

Chief Executive Officer's Report - 2025 AGM

Introduction

Firstly, I must thank you all for your support during our first year as a registered charity. The purpose of this report is to remind you of all our achievements to date, and the importance your role as a trustee plays in the success of The Free Town Trust.

Mission and Vision Update

I'd like to begin by reminding trustees of our statement written within our charitable objects (our Constitution):

The prevention or relief of poverty in Sri Lanka, primarily by providing or assisting in the provision of food, practical items, education, training, healthcare projects and all the