

"A man never stands as tall as when he kneels to help a child".



Patron's Message at the 26th Annual Charity Dinner

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by extending a warm welcome to each and every one of you to our 26th Annual event, where we will also provide updates on our ongoing work in Sri Lanka and India. I am certain that the Chairman will comprehensively address the day-to-day operations and achievements of the Arobanam Children Fund. With this in mind, I would like to focus my remarks on the history of this organisation, something that many of our sponsors and supporters may not be fully aware of.

The past few years have been challenging, especially due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, we are now starting to return to a sense of normalcy. During the pandemic, all our committee meetings had to be held via Zoom. While this technology has been wonderful, it has taken away the crucial face-to-face interactions that foster deeper discussions. However, even though I am no longer involved in the day-to-day management of Arobanam, I have noticed some positive changes in the committee, with efforts being made to reintroduce some in-person meetings.

When Arobanam was founded in the 1990s, many Tamil political and charitable organisations sprang up here in the UK. Unfortunately, many of them no longer exist today, due to mismanagement or for other legitimate reasons. Some were even taken in directions far removed from their original purpose. However, the founding members of Arobanam, guided by Fr. James Pathinathan, put in place several golden rules that every future management committee must adhere to. Let me share a few of these with you:

- "No two immediate family members can hold senior positions such as Chairman, Secretary, or Treasurer."
- "All cash donations collected at annual events must be sealed in a container and only counted in the presence of an invited member of the public."
- "No cash withdrawals are permitted from any of our bank accounts."

These are just a few examples of the 13 golden rules currently in place. These guidelines were established to ensure that your hard-earned contributions are used for the sole purpose of supporting underprivileged children. Additional rules may be added as needed to safeguard the integrity of our operations.

When Arobanam Children Fund was founded, Fr. James and the original members believed that our services would only be required during the war years, and perhaps for five years after the war ended ... how wrong we were! The war ended in 2009, yet our work continues - and will be needed for the foreseeable future. Many of the children we initially supported have gone on to build meaningful lives for themselves, with some even entering university and securing employment in Sri Lanka. A few have had the opportunity to work abroad as well.

However, we must never forget those who were tragically lost, including the 111 Senthilir children who perished in the 2004 tsunami. Since our founding, nearly 4,000 children have benefited from our services, and we currently assist 404 children in Sri Lanka and India.

Ladies and gentlemen, none of this would have been possible without your generous contributions and unwavering support over the years. I urge you to take pride in what you have helped accomplish, and to continue supporting Arobanam Children Fund with the confidence that your donations will be used to benefit the deserving children.

Thank you, and please enjoy the evening.

Vijayanathan Ramakrishnan – Patron Arobanam

Please note: Due to a printing error, a wrong version of the above article was published within our annual charity dinner brochure. As such, we herewith provide our supporters with the correct version of our Patron's address.

Please accept our apologies for this error within the brochure.

Special Rewards on Prize-Giving Day at Remote Village School

Two children attending a remote village school in Kalviyankadu, in the northern province, have excelled in their O'Level examinations and this has led to one of the children gaining admission to a prominent high school. Awareness of this news raised the charitable intentions of an ardent ACF supporter to reward the children with special donations towards completing their studies. Assistance will also be provided for the education of the child intending to study at A'Level grade. During the school's prize-giving day these children were praised, and they were delighted to receive the special donations for all their hard work



Provision of Assistance to the Elderly in the Hill Countries

Since August 2024, ACF has been assisting elders in the Hill Country, through the special request and funding from loyal supporters of Arobanam Children Fund.



Sponsors' Special Donation for the Provision of School Starter Kits in 2024

Through the generous donation of one of ACF's long-term sponsors, 148 school starter kit bags with essential starter stationery items were distributed to our foster care children in Mannar, Nanattan, Mankulam, the Hill Countries and Muttur. The items were handed over to the children and families through our operation manager, Mr Dinesh Thiruchelvan and ACF's respective project partners.





Donation of 2 Milk Cows

Through the generous donation of a long-standing ACF sponsor, 2 deserving families from Mannar and Mullaitivu received a cow each. These families were assessed to determine their current needs and found would benefit the most through these gifts. Both families are destitute and have children to support.



Arobanam Children Fund's 26th Annual Charity Dinner

ACF was delighted to host its 26th Annual Charity Dinner on Saturday, 2nd November at New Haw Community Centre, in New Haw, Surrey.

The event was a great opportunity for sponsors and supporters alike to come together for an evening of music, dance, food and for the serious aspect of receiving the update about our work over the past 12 months.

On this occasion we were pleased to note that in addition to our long-term supporters, hitherto new to ACF's work, several groups of attendees were present on this occasion and showed much interest in supporting our work. This was particularly satisfying in that it signified a continuing interest in the charity, which we hope will ensure further development and the future of ACF.

