



Newsletter



India – First up, the U21 Football Tournament hosted in Madurai and later we feature the Travellers Trophy!

U21 National Football Championship

Madurai was lucky to be the hosts for this year's U21 Football Tournament held at the Racecourse Stadium will free entrance for all! Tamil Nadu had made it through to the final stages so we had to come along and support our local team!

One of the biggest matches was Tamil Nadu v West Bengal and the volunteers who were here at the time witnessed a thrilling match as TN won 4-2. The crowd went completely wild at the end and TN qualified for the semi finals! After the match the team were delighted and all the volunteers went onto the pitch to have a group photo with the team!



The first of the semi finals featured Goa v Punjab with Goa winning 2-0. In the evening TN beat Assam 3-1. The stage

was set for a grand final! The build up started a good 3 hours before kick off and featured cultural dancing; singing and dancing from local school children and fireworks. It was always going to be a tough match as Goa were the current holders. Unfortunately Tamil Nadu never got into the game and were very poor. It seemed that they had spent all their energy in the last 2 games

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and ended up losing 2-0. However it was wonderful to witness such a spectacular show and see the young up and coming footballers who hopefully will one day play for their country.

Vijay School – Painting

Jane Potapa, a volunteer Teaching English at Vijay School was so concerned that the school needed a revamp of colour, asked for our help in enlisting a local painter to come and brighten up the classrooms.



Along with Sharon Perry, who was also Teaching English at the school, they pooled their money and have made a fantastic job of smartening up the classrooms and the children and staff were delighted.

Jane has said "When I first visited the Vijay School I thought yes – the front of the school is what I expected because of the information I had received from Travellers. It was however rather a shock to see the drab tiny classrooms, five on the top floor and five on the bottom with only low walls separating each classroom. I decided that if it was affordable I would have come if not all the classrooms painted. When the quote came in I decided to pay for all the top classrooms to be painted up to door height. Sharon, my roommate very kindly decided she would pay for the rest, i.e. corridor and the upper walls and ceilings. So bingo! It is now finished. We hope the children like the colours".

After Jane left, Sharon decided to pay for the downstairs to be painted and the school were thrilled with the results.

Sharon has now very generously donated money to have the downstairs section of the school painted. This is due to start very soon.

Travellers Trophy

Tim Roberts (Football Coaching Placement) was teaching at both SEV Matriculation Higher Sec School and Fusco's Matriculation Higher Sec School. He wanted to arrange a football tournament between the two schools before their exams took over and football would have to take a backseat. With agreement from both of the principles our country Manager, Pradeep Kumar got permission from the Director of Sports at the Racecourse ground to hire a pitch for the occasion. Alex Cann who was also coaching football at SEV helped Tim with the preparations for the tournament; the teams were picked and trophies and medals were purchased. Travellers decided that this was such a worthy cause that they sponsored the whole event!



Written by Tim Roberts:

"It was 3pm on a stiflingly hot afternoon in Madurai, South India. I arrived at the city's main sports stadium, with a group of fellow Travellers volunteers and staff, ready to set up the inaugural Travellers football tournament. The teams had arrived and the boys were enthusiastically warming up, just like the pros.

But where were the goals? Where were the pitches? I though the groundsmen had been working hard all day to get things ready? The matches started in thirty minutes! "No worries" the groundsmen claimed as they got out their measuring tapes and white powder. It was pointless asking them why they were starting this so late. The tournament would have to be delayed.

So it was a little late in starting, but at least the sun was a little less intense by the time the first whistle was blown. I had seen the boys make great progress in training but how would they look out on the pitch, playing in proper matches with proper pitches? I feared

The occasion might get to them and they return to the "hit and hope" or "swarm of bees" tactics of old.

I was wrong: they did ever so well. Moving into space, calling for the ball, keeping it simple, one touch passing..... I was really proud to see them looking like football players and working together like football teams. I had feared 0-0's all round but once again I was wrong. The goals flowed freely and excitable cheers could be heard from across the pitches as the boys realised their dreams and found the net. Ok, the celebrations were somewhat over the top, but at least they were enjoying themselves.



