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# Impressions

Sri Lanka, when I first arrived, was a bit too much. The hot sticky climate, the noisy swarms of tuktuks that apparently don't follow any traffic laws, the sun beaming in through the inadequate curtains and waking you at 6 AM, the dodgy buns filled with chilli chutney for breakfast, the first day at school where everyone stared at me and during lessons I couldn't even keep a small degree of control, and, probably most of all, the jet lag. All these things made me sink into some sort of tired state where I just thought "I want to go home, eat pizza and sleep" but gradually this wore off. I realised that, far from being a lonely westerner who couldn't talk to anyone, I was in fact the new and exciting neighbourhood sudtha (white person) who everyone wanted to talk to (well, everyone except for girls of a similar age to me at the school, who just giggle and run away whenever you go near). I was also lucky because I am a big cricket fan, and to talk to a Sri Lankan about cricket is usually to talk to a Sri Lankan about his favourite subject, or at least one of them. Although now, in hindsight, I realise that in these early conversations I shouldn't have been so vocal in my claims that England could win the upcoming cricket world cup, as last week Sri Lanka dumped us unceremoniously out of the competition, and ever since I have been bumping into various shopkeepers and people to whom I made these claims and have been greeted by phrases such as "my friend, what happened to England?", "England, go home!" and from the school children a slightly less artful "sir, sir, England" accompanied by a thumbs down and a fart noise. To these various harangues the only real response is

## Country Director's Message



Sri Lankan homes in all parts of the country will unite in one celebration marking the beginning of a New Year on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

A time of festivity where goodwill prevails and is symbolised by the exchange of gifts and food unique to each culture, uniting in one common annual celebration.

Projects Abroad events for the month of April

The medical seminar will be held at the Kethumathi Women's Hospital and the Medical Camp at the Delduwa Temple in Bandaragama all medical volunteer's participation is greatly appreciated.

Projects Abroad monthly get together will be held at Tangerine Beach Hotel in Kaltura this month in celebrating the Sinhala New Year we will be organising the traditional New Year games and sweets, after which you will be served a delicious buffer lunch, please join in the fun.

The outreach for the month will be at the Elders Home and the day will be spent cooking a meal for the inmates and a few activities to make their day memorable.

Enjoy reading this edition

**Shyamalee Wijesinghe**

Country Director

Sri Lanka

to shrug your shoulders, sigh, and shake your head, something that I did so much over the few days after the game that I ended up with a slight stiffness of the neck muscles!

The one thing that has remained reasonably tiring and hard work throughout my time here is the school. One of the reasons for this is the children's insatiable thirst for having their work ticked. I have once or twice tried simply writing the correct answers on the board and getting the children to mark their own work, but oh no, the children have other ideas. What they do is simply copy the correct answers off the board, and



then come to you for a tick anyway. Some children aren't content with just a tick as well, they have better things in mind, they want you to write good on their work and some, the really ambitious ones, want you to draw a star. The average class size is probably about 35-40 pupils, and if in an average lesson you give them ten questions to do then each pupil will want at least ten ticks, and probably a star and a good as well. This means that in a normal lesson you will have to dish out a startling three hundred and fifty ticks, thirty five stars and write the word 'good' thirty five times as well. Now, you are probably thinking "why not just tell them to sit down and not give in to their marking demands?" but this is impossible, believe me, I've tried. Nothing can discourage the Sri Lankan student in the quest for a tick, a good or a star. If you put a teacher with a red pen on one side of the Grand Canyon, and a Sri Lankan child with a book full of correct answers on the other side, believe you me that kid would find a way across. So if you try and ignore them you will very quickly find yourself surrounded by a mob of pupils, each one wrestling to get to the front with desperation and each one waving an exercise book and yelling "sir sir, right" or "sir calluwa" (calluwa meaning star, I think) and eventually you have to give in to the tide, or else risk death by crushing.

This slightly crazy aspect of the Sri Lankan, which is evident in their desire for ticks, is most noticeable at cricket games. When a Sri Lankan enters a cricket stadium they instantly become some sort of raging lunatic. When I went to watch Sri Lanka play New Zealand in the world cup semi final there was one man about my age and sitting just to my left, who spent the entire seven hour game dancing in the very energetic and completely uninhibited manner; the sort of way that you would only find English people doing when very drunk. This was even more impressive as, for about three and a half of those hours, he was in direct sunlight and absolutely drenched in sweat. I think the best way of describing his condition would be "drunk on the love of the game". Although this guy was the extreme case, most of the crowd had a milder form of the same thing. When Sri Lanka finally won, such was the wave of happiness that swept round the stadium that even the beaten kiwi fans looked happy, I think it is impossible to be grumpy when surrounded by such happiness.

Patrick Lambton – UK – Thimbirigaskatuwa School

# Medical Camp – Delduwa Ancient Temple

The Medical Camp in April was organized by Projects Abroad with the assistance of Lions Club International at Delduwa Ancient Temple, Waskaduwa on 23rd April. The event was very successful and big crowd attended. Check photos below to see how our volunteers contributed to the event.