The event started with the lighting of the "kuthu vilakku", and by observing a minute's silence in reverence to those affected by the wars in Sri Lanka, and in the world. It was a delight to see and meet our supporters, face to face, for the second time post Covid-19.

The event was enriched by the presence of our esteemed guests Drs Mr and Mrs Baheerathan, who are long standing supporters of our work. Dr Baheerathan is the founder member and co-ordinator of AEDU-UK, a similar charitable organisation based in the UK, that supports the education of disadvantaged children in the North and East in our motherland. During his keynote speech, he stated that "ACF's services are a lifeline to many individuals and families who face challenges"

The evening was eventful with ACF assisted children's participation via recorded videos and an in-depth ACF related address given by our Chairperson.

Entertainment, in the form of Bollywood style dancing and rousing renditions of popular Tamil songs were well received by the audience. Following on, they had fun participating in our ever-famous American auction and afterwards settled down to enjoy a traditional dinner. Prior to the vote-of-thanks the raffle draw brought in some very happy winners.

The event brochure contained messages from our partners, children, office bearers; and included photos of project activities, along with ACF's annual accounts for the year 2023.

ACF thanks all its supporters, partners, children, and committee members for the culmination of another successful annual charity dinner event. We raised over £2,500.



Chairman's Address

Vanakkam and Good evening again ladies and gentlemen

Arobanam Children Fund has grown significantly in the past 30 years. Today, I want to express my gratitude to all supporters, well-wishers, founder members, predecessors, and our committee. I also take this opportunity to thank Drs, Mr and Mrs Baheerathan our esteemed guests.

I repeat that what began as a one-off assistance to support the 38 children in 1993, as you saw on videos and other materials, has evolved into a robust organisation. We have invested your funds of over two point one million pounds, assisted over 4,000 children; produced over 90 graduates, of which 24 children grew up receiving

ACF's assistance; and assisted over 100,000 individuals during natural disasters; all the while continuing to maintain zero administrative costs in the UK.

During the past year, we added three new projects and are currently working with a total of 24 projects both in Sri Lanka and India, assisting over 400 children including 32 university students and 10 elders.

The new projects include one assisting elders in the Hill county at the special request with funding, by a long-standing supporter of Arobanam Children Fund. The others are two livelihood projects at the special request of another long-standing supporter, where we donated milk cows to two families.

From a bird's eye view, ACF is caring for children at children's residential homes, foster care, where the children remain at their own or relatives' homes, and receive monthly assistance, GCE Advanced level tuition assistance, care and schooling for special needs children, especially those with mental health needs, and caring for abused and pregnant young girls.

In addition to assisting with their essential needs to children, as you saw on the video, we provide special meals primarily sponsored by supporters, conduct educational tours, implemented garden initiatives, and sports initiatives at residential homes to name but a few. In addition, we provide assistance to general public during natural disasters.

Unfortunately, within the past few years, we continue to witness an alarming rise in the admission of abused children. The admissions of abused children to our partner homes have increased significantly; with some having a take-in of over 50 to 60%. Such abuses are in addition to our care of abused pregnant girls at Welcome House in Anaikodai. Through our partners, we are dedicated to providing care and stability to these vulnerable individuals.

On a brighter note, many of our past students are thriving through their academic achievements and / or hard work. As stated in the past, our first university student is a leading human rights lawyer who is currently, also the acting Judge in the Mannar district; and he has also partnered with ACF and runs a foster care project in Nanattan, outside Mannar. Some others are working as doctors, engineers, teachers, and entrepreneurs, to name but a few, and are contributing to their communities. Some have come forward to assist deserving children directly via ACF. Also as you saw on the video, one of our past university students, after receiving two years of assistance, left the ACF programme voluntarily, when he found a night time employment. Subsequent to graduating, he is currently running a printing unit opposite the Jaffna University, where he provides low-cost printing services and part time employment opportunities to the less economically fortunate students. In addition, he provides some printing service to ACF at nominal cost, and works as one of our referral partners.

Furthermore, some students, subsequent to obtaining their academic qualifications, have gained experience and, more importantly, the confidence to negotiate with their banks, and are progressing with further studies.

Within the past year, 14 children sat for their GCE Ordinary level exams and 11 of them passed and go on to study at GCE Advanced level; 11 Children sat for GCE A level and 8 passed. Following last year's GCE A level results, 07 ACF assisted students will be entering university, and 3 of them grew up receiving ACF's assistance, long term. One foster care child from Kadalkaraichenai, a remote village outside Muthur achieved the best results of 2A's and a C grade in her school, and will enter the university. 11 students graduated from universities this year.