The group stage came and went and so to the final: "Fusco's B vs SEV A"! A longer match and then a chance for the players to lift the mighty Travellers Trophy! The best team won (SEV 2-0) and the inevitable celebrations ensued. Medals and trophies were presented and photographs were taken in scenes reminiscent of Leicester 2006 (what do you mean you don't remember Hereford United's play off final victory??). After a while the boys got on their bikes and set off home; pleased, I hope, with the way they played and motivated, I hope, to keep on improving".



Sri Lanka - with our teaching and other Ja-Ela based projects back in action we thought it was worth taking a look back at one volunteer's recent

experience – and it seemed very much like a placement that she will never forget.

'The first week has been very good and I have donated books, pencils writing books and one or two other things. I'm having a great time giving something back, which is what I came here to do. The school likes it to.

School is good.

I went in today and it had been raining from 4pm yesterday till 9am today, it didn't stop. The class room was a mess, the roof leaks and all the table and chairs were wet through. The floor was like a paddling pool. This is the norm. The government said they are going to fix the roof a few years ago but they are still waiting. Sri Lanka has no time!



So first on the list was to wipe all the table and chairs and make a space where the rain wasn't coming in. That was a task in it's self I can tell you. Okay, children

seated and ready for lessons. I did math with them today and they were very good. They had even finished the clock I left them to do yesterday so I had to do marking before I started. They get excited when I walk in know, it's great and they pull a face when I say it's time to leave.

The helper said she will miss me when I'm not there, so that's good. The children work so well for me and do all the things I ask of them. They finish all the work that is set for them. I don't know who is rewarded the most, me or them, me I think.....!

Ja Ela, is clean and it's really nice. I spend time with all the staff including Niranjala and Roshan. I feel at home, the food is good. Niranjala is so helpful and has a large knowledge about all sorts of things, if you listen to her and take note of what she says you can't go wrong. I feel that she has made my stay here great. She always makes sure that I am well and helps me in any way I ask.

St Josephs School is so poor, they need so much help. If you have any more volunteers coming over to teach and they ask you as I did "can I take things for the children" Please say YES as much as you can, or send it to Ja Ela house for mother to take into school.

It makes my heart ache when I see how much help this school needs!'

News from our Wasgamuwa partners

Wasgamuwa – The SLWCS (Sri Lankan Wildlife Conservation Society) established their first project in Wasgamuwa, a village in the Central Province over a decade ago, with the "Saving Elephants by Helping People" (SEHP) project, which fence elephants OUT of villages rather than IN reserves, using solar powered electric fencing.

This project still remains the most successful participatory HEC resolution program in Sri Lanka today. The communities are still working together to maintain their fences. Unfortunately, due to the security situation in Sri Lanka, the number of international volunteers has

declined drastically since February, so sadly the main field research site at Wasgamuwa is operating on a skeleton staff. The locally trained Field Scouts have continued to collect data on the fences, HEC, and socio economic issues without help from volunteers. Through this important research SLWCS have discovered that elephant raids have reduced by 100% in some areas, and approximately 7 hours per day of farmers time has been saved, and Rs.5,500 (approx \$50) per annum saved from not having to purchase paraphernalia to chase away crop raising elephants, as well as saving thousands of rupees previously spent on repairs to property damaged by elephants. We have just been informed that two volunteers will be joining our Research Team at Wasgamuwa in July, which is great news!



SLWCS made an exciting discovery in one of the field sites, of a possible, but not confirmed presence of an endemic fish species

(see the presentation "A Fish Story" above), and would like to encourage researchers and conservation enthusiasts to join the team in undertaking further studies of the area.

SLWCS is also keen to find funding to continue the good work in the area, by carrying out the Habitat Enrichment Project (HEP), as an additional means of deterring elephants and alleviating poverty, by planting citrus and other crops varieties that are known to be not preferred by elephants.

We have plenty of spaces for this project area and the work the SLWCS are doing is really fantastic and makes a massive difference to the local elephant and human community in particular – let us know if you are interested in teaching English or helping in their conservation work – we would love to get you out there to see this wonderful setting and opportunity for your selves!

