

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



December 2023

Dear Supporters, Friends and Readers, Arobanam Children Fund wishes to keep you updated with our continued work and is happy to send you its closing newsletter of 2023.

25th Anniversary Charity Dinner

On the 14th of October, Arobanam Children Fund held its 25th Anniversary Charity Dinner, at Oakington Manor School in Wembley. It was well attended, and the committee members took great pleasure in meeting and greeting many of the attendees.

All who came to support us that evening appreciated the quality and content of our event. A particular eye-catching item was the picture posters exhibition of ACF's work. The posters showed extracts of our work and pinpointed the exact location of each project on the Sri Lankan map. It proved to be of special help to members of the audience who were not very familiar with the geographical locations of ACF's work, which currently covers 22 projects.

During the evening's programme, both our patron, Mr Ramakrishnan and our chairperson, Mr Varathan presented various details on ACF's 25-year journey and its vision and mission for the future.

Message from the Patron

It gives me great pleasure to write this note and to welcome you all to Arobanam Children Fund's (ACF) 25th annual charity dinner event, in Wembley.

Although I have written such notes in the past, this is the first one in the capacity of the current patron of the organisation.

The past few years have tested us extensively and charitable work was no exception. However, with the young team now responsible for operations of the organisation, we not only managed to continue, but also provided additional assistance to several new children and families, during the difficult times, especially during Covid 19.

As well as growing within the established areas of operation, geographically, ACF's work has increased with new projects. In particular, our work has expanded in the areas of foster care and special needs, with mental health being a particular focus.

It is a delight to see, that what started as friendly help to our founder, patron Rev. Fr. James Pathinathan, where he took care of the children he'd brought to safety during the war in Sri Lanka, has grown, through his guidance and patronage, into a well-established and structured organisation, and is still functioning three decades later.

In addition, to maintain its reputation as a respected organisation, ACF continues to strengthen cooperation with its partner organisations, such as DWF, Arobanam Boys Home, Welcome Home, SPACE in India and Sivapoomi Trust, to name a few.

I am very encouraged by the progress we have made in the past 27 years with your support and am very confident that the young team is carrying the organisation, in the right direction, with full commitment,

Once again, I would like to thank you all for your continued support to this noble cause and wish the current team all the success in the future.

Vijayanathan Ramakrishnan – Patron ACF



Message from the Chairperson

Vanakkam / Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen

After a lapse of several years, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all, for the first time and to have your presence, here today, at Arobanam Children Fund's (ACF) 25th annual event, at Oakington Manor Primary School, in Wembley.

The last few years have been very challenging in every way. However, with your continued support, we've not only continued serving children, but also managed to assist several new struggling families in Sri Lanka and India, especially during the Covid 19 pandemic lockdown.

ACF has, in the past few years, progressed further with new projects within previously operated geographical areas and reached out to new ones in the Eastern province, and Hill Countries of Sri Lanka, while opening new foster care projects in India.

We have also engaged ourselves with empowering special needs children through working with the department of social services, to assist a wider community of special needs individuals.

ACF additionally arranged zoom workshops for the resident children, where the homes had access to online technology. Furthermore, we have also run partner conferences to promote two way understanding between our partners and ourselves.

ACF is currently engaged in 22 projects. Subsequent to my project visits, in Sri Lanka, in March 2020, (just before the Covid 19 pandemic); excepting 2 projects in the eastern province, I visited all the other projects, during February - March 2023. ACF's Operations Manager, Dinesh Thiruchelvan, also joined me when visiting the projects within Sri Lanka. Overall, I am very encouraged by the way our projects are managed.

However, we have identified some operational difficulties within a minority of the projects and are working with the projects to rectify the issues.

It is my observation that there may be a general perception that Sri Lanka has moved forward; but the struggles amongst the poor appears to have worsened. As our founder patron Rev. Fr. James stated at our 20th annual event, "new roads and electricity have come up, but the parentless child's life has not changed"

In addition, our partners accept that vulnerable individuals continue to be exploited by an immoral sect within the community. Within the past few years, admissions, of abused children, to our partner homes have increased significantly, with some having a take-in of over 50%. Such abuses are in addition to our care of abused pregnant girls at Welcome Home in Anaikodai. ACF is working hard with its partners to care for and provide near normal lives, in the futures of such children.

