

Livelihood assistance by Assist Resettlement & Renaissance in Batticaloa

Bicycles donated to students in remote villages of Batticaloa

Trustees of Assist Resettlement & Renaissance (Assist RR) visited a number of very remote villages in Wellaveli DS Division in Batticaloa, bordering Amapara district, on 22-23 Jan 2014. These villages are 38th Colony, 16th Colony and Maalayarkaddu. We were told by the villagers of 38th Colony that there are a couple of wells built by INGOs to help farming and drinking water but they do not have water in the summer. They also informed us that during construction of one well, the contractor brought water from elsewhere to the well and showed to the INGO that they had found water. The Villagers made a request to either dig further down to ensure water in the summer or build a new well to provide drinking water to the villagers.



38th Colony, Wellaveli DS Division without proper water facilities

It is understood that these villages are generally cut off during rain flooding from the rest of the district. There is a river between 16th Colony and Maalayarkaddu and are linked by a 1m width bridge. Bicycles and motorbikes use this bridge with great difficulty. We were told that it would take an hour to get to Maalayarkaddu by a vehicle using another longer route because the link with 16th Colony is not suitable for vehicular transport. There is no public transport to these villages and children walk to their schools up to 13 kMs one way.



A narrow bridge connecting 16th Colony & Maalaiyarkaddu

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Path leading to Maalaiyarkaddu village from the bridge in the photos above

We met the villagers of 16th Colony and Maalayarkaddu in 16th Colony and discussed various issues. There are nearly 65 families live in these two villages and most of them work as labourers. Parents also stop their children attending schools and encourage them to start work as labourers at very early ages. We were told that there are no A/L students and only 3 O/L students in these two villages. However, we found that many children are eager to learn and have ambitions. A girl started crying and told us that she wants to become an English teacher but not getting enough support. She cycles 26 kMs a day to her school and she would benefit from a better school.



Meeting the villagers in 16th Colony & a girl became emotional about her studies



Meeting a family in Maalayarkaddu (both parents were killed, living with grandmother)

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When we tried to establish the number of students who have been walking more than 7 kMs to schools, 30 children gave us their names. We then, with the assistance of some locals, filtered down the list to 15 children. As they have been suffering without a bike and forced to walk to schools, Assist RR decided to donate bicycles to 15 students.

The bicycles were purchased in Kalmunai and were taken to 16th Colony the next day. It was dark when we arrived in 16th Colony and there is no electricity. We had to use a headlight of a motor bike to conduct the handover of bicycles event. Some photos are given below.



Donating bicycles to 15 students of 16th Colony and Maalayarkaddu

Further needs were discussed with the villagers and the following needs were identified as crucial to the development of these villages:

1. Provision of drinking water to 38th Colony - Cost is around Rs 150,00 - An anonymous donor has already provided funds to construct a well;
2. A few more students need bicycles to go to school in 16th Colony and Maalayarkaddu - One bicycle would cost around Rs 13,500 (£65) in Sri Lanka;
3. Requested for educating 6 bright children at boarding schools as they do not have the right environment for learning at home - it is expected that hostel fees would cost around Rs 5000 (£24) per child per month and there may be a small school fee depending on the school to be admitted;

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4. They also requested evening classes to help the children to improve their chances - It would cost nearly Rs 20,000 (£100) to conduct evening classes to O/L students in two schools to help the children in these areas;
5. Livelihood assistance to families without parents and women headed families - This may cost between Rs 70,000 - Rs 100,000 (£350 - £500) per family depending on the type of livelihood project to be supported;
6. They asked us to talk to the GA to widen the narrow bridge that links 16th Colony and Maalayarkaddu - Happened to meet the EP Governor's secretary, who is willing to take this up with the Governor's office and the EP council, and asked me to email the details.

Assist RR would like to assist these needy villagers and are seeking funds from Diaspora.