

Dear Friends

Shining Life Children's Trust 20th year – who would have believed it all those years ago when I travelled to Sri Lanka to pursue a dream! Over those 20 years we have supported over 4,000 families in 50 villages. Our Friends of the Trust, you, have been with us throughout this journey. Thank you for your support – financial and emotional, the advice, ideas and belief that have got us this far.

This summer I had the amazing experience of visiting Sri Lanka and taking my family for the first time. What a fabulous 2 weeks. If you have not visited Sri Lanka, I would urge you to – a fantastic country, stunning scenery and welcoming people. We bathed elephants, marvelled at ancient temples, released turtles, lazed on tropical beaches, but most importantly visited two of the communities with which Shining Life has been involved.



It was lovely to meet the people of Kirimetiawatte, one of our current projects up in the hills, on a tea plantation, where your donations have really made a difference. We met the young children attending the new nursery classes and walked round the village with Nila the inspiring lady who lives in the village and coordinates the project.

The most memorable experience for me though was our day in Telwatte, a coastal village that was hugely affected by the tsunami in 2004. An 18.5 metres high memorial towers above the community; a constant reminder of the 1700 people who perished in a train. Shining Life worked in Telwatte following the tsunami. The community had lost everything – buildings, livelihoods and relatives. Shining Life provided household equipment, supported children to go back to school, ran vocational training courses, taught community members how to set up their own business and established mothers societies and children's clubs to build community cohesion.

That was over 10 years ago now, but the prayers said at the beginning of the mothers' meeting show the impact of the tsunami is far from forgotten. It was incredible to meet these people and witness the impact of Shining Life. We visited a carpenter, marvelled at his incredible wood work and admired the lathe he bought with a Shining Life loan. We saw two ladies who have built a business out of spinning coconut husks into string and make a range of items from mats to pots as a result of the training they received in the project. I met the women's society – still meeting with over 90 members (I even managed to give a speech in Sinhala!) and laughed with the children in the children's club as we jumped after bouncy balls sent out from children in the UK. It was a real honour to meet such warm and resilient people and a privilege to see first-hand the difference Shining Life has made.



Whilst I was with the people of Telwatte, they asked if Shining Life could run some more vocational training courses for them and support some of their older children who hope to be the first ever from the village to go to university.

We would love to do this but to do so we need to raise £3000. If you are able to give a gift this Christmas and support this additional work in Telwatte building on their incredible achievements to date, please visit our website on how to donate <http://www.shininglife.org/support.html>.

Thank you for your continued support and I wish you a wonderful Christmas and peaceful New Year.