



Optima Foundation - Poverty Relief

25 Oxford Avenue, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 5NS, UK

Established: 1996 (Web: www.optimafoundation.org)

Associate Partner: International Children's Medical Aid – UK Charity No: 1072509

News Letter – Issue 19

August 2007

Back to the future

We are very pleased to release the 19th Issue of our **News Letter** from St. Albans. Optima Foundation (OFPR) commenced its operation from St. Albans in 1996 and after a three year period of absence, OFPR is back in St. Albans. During this period, the operation was co-ordinated from Isle of Man.

Last 3 years have been hectic for Optima Foundation. There has been a major shift from Europe centred work (Bosnia, Romania and Ukraine) to Asia centred work (Sri Lanka) largely resulting from the Tsunami disaster of 2004. In this, the people and organisations of Isle of Man have shown the best in human values. Their generosity has enabled Optima Foundation to provide immediate remedial support to many children's homes. This includes providing basic necessities, feeding and undertaking some self sustaining projects to

support the orphanages and children's homes.

In this, the support received from Sulby Glen Hotel, IOM International Business School, Bibby International Services, Farm Hill Store, Gough and Co, Boots the Chemists, IOM News Papers, Manx Radio, One World Centre and Street Heritage Events Ltd are worthy of special mention. We also appreciate the contributions made by many individuals.

Here, our volunteer member Miss Michelle Robson provided an invaluable contribution to the welfare of children in the orphanages and children's homes in Sri Lanka during our visit. So, let's say "**Thank you**" to all in Isle of Man.

Now, we are in the process of planning our work during 2008, especially taking note of the current civil unrest in some parts of Sri Lanka. Building on our experience of over 11 years, we intend to

provide support to the state registered orphanages and children's homes in whatever way we could, bearing in mind we are only a small organisation with limited resources.

Our aims and purpose

Optima Foundation exists to provide **Poverty Relief** on a global basis, thus reducing the physical, intellectual and spiritual hunger. In this mission, Optima Foundation aims to promote the Five Lamps concept in Human Values. They are **Love, Peace, Truth, Right Conduct and Non Violence.**

Our commitment

Optima Foundation is fully committed to the principles of **Interfaith Harmony and Human Values**. Thus, we carry out our work without any social barriers based on gender, race, class, religious affiliation and physical or mental limitations of individuals.

Recently completed Projects

- ❖ **2007 Project 1:** The buildings of Swami Vipulananda Children's Home (SVCH) have being repaired and repainted following the sea water damage (Tsunami – December 2004). This project was sponsored by Rosie and Eddie Christian of **Sulby Glen Hotel**.



- ❖ **2007 Project 2:** A **water tank** at the Yoga Swami Girl's Home (Sittandy, Batticaloa) has been built and it is now functional. The children are now able to get the water on tap for washing, shower etc. This project was partly sponsored by **London Sri Meenatchi Dance Academy and their benefactors**.

Case Study: From a conceptual model into a 'self sustaining system'

In 2006, Anita Bhardwaj and Michael O'Hanlon of International Children's Medical AID (ICMA) joined in the vision of Optima Foundation to create a self sustaining system for Swami Vipulananda Children's Home (SVCH) in Sri Lanka. Thus, a 7 acre agricultural land was purchased to reduce the cost of feeding the children and to support the newly created dairy cattle project set up by Optima Foundation. In the first year the yield from the land has been closer 10 tonnes of paddy rice (243 sacks @ 45 kg).

While initial plan was to produce enough rice to feed the children and to use the straw and the animal feed content to feed the dairy cattle, the trustee and the committee of SVCH have now decided to convert the 7 acre

land into a mixed crop "Model Farm". This will enable the SVCH to use the Model Farm in developing skills among those boys who wish to be in the agricultural sector after they leave the children's home. Moreover, the Model Farm is expected to provide continuous yield on a daily basis.

Under this new scheme, a third of an acre is allocated to grow coconut palms with banana trees and another third of an acre is dedicated to growing the special grass for the cattle. While the Model Farm takes shape, the remainder of the land will be dedicated to produce rice.

Since the inception of the this new Model Farm concept, the daily activity plan for SVCH boys include a 4 hour period, every Sunday

morning to be active in the field with various activities. In the hot summer months (late March to early September) the children also use the river close by to bath and cool down the cattle. The activities conclude with a picnic style lunch.

For Optima Foundation SVCH Project is the first conceptual model in creating a self sustaining system. This fits in well with the ethos of Optima Foundation as it can move on to other activities both within and outside Sri Lanka. While Optima Foundation has functioned as a catalyst, this dream was made into reality by IOM International Business School – 'Parish Walk' participants, Sulby Glen Hotel, Gough and Co, and International Children's Medical Aid (ICMA).

Points to ponder

Spiritual progress is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is the right living, good conduct and moral behaviour. These attitudes are the automatic consequences of belief in a good, just and compassionate God who is watching and witnessing every act. (*Guru Sai Baba*)

Feeding initiatives

- ❖ Currently we are working on our annual feeding on the 10th December 2007. Like the Christmas day celebration in the western countries, our annual celebratory feeding is expected to include prayers, contemplation and a hearty meal for the children in children's homes and orphanages.
- ❖ The girls at the Om Sakthi Girl's Home (Kaluwanchikudy near Batticaloa) are continuing to receive milk on a daily basis to counteract the malnutrition, sponsored by **International Children's Medical Aid**.

Having fun to feed the children in need!

While organisations such as Bibby International use the dressing down days (informal dress code) for raising funds for charities, Char, the birthday girl used her birthday celebration to raise money on the 20th of July. Thanks to the landlord (Earl) of **Trafalgar at the Douglas Quayside** and the music bands "**Beek**", "**The Chris Flood Band**" and the "**Red**", our volunteer member Michelle Robson and the birthday girl, Char were able to raise £150.00. This money will be spent during our annual feeding day on the 10th December 2007.

For further information –

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No child deserves neglect and starvation – Let us show that we care!