Additionally, and more importantly, our partners reintegrated 4 special needs children into society last year and bring up the grand total to 20 such integrations. Our fully rolled out monthly children's savings scheme is proving very valuable, primarily, as a start-up for university entrants.

Some of ACF assisted children, despite their financial difficulties, are excelling in extra-curricular activities as well. A female foster care beneficiary from Trincomalee has been excelling in weightlifting, and has won prizes at national level, a university student has been excelling in language related competitions and has been selected to take part at national level. Additionally, a Management student is not only demonstrating his talents in music, but also academically, is progressing well, with expected grades of a first-class degree on completion. Another engineering student is also progressing well and is equally likely to obtain a first-class degree. It is a delight to report that the engineering student entered the university with 3 A grades – which are the highest distinctions and both students are from the Hill countries.

During my visits to the Hill countries, despite observing much with continued sadness, my team & I were very heartened to learn of such achievements, and ACF, along with our Hill Countries partners, is delighted to have provided this impetus for our children.

We have also established strong links with the department of social services, where we work with 18,000 differently abled individuals, and have assisted with the department's efforts to fix the limbs of 300 amputees – mainly war victims. ACF has strengthened its connections with the University of Kilinochchi engineering faculty, and recently, with the Governor's office in the North of Sri Lanka. Such relationships have proved invaluable to us, especially during challenging times.

In recognition of our work, ACF was selected as the "Charity of the Year - 2023" by the Kings College London Tamil Society; and we were honoured to give a presentation at the grand finale of the "Kings of Gaana" in December 2023.

Projects pipeline:

We have three projects in the pipeline and are optimistic that, at no later than the beginning of 2025, we should be able to bring those on board.

Communications:

We engage with children, partners, and supporters in many ways. At least one committee member visits our projects regularly. Post-Covid19 pandemic, as you would have read from our news-letter, I visited all projects during the periods of

February–March 2023, and February–March 2024. ACF's Sri Lanka based Operations Manager, Dinesh Thiruchelvan, also joined me when visiting the projects within Sri Lanka. Overall, we are very encouraged by the way our projects are managed.

However, we have identified certain specific individual needs for children, arranged medical treatments and / or counselling as appropriate and have seen positive outcomes. In addition, we identified operational difficulties within a minority of the projects, exited from one, and are working with the others to rectify identified issues.

Dinesh visits the projects on a regular basis and reports back to the committee; and where technology is available, we organise video conferencing and promote two way understanding.

Losses:

It should be noted that we also face challenges. This year, sadly, we lost two children – one resident child, and one foster care child - both through tragic circumstances; and, in addition, some directives do not always go according to agreed plans, but we work diligently with those partners to bring them back on track.

Current / future needs:

As a charity, we rely entirely on sponsorships and donations from our supporters. Currently we have a regular funding gap to meet the growing needs. We bridge this gap with one off donations, gift aid etc. We often use some of our contingency funds to bridge any further gaps created by events such as natural disasters, as and when required.

Today's needs are immense and there is a need for us to expand assistance further. We have a five-year strategic plan to be a fully funded organisation by 2027. This clearly indicates the need to attract further

For further information, please contact one of our committee members at:

Arobanam Children Fund, 11 Alma Place, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2AE, E-mail: arobanamchildrenfund@gmail.com

Together We Can Make A Difference

sponsorships and donations. If you or your friends are in a position to join as a sponsor or are able to make donations, I would be grateful, if you could do so.

Our strength has been growing in the past 30 years, and our services must continue. I encourage you to involve your children and grand-children in our mission, helping them to understand charity work. Please bring them to events and let them listen and learn of the difficulties faced by children & parents like. This will pave a way for us to handover small charitable organisations, such as ACF to them, with a view to continuously serve the deserving.

We continue to invite sponsors and provide them with complementary tickets for the annual event. In view of the current higher cost of living, if you are able to make a donation towards today's costs, please donate at the ticket desk.

Please continue to support ACF or any other similar organisations, which you may already be supporting.

With your continued support "We will rise by lifting others"

If you have any questions, please let any of our members or myself know. Alternatively, you may contact us later by email at arobanamchildrenfund@gmail.com.

Thank you.

**ACF are always in need of more sponsors to assist
more children in need
TO SPONSOR A CHILD PLEASE CLICK HERE:
[Sponsor a child](#) OR contact a member of the team**

December 2024 – Greetings to all our Sponsors and Supporters

We're now less than a couple of weeks away from Christmas Day and our thoughts are turning towards the festive season. Before 2025 draws us into another year of interesting prospects, aspiring hopes and new challenges, ACF would like to update you and leave you with information that will inspire you to continue your much needed support with us. We take this opportunity to thank all the sponsors for their continued support of ACF.



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