



The TEA Project Annual Report 2014



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The TEA (*Training, Empowerment & Awareness*) Project Annual Report 2014

Section 1

The Launch of The TEA Project

1.1 A number of factors inspired the development of The TEA Project, including British friends running a 'Safeguarding Children' Project in Zambia, creating new experiences for our two young children and a personal desire to help people less privileged than ourselves. In combining our skills we had over 30 years experience of working with vulnerable children and the creative arts scene which we felt we could utilise to benefit others. With the initial support of close family we developed a leaflet and a website which were the catalyst for the UK fundraising campaign. After 9 months of planning we launched The TEA Project in December 2013 and in March the following year we began making arrangements to move our family from the UK to live and work in Sri Lanka.

1.2 With heartfelt thanks and the remarkable efforts of our friends, family and the generous support of people and businesses we successfully raised a total of £15,000 to fund the set up and running costs of the project for a 12-month period.

1.3 2014 Fundraising Activities Included:

- Sponsored Head Shave
- The May TEA Party in Bristol
- An Aloe Vera Event
- An Auction of Donated Art Work
- Raffle Supported by Local Businesses in London and Lancashire
- London TEA Music Gig
- Lancashire TEA Music Gig
- Sponsored Work Pyjamarama (pop-cake sale)
- Donated Car Boot Sale Funds
- Sale of Donated Vouchers for Restaurants and Tourist Attractions in London
- Cake Sale

Section 2

Who We Work With

2.1 We support children from poor socio economic backgrounds who are disadvantaged and marginalised by their circumstances and environment. Urban street children, children from poor rural and farming communities, children from remote tea picking regions, orphans who live without the love and care of protective parents and children from unemployed or poorly employed families. Many of the children we work with suffer neglect and come from dysfunctional families afflicted by alcohol, poor mental health and domestic violence. Sadly all the children whom we work with attend poor government run schools, where pupil attendance and education standards are low compared to those offered at the many fee paying private and independent schools.

2.2 A familiar pattern we have observed includes inadequate housing conditions and the poor physical and emotional health of children. In Kandy we commonly see children we work with alone on the streets or begging with a mother or relative. It is disturbing to see young children we know on the streets, alone; a bustling city is no place for unsupervised children. A young boy we see frequently alone on the streets is 'S', he is 8 years old with four younger siblings. It was recently discovered that S was being repeatedly abused by four men on the streets. This horrific experience did not come to light until one day his mother noticed that he was having difficulty walking. Parents of the children commonly beg on the streets for survival, are street vendors, street cleaners or domestic workers who work long hours for very little money.

2.3 In the absence of working parents many children, often the eldest female sibling, will take on the responsibilities and duties of adults. An 8 year old girl called 'R' is one of those children. She is the eldest of her five siblings and before the school day her tired eyes tell of the many chores she has completed before arriving at school. If you give R any food to eat you can guarantee she will slip some in her pocket to take home and share.

2.4 We work with an orphanage in Kandy; the children are cared for by a Buddhist Society of women who fundraise and volunteer to care for the 19 girls. The children own very few personal belongings. They sleep in a shared dorm with bunk beds and have a small personal store cupboard to keep their clothes, school books and few treasures belongings safe. The orphanage is a functional building providing a safe home for the girls, however it is uninspiring, dark with no notice boards or pictures on the walls and no toys or activities to enable the girls to play, grow and have fun. The future for the girls is bleak with low expectations and opportunities in short supply.

2.5 We support a local government school 1-day per week teaching the Junior and Senior grades. The school has few resources, no computer or telephone and works hard to educate approximately 50 students from very poor families. A number of the Junior grade children cannot write their name and many from the Senior grade cannot read or write to

expected levels. The teachers are passionate about change but the difficult personal circumstances of the children teamed with inadequate school funds results in low educational outcomes for pupils.

2.6 We support a local charity in Sri Lanka called Child Action Lanka (CAL) and we have developed a school and an orphanage partnership through our community work. We have been privileged to work with over 300 children since the project began in Sri Lanka and India in July 2014. This includes children from English school camps, babies, pre-school children, street children, teenagers, orphans and children from remote and poor farming, fishing and tea producing communities. Children are only one piece of the jigsaw therefore we work closely in a holistic manner with teachers, social care practitioners, charity workers, government departments and local Sri Lankan groups and associations. The TEA Project believes that the strong professional networks we have developed will prove beneficial when we begin to train adults and professionals in the future.