When I visited the new projects in the Hill Countries for the first time, both Dinesh and I were saddened to see the level of neglect in that part of the island. However, it is our observation that most children are taking their studies seriously, as it being the only way out of their current dire situation. They are achieving higher grades in their CGE O/L and A/L examinations. We are optimistic, that with appropriate assistance, there will be a change, for a better future, in this area.

Looking on the positive side and at ACF's achievements; ACF has, to date assisted over 3,800 children, produced over 80 graduates, that include lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers, and historians. It is important to note that, during their primary / secondary education, approximately 17 of the graduates grew up with or later received assistance through ACF. In addition, our partners have successfully integrated 16 special needs children by increasing their IQ through coaching and counselling.

Some of our beneficiaries are not only doing well in their lives, but also coming forward and working with ACF to assist the community.

It is important that we continue, with this work, to help destitute young individuals succeed in their lives; and look forward to your support and encouragement in doing so.

I thank you all for your continued support and invite you to enjoy this evening.

Varathan Thiagarasa – Chairperson ACF

The evening's chief guest, Dr Elizabeth Harris, specialist in theology and religion, a long-term sponsor of ACF, spoke of her historical interactions with our work from the time of our founder patron, the late Rev. Fr. James Pathinathan, and the reasons for her continued support of our work.

The evening proceeded well with a rewarding rendering of songs from gifted singer Ms Janani Suresh and incredible audience interaction throughout the American auction session.

During and since the event Arobanam Children Fund has gained new sponsors and donations to further our work. We continue to be grateful and much obliged to the continued support of our generous sponsors.

In his address, the chairperson expressed the immense need for further assistance and his appeal for sponsorship and support was well received by the audience.

Home Gardening Initiative

The home gardening initiative that was started in April 2021, in Mankulam, with 80 families within the Mankulam foster care scheme became a success, helped the families during the Covid pandemic and was rolled out to some of the ACF assisted homes.

In the month of November, Rev Sr. Sumithra and other staff members, from Good Shepherds Convent, in Mankulam, were able to harvest 2 varieties of chilli peppers from their continued home gardening initiative.



Children's Joint Group Outing – Annai Illam & Caritas Convent

In the early part of October, the children from Annai Illam, in Mannar and Caritas Convent, in Vavuniya went on ACF arranged coach outing to the beaches in Thalai Mannar and Pesalai. The Old Lighthouse in Thalai Mannar and the wind turbines in Pesalai were of special interest to the children. The day trip was thoroughly enjoyed by the whole group and the day was also an opportunity for the girls from different districts of Sri Lanka, to get together and form friendships.



Hill Country – Central Province

In February 2023, we reported that we started a new project to assist university students in the hill country. Currently, we are supporting 11 students. From November 2023, we have also started a foster care scheme to assist 10 families with their needs. There is an urgent need to expand assistance to many of the poorer families in the hill country and with this in mind the ACF team are working with its supporters and partners to increase its reach.

Following the fire destruction of 24 houses in Rahanwatte, in the Akkaraipathana area, in August of this year, Arobanam Children Fund's immediate response to send funds for food and other urgent needs helped immensely in alleviating the immediate suffering of 24 families.



In September, to lessen the burden of the economic crisis in the rural areas, Arobanam Children Fund aided 40 families in the Mount Jean Estate, Carolina Estate and Diyagala Estate in the tea plantation region of Watawala.

SPACE – Special Meal on 26th November 2023

One of our sponsors kindly provided special meals for all of the 90 children plus staff members, in both Anaiyur and Muniyandipuram, in Madurai, South India. The children enjoyed the meal and the dessert of sweets and ice cream.



Sivapoomi School - Kondavil



The Sivapoomi School has topped the league of special needs schools, in the Northern Province, for 2023. This is their 2nd time at winning this prestigious award, since 2019.

Another notable achievement is the fact that one of the attending students won 1st place in the all-island dancing competition.

ACF wishes the managers, teachers and students of Sivapoomi School continued success for the future.

New Support Needed for Arobanam Children Fund

We need volunteers and supporters who can help us achieve our strategic growth plan. If you or your friends can help us, please contact our chairperson, Mr Varathan, via his email address: vthiagarasa@aol.com or via the contact details on the Contact Page on our website <https://arobanam.co.uk/>

Arobanam Children Fund wishes you and your families, peace, health, happiness and prosperity in the coming year.

Thank you for your continued support.

