



Annual Report 2021



dear friends,

2020 will be described as a year like no other – unprecedented, terrifying, chaotic, relentless, heart-breaking, virtual and exhausting, as well as innovative and ground-breaking.

For TFT this was set to be a most successful and impactful year with our alternative family care training planned throughout 2020. By the end of 2019 this was really gaining traction at the highest level, and a 'Children belong in Families, Not Orphanage's nationwide campaign to raise awareness of the unknown concept of foster care had been planned during the England vs Sri Lanka test matches, with the support of the Sri Lankan cricket board and England's Barmy Army.

Then Covid-19 arrived and suddenly everything stopped. Everything was cancelled, including our 15 year anniversary fundraising events, which incurred unexpected loss of income. Travel was banned. Sri Lanka was under strict lockdowns, and schools and businesses were closed on and off throughout the year. The world was united in fear and uncertainty.

Covid-19 case numbers in Sri Lanka remained relatively low throughout the year, but it was the long periods of strict lockdowns and threat of the virus which caused the biggest problems as thousands of daily wage earners were without income. As a result they couldn't buy food to sustain their families. Also, with schools closed, children also missed out on vital school meals.

At TFT, we paused, re-evaluated, adapted and innovated new ways of implementing our services to support and protect those in most need.



Thanks to our local team and generous emergency funding from supporters, TFT International Preschool (sponsored by Mercury Holidays) was quickly adapted into an emergency food distribution centre which provided over 200,000 meals, medication, soaps, sanitisers and sanitary wear to more than 400 local families to help prevent child abandonment.

Our dedicated preschool teachers devised a new curriculum and exciting home-schooling workbook, and met with parents outside of lockdowns. They communicated online to ensure all 65 pupils had access to learning throughout, and we translated UNICEF hand hygiene information into Sinhala, and this reached over 10,000 people.

The TFT annual book-giving ceremony was cancelled due to the pandemic restrictions, but our hardworking team arranged special permission through the Ministry to distribute schoolbook packs to 2,901 children in seven schools, ensuring young futures could continue their education.

In collaboration with Sisters at Law, we expanded the TFT Heartbeat Centre to provide safe shelter, access to justice, and education to an additional 6 women and 3 children. This was in response to increased numbers of desperate helpline calls from mothers and girls affected by domestic violence and sexual abuse, who were at risk of institutionalisation, and/or separation from their babies.

As travel was out of the question, we appointed and trained a local National Advocacy Manager for Alternative Family and Foster Care to provide continuation of the programme. We trained 35 applicants in this unknown concept, and connected with 9 Sri Lankan NGO's online to discuss alternative family and foster care in order to raise awareness.

Our success this year was only made possible because of the unwavering and extraordinary support of our new and existing supporters from all over the world, trustees, volunteers, partners, friends and staff, and we thank each and every one who has contributed in some way to help overcome such deep hardships for our fellow human beings, especially vulnerable women and girls, to help them not only to survive, but to thrive in these challenging times.

The main aim in our 3 year strategy is to continue to strive to give every child love, belonging, protection and education which is fundamental for a healthy human existence, and cannot ever be achieved through separation and institutionalisation.

With your continued belief and support we can go forward with a renewed sense of hope, determination, clarity and purpose.

Huge thanks and loving kindness.

Lynn

**Lynn Stanier MBE FRSA
CEO, Their Future Today**

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020/21



TFT Country Director - was awarded Sri Lanka's second highest civil honour, and became Deshamanya Percy Gunarathna



TFT Partner - Marini De Livera received The Power of Light Award from HM Queen Elizabeth II



200,000+
meals were provided to vulnerable families



2,901
children received school book packs



10
single mother entrepreneurs were supported with employment



10,000+
people received information which we translated into Sinhala to advise on hand hygiene



12
women escaping abuse were given legal advice, safe shelter and support



100
rural families were given seeds and crops, and received agricultural training

Our response to COVID-19



2,000+

vulnerable people were supported with food parcels, masks, soaps, sanitisers, and sanitary wear which was made by local single mothers, which provided employment and income



500+

fruit trees and vegetables such as snake gourd, bitter gourd, ridge gourd, spinach, lime, ladies fingers and brinjal were planted to provide food to the local community

5

families were given support in the form of repairs or resources to continue their small businesses



100

infants from displaced families in the Mannar district received nutritious food supplies



In August, we launched a livelihood programme to help families become sustainable by providing land to grow fruits and vegetables, and resources to help start or support their small businesses.



In gratitude for the support of local Police officers, we donated 10 substantial and protective face masks to keep the team well in their challenging work in keeping the public safe.