Section 3

Some Key Achievements So Far

- 1.** We trained 17 children from a poor tea producing region to become Youth Volunteers in their local community. We returned 2-months later to deliver a further training programme focussing on 'Safeguarding Children', 'Keeping Safe at Work' and 'Being a Professional'.
- 2.** Organised free 12-month English programmes supported by the British Council in Kandy and free books/resources for five poor and marginalised children. This offer is worth over £2,500 and will provide life changing opportunities for extremely under privileged children.
- 3.** Created a new, colourful and positive library space for street children. Children were consulted and collectively named their library '*The Space*'; creating a clear and fair set of rules for its use.
- 4.** We developed and facilitated a 2-day 'Personal Development Training Programme' to 27 street children in Kandy.
- 5.** We have established a strong working partnership with a local government run school which provides free state education to some of Kandy's poorest children. To support the limited curriculum we run 'TEA workshops' to all year groups on a weekly basis.
- 6.** We established a full time programme of interactive and engaging activities supplemented with work sheets, a timetable and resource box during the busy 4-week school holiday period in August 2014.
- 7. India 30/30 Appeal:** We partnered with an Indian orphanage and successfully fundraised to deliver a month long programme of TEA workshops and art projects to approximately 35 children and taught at 'The Good Shepherd's International School' during November 2014.

In India we ran a creative writing workshop with children using stories, poems and the views of children, their artwork and photographs to design a 'Christmas 2014 Newsletter' for supporters of Our Home.

8. The TEA Project has established a working partnership with a girl's orphanage in Sri Lanka. In 2015 we began running a therapeutic art based 'Girl's Group' on a weekly basis.

9. In the first 7 months we have worked at four of the five countrywide projects run by CAL, our partner charity. These include Kelaniya, Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy. Due to severe draught, poor weather conditions and school holiday restrictions we have not had the opportunity to visit the Killinochi Project but we plan to facilitate training in this harsh northern territory in February/March 2015.

10. We have successfully and painstakingly redeveloped our website (www.theteaproject.org.uk) with working information and pictures of the project. This work is ongoing.

11. A 'Steps Over the Rainbow' art project re-generated the entrance of the CAL centre in Kandy which supports up to 60+ poor and marginalised (street) children. The entrance was transformed from being dark, dirty and gloomy to a space which is now inviting, positive and engaging to children, parents and staff.



Section 4

The Day-To-Day Work of The TEA Project

4.1 We work full time sharing home schooling responsibilities for our two young children. We carefully plan, fund and facilitate all of the TEA workshops, training and art projects which is heavily resource intensive. Due to the dynamic nature of the project our work patterns vary and priorities change frequently however below is a list of regular weekly commitments for The TEA Project.

4.2 The Weekly Work Programme of The TEA Project includes:

- ✓ Weekly staff training and English language support to staff and managers at the Kandy centre
- ✓ We run weekly TEA workshops with street children aged 6 to 10 years
- ✓ We run a weekly English class with teenagers at the Kandy centre
- ✓ We run a weekly 'Girl's Group' with young orphaned females
- ✓ We are developing a broad and encompassing 'Volunteer Policy' for our partner charity
- ✓ We work at a local government school 1-day per week running TEA workshops to support the limited curriculum offered
- ✓ A rolling weekly art project at the Kandy centre is now transforming the children's environment 'The Space' and 'Steps Over the Rainbow' projects are both now complete and we are working on a new project to design the pre-school classroom.
- ✓ In February 2015 we will begin to run a Leadership Training Programme called 'LIFE' (Leadership, Independence, Futures, Empowerment) at a Sri Lankan International School 1-day per week.
- ✓ An art project to develop the entrance of a Sri Lankan Government run school has been approved, this will be followed by the design of the Junior classroom.

Section 5

Future Plans of The TEA Project

5.1. Establish and support a school **partnership with a Surrey based Primary School** and Our Home orphanage in Kerala, Southern India. Following much discussion we have decided to support a school partnership with Our Home in India. This is primarily due to the children's increased ability to converse in English and the availability of local staff to manage this project long-term.

