sourire qui nous font la visite de leur maison et de notre chambre. La maison n'est située qu'à 200 mètres de la plage, ce qui est très agréable après une journée de travail. Ils nous aident beaucoup pour planifier nos voyages du week-end.

Nous devons être à Don Bosco à 8h30. Pour s'y rendre, nous devons prendre 2 bus et surtout ne pas avoir la nausée en transport, secoués dans tous les sens à cause de la conduite du conducteur et de l'état de la chaussée. On m'annonce aussi que je devrais enseigner le français à des séminaristes. Plus tard, Emil et moi avons fait la connaissance des plus jeunes à leur retour de l'école, après un accueil rythmé et musical. Les enfants sont très curieux de nous voir dans leur orphelinat et nous posent beaucoup de questions et nous touchent. Et quelques enfants sont timides et ils nous font de grands sourires. Le niveau d'anglais est assez hétérogène et cela peut être un problème, surtout en classe. Nous profitons aussi de leurs temps libres pour jouer avec eux au football ou au volley.

Le Sri Lanka est un endroit exceptionnel où les gens sont très souriants. Parfois, quelques enfants nous saluent et nous disent bonjour. Je profite de mes week-ends pour visiter le pays qui peut paraître petit sur la World Map et j'aurais du mal à visiter tous les temples bouddhistes ou les lieux à voir pendant toute la durée de mon voyage.

Maxime



Care og undervisningsprojekt i Negombo

Indtil videre har det hele været helt fantastisk!

Jeg startede ud med en lang flytur fra København, hvor det hele gik problemfrit. Første dag gik bare med at blive frisk og nyde naturen og det dejlige vejr. Ved frokosttid kom Richy og hentede mig, og tog mig til frokost i en hyggelig lille restaurant. Da han havde boet her i 7 måneders tid, vidste han hvad der var stærkt og hvad der var til at holde ud.

På anden dag mødte jeg min fremtidige roomie Maxime fra Fankrig. Vi brugte bare dagen på at se noget af Colombo. Dertil vil jeg anbefale Majestic city (staves) hvis du mangler noget ligefra tandbørste til sko.

Dog hvis du skal til Kabungoda eller Negambo er der et lille hyggeligt marked ála Det Gule Marked i Prag, hvor du kan få billige t-shirts eller sko eller noget i den retning. Ellers kan du kun få vand fra flaske (vigtigt hvor end du er i Sri Lanka) eller noget småt at spise, hvis du bor hos Mac!

Mac, konen og sønnen er helt fantastiske! Det er kun Mac som snakker engelsk i huset, men hans søn bor lige ved siden af, som også snakker lidt engelsk. De er altid glade, og har meget få regler. Det vigtigste er bare at hvis du er sent ude på en hverdag skal du skrive hjem. Ellers er det til at overkomme herovre! Stranden er nærmest lige i baghaven, så hvis du har brug for at blive kølet ned, er det no problem! Menneskerne i byen ser ikke så tit blege personer, så de fleste vil stirre lidt på dig, men efter noget tid er du som en lille berømt herovre. Alle hilser på dig, og især børnene vinker og prøver at snakke engelsk!

På Don Bosco Sevana er der overraskende roligt og fredeligt! De mindre børn (11-13 år) er meget fasineret af os fordi vi skifter farve når man trykker på vores hud. Hvis du er så heldig at komme derover på et projekt, er det godt hvis du kan spille fodbold eller volleyball, så vil de elske hvis du deltager.

De 17-20 årige der bor derovre er rigtig gode til engelsk, så det er svært at undervise dem, så kan du fransk, bør du undervise i det! Siden de er nybegyndere, (fra januar 2013) er det nemmere at undervise i det! De er som en stor familie derovre, så de små kommer over til de store, eller dig, hvis der er nogen former for problemer.

Så hvis du får muligheden for at komme til Kabungoda, bør du tage muligheden! Du vil få en helt fantastisk oplevelse!

Og det her var kun min første uge!

Henrik

