

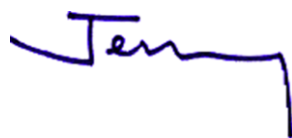
Dear Star Action Supporters,

I have recently returned from Sri Lanka and India, and bring good news about our projects. Thanks to you, Pawalam (our destitute war widow) had her new house built before the rainy season started. Your response to this EMERGENCY APPEAL enabled us to act swiftly to help her. See inside also for progress of our other Sri Lankan projects and new things we have identified for further support.

I am also happy to report that a Sri Lankan journalist came to meet me to hear about our work and see the TEN TOILETS now completed in the very poor village near Negombo. His article has appeared in a number of papers.

I also visited India and spent happy days with our family there (see inside).

Thank you again for all your support.



On behalf of our four Star Action Trustees

Stuart, Joan & Kate



Richard and Sasees: amazing house-parents



Shirani outside her new toilet



Off to school – all in one auto-rickshaw



Richard serving dinner at Save the Babies

I N D I A

OUR CHILDREN'S HOME IN TAMIL NADU



Our new house is getting on well. The outer shell of the building is completed and will provide spacious accommodation

for boys and girls to be housed separately, but all joining together in the communal rooms.

The location is perfect, being at the end of a new residential development, on raised ground with good views all around. It is adjacent to designated government recreational land so will not have other new buildings appearing nearby.

The doors and windows are being fitted now and all the electrical work will then begin. After that there is the plastering and tiling.

We have launched a special appeal to help us finish this project.

(See special appeal flyer.)



MORE ABOUT OUR STB FAMILY

Since our last visit we have 4 new children in our Save the Babies family.



New government regulations mean we cannot take children under

3 years old but our work is so well respected that our house parents, Richard and Sasees,



are regularly asked to take on more children by a local head teacher. Last year we had four 'tribal children' join our family. Their parents are very poor illiterate workers. The children did not even speak Tamil (the local language here). We were happy to find they are well integrated with the family already, attending special school classes to catch up.



VELLAMAL

Last time we reported our 'Star' pupil Vellamal's success. She came 2nd out of 400 pupils in her district, taking 10th Standard Exams (UK GCSE equivalent). While we were with the family this time she was studying hard in the first year of her A Level Course and continuing to do very well indeed. She is a clever girl.



Breakfast before more studies

She hopes to go to University for nursing training, specialising in ophthalmic surgery. She is a 'success story' for STB, having come to us at 3 years old as a street beggar. Her father was suffering severely from leprosy and we were able to arrange for the necessary treatment for him, with Vellamal becoming one of our family.

A SECURE FUTURE FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN



Discussion on the steps of new home

With all our children—who have many different levels of ability—we are thinking ahead to possible careers. Three of our older boys have already successfully completed catering training and now have jobs, which have given them independence. (This has enabled us to take on new young ones and keep our family at a manageable level.)



Cheery faces

SRI LANKA

OUR EMERGENCY APPEAL FOR A DESTITUTE WAR WIDOW

It was a moving moment when Pawalam came out of her new house to greet us. She only has two words of English 'Good morning'. She kept shaking our hands, repeating these two words, but actually her smiling face said it all!



Thanks to the generous and immediate response to our emergency appeal, her house WAS built before the rain came. This area of Eastern Sri Lanka continued to have unusual levels of rain and we saw that her old 'home' was almost completely flooded.

Pawalam was wearing one of the new dresses our East Coast 'sewing machine lady' Sutharsini had made for her, but when we went inside her new house it was shocking to find no furniture at all. Just a few things in one corner of the room and a few clothes hanging up to dry on a little piece of string. These were the sum total of her possessions—no bed (just a straw mat), not even one chair—nothing. This really IS poverty. She then told us that she had no food at all to feed her four children when they came home from school. Her only income came from forest labouring which

the continual rain and overwhelming mud was preventing. We left Pawalam with enough rupees to buy food for the family that night, and arranged for Lal to give her employment for the next month in his vegetable garden.



We were the ones who were shocked about the lack of what most would consider to be basic comforts for daily life. Pawalam was all smiles and thankfulness about the gift of her warm dry house!

KANDIA NEEDS OUR HELP

After our visit to Pawalam, Lal took us to



meet another war widow living in a house similar to Pawalam's before we built her new one. Kandia Vimela has one ten year old daughter called Venusika. She also missed out

on any government help for a new house. We did not make any promises to Kandia (who also works as a labourer on sporadic and minimum wages). Whether we can help her or not will depend on YOU.

NEW ELECTRICITY FOR A FORGOTTEN SCHOOL

Whilst post-tsunami gifted money is still being spent by the Sri Lankan government on new highways across the country, Star Action has identified individuals and schools which the government system and 'red tape' rules have left out.