# 'Don't expect to get anything in return when volunteering'

*"The year 2011 marks the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in 2001. There's opportunities throughout 2011 to showcase the diversity, breadth and depth of volunteering worldwide, raise the profile of volunteering and mobilize many more volunteers."*

**This article was published in Sunday Island Newspaper. Written by Projects Abroad Journalism Volunteers Maya Bille and Geraldine Bouvry**

"Volunteerism is the driving force to achieve major changes" This was part of the message which the Minister of Social Services, Felix Perera delivered at the 'V' (or 'Volunteer') Forum. The great diversity of volunteers in Sri Lanka was celebrated at the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) at the 'V' Forum in Colombo on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found this a golden opportunity to gather a broad range of stakeholders to network, be inspired, inspire and foster a national dialogue towards strengthening the volunteerism spirits and actions in Sri Lanka.

The plenary speakers consisted of UNDP Resident Representative, Douglas Keh, the Guest of Honour, Felix Perera, Project Director Training for Trusteeship WICPER, Neshan Guneseekara, IYV 2001 – Goodwill Ambassador Rosy Senanayake, Founder of Foundation for Goodness, Kushil Guneseekara, UN Global Compact Focal point for Sri Lanka, Ravi Fernando and supporting on video, Vice Captain of the Sri Lankan Cricket Team, Mahela Jayawardena.

The international Year of Volunteers was a success and volunteerism has gained a remarkable ground in the past decade. Douglas Keh said that he sees the 'V' Forum as a kick off event to keep the ball of success rolling. He said that volunteerism is key to reach the goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The goals aim for improvements of maternal health, reductions in child mortality, empowerment of women, eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, achieving universal primary education, ensuring environmental sustainability, combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, plus creating a global partnership for development.

"This year is about helping all of us in this room, in this country, at a global level to change the way we live. Volunteerism is about raising awareness, sensitising, inspiring and mobilising." Keh said about the IYV+10.

The speakers at the meeting all agreed that a bright future for volunteerism demands a change of mindset: "Don't expect to get anything in return when volunteering". However, "as long as you do small things with great love, this is what matters", K. Guneseekara said.

"How happy we are depends on how happy others are because of us", Keh reminded the audience.

"Volunteerism is about making people smile and feel good. At the end of the day what you sow is what you reap," Rosy Senanayake said.

This idea that volunteering calls for dedication was also sensed in Guneseekara's words, when he said "volunteering is deeply rooted in culture and religion". He took the example of the "good shepherd who lays down his life to save his flock".

There was also a request from the speakers to combine efforts to achieve the volunteering projects' goals. Gunesakara asked corporations to get involved in volunteering projects and to maintain dedication on the long-term. This is not only about establishing projects, he stressed. This is about 'building, operating and transferring' he said. On the same line, Perera also called the government and the volunteering organisations to work side by side on those projects and gather their efforts.

Of course, volunteering has to be carried out while ensuring sustainability, said Fernando. "You don't own your planet", he stressed.

Although this Forum was primarily about celebrating the numerous volunteering activities across the country, there was an urge for action. "It is time to act", said Guneseakara.

"You can make the difference, be the change", he added. How to make this difference? "We should all aim for one project a month".

## Donations

**Anna Lundberg** from Sweden donated approximately Rs.200,000 and used for the following tasks.

- Thank you ANNA

- Welapitiya, Clean up and repaired the playground including fence
- Painted and decorated walls
- Planted some plants
- Bought holidays Gifts, toys & Stationary for the children
- Bought paints and painted chairs and tables
- Built the kitchen (purchased Gas cooker and kitchen equipments)
- Organised a trip to national zoo and paid full cost
- Arranged a Christmas party at tsunami camp
- Bought sports equipments (Cricket, badminton and volleyball) toys
- Paid for afternoon trip to Panadura Beach with tea party.
- Planted plants and vegetable seeds
- Provided three doctors, dentist, eye doctor and ENT doctor

- Tooth brushes and tooth-paste for all the children
- Dentist treatment (Rs.60000 doctor's charges)
- Medicine glasses for children - Rs.9300
- Money - Welapitiya
- Gas and food Welapitiya cooking (2250 x 3) =Rs.6750
- Money donation to Sri Rathanaramaya - Panadura Rs.25,000/=
- Welapitiya Temple - paid for local teacher's one month salary Rs.8000/=
- Mattress 5 for babies 17500
- Sri Rathanaramaya - stationary and story books



### Donations

- Projects Abroad donated Rs 20,000/= to the State Detention Home & Malamulla Community Centre Sinhala New Year celebrations

### Janet Tate

- Monthly sponsorship for the tsunami children

## New Year fun “Ayurudu Uthsawa” Games

Projects Abroad managed to arrange two Ayurudu Uthsawa in two locations where our volunteers work. Namely State Detention Home and Malamulla Community Centre. Volunteers who participated in these events are pictured here in both locations.



# What you always wanted to know about... Colombo!

## Launch of first Colombo City Guide book, by Juliet Coombe and Lasantha David

2.30 p.m. Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, Galle Face Hotel

A red double-decker bus is parked on Galle Face Hotel's car park. We are not in London though and more than ready to get on board of a Colombo City Tour bus with well-known British publisher Juliet Coombe. Juliet is running a publishing house called 'Sri Serendipity Publishing' based in Galle Fort. With co-author Lasantha David, she will be officially launching and signing off the first Colombo guide book, called '7° Colombo City Guide', on Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, in Odel. The book will then be launched in 40 other countries.

