



NEWS FROM SRI LANKA

Sisters of Providence Welfare Services February 2017

Dear Friends, Family and Sisters,

Communication with our two Islands in the Indian Ocean was and is not so easy these last months: difficulties with internet connections and in Madagascar load shedding of electricity, so all the information could not arrive in time. That is the reason why our newsletters are a bit later than usual. But as every year it is with joy and gratitude that we send you some news about our different activities and projects for which your help and support has been so precious.

Some information about the country

Sri Lanka is a lower middle-income country with a total population of 21.0 million people, 62,3 % working age, 13 % retired, 24,7 % before working age and a per capita income of USD 3,924 in 2015. Following a 30-year civil war that ended in 2009, Sri Lanka's economy has grown at an average 6.4 percent between 2010-2015, reflecting a peace dividend and a determined policy thrust towards reconstruction and growth. Sri Lanka's economy transitioned from a previously predominantly rural-based agriculture economy towards a more urbanized economy driven by services.

The main economic sectors of the country are tourism, tea export, clothing, textile, rice production and other agricultural products. In addition to these economic sectors, overseas employment contributes highly in foreign exchange, 90% of expatriate Sri Lankans reside in the Middle East.

Our activities and projects

Women's day program at Thabbowa



The women's day program was held on the 7th of March 2016 at the school of Thabbowa, situated in Putthalam District in the North-Western Province. We selected this place, due to the needs of the area. Most of the families are poor and their main occupation is fishing in the lake. Every year they face many hardships due to the weather. They experience in the same year flood and drought. It is



also the area where the threat of Elephants is most present. Many women raise their Children alone. Our aim was to reflect with them on the education of their children and the need of moral values, love and Care.

Seminar for the Students in the North



On the 25th of August 2016, 43 students from Kunchukulam and Sinnapandivirichchan, who are studying in grade ten and eleven participated in a seminar organised by the Sisters of Providence Welfare Services at the Kunchukulam

Roman Catholic School. Two well experienced teachers, conducting classes in Colombo, voluntarily

gave their fullest support to make this day a success. They taught them Mathematics, Science and English. They discussed about some important areas which will be helpful for their coming ordinary level exam. It was really an excellent opportunity for them.

Bicycle project



On the 17th of August 2016, 35 students, who had to walk a long distance to reach their school, gathered in Ja Ela, a town close by Tewatte, Ragama. They all received a bicycle. There were 5 students from Anuradhapura and Pemadhu, 15 from Kunchukulam and Sinnapandiwirichchan, 12 from Thabbowa, Kala Oya, Rajanganaya, Thambuthegama and Thammanawa, 2 from Madampella and 1 from Thibbatugoda. These 35

students are facing many difficulties to go on with their studies, most of them lost their father or/and mother during the war. That is why they were selected by the Sisters serving in these areas. The bicycles were given by a group of people from the business sector. They also provided lunch and snacks for these pupils. The businessmen were accompanied by their families. It was also an occasion to talk about the "Joy of Forgiving" in this year of Mercy. The students had their own activities.



Elders' Day Celebration in South Region 2016

The 29th of October 2016 was a special day for the Residents of the St.Martin's home for disabled elderly at Kotugoda. They had the visit of the Sisters who arranged a breakfast with hoppers, eggs, dhal curry, zeeni sambo and banana. After they had enjoyed their breakfast the 33 residents were given a nicely sewed frock. They were entertained by some songs and they all joined in dancing with the Sisters.



Elders' Day in Kunchukulam and Periya Murrippu

The elders 'day was celebrated on the 23rd. of October in Kunchukulam at St. Angamathu Matha's church. The Elders from Periya Murrippu and Kunchukulam took part in this program. About ninety elders participated. A Mass was celebrated on that day. The elders were surrounded by their grandchildren. Some of them were moved by their gesture. After Mass they were given refreshments and tea.



In the afternoon, they gathered for some games and many of them got prizes. They had soft drinks attended a cultural show given by their grandchildren. At the end of the gathering they were given a dinner and some of them were taken to their homes. They were very happy. There was a good collaboration with the Parish Priest to make of this day a real success. Many of the prizes were given by our Sisters of Kala Oya. We have made the request to have a similar celebration every year.