February 14th 2013 was a memorable day for me - not because of Valentine's Day! - but because we finally got to Arankulam village school to deliver the long-promised school bags. (Lal had told us of this remote school a while ago. On our last two visits it was cut off by floods.) There are now 150 children attending this delightful little school—right in the heart of the area where civil war raged not so long ago. The smiles on their darling little faces as we handed out the unexpected (to them) gift of a bag will long stay in my memory.



Again we have here children with nothing—nothing but warm loving hearts and happy smiles. (The fighting has finished and no more killing going on around them.) Most of the children had no shoes at all and shabby school uniforms. My Peter Parrot glove puppet (with a yellow Star on his chest) who came with me on this special day, was probably the only toy many of them had ever seen. While talking with the headmaster, Mr. Ravichandran, and newly appointed English teacher, Mohamed Razick, a shocking fact emerged! The school had no electricity at all. Although Mohamed had a laptop computer to help him teach, there was no power. The school could afford to pay the quarterly electricity bill, but the government refused to pay for the connection! The sum involved is not great and we said we felt sure Star Action supporters would want to help.

LET THERE BE LIGHT!



WONDERFUL TEACHERS CONTINUE THEIR AMAZING WORK IN MANKERNY VILLAGE



We had a special surprise when we called in to see Sneeka and Kowsika. As our visit was in the afternoon (official school time in Sri Lanka is 7.30am – 1.30pm) 55 children were gathered outside the newly painted village hall where the extra afternoon lessons take place, with garlands and flowers, to say ‘thank you’ to Star Action. When we gathered inside, the children all told us their names and ages, and some sang and danced for us.



As before we were so impressed with our two dedicated teachers (whose small salaries are

paid by Star Action). As well as their usual earnest request for exercise books and pens (when we said, as we always do, ‘Is there anything you need?’) they asked us *‘Is there any chance Star Action could give us each a bicycle?’* (The village is rather remote and far flung, and bicycles would help them visit parents

to discuss the children’s progress.) We left it that we could tell you, and see if anyone was interested in making a gift of a bicycle. We stopped later at a bicycle shop in Valachenai—the nearest town—and discovered a medium range, good quality, lady’s bike cost about 10,000-12,000 rupees (£50-£60).



Sneeka and Kowsika
(aged 19 years)

LAL's EAST COAST PROJECTS

Again we were thrilled and amazed at Lal’s ongoing altruistic efforts for his entire neighbourhood. (Star Action now pays him a small monthly salary for his work.) He never asks us for anything, but as a highly skilled deep sea diver he could earn much for this work. However, this would



involve him being at sea for long periods. His heart is with the people and his community, and not in making money. His own home is incredibly simple with very little inside. At least he has several plastic chairs—unlike Pawalam who had NOTHING.

FRUIT & VEGETABLE PROJECT

In spite of severe weather conditions—drought and then flooding—Lal has succeeded to some extent in his fruit and vegetable farming efforts. He reported he has done well with peanuts, brinjal, chillies and tomatoes. Twenty coconut trees are flourishing and he gave us a huge water melon (an example of his crop). So far he is disappointed with his papaya plants. He had great hopes these would be a lucrative crop, but they have been much affected by the weather. Due to their uncertainty he has not yet extended this project to other families, but see new CHICKEN FARM PROJECT.

NEW CHICKEN FARM PROJECT

Lal offered us a new community project which he recommends as much less ‘weather dependant’ than the Fruit and Vegetable farming. He has three families ready to work

under his supervision.

He will organise the construction of three wooden hen houses and runs, and purchase young chicks for both egg and meat production.



Theepa & Wasantha: hopeful chicken farmers There is a good potential income from this business, which can provide well for these families. If it is a success, it can be extended to many more.

We decided that Star Action would fund the initial experiment with these three families. We will let you know how it goes.

(Jenny writes: Being a lifelong vegetarian myself, I had some qualms initially at being involved with this project, but on reflection feel it could be truly beneficial for the community and bring a really helpful sustainable income for the families involved.)

TWO NEW SEWING MACHINE LADIES

Our existing Star Action ladies continue to do well, making an income for their families.

On this trip we accepted two new requests, one in Lal’s village and one in the West Coast village of Sagarasiri Gama (where we have our TOILET PROJECT).



Anusha Dilrukshi



Rathikala Suresh with her Certificate of Dressmaking

THANK YOU!

In Sagarasiri Gama village (near Negombo, West Sri Lanka)

We began with the hope we would have six toilets completed by this time. WE HAVE TEN, thanks to your wonderful generous support.

As I wrote in my opening letter, our work has interested a Sri Lankan journalist. It has also thrilled the village community that other Star Action supporters have visited, bringing light and love (and gifts of sweets and bubbles for the children!).



TEN TOILETS NOW COMPLETED