Before the official launch date, the press was invited to get a live preview of Colombo's most famous sites and secret places through an exclusive City Bus Tour. Of course, the '7° Colombo City Guide' was to be unveiled by the end of the journey...

This initiative is unique and the first of its sort. The Sri Lankan capital had never aroused touristic interest in the past, mainly due to the civil war and the numerous blockages within the city, Juliet explains. "No photographs were allowed for 30 years!" she adds. Moreover, visitors always preferred to focus on the greener parts of Sri Lanka.

However, with her persevering nature and can-do spirit, Juliet decided to bring to light Colombo's worthy historical patrimony and unknown charms, all of them to be captured in this original guide book. She explains that she started off this project just after the war and carried out much research. Essentially, she spent most of her time wandering the capital streets. She walked for six months, used all types of transports and carried out 2000 interviews! Nobody really believed in her project, she comments. 'You are crazy, nobody will buy such a book!' people kept hammering to her.

Here we are today though, privileged guests of this Colombo tour with Dudley Perera at the microphone, the 'best guide in Colombo', Juliet says.

To set the spirit of this special tour and of what her City guide book is going to reveal, Juliet starts off by distributing cup cakes, freshly coming from the 'Quintessence of Spun Sugar' shop, a recommended sweet retreat, in Colombo 7.

The journey takes us first through the Fort area with views on the old Clock Tower which used to be Colombo's Lighthouse, the Presidential House, Cargills and the Grand Oriental Hotel, the second oldest hotel in the city. We then pass by the Harbour and Pettah, St John's fish market, and we get a glimpse of the oldest Mosque in Colombo, Jami-UI-Alfar, nested in a narrow street. We then reached the Hindu area (populated by Indian Tamils) marked with its colourful temples and lastly Kotahena, an area mainly occupied by Catholics, featuring St Lucia's Cathedral, Sri Lanka's biggest church.

Our bus then pulled over for its first interactive stop in the Warehouse Project, Maradana, Colombo 10.

The Warehouse Project is a hidden 'green-house warehouse' type of building, filled with smiley kids and dedicated volunteers. The association works towards three main goals: 'Eat' to provide food for everyone, 'Borderless' which promotes social and cultural interactions between children from different backgrounds, and lastly, 'Life' and its access to healthcare for everyone.

We are now hopping back in our bus to continue our journey towards the exclusive residential and diplomatic streets of Colombo 7.

And this is what this bus tour reveals: Colombo is a permanent clash of cultures, religions, modern and old architecture, fashion and tradition.

We pass by the recognisable National Hospital, the famous retailing shop Odel to eventually reach our next 'sweet' stop over, the coffee shop Coco Veranda. This small but blissful place offers a wide range of teas and coffees along with treats, all served by friendly staff. Nothing comparable with chain-coffee shops! Talking to Sarath Sathiamoorthy, manager of the place, his wish was to reproduce the atmosphere of London's coffee shops. Coco Veranda has now been opened for more than one year. The place works well and its situation, two minutes walk from Odel, helps in attracting customers, explains Sarath. Upon our arrival, we are being brought canapés and iced coffees. Unfortunately, the journey must go on...

Our bus drives us past the 'White House' city hall, the massive but delicate Dewatagaha Mosque and the well-known Viharamahadevi Park. We cannot miss the 'lotus-shaped' Opera House (and exhibition centre), the largest in South Asia, our guide Dudley underlines. We eventually reach the busy and crowded Galle Road to quickly escape again and pause in a peaceful cul-de-sac where the Casa hotel is nested.

Who would have guessed that, just off Galle Road, there could be such a retro-chic hotel, blending contemporary design with the charms of a magnificent 200 year old Moorish mansion? There, Horst Schmidtke, General Manager, welcomes us with kind words, iced teas and donuts.

We head off to our last and final destination, Bayleaf restaurant, an old colonial house on Gregory's Road in Colombo 7, which specialises in Italian food.

There, the press-launch of Juliet and Lasantha's '7° Colombo City Guide' is eventually happening and wraps up this atypical journey through the city.

As for the bus tour, Juliet explains that it will go on at the weekends at first, with expert guides on board.

Tourists and locals, watch your bookshop shelves then and get this guide book for 3500 RPS, the price to discover the Sri Lankan capital from a new angle! - By Geraldine Bouvry

## Upcoming Volunteers' Corner



I don't know how to start. All in all I'm a happy girl brought up in a European environment in Luxembourg who's been living, for the past two years, in Denmark. I'm from a mixed home (Danish on my mother's side and French-Greek-Moroccan on my father's side) and have one twin brother. I just turned 20 on April 18<sup>th</sup> and am giving myself this amazing journey.

I like sunny weather, Ben & Jerry's cookie dough ice cream (I discovered it 3 weeks ago, so I'm still in an overexcited state) and am a sport fanatic (dance and basketball mainly although I hide it very well). I'm a pre-graduate student from Denmark and am hoping to get into medical School this fall. Taking on a medical voluntary stay came naturally. When I was 12 my mom bought the old M\*A\*S\*H 4077<sup>th</sup> series on DVD and for a highly impressionable little girl, it turned my world upside down. Ever since I dream of becoming a surgeon and travelling the world.