Most families in the rural areas struggled to buy the essential food and medication they need. Through village leaders our team identified those who were suffering from medical conditions, with special needs children, and were most vulnerable.

Karvindiya 5 yrs was born with a neurological deficiency which causes lack of oxygen to the brain. His father's hand is paralysed and he is unable to work to support his family.



Providing education

Thousands of children end up in orphanages as a result of family poverty, most often due to lack of education.

Enabling education helps children to reach their full potential and in the longer term lifts future generations out of poverty, which subsequently reduces child abandonment.



2,901 Children received school books at seven local schools to enable continuation of their education.

65 TFT preschool children received bursary places, as families couldn't afford school fees.

4 TFT Preschool Teachers have trained to complete diploma qualifications during this year, and the government are now contributing 2,500rs per month to all preschool teachers' salaries.





65

Under-fives benefitted from a new curriculum and home schooling workbooks to continue their vital early learning development during the COVID-19 lockdowns at TFT International Preschool, which celebrated its sixth successful year



100

Institutionalised girl victims were thankful for a lifeline at the TFT bakery project. During lockdowns, TFT teachers were not permitted to enter, but bakery classes were allowed to continue. This has provided the girls with some much needed light relief and pleasure. When it is possible, we will help those interested in taking up baking apprenticeships.

180

Vulnerable children aged 11 to 18 in two institutions, intermittently continued lessons in computer studies, remedial lessons, embroidery and sewing vocational training classes.

Transforming the lives of children in orphanages

While we do not support the orphanage system, it is imperative to improve the health, education and well-being of abandoned babies and children who are languishing inside. They are surviving without love, dignity or even the most basic care. So we advocate that their voices must be heard, and continue to advocate and work towards ending institutionalisation, through our alternative family and foster care programme.

Our eighteen month Hearts TFT childcare training programme for housemothers was completed in July 2019. This gave us some reassurance that the care provided during this year was much improved for the 61 babies and children under 5 years old at Ruhunu orphanage, and TFT Ruhunu Preschool stayed open throughout.

20

Dedicated TFT childcare-trained housemothers cared for up to 61 abandoned babies round the clock during the lockdowns, and they all stayed safe and healthy.

49

Children 3-5 years received vital early learning development at TFT Ruhunu Preschool.

18

Disabled children aged 6 years to 18 years were assessed at Kanchadeva Children's Home, in Hambantotha, and speech therapists, audiologists, staff trainers and teachers were appointed.



TFT housemothers also undertook agricultural crop training at Ruhunu, which provided food and nourishment to the children in the orphanage, as well as to their own families.



PPE equipment including face masks, thermometers, sanitisers and soaps, were provided to TFT housemothers and government caregivers to ensure protection of staff and children in Ruhunu orphanage.

In May, TFT housemothers provided practical childcare training for a new government initiative to caregivers.

In future, only trained housemothers will be employed in government orphanages. We were delighted to learn from the National Childcare Probation Commissioner that the ground-breaking work and influence of TFT had been a force behind this change, and eventually we intend to retrain our staff to support families in the community, as children begin to reintegrate.



TFT Ruhunu Preschool has created the routine and stimulation needed for essential early learning development. Matron said "I can see a real difference in the happiness and wellbeing of the children and staff, as a result of the HEARTS childcare training, and the preschool facility."

Bringing & keeping families together

In our ongoing drive to prevent children from being abandoned to institutions and orphanages, we identify families at risk in the community and work closely to support them with medical care; provision of required therapies for either parents or children; provision of education and tools. More importantly, following the assessment, we look to implement an income generation project or provide a job opportunity in order that the family can become self-sufficient and independent in the long term.

TFT is committed to reuniting children who have been abandoned through poverty with their families, and we are working with National Childcare services to identify children in the institution with potential family relationships, then seek out the parent or relative to assess their needs.

Where safe and possible we assist with re-adoption through the courts, establish the children in local schools, and provide housing and support until the reunited family can reach self-sufficiency and independence through income generation training.

5

Families were successfully supported to independence despite a challenging year.

2,000

Vulnerable people in 400 multi-generation families received emergency food parcels to help strengthen families and keep them together. This included 50 tuk tuk drivers who were without income due to the loss of tourism.



7

Heddle looms were donated to single mothers escaping domestic abuse in WDC shelter in Kandy. The long-term aim is to teach new skills to make creative items and sell as an entrepreneurial activity, and make their families sustainable



A few months ago our longstanding preschool caretaker and mother of three children, was told she was going blind in both eyes and urgently needed a cataract operation. We arranged her surgery and thankfully the operation was successful.

