

QUONDAM TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP 2016

In 2016, Amy Fass travelled to Sri Lanka to volunteer with a children's charity.



Thanks to the generous support of Quondam I was able to travel to Sri Lanka this summer with six other Lancaster medical students. We were aiming to set up a new branch of SKIP. SKIP stands for Students for Kids International Projects. It is a student led charity which helps support children's welfare in developing countries. SKIP currently has branches across eleven UK universities each of which work with a non-government organisation (NGO) in Europe, Asia or Africa. The aim is to develop a sustainable community-based project focusing on the health and education of local children.



As the newest SKIP branch, Lancaster's trip to Sri Lanka involved visiting four NGOs in Colombo, Kandy and the tea plantations of Dickoya. The aim was to visit each of these charities to see which one would be the most suitable partner for SKIP Lancaster. Over the coming year we will work with the chosen NGO to establish our healthcare project and in 2017 we hope to be able to send students from Lancaster University to volunteer on the project over the summer.

The four NGOs that we visited were Child Action Lanka, The Paalam International School, Lanka Mother and Child and the Cerebral Palsy Lanka Foundation. Child Action Lanka and The Paalam International School are two NGOs that work with street and disadvantaged children.

Both NGOs are attempting to break the cycle of poverty by providing these children with an education which they would otherwise not have been given. During our time with these NGOs we were given the opportunity to run some interactive first aid sessions. In small groups we taught the children basic life support, the recovery position and what to do if an adult or child is choking. This was a fantastic experience for us and it was really rewarding to see the children practising their new skills at the end of the sessions. We also ran some teaching sessions on infectious diseases, for example dengue fever, which is highly prevalent in Sri Lanka. We focused predominately on how to identify its symptoms and the management of the disease. We were also able to learn from the children as many of them had themselves contracted dengue fever.

The third NGO, Lanka Mother and Child, focuses on improving the lives of the children of the Dickoya tea plantation workers. Amongst

this community there are high levels of poverty and alcoholism and children often leave school at a very young age. We were given the opportunity to visit the NGO's child development centres, which provide a safe and educational environment for pre-school children whilst their parents are at work. We also learnt about the medical camps and nutritional programmes organised by this NGO. This experience provided us with a good background knowledge of the problems these children face and how SKIP Lancaster could potentially get involved with this predominately isolated community in the future.

The final NGO we visited was the Cerebral Palsy Lanka Foundation. Cerebral palsy is a physical disability that affects movement and posture and it is estimated to affect 40,000 children in Sri Lanka. This is currently the only charity in Sri Lanka that helps children with cerebral palsy. We visited one of the charity's "dream centres" with the view that Lancaster students could potentially volunteer at the centre next summer. The centre provides the children with both education and therapy (occupational, speech and physiotherapy).



Whilst in Sri Lanka, we also took the opportunity to explore this fantastic country; visiting the elephants at Minneriya National Park, exploring the temples in Dambulla and the beaches in Mount Lavina.