Why I chose Sri Lanka is a mystery. It's a little like twirling a globe and whilst closing your eyes, putting your finger on it and hoping not to land in the Pacific Ocean. All I knew when I started looking was: it had to be medicine and it had to be sunny. I went to Projects Abroad's information meeting here in Aarhus and spoke with a girl who had been to Sri Lanka. She seemed so amazed by it so I went home and started the application!

Even if I can only stay a month I hope to learn a lot; to get an insight into medicine and hospital work and furthermore, to see and visit Sri Lanka every chance I get. I know that I'll learn a lot and I hope that I can, in any way, give back and be of help wherever I get sent.

Greetings from Katrine

Hi!

My name is Eileen and I'm 19 years old. I live in a small village in Germany with my parents.

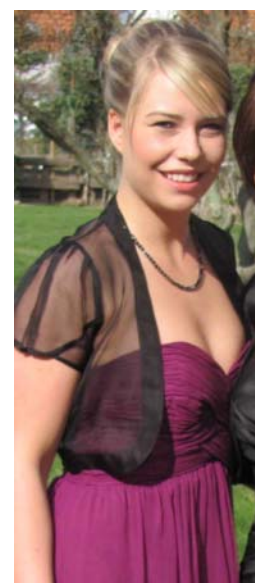
In March I took my A-levels and now I want to make new experiences before studying and further developing myself. So I decided to spend 3 months in Sri Lanka on a teaching project because in October I want to study teaching as a profession.

Furthermore I want to become acquainted with another culture, new people and another way of live.

So I surfed the internet and found Projects Abroad.

The decision was quickly made and I'm looking forward to it.

Eileen



Hi

My name is Marika, I'm 19 and I am from Kent, South East England. I'm currently on my gap year working as a face painter, lifeguard, music teacher, waitress and sales assistant.

I have just secured a place at medical school for this September, and really want to get a little taster of the career that I have chosen. I have managed to obtain some UK based work experience, but was not allowed to do or see many procedures due to insurance and health and safety issues.

My uncle fell in love with Sri Lanka some years ago and now runs an eco-tourism company based in Kandy. I have heard so much about this beautiful country and decided to experience it for myself.

I hope that I will be of some use to the doctors and patients when I arrive; I have a national pool lifeguard qualification and emergency first aid qualification, which I regularly update. I am a fast learner, but I have a feeling I am going to find the language barrier difficult. I love working with children and am looking forward to the paediatric unit. In fact I'm looking forward to everything; staying with a host family, learning about a different culture, learning about life in a busy Sri Lankan hospital, the works!

At home I live with my parents and little sister, but my older sister lives just round the corner with her fiancé and gorgeous new baby. We are very food and family orientated as my dad is half Italian; I can't wait to try the delicious Sri Lankan cuisine.

Looking forward to meeting you all - Marika



Hi everyone!

My name is Joanna and I am 18 years old. I live in Scotland and I am currently a full time college student. I work weekends at a nursing home as an Auxiliary Nurse where I started to gain experience in the nursing profession. I will be beginning university after the summer to study an Adult Nursing Honours Degree. I am really looking forward to beginning my studies and training to become a registered nurse.

I have dreamed of travelling for as long as I can remember and now that I have the time and opportunity, it was just a case of deciding where to go and what to do.

Projects Abroad seemed to offer the solution with the opportunity to travel and get care and nursing experience. Next I had to choose where to go; Sri Lanka's reputation of warm, friendly people and a beautiful country drew me in so that's where I'm headed this summer!

I am so excited to immerse myself in a culture and country completely different to my own and experience the challenges that may come my way. I can't wait to meet some other volunteers, my host family and the Projects Abroad team.

Joanna



# My time in Sri Lanka

On November 23<sup>rd</sup> I left Sweden for the volunteer work in Sri Lanka I'd been waiting for for so long. Three months later I arrived home, overwhelmed with feelings, experiences and memories for life. This is the story about the indescribable time there between!

Sri Lanka completely embraced me with its pulsing, wild and exotic spirit of life, mixed with the peacefulness in the Buddhism that permeates both people and society. The island offers everything from breathtaking nature and beautiful beaches to fantastic culture and ancient ruins. You can discover it by eating the amazing food with your hands while your mouth is burning from the spices, by going in a tuktuk through the crazy traffic and passing cows calmly walking in the middle of the chaos by seeing young boys attend monkhood and understand the story of a young monk's life or in a thousand other ways. Best of all is through the people of Sri Lanka, whose curiosity (10 questions in two minutes!) and genuine friendliness don't have any limits.

I was placed in Panadura, in the wonderful host family of Bandara. From the first day I was taken care of like a family member and they became something that actually felt like a safe harbour in the stream of new experiences. The kindness and helpfulness they showed me was incredible. Somewhere in all the chats, cooking and Sinhala lessons, temple visits and caring gestures I found a second family!