5.2. We have established a **partnership with a local orphanage** and gained approval from the Sri Lankan Commissioner to run a weekly '**Girls Group**'. An art resources box full of creative and colourful materials has been funded by a supporter in the UK. We aim to work under the broad banner of a 'Girls Group'. The work of this group is intentionally un planned; as the group evolves project work will organically and naturally present itself. We plan to nurture a group environment which is safe, empowering, fun and self advocating.

5.3. An important future piece of work for the **project is to develop a Children's Rights Programme** and pilot this training in Sri Lanka to children in Killinochi, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy. For some time we have discussed developing a key rights based programme using a **Child Led Community Development (CLCD)** model. Given our experience of developing tailored workshops and training programmes to children in Sri Lanka and India we feel 2015 is the right time to consolidate our learning, experience and cultural knowledge to develop and facilitate an empowering child rights programme. Part two of this training will focus on training local Youth Leaders and staff to become trainers so they may take the training forward and adapt it to meet the changing needs of local children.

5.4. Develop art projects to recreate dark and unappealing children's areas; creating murals, consulting with children and young people to ensure they own the process and steer the work of The TEA Project. During the next 6-months four further art projects are planned. The first will run at the centre for street children in Kandy decorating and energising the pre-school classroom. **We plan to develop the entrance of a government run school** and design a playful new classroom. In April 2015 we will support a Sri Lankan orphanage to improve the institutional appearance of their building by injecting colour, feeling and emotion as directed by the 'Girls Group'.

5.5. With **partnership building** we plan to work more closely and be in a position to positively influence local government departments and intuitions with excellent best practice standards in Advocacy, Children's Rights and Participation principles. We plan to forge strong links with charities working in India and Sri Lanka; this will enable us to reach more children and share knowledge, resources and expertise.

5.6. We will continue to deliver our weekly commitments as listed in **Section 4**. We will continue to work on a daily basis with our three main partners in Sri Lanka; the orphanage, our partner charity and the local school. In addition we have policy and project work which we support when required by our partners. An example of this in Sri Lanka is a Tamil holiday where we have been asked to run TEA training and workshops with approximately 40 children who have no school during the day. We will continue to help and support Our Home in India and work will soon commence with setting up an exciting school partnership. We imagine this project will be resource intensive in terms of planning.

5.7. We are committed to devising a broad **Volunteer Policy** for our partner charity that is clear and useful. The policy will assist CAL with safely recruiting and selecting skilled volunteers from around the world.

5.8 We are currently developing a Leadership and Personal Development Training Programme called '**LIFE**' (Leadership, Independence, Futures, Empowerment). We have been commissioned by a Sri Lankan International School to run this programme on a rolling basis to over 100 students aged 10 years and up. We plan to develop further commissioning

opportunities with all income raised going directly into providing free and effective intervention for children and institutions most in need.

Section 6

Outcomes from The TEA Project

6.1. We regularly receive feedback from children following their participation in TEA workshops and training. The messages we hear direct from children confirm that the work of the project is having a significant impact on their lives. Children tell us they are learning new skills, developing their independence and confidence, learning to think in a broader sense and think about their future goals. Poor and marginalised children who face many difficulties in their daily lives are having fun learning and using a variety of materials and concepts which are unique and challenging to them.

6.2. We feel the project is raising aspirations, creating hope, developing skills, providing opportunities for fun and laughter, challenging children's perceptions of the world and their place within it, empowering children to think independent thoughts and original ideas, learning about health issues, environmental awareness, recycling and nurturing self expression. An important role of the project involves developing mechanisms to listen to the views, wishes and feelings of children. Ensuring we positively respond to children's views is crucial as is promoting the voice of marginalised and excluded children who have few advocates in the world.

6.3. All the work of The TEA Project encompasses and promotes advocacy, children's rights, safeguarding and participation standards. Applying fundamental human rights principles teamed with our experience of work in the voluntary, public and private sectors in the United Kingdom is leading the work with children, families, staff and colleagues in Sri Lanka and India.

