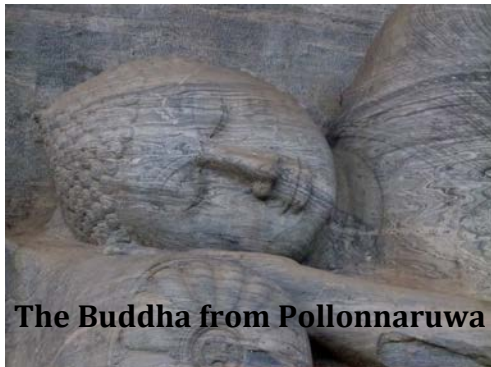


TOILETS 2013

Everyone in Sri Lanka giggled at the toilets. In fact they found it hard to be serious about this most serious subject. But as time went on, they began to accept the fact that



The Buddha from Pollonnaruwa

evacuation is as important as the rest....

Joking apart, the importance of good toilets in schools cannot be over emphasized. The lack thereof allows parents to keep girls at home (after puberty they can no longer

go in the bushes) and improves everyone's health as illness is contained.

And so toilets have become one of our (DACF) focal points – along with toothbrushes and garbage cans/rubbish bins.

This year, 10 schools were chosen in Sri Lanka. Ah Sri Lanka, so many fond memories... (It is where I was first ordained, where I lived an almost idyllic life due to its extreme simplicity – can one go back?) And so the chance to build toilets there was embraced warmly by DACF.

My friend Ven. T. Dhammika Nayaka Thero in Geneva coordinated the international bit and his good friend Ven. E. Sorathe Maha Thero was on the spot. He had researched isolated schools which needed help. In fact he did it so well that when we came to visit, we covered about 1,100 kilometers – not including the dirt tracks -- an exhausting but rewarding endeavor. It was exhausting because the roads vary enormously and we had many hours of travel but rewarding because we learnt so much. Here is a break-down:



Name of school	Place	Amount(Rps*)	New toilets	Repaired toilets
Weerapana School	Galle area	103,609	1	2
Halvitigala School	Galle Area	61,334	2	
Halgawela School	Galle Area	64,355	1	
Devalegama School	Galle Area	49,195		2
Gallandala School	Galle Area	66,170	1	2
Kuda Oya School	Wellawaya	103,575	2	
Pelawatta School	Monoragala	95,067	2	
Udawelayagama School	Sigiriya	39,241		2 but did 3
Diyakepilla School	Sigiriya	98,996	2	
Sucharithagama School	Anuradhapura	114,662	2	1

* Sri Lankan Rupees: US\$1 = SLRupees130

We learnt, for example that Sri Lankan parents pay SLRs.36 (27 US cents at the present exchange rate) towards school maintenance each year. Some of this money will be used to maintain the toilets and many of the parents are involved in the maintenance of the grounds – and toilets. (In most schools we were assured that the principal would check every now and again.) Uniforms and text books are free, the problem of exercise books (we distributed 1700 80 page volumes = big for primary school) and shoes remain a problem for poor families. Teachers are required to fill the posts allotted to them for 5 years no matter where, no matter what. (I was assured by a specialist in the field that fraud – getting a better position – is not tolerated.) Unwillingly at first, some of the teachers we met had dug in and loved the quiet rural life and intended to stay. At one school a teacher had been there for 23 years!!

So we started out and the worry was how to record the gift of the foundation to each school: we hit on the idea of painting the name on the side of the toilets. In many places the result was crooked and it was difficult in pouring rain but I was assured that the result was very artistic – I sincerely hope so!

We were happy to visit pink and yellow and blue after the many unimaginative green ones...

Next time you go on a ride through the forests of Sri Lanka or trekking along one of the paths, you may come across a welcome site: a school with a toilet on the side of which is written “Douglas A. Campbell Foundation” and you, unlike many will be able to smile because you know where it comes from....

PS. We did spend a wonderful day at Polonnaruwa, the second capital city from 993 until 13th century. There are rock faces in front of the famous, inspiring, glorious statues of the Buddha and Ananda.



Here is Minhindu, the principal, a teacher and the artist!



As we sat there, people came up and said hello or Ven. Dhammika would greet them. Here is a picture of the two of them, nominated the Entertainment Committee for the day!