As a care-volunteer I had two placements. In the mornings I worked on Welapitiya Montessori by assisting the teachers with the around twenty children at pre-school age. After the worship and singing to Buddha that started every day, we sang, played, drew, and did handcrafts and other pedagogic activities. Ever, if neither the teachers nor the children spoke English, we found a way to communicate (a smile helps a lot) and often I had the opportunity to do my own activities with them. I didn't feel like I could really give the children something, but they showed me their happiness and gratefulness for the things I did, always smiling and fighting about my attention, holding my hands and to sit in my lap.

In the afternoon I worked on Modarawila Tsunami Camp with children from 5-16 years old, something totally different as I actually (more or less) could communicate with many of them in English. First we had English teaching, or some days handcrafts, and I had the freedom to do my lessons however and about whatever I wanted. After this it was play time, when we did games, played sports (cricket of course) and were outside on the playground. It was always a varied and great time!

One evening I and another volunteer visited the small Sri Rathnaramaya Temple, and suddenly we found ourselves starting English teaching there four nights a week. The rest of my time on Sri Lanka I was working in the morning, the afternoon and now also on my spare time in the evening, something I never regretted. I often did extra classes at the temple and starting this English teaching is one of the things I am most proud of! The group of two monks and four other boys connected to the temple, aging from 14 to 22 but with different knowledge, quickly expanded with both children and adults. Teaching here was truly amazing as everyone who came to the class really wanted to learn English. I loved every second (me who hated to talk in front of groups before I came to Sri Lanka) and I deeply felt like I really made a difference!

During my time on Sri Lanka I also did different projects on my own. With the trust from the giving people and organisations in Sweden, I had free hands to do whatever I thought was needed with this money, all in all 288 573 rupies. It was a very hard (and time-consuming) but at the same time fantastic work to choose who and how I wanted to help. But I did a lot... When I came to the Montessori I didn't find so many things for the children to enjoy, barely any toys and a totally broken-down playground. So I repaired the playground and cleaned up all the rubbish and weeds. I planted some new trees and flowers and with some help from other volunteers I (with many reversals) painted the whole wall and decorated it with everything from the alphabet to animals and flowers. I bought material and toys, painted the chairs and table and suddenly it was a much more child friendly and cheerful place. I also built a kitchen, yes from the ground (!), and bought all the necessary equipment. This gave the children a healthy meal every day and made it a lot easier for their families. Before I left, I arranged it so Welapitiya Temple gives the food once a week and Projects Abroad two days a week.

One day filled a whole bus with children, mothers and some siblings and went for an enjoyable day at the zoo (and returned totally exhausted with sleeping children). At the Tsunami Camp the children needed something to do, so besides toys and other material, I also bought equipment for badminton, volleyball and of course their favourite, cricket, which scored highly

at both the great day we went to the beach and at the playtime every afternoon. I also planted some new flower bushes on the area and five different vegetable seeds in a plot behind the building. But best of all were the afternoons when I brought two doctors and a dentist to check all the children's ears, eyes and teeth. We created a waiting room with entertainment from the volunteers, where, under much laughter, the children were shown how to brush their teeth and actually had great fun, even if the children were quite nervous in front of the doctors. Before I left, I bought a pair of glasses a boy had needed for so long and gave money to pay all the ridiculously expensive dentistry treatments (27 of 32 children). Besides all these projects and some other small ones, the money also went to two temples. The children monks at Welapitiya Temple, that I got in close contact with through a friend, got a few mattresses so they didn't need to sleep on the floor anymore and I also paid a English teacher to have classes with them the month there wasn't a volunteer. For my evening class at Sri Rathnaramaya I bought dictionaries and storybooks to encourage their learning and finally, I also gave a big donation to the fantastic social work the chief priest there tries to do.

I left home full of enthusiasm and excitement, very determined to discover the genuine Sri Lanka. My first weekends brought me to paradise beaches, national parks, the cultural Kandy, mysterious Sigiriya and around in the hill country. Most memorable is when I, at 2 am on Christmas Eve, climbed Sri Pada, three and a half hours of stairs, stairs, some tee-huts and more stairs... The rain was pouring down, which made us climb in flip flops like the local people, and quickly we were completely soaked. Every five minutes we stopped under a lamp for a leech-check but after what felt like a lifetime we finally reached the freezing top. I've never ever felt so miserable before. In the morning we were exhausted and came down with hurting feet, shaking legs and water still dripping from our clothes. Still there is something that makes this trip special. Maybe it is the fact that we did it in these circumstances. Maybe it is the incredible view and the spirit around this holy mountain where the butterfly comes to die. Maybe it is the faith I saw in the faces of the climbing people, from children to barely walking elders. I suggest that you find out yourself (hopefully in better weather)!

