



Seasons Greetings

We are very pleased to release the 23rd Issue of our **News Letter** with our **Seasonal Greetings** and **Best Wishes for 2010**.

Let us also take this opportunity to pray for those individuals who feel isolated, in poor health or lonely.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah – 9:2)

Our prayers are also extended to those nations that are in conflict.

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it” (John – 1:5)

'2004 Tsunami' - Five years on!

The Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 is almost becoming a distant memory to many. The number of deaths and displacements among communities, international aid and the amount of money collected and spent are all becoming statistics for political, academic and intellectual debate.

However, many families and children in those affected areas are still struggling to overcome the physical and emotional trauma caused by the 2004 tsunami.

At Optima Foundation, we began our long journey immediately after this tsunami disaster to support the children's homes and orphanages in the east of Sri Lanka. While the east and the south were badly affected, many major non-governmental organisations were able to support the disaster relief in the south. Eastern Province, however, had a double whammy; civil unrest and the impact of tsunami. Hence, contribution from organisations such as ours became a focal point at the ground level.

As Optima Foundation is bound by its constitution to focus on **children in need** regardless of their backgrounds, we set about targeting the children in children's homes and orphanages.

Our first visit in March 2005, with a collection of £4000 from the UK

and Isle of Man enabled us to purchase some essential items such as sleeping mats, pillows, bed linen, personal care items, kitchen utensils, a kerosene cooker and a fridge.

With this money, Optima Foundation also replaced a water pump and a power generator damaged by the sea water and repaired a set of toilets.

Remainder of the money was utilised to feed the children. Full account of our activities was provided on **Issue 13**.

Batticaloa / Ampara District

13 children's homes / orphanages (approx 700 children) – partially or wholly affected by tsunami. Optima had previously supported 4 orphanages and one was lost to tsunami in Thirukovil.

Trincomalee District

5 children's homes / orphanages (approx 400 children) – partially or wholly affected by tsunami. Optima had previously supported 3 orphanages.

As part of our long term strategy, we investigated the opportunities to create various self sufficiency projects.

To date, Optima Foundation has completed one clean water project by building a water-well and water storage tank at Yoga Swamy Girls' Home and working on Model Farm Projects at Hari Boys' Home and at Swami Vipulananda Children's Home. We have also supported the building extension of a first floor dormitory at Hari Boys Home.



Over a thousand smiling faces - Priceless

Case study

Mangaiyarkkarsiyar Girls' Home in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka was set up in 1988, following the civil war and the consequential increase in the number of girls who were either made orphans or in dire straits. Our association with this Home however started in year 2000, following our own millennium pledge to work towards eradicating child poverty. Since 2000, we have organised special feast days for the girls.



There was a turning point in year 2004, following the tsunami. Not only the Home lost a few girls who had gone to their relatives for their holidays, but also ended up taking on more girls affected by the tsunami.

Our visits to this Home both in 2005 and 2006 were aimed at giving 'a morale boost' to the girls. Now the time is right to reflect on the progress of the girls.

The number of girls in the Home went up from 80 to 102 since 2004 tsunami and now the number has gone down to 64. While some of the reduction is attributed to the Sri Lankan Government Policy of not supporting those who are over 18 years of age in a children's home, there are also signs of real progress. Between 2005 and 2009, 26 girls have entered the universities (12 campus based and 14 via Open University mode). Among the 26, 2 have already completed their undergraduate degrees. 17 girls who opted out of higher education are now married and 11 of them received a sewing machine and a storage cupboard each to establish their own 'home based' tailoring business. In this the Board of Trustees and other funds

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

providers take the credit as our contributions were minimal.

However, when the seniors (who were leaving) were asked to reflect on their stay in the Girls Home, in unison, they remembered "sister Shell" (Michelle Robson) for bringing a suitcase full of perfumes, shampoos and other personal care items as gifts from Isle of Man. For the seniors, it is a sweet memory they plan to treasure.

Think, Act and be Blessed

"Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person.

Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing."

Mother Teresa 1910 -1997

"Do not dwell in the past; do not dream of the future; concentrate the mind on the present moment"

Lord Buddha 563 – 483 BC

"Think truly and thy thoughts shall be the world's famine feed"

*Horatious Bonar 1808-1889
Scottish Spiritual Poet*

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.**

Cost of feeding

On average, we spend around 60 Pence per child for a hearty meal.

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.



Annual Celebration / Feeding

Since 1996, we have been consistently supporting the annual celebratory event / day in December. On this day, children are encouraged to celebrate the "**positives**" of what they have achieved and pray for "**Peace and Harmony**" around the world. At Optima, our contribution is to provide a celebratory meal on that day (similar to



that of a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings!) to the children. We also organise other days as "special days or feast days" to show them that we care. All our collections are spent on these events.

We take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to our collections and our charity raffle in 2009 and hope that 2010 will be **even better** with your support.

Our work continues.....

❖ Ongoing project in 2009:

The girls at 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** (Thank you, Anita Bhardwaj and Michael O' Hanlon for your sponsorship, UK and Ireland).

❖ Work in progress in 2009:

To complete the Self Sustaining Project at Swami Vipulananda Children's Home, money was released to purchase a water pump. (Thank you, Rosie and Eddie Christian of Sulby Glen Hotel, Isle of Man).

Money was also released to purchase clothing for the boys at Swami Vipulananda Children's Home as New

Year gifts from Sulby Glen Hotel. (Thank you, Rosie and Eddie Christian of Sulby Glen Hotel, Isle of Man).

❖ Volunteering – July – August 2010:

Optima Foundation is planning to take a group of volunteers during July / August 2010 to be with the children and support their learning / life skills development. For more information, please contact our Dr. Tom Jeyendran

❖ Can you help to fund one of our "sustainable development" projects?

If you can sponsor one of our projects or would like to hear more about our work, please contact our Dr. Tom Jeyendran (details are shown below). We spend 100% of the funds we receive on the projects for the benefit of the children in need.

For further information –

Please write to: Miss Valli Luschwitz (Hon. Chairperson)
At Optima Foundation – Poverty Relief
25 Oxford Avenue, St. Albans, Herts,
AL1 5NS, UK

Or: email: tom_jeyendran@yahoo.co.uk
Telephone: Tom on 01727 841468
(Web: www.optimafoundation.org)

Bankers:

National Westminster Bank
10, St. Peter's Street, ST ALBANS, Herts
AL1 3LY
Sort code: 60 – 18 – 11
Account Number: 45319502
BIC: NWBK GB 2L
IBAN: GB87 NWBK 6018 1145 3195 02