



September 2022

OPPURAVILLAM

NEWSLETTER 3



When our last Newsletter was sent to you one year ago, Sri Lanka was slowly emerging from two years of disruption, lockdowns, restrictions on gatherings and vaccination campaigns. Covid 19 still dominated local and global headlines with about 900 daily cases in this country and a daily death toll of about 60 while 3 million new cases a week and over 55,000 weekly deaths were being reported worldwide. Sri Lankans were cautiously optimistic that the worst of the pandemic was behind them and were looking forward to a gradual return to 'normality'.

This was not to be as a gathering economic crisis burst into a full blown storm by March of the year. Decades of living beyond means, profligate spending on prestige projects with no returns, misgovernance and institutionalized corruption, all combined to bring down the country to its knees. Sri Lanka defaulted on its external debt, drastically shut down imports, was forced to devalue the currency by a staggering 45% and was compelled to plead for foreign

currency to import fuel, food, cooking gas and medicines. Inflation skyrocketed to over 70% with most food prices increasing two or three-fold. Massive public protests rocked the country and led to the resignation of the President, Prime Minister and the entire Cabinet of Ministers.

Once again the most affected are the poor and vulnerable. The World Food Programme estimates that over 30% of the population are "food insecure" while UNICEF estimates that Sri Lanka has the second highest levels of child malnutrition, with 17% of children suffering from chronic wasting. Education is in crisis with skyrocketing cost of books and other requirements.

Anglican Board of Mission, Australia was among the first faith based institutional bodies to respond to this emergency situation with an emergency grant through the diocese to Oppuravillam. It

helped provide daily nutritional support to

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children, - those attending our preschool and other activities at the Centre. Food ration packs have already been provided to 150 selected needy persons and families, in the vicinity of the Centre, in Nugelanda in the Eastern Province and Deniyaya in the South. In the coming weeks this will be expanded to 200 more families



Pre-school

The multi-lingual pre-school is now in its 5th year of operations. 31 children attend the school which is now being conducted normally after the Covid disruptions. Several special events have taken place, such as a sports day, exhibition, market day, children's day etc., while Saraswathy pooja and Vesak activities were held to mark religious festivals. An educational tour and an year end Nativity Play are planned. The dedication and hard work of the teachers and the Centre Manager with the active involvement of parents have made this a safe place of love, care and learning, Twenty children will leave at the start of the next school year and new enrol-

ments have begun. We are happy that the Provincial Ministry of Education for the North has now recognized and registered our pre-school.



Inter faith



Oppuravillam continues to offer monthly “Dhana” or meals, to the resident monk of the Buddhist temple nearby and maintains an excellent relationship with Kelaniya Kesapa Thero who is very supportive of our work.

Inter-faith celebration: Vesak and Saraswathy Pooja with the Pre-school children



Organic farming



The organic vegetable planting activity which was disrupted due to the pandemic restarted with teachers and children of the preschool joining in. Here's part of the recent harvest of brinjals (egg plant) and okra, shared with the community.

Toys donated to the preschool



Sewing Training Program in Oppuravillam



The 2nd sewing batch began their training in September this year. Once again, a local donor is sponsoring the entire course and has also donated six new sewing machines, while the village Buddhist temple has gifted an Overlock machine. 18 members of the previous group are now making use of their training to produce garments for their families and also for sale to supplement their incomes. This is a National Apprenticeship Board certified vocational training course



The Oppuravillam Manager speaks...

“Working at Oppuravillam is something I see as a gift from God. I believe that this is an extension of the late Thiruvartupani Donald Jayapalan Kanakaratnam’s work. What he planned and began in this location is being continued, and I am privileged to be part of his vision. I hope that I can be part of his theology, *be the people and be with the people*. Since the rededication of the center in 2017, we have begun a number of projects, among them, pre-school where Tamil and Sinhala children are educated together, learning a little from each other’s language and experiencing each other’s customs, culture and festivals. Oppuravillam is also a meeting place for other learning activities, youth work camps and

children’s groups, Sewing training and Savings Groups for women from the community. I have also been able to build very friendly relations with Buddhist temple, other religious and community leaders. Our outreach activities based on Christian teaching of “caring for your neighbour” is central to all the work of the Oppuravillam Center”.



Sivasanthirabos Sureshkumar,
Oppuravillam Manager

Saving with Education Program in Oppuravillam

With 13 members, the first of the Savings with Education (SwE) groups under the Episcopal Relief and Development sponsored “Building Human Resilience” programme is operating well at the Oppuravillam Center. The group named is “Sembarathy”(Shoe Flower - Hibiscus). Members participate in group meetings, make contributions, obtain and repay loans for their needs. The facili-

tator and members have helped to expand to new locations and two new groups have been formed. The Learning part of the programme will begin in the new year so that our goal of knowledge and skills building to make members more resilient is realized. This group has already decided to begin its 2nd year cycle in February 2023.



Digital Learning Program...



... for children, which will be expanded with additional 2 computers provided under a UTO grant. Due to the power crisis and the daily power interruptions of 1-2 hours, our distant English learning program has been stopped temporarily. We hope to restart the classes immediately when the situation comes back to normal

Evening Class in Oppuravillam



Our latest activity is a coaching class for children in Mathematics. Several of them are helped twice weekly in mathematics. We hope to expand this to other subjects such as Science and English in the new year.

Opporavillam ministry in Ponagar



The Counselling Ministry expanded to Ponnagar in the Mullaitivu district but could not be sustained This work needs to be strengthened.

*Thank you to all
Our friends, partners, volunteers and donors.*

Contact us

Write/Telephone/Contact us if you would like to be a friend or partner, or if you simply want to make a comment or learn more about Oppuravillam,

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