Somewhere in the middle of my journey something started to change and the round trips left place for Panadura in my discovering of Sri Lanka. Staying home made it possible to spend even more time with my host family, to learn the traditional cooking and experience their way of life. I did extra English lessons, went to the Sunday school and spent time at Sri Rathnaramaya Temple plus visited other temples. I participated in the religious celebration of the full moon day, went on a road trip to a wild monastery in the jungle with the monks, was invited to the rare ceremony when boys attend monkhood and saw the big Pera hera in Colombo. I went on adventures with my dedicated tuk tuk-driver, I visited families and students both inside and outside the Tsunami Camp, I took the time to inhale the atmosphere on the streets around me and I could carry out and finish all my private projects in the way I wanted to. Through the local people I got to see the genuine Sri Lanka, just like I so deeply wanted, and, for me, understanding and taking part in these people's lives was the richest experience I could ever get. Projects Abroad offers a great opportunity to connect with volunteers from all parts of the world, which from time to time was a helpful support for me, but mostly I'm really proud and grateful for the balance I found between that and the Sri Lankans.

My volunteering in Sri Lanka gave me more than I ever dreamt. Like the cliché, it opened my eyes to different ways of life and showed me a whole new world I didn't know anything about before. I not only saw, I even understood and shared the simple life with the people and also got an insight into the life in a Buddhism temple. I learned incredible amounts and experienced things I never thought I would; I even got the enjoyment to learn a bit Sinhala and still I sometimes can exclaim "Ayooo" or do the head wobbling (and confuse everybody). It definitely made me stronger because, to be honest, it wasn't easy all the time. The impossible language barriers in some situations, the constant dirt and heat (except the escape in the ice cold showers), the open staring from people everywhere you go, to always being the one sticking out from the crowd... But even these things that were hard in the beginning became a part of the Sri Lanka I so deeply fell in love with. What can possibly be better than waking up every morning, knowing that the day will bring new fantastic adventures? And just to see the people's smile and the expression in their eyes was enough, they give so much back. I really think that I, not only with my projects, but also with just my open mindedness and genuine interest in their lives, made a lasting impression. And nothing could make me happier!

So don't be afraid of choosing your own way. I know that my time in Sri Lanka was quite different from other volunteers' experiences, but if you open your heart to Sri Lanka you will get the time of your life either way you take!

By Anna Lundberg – Sweden – Welapitiya Temple

# Beef Mustard Curry (Sri Lankan Style)

## **Ingredients:**

500 g beef (top side or rump steak) cut in to cubes

3 tsp chilli powder

1 tsp saffron

1 tsp coriander raw powder

1 tsp cumin powder

2 tsp mustard seeds ground

5 tsp vegetable oil

Salt to taste

1 tsp pepper powder

Large onion - sliced

2 fresh green chillies - chopped

3 cloves garlic - chopped

small piece of ginger - chopped

Lemon grass (optional) - chopped

2 tsp tomato paste

3 tsp lime juice

½ - 1 cup milk

5 curry leaves (optional)



## **Method:**

Add all ingredients with the beef, except the lime juice, mustard and milk.

Mix all together and cook in a slow fire for about 15 minutes. Then add ½ a cup of water and leave to cook for another 10 minutes.

Add the lime juice, mustard and milk and cook for a further 10 minutes until the meat is well absorbed with the gravy.

Serve with rice.

# Even a "smile" can speak a thousand words!

It was finally the dawn of March 25th, the day I was really looking forward to. I was pretty excited from the time I woke up but by the time I reached our office at Austin Place, the ever so active Charley beat me to it as he had already finished packing boxes of paint and brushes into the vehicle! And my other colleagues Bianca, Marie and Katie were waiting for me and in a matter of minutes we were on our way to the outreach program at Sukitha Children's Orphanage situated in Kalutara, on the southern edge of the western province of Sri Lanka.

While we were caught in the busy morning traffic along the Galle Road, we enjoyed Charley switching the radio channels every five minutes and nibbling on the yummy bran crackers (I must add it was a very healthy choice!). En route there were a few pick up points to gather all the volunteers, namely in Panadura and Wadduwa. We then turned inland and headed to Galpatha where Sukitha Children's Orphanage is located. Founded back in 1976, Sukitha Children's Orphanage is one of the few special schools for the differently abled girls and women in Sri Lanka. This is the home for a number of girls of all ages with different physical and emotional abilities as well as special learning needs.

As we entered the premises, the tiredness brought on by the journey was soon ended by the bright smiley faces of the girls! They were clapping and happily screaming out making gestures that surely meant to welcome all of us... Some of them held on to our hands while the others carried chairs bigger than them to make us sit. They used the only few words that they knew to have a conversation with us and all of us were addressed as "teacher". There were also a couple of boys and we got to know that they too were in the home, probably because the other homes did not accept them. Sunil, one of the boys, was over-joyed as always with our presence and oh boy, he too was down with the cricket fever! From the minute we got there, he was making batting and bowling gestures & wanted to play cricket with one of our volunteers.

We started off our day's work by sweeping and cleaning their dining room to start the painting jobs. Some of us staff members took the duty of sand papering the walls while the volunteers started off with the painting. Even some of the resident girls who were capable joined us in the fun... We sure did have fun with paint droplets all over us and some of us even had little blobs of yellow paint on our hair. The guys took up the job of painting the ceiling and the high parts of the walls, whereas we shorter-beings took on the lower walls and the grills on the windows. The sweaty warm day did not stop us... We finished our day by handing over a freshly painted dining room for the Sukitha Children's Orphanage and also the wish tree made especially for the home by some of the volunteers!!!

