

# Shining Life Children's Trust

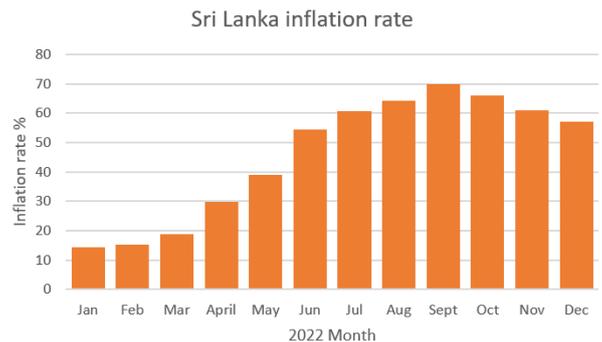
December 2022



## Welcome to our newsletter

Sri Lanka seems to have fallen out of the news recently, but the economic situation that hit the headlines in the summer is still dire. In many ways their experience mirrors ours but much more exaggerated. According to the World Bank, 'Sri Lanka is facing unsustainable debt, which is having a negative impact on growth and poverty. Sri Lanka's GDP is expected to fall by 9.2% in 2022.' Inflation is still extremely high at nearly 60% (and over 90% for food). The UN has warned of a worsening food crisis and a requirement for \$70million more in aid to meet the need. People are still queuing all day for bread, fuel and other staples.

There is, however, a glimmer of hope. In October, inflation fell for the first time in a year. At the same time, the rupee has stabilised at about 420 rupees to £1 (not far off double where it was at the beginning of the year). This does of course partly offset the inflation increases for Shining Life, meaning your donations continue to go a long way.



We are delighted that our communities are managing comparatively well. Shining Life has supported them with direct food aid to help them get through the crisis; however, their commitment to education, focus on growing their own food and development of local businesses has put them in a strong position.

Thank you, your support is helping to make a real difference to the lives of people in these communities.

## Thriving communities in Angunochchiya

Our partnership with the three villages in Angunochchiya had been due to finish in 2020. However, we have continued to work with them through the pandemic, and beyond, to make sure that the achievements of the project are sustained. It is good to see that their unwavering commitment to implementing long lasting change is really shining through now.

For almost 18 months schools in Sri Lanka remained closed, Shining Life therefore supported the community to run tuition classes in English, Maths and Science and these continue to run, providing the additional boost the young people need. Parents and students have expressed great appreciation for these classes.



Excitingly, in the last year the community has opened a new preschool in Maligaswewa village temple. Three local women are training for their teaching qualifications while running the classes Monday to Friday. This clearly demonstrates the increased ability of the community to identify a need and to implement a solution.

Throughout the project we have worked with the community to develop entrepreneurial skills and improve their ability to earn an income. We have set up welfare groups, provided vocational and business

skills training and established a small loan scheme. This is functioning really well. Loans have been taken out by members to invest in home-gardening, cultivation and dress making. The loans are always repaid on time. Group members are unable to access loans from commercial banks and so without this fund would have no other way of growing their micro enterprises.

All of this means that the communities of Angunochchiya can face these difficult economic times with more optimism and resilience.





## Technology assists education in remote Sri Lankan hills

The three villages of Kirimetiya, Ambalanmanam and Sriyagama could not be more remote, situated high in the hills of central Sri Lanka up narrow, long, winding lanes only passable with a 4-wheel drive. Yet here, thanks to Shining Life's investment helping with mobile phones, our partner organisation WDC, has been able to continue working with the communities throughout the pandemic. WhatsApp groups were established for the youth clubs and women's society and, much as in the UK, Zoom has played its part! In Ambalanmanam the community participated in a talent show with the children demonstrating their skills in song and dance over Zoom.



Education has been a focus of our work throughout the project and this is now paying dividends in all age groups.

The pre-school in Kirimetiya, that the project established, has gained recognition as the only Tamil language preschool in the area. While schools in other areas were forced to close due to Covid, the dedication of the Kirimetiya teachers meant the preschool was able to continue to operate, greatly benefitting local families.

The junior school for the area is also in Kirimetiya. Here a parent teacher association has been formed meeting regularly to discuss the impact of Covid on the children's education.

Children aged 9 to 10 across Sri Lanka sit the Grade 5 Scholarship exam. This influences their progress onto senior school. With the additional tuition and on-line classes that the parent teacher association established there was a 60% improvement in children's test scores this year. This is a complete turnaround in attitudes to education, and results, from when we started working with the communities.



As we progress up the ages, excitingly, two young people from the youth club have been able to secure good jobs as accountants with local companies. Previously the majority of young people were employed in manual labour and farming so this marks a very positive change. These young people are now acting as role models and positive examples for their peers.

We continue to enjoy working with WDC and the communities in Kirimetiya, Ambalanmanam and Sriyagama and

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## How to donate to Shining Life Children's Trust

### Regular donations

Regular donations help us to plan our work in Sri Lanka better. If you would like to donate regularly, please set up a standing order. You will need to give your bank these details:

Account name: Shining Life Children's Trust, Sort Code: 40-52-40 (CAF Bank), Account Number: 00016399.

If you set up a standing order, please tell us through [admin@shininglife.org](mailto:admin@shininglife.org) or write to us.

### By credit card

You can donate by credit card through the Charities Trust website. Please go to our website ([www.shininglife.org/support.html](http://www.shininglife.org/support.html)) for links.

### By cheque

Please send your donation to Shining Life Children's Trust at:  
1 Chestnut Lane, Amersham, Bucks HP6 6EN.