As a result, a donor came forward to donate 100 pairs of lenses to poor rural people who would not be able to afford the 40,000rs (£150), and they are being distributed at our TFT Pinkanda office.



A new wheelchair has meant Danushka 8yrs can stay at home with her loving father and family as he can now go back to his job and earn an income from selling lottery tickets.

Ayomi* suffered physical and verbal abuse daily. She said she is sure she would have been injured or killed by now if she hadn't run away and found safety and peace at the Heartbeat Centre.

Ayomi is devoted to her studies and wants to become an English teacher so that she can become independent and look after her little daughter Anika* who is 4 years old.



*Name changed

Heartbeat Resource Centre & Shelter

Belonging is a basic need, and in order to change lives for the many and not just the few, we are committed to providing global alternative family and foster care knowledge and training from grassroots to national level to plant the seeds of cultural and social change, and give children back their human rights.

In order to continue momentum of this project during the pandemic we appointed and trained a National Advocacy Manager for Alternative Family and Foster Care, with the support of our partners Professor Myrna McNitt, IFCO, and Vasundhra Om Prem, Centre of Excellence Alternative Care, India. Zoom meetings were held with 9 Sri Lankan NGO's to raise awareness and discuss the new concept of alternative family care.

3,500+

Helpline calls were received at the Heartbeat Centre this year from desperate mothers of children in orphanages who were suffering abuse, and abused women and young girls who needed advice, support and protection. Approximately 10 calls per day reported cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse, selling of child brides, child trafficking, child sex slavery, and prostitution of children in orphanages.

Within all communities, there were many reports of sexual abuse and domestic violence, with numbers of cases increasing by 100% during the pandemic.

TFT provides advocacy and vital support to signpost these women and girls to a place of safety - an important job completed; preservation of life. But what kind of life does anybody have if they remain in a cycle of poverty?

Saving someone from a situation is simply the start of the journey. Empowering them to stand on their own two feet is critical for continued sustainability and success.

Tharushi* 14 years

"My father is sick, and my mother is a sex worker. She sold me to men and forced me to be a sex worker too. I ran away and was scared I would be sent to a remand home with criminals. Now I am experiencing love, peace and happiness for the first time at the Heartbeat centre, and I am studying hard to be a nurse."

*Name changed



The TFT Heartbeat Centre, run and managed by Sisters at Law, provides safe shelter, pro-bono legal services by an all-female group of lawyers, and education to help these marginalised victims fulfil their potential and rebuild their lives. This year we increased capacity to provide safe shelter for 10 abused women and girls, and 2 mothers and babies to keep them together and out of abusive institutions.



10

Girls, and two babies escaping abuse have received shelter, protection and tutoring to achieve their dreams of becoming lawyers, teachers, and a hairdresser. Victims need love and care, not institutions.