It was quite a sad moment when the time came for us to leave... But the whole experience was sure worth it because the smiles we received from the time we got to Sukitha Children's Orphanage were still on those happy glowing faces on all the kids and we knew they wanted us to come back. And I will make sure I pay them a visit again, just to see those smiles. J

Kishani Samarakoon



# Outreach Programme Leela Hapuarachchi Elders' Home

On **Friday, April 29th** we help an **outreach day**, where many volunteers in Sri Lanka joined for **cooking and arms giving**. The selected place was Leela Hapuarachchi Elders' Home - Gampaha. There are 45 elders and the home depend on donations of villagers. On request of Ruchira - our colleague in the IT team, we organized the outreach at this home and it was the first time we organized an outreach at an elders' home.



# Nadinne Remacle : Mon expérience sri lankaise

Bonjour à tous et à toutes. Me voilà de retour du Sri Lanka et enfin je prends ma plume pour vous remercier de votre générosité, de vos encouragements, de vos dons et merci car ce projet qui me tenait très à cœur, j'ai pu le réaliser. Je n'ai pas pu vous écrire plus tôt, tellement mes émotions étaient fortes. Ce que je retiens de cette expérience, c'est l'humilité, l'humanité, le désir de venir en aide aux autres plus petits que soi, la souffrance, l'altruisme, le désir de comprendre et de partager les cultures différentes, la misère, ces yeux qui questionnent, ces regards nous prenant aux tripes et malgré tout, ces sourires toujours présents...

Même avec mes proches je ne pouvais m'exprimer, tellement que ce que je ressentais était poignant. Isabelle est venue avec votre argent pour le donner aux enfants et même avec elle je suis restée muette, impossible de me libérer de tant de souffrances emmagasinées depuis 2 mois dans mon cœur, difficile d'expliquer le besoin d'amour de ces enfants, difficile d'expliquer pourquoi une petite peluche dans les bras d'un enfant pourrait le rassurer (surtout quand on a soi-même été à l'orphelinat), difficile d'expliquer pourquoi un enfant te regarde et s'accroche à toi, les yeux pleins de larmes.

Et pourtant des sourires, j'en ai eu car grâce à vous, j'ai pu apporter un peu de bonheur à ces 92 enfants (petits-moyens-adolescents-presque adultes mais toujours des enfants). Avant mon retour en Belgique, chaque enfant a reçu un sac plastique avec son prénom... et oui pour les filles, un sac avec des nouveaux vêtements, jupe, chemisier, collier, shampoing pour les poux, savon, talc, sandales, savon lessive, ballon à gonfler, bonbons, biscuits, brosse à dent, dentifrice, IDEM pour les garçons sauf que la jupe était remplacée par un sarong (espèce de longue jupe qu'ils mettent pour dormir, idéal quand on a la gale, car ça permet à la peau de respirer et les shorts ne gênent plus sur les lésions), et le chemisier par un tee-shirt.

A mon arrivée, j'avais déjà donné tout le matériel scolaire, bics, crayons noirs et de couleurs, ciseaux, papiers couleurs, papiers dessins, peintures, taille-crayons, gommes, livres à colorier, dictionnaire anglais avec illustrations, nombreuses photocopies, marqueurs de couleurs, lattes, formes géométriques, etc. Pour les enfants, en fin de matinée, j'organisais toujours une tournante avec des jeux de sociétés, jeu de dame, petits chevaux, mémorisation, ou simplement un peu de gymnastique ou des chants mais je pense que ce qu'ils aimaient le plus c'étaient des magazines (trouvés dans des hôtels) qu'ils pouvaient découper et coller sur du papier.

Les après-midis, nous faisons place à des activités sportives, j'avais acheté des ballons, des raquettes de badminton, des raquettes de plages, et puis, un sifflet entre les lèvres, j'organisais des tournantes pour les éventuels jaloux, ou simplement on jouait à la chaise musicale. Celui qui gagnait pouvait posséder le sifflet au tour suivant, j'avoue que j'ai eu pas mal de fous rires avec les enfants, avant mon départ les enfants ont reçu des battes de cricket car au Sri Lanka c'est un jeu national comme le football chez nous.

J'avais repéré une petite fille vraiment myope, je suis allée voir le directeur et 1 semaine plus tard, elle portait des lunettes. Un sourire immense émanait de la bouche de cette enfant quand elle a reçu ses lunettes. Tous les enfants ont été pris en photo, et chacun a reçu sa photo que j'avais fait développer, il y a eu quelques petits problèmes car les plus âgés des garçons et des filles avaient échangé leurs photos, mais bon, ça arrive!

Un jeune homme du village a dû être opéré, j'espère que vous ne m'en voudrez pas d'avoir aidé aussi cette famille qui ne faisait pas partie de l'orphelinat, j'ai aussi aidé financièrement la famille qui avait besoin de médicaments, malgré toutes les huiles essentielles que j'avais prise avec moi ce n'était pas suffisant.

Et bien me voilà au bout de mon récit, j'aimerais encore vous dire mille fois merci. Je remercie tout particulièrement Isabelle, Marcelle, Adrienne, Michelle et son amie, Anne-Sophie, Thomas, tous ceux qui activement m'ont aidée pour le spaghetti, merci ! Je vous embrasse tous très fort.