The Scholarship Day in the South Region

The scholarship day was held on 21st of December 2016 at Tewatte. 39 students, supported by ten of our communities participated. Mr. Pradeep, a qualified trainer in human resources development gave an inspirational demonstration to the students to help them to empower themselves. The students got the opportunity to participate in several games and shared the joy of Christmas.

These students were given a gift voucher to purchase their school shoes and a gift parcel of books and other necessary equipment. All those gifts items were given by some local donators and some of them were present during the gathering.



The Scholarship Day in Kunchukulam

The scholarship day was held on the 12th of December 2016 at Periya Kunchukulam church. There were 6 students coming from Kunchukulam and Sinnapandiwirichchan.

The programme was started with the Eucharistic celebration. After the morning tea the children took part in some activities. All these students were given a gift voucher to purchase their school shoes and a gift parcel of books and other necessary equipment.



The Christmas programme with the TB patients in Welisara hospital

The Sisters attended the official Christmas celebration of the Welisara hospital on the 20th of December 2016. After the Eucharistic celebration in the hospital chapel, they went to visit the wards and sang Christmas carols. Each patient received a gift. The Sisters had the opportunity to give 30 special gift parcels for patients who have no one to look after them.



The sharing of Christmas with the little ones The less privileged 30 little children who are residing close by Tewatte gathered together on the 21st of December 2016 in the nursery hall at Tewatte.



After singing a few carols they were given some refreshments. Then they received their gift parcel from Santa Claus, a generous local donor.



The sharing of Christmas with the school children



50 less privileged school children gathered at the Nattandiya Convent on the 22nd of December 2016 to receive their new school shoes and a gift parcel: 15 were from Irabadagama, 10 from Madampella, 18 from Nattandiya, 7 from Meerigama. A group of Dahampasal teachers (Catechists) from St, Anne's Church Wattala . gave their generous support to provide the school shoes.



In the Anuradhapura Hospital

A Sister is attending to the following needs of the patients:



- ◇ Expressing their sicknesses to doctors when they are unable to do so in Sinhala and English.
- ◇ Finding food, lodging, travelling expenses and other medical needs.
- ◇ Listening and making them feel that they are loved, listened to and cared for.
- ◇ Spiritual needs such as giving communion to the sick and when necessary to look for a priest to administer the sacrament of the sick.



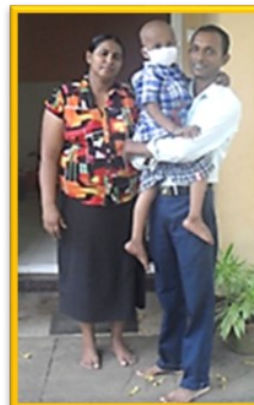
Kotte project

As we told you last year the project was delayed for different reasons. In 2016 we re able to carry out the renovation, the arrangement and the reorganisation of the building.



In a reflection with the Director, Deputy Director and some Matron Officers of the Maharagama Apeksha Hospital (new name for the Cancer Hospital), we talked about the extreme caution to take with children who have leukaemia,

their immune system is very low and the standards in respect to hygiene have changed recently. Our welcoming centre has not the necessary facilities for such patients. They stay in a special place near to the hospital. We can welcome children recovering from leukaemia and other patients, even adults who have nobody to take care of them and who have no place to go. Very often we receive phone calls from the hospital for elderly people who cannot afford to stay elsewhere. We can provide accommodation for 10 adults and 6 children.



The Poultry project in Kunchukulam will start soon.

We are sorry that the project could not be worked out as quickly as we wanted. Three things had to be done before: raise enough money for the project, make an agreement with the Diocese about the land and prepare a group of people to take on the responsibility of this project with the Sisters. Both conditions are now fulfilled and the project will soon be realised. For the rest the farming work is going well. The yoghurt project will start but in a smaller and more artisanal way.

The Sisters also did some fund raising in their own country for several activities, that's why we talked about local benefactors.

They are also working in parishes, schools, a home for the elderly and a retreat house. And throughout all these activities and projects they try to actualise the Charism of the Congregation, being Providence for the poor.

In ending this letter, we want to express our gratitude to all those who support us financially in our country, in Europe and elsewhere. We wish all the best to you and your families.

Sister Merlyn, Regional Superior and the Sisters of Sri Lanka