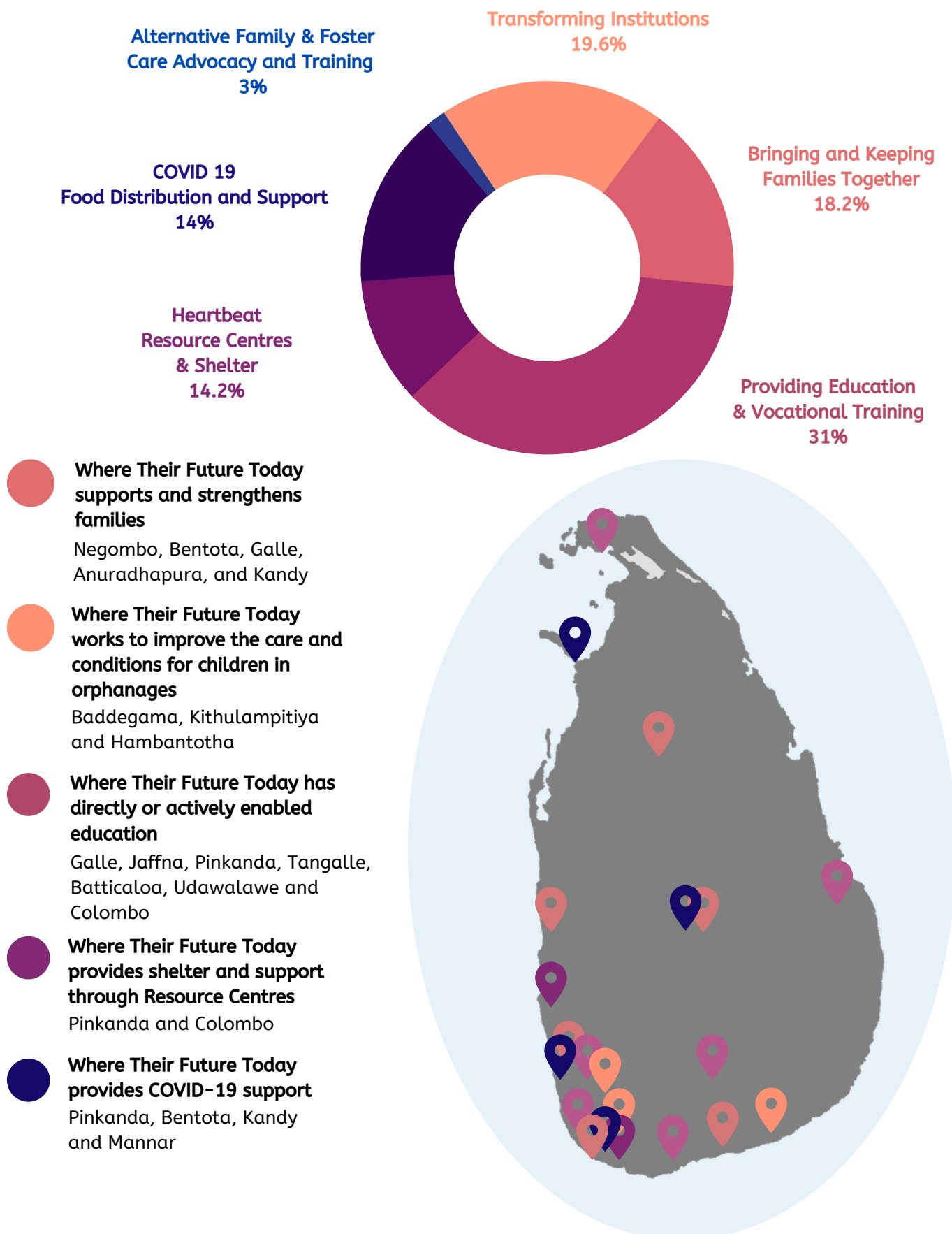
2

New computers and a printer were provided to support online weekly English and art therapy classes, which are providing a very welcome distraction for the girls who are suffering from deep emotional trauma during this time of strict lockdowns. Huge thanks to individual volunteer fundraising efforts.



Our impact is only possible due to the generous and committed support of our donors, fundraisers, volunteers, charitable trusts, partners and corporate partners.

This year, we spent £121,296 supporting children and families across Sri Lanka. Being clear and transparent about where our supporters' money goes is important to us. Here's a breakdown of what we spent to support our beneficiaries.





A message from our Chair of Trustees

" The past year has been one of the most challenging in the charities history but despite this, with your support, we have managed to deliver lifesaving support to families and children. Over 200,000 meals were provided during lockdown where families were literally starving in their homes. We assisted in the vital education of children and supplied 2,901 school book packs.

Their Future Today has the ability to act and support those in need on a micro basis but also is making historic changes in a macro way. You will recall that we had been training Judges in alternative outcomes for children who have been brought in front of the courts to be placed in an orphanage. It has taken some years but we are proud to let you know that new legislation has been brought in: the policy document which was influenced by TFT, encompasses this ground-breaking law change and will give us the opportunity to ensure that children are afforded alternative outcomes when faced with being placed in an institution. We continue to push for better conditions in orphanages through resources and training.

We are pleased to welcome Nimali Jayawardene to our dynamic board of valued trustees and thank everyone, including our Patrons for all the support in the past year. We look forward with optimism to the year ahead."

Simon Jackman

Trustees

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Thank you for your invaluable support

Their Future Today would like to give special thanks to the following organisations for their generous donations in 2020/21:

Association of Professional Sri Lankans
The Barmy Army
The British Sri Lankan Association
Classic Collection
Clifford Chance
The Clinic by Dr Mayoni
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The Other Art Fair
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The Sri Lanka Collection
Teardrop Hotels
Twirltour Travel
Wimbledon High School

Their Future Today is also grateful for the support and expertise generously provided by:

Better Care Network
Centre of Excellence in Alternative Care, India
Foundation of Goodness
International Foster Care Organisation
Lumos
Hope and Homes for Children
Sisters at Law
UK Fostering
UNICEF

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of others, and we are eternally grateful to all of our Trust Funds and Foundations and supporters for their contributions in 2020/21.





TransFormaTion of Little Lives



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