NADINNE REMACLE – France – SDC Galle

# Ma vie de volontaire au Sri Lanka

Je suis restée au Sri Lanka pendant deux mois, j'y ai passé un très bon séjour. Je travaillais dans un orphelinat. Le Sri Lanka est un bel endroit et les sri lankais des gens vraiment adorables. Il règne une certaine sérénité dans ce pays que j'ai vraiment appréciée.

Vivre dans une famille sri lankaise s'est révélé être une expérience vraiment sympathique, c'est une découverte du style de vie très profonde... Je partageais la maison avec d'autres volontaires, ce qui bien sûr était aussi très agréable.

La nourriture : moi qui craignais la *spicy food* et qui par conséquent espérais perdre quelques kilos au passage, et bien je me suis trompée... J'ai trouvé la nourriture très bonne (bon pour être honnête, il est clair qu'au bout d'un mois tu es aussi contente de trouver des supermarchés avec du fromage, des yaourts, de l'huile d'olive et du vin bien sûr...)

La ville de Galle est également sympathique, on y trouve tout ce dont on a besoin, sans jamais aller très loin.

Je travaillais dans un orphelinat à Galle avec des enfants de 0 à 5 ans. Si je peux me permettre de donner un conseil : en lisant les témoignages ou les avis d'anciens volontaires, on peut arriver avec des préjugés (ça été le cas pour moi), je pense que l'on est tous apte à juger par nous-même, et que selon les individus, on peut être plus ou moins gênés par différentes choses. J'avais lu des trucs horribles sur cet orphelinat, alors tout n'est pas rose c'est clair, mais il ne faut pas oublier de prendre en compte la différence de culture et le manque de moyens. Le rapport avec les personnes qui travaillent à l'orphelinat est en premier lieu assez froid, mais avec le temps, en essayant de communiquer, on arrive à des rapports plutôt sympathiques...

Les enfants, parlons-en : j'ai passé deux mois avec des enfants entre 0 et 5 ans. C'était ma première expérience avec les enfants et d'autant plus dans un orphelinat. Il y avait d'un côté les enfants entre 0 et 2 - 3 ans, dont je m'occupais le matin : la douche, les vêtements, et puis les jeux... Il est clair que les jouets ne sont pas nombreux, j'en avais acheté quelques-uns que je récupérais tous les jours, pour être sûre de les retrouver le lendemain. Ensuite, j'allai m'occuper des plus grands entre 3 et 5 ans à l'école. J'ai commencé par demander leurs prénoms à la maitresse. La classe avec les plus grands a été pour moi la chose la plus difficile car ils sont en âge de jouer à différents types de jeu mais la difficulté de communiquer empêche tout ça... On a ensuite eu l'idée de constituer des petits groupes (un enfant pour un volontaire) pour faire toutes sortes d'activités : du découpage, des masques, des couronnes, des chapeaux, avons en papier et là c'était que du bonheur, on avait droit à toutes leurs attentions, toutes leurs concentrations, et de plus ces moments créaient beaucoup d'affinités avec les enfants...

L'après-midi, je retournai avec les plus petits pour simplement passer du temps avec eux, les prendre dans les bras pour les très petits, pour les autres et bien simplement les sortir de leur lits (et oui sans les volontaires beaucoup d'entre eux passent un temps considérable dans leur lit), les apprendre à faire quelques pas, pour certains même, leur apprendre carrément à marcher... ou simplement répondre à ces bras qui se tendent lorsqu' ils vous aperçoivent...

Les week-ends, on s'organisait avec les autres volontaires, certaines fois c'était *farniente* à la plage et d'autres on partait visiter le pays : Kandy, Adams' peak, Yala parc, Sigiriya, Dambula, l'orphelinat des éléphants, Nuwara Eliya le pays du thé, et une bonne partie de la côte entre Galle et Colombo. Le train, le bus, le *tuk tuk*, tous ces moyens vraiment pas chers et très typiques qui nous emmenaient partout...

On a eu également l'occasion d'aller manger au resto, de fêter nos anniversaires, de fêter chaque départ, de se faire inviter dans certaines familles d'accueil où on a passé vraiment de bonnes soirées!!! Et puis il y avait aussi les journées organisées par Projects Abroad, des journées où on avait l'occasion de tous se rencontrer, soit pour une mission comme repeindre les écoles, ou simplement pour passer du bon temps ensemble...

Je suis très contente d'avoir réalisé ce séjour, et je suis satisfaite d'avoir choisi Projects Abroad, ils m'ont donné une certaine assurance avant départ, qui était indispensable pour moi, avec un interlocuteur très réactif à toutes mes demandes. Sur place, lorsque j'avais besoin d'une information, il me suffisait de les appeler, les contacts avec le personnel étant très faciles...

Un seul regret : ne pas avoir plus de temps à consacrer à ces enfants, mais je ne suis pas sûre que l'on puisse tenter ce genre d'expérience sans jamais y revenir... Alors oui je vous encourage tous et toutes à vous lancer dans cette belle aventure!!!

Nathalie Camberlin – France – Ruhunu Orphanage