

June Rainbow – January 2009

I met Olly over 30 years ago when we were both pregnant with our sons. We became close friends, as did the boys and I have many happy memories of the many get-togethers Olly and Fred used to host, as the lifeblood of the Sri Lankan community in Townsville, North Queensland.

I was really looking forward to my trip to Sri Lanka and Olivia kept asking me when I would visit. Finally I stopped over on my way back from Mumbai and Olivia very kindly met me at the airport. We spent a hectic day in Colombo visiting disadvantaged children at the beach and suburbs, where she distributed bags of gifts and toys to excited and happy groups of kids.

We then left for the orphanage which was a couple of hours away and it certainly was quite a contrast to the hustle and bustle of Colombo. In peaceful and idyllic surroundings – she took me on a tour of the grounds where I saw all sorts of flora and fauna, not unlike that in India, and I met all her helpers and the children.

They were a happy and hardworking group and even though my stay was short, we formed a friendly bond, and my lack of language was no barrier. We all met at mealtimes, (I enjoyed the food immensely) and we sometimes played games in the evening.

We visited the local market and Olivia also took me to Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, which was much cooler due to the higher elevation. Whilst there we visited a tea plantation which was a most interesting excursion.

I spent a couple of evenings helping out with the English language classes which are offered to the local community and workers and after their initial shyness, the students were keen to practice their English.

I had an enjoyable and fulfilling week there and was very impressed by their devotion and hard work. I hope they can continue as long as they are needed and wish them every success in their endeavours.

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