6.4. Tangible outcomes of The TEA Project include:

- Youth Volunteer Training Project (*17 children*)
- Free English programmes supported by The British Council (*5 children*)
- Development of a new Library facility (*23 children were consulted*)
- Personal Development Training (*27 children*)
- Developed a 4-week programme of activities for street children (*40+ children*)
- Ran a month long programme of TEA Workshops in India (*35+ children*)
- Taught English at The Good Shepherd's International School (*50+ children*)
- Developed a Girl's Group with orphaned children (*19 children*)
- Completed an art project to regenerate the entrance of a facility used by street children called 'Steps Over the Rainbow'
- Ran 1-day of TEA Workshops at an English school camp (*70 children*)
- Ran 1-day of TEA Workshops to street children during public holidays (*40 children*)

Section 7

Our Values and Strengths

7.1 Strengths of The TEA Project include its dynamic and creative methods of working with partners which we have observed are unique to Sri Lanka and India. We work in the field of education, social work and children's rights, supporting innovative learning methods and personal development of children. Our approach to working with children aims to promote equality and listen to the voice of children which are both relatively new concepts that make The TEA Project distinct to other organisations.

7.2 We work hard and are passionate about what we do. **We believe in children.** We believe every child is unique, beautiful and irrespective of ability and personal circumstance holds **unlimited potential.** We want to nurture, inspire and enable children to realise they can achieve their dreams and aspirations despite the many disadvantages they endure due to living in poverty.

7.3 We believe in creating sustainable 'Child Led Community Development' projects that safeguard, protect and promote the rights of children. The TEA Project believes that helping children to find a voice is an essential step to helping them claim their individual rights.

7.4 We are flexible and adaptable in our approach; this has resulted in excellent feedback from children and has enabled us to develop key partnerships and networks with government departments and agencies.

7.5 See **Appendix 1** for a list of our values.

Section 8

Challenges to the Work of The TEA Project

8.1. Fundraising will be a key focus if we plan to continue the work of the project beyond May 2015. If we are to continue the work of The TEA Project for a further year we will need to raise £10,000.

8.2. We had expected to be provided with NGO visas once in Sri Lanka but unfortunately this did not happen which has caused our predicted visa costs to increase by over 500%. This current situation is not at all feasible and is therefore a key priority for the project moving forward.

8.3. The project is vulnerable to political instability. Sri Lanka is a developing country still emerging from war and communities are fractious. Charity and human rights work is looked upon with suspicion and like any developing nation the political situation is unpredictable.

Section 9

Next Steps for The TEA Project

9.1 We are working to resolve our difficult and expensive visa situation. Placing our youngest child in school in May 2015 will allow us to apply for student visas for both children and guardian visas for myself and Carl. Costs for placing Asia-Lilly in school and applying for 12-month visas will be much cheaper than the current visa costs alone.

9.2 In February 2015 we plan to begin fundraising to enable The TEA Project to continue to inspire and develop children's potential for a further year. To maintain our work programme and develop future projects and training programmes from May 2015-2016 we need to raise £10,000.

9.3 We are really excited about planned project work; specifically the development of a Child Rights Training Programme to train children and adults who work and support children. Children co-delivering training to adults is a unique concept in Sri Lanka & India but one which will assist us in creating powerful and strong future youth leaders.

Section 10

Final Words

10.1 Starting The TEA Project just over 1 year ago we did not know what lay ahead of us. We thought perhaps we would not like living in Asia, maybe our children would get sick or we would miss life and comforts in the UK. In our 7-months in Sri Lanka and India it is true to say the success of The TEA Projects first year has exceeded all our expectations. The work has been warmly received and we are making new partnerships day-by-day. We have not looked back and remain inspired and motivated by the work we have completed and the exciting plans ahead. We are mostly enthused by the incredible children and young people we have had the privilege to work with. Their improved outcomes and the individual potential being realised continues to drive the direction and scope of the project.

10.2 The success of The TEA Project must be credited to the many generous friends, family members and supporters of the project. Without the financial and emotional belief from supporters we would not be in this position today and the lives of over 300 children would not have been touched and inspired by the facilitation of free workshops and training programmes. The regular parcels of supplies we receive reminds us how special people are and how good the world can be. "Thank you".

Section 11

Appendix

11.1 Appendices 1: The values of The TEA Project

- ✓ Put children and young people at the heart of the project
- ✓ Promote equality of opportunity and celebrate difference and diversity
- ✓ Help to give vulnerable children and young people a strong voice and be their champion
- ✓ Always listen, respect and value children and young people as individual human beings
- ✓ Challenge discrimination and never make judgements on children and young people; every person can change and every person deserves a further chance
- ✓ Work to protect children and young people from harm, suffering and maltreatment
- ✓ Work to fight the harmful effects of poverty upon children, young people and their families
- ✓ Work holistically: A child is only one small piece of the puzzle, albeit the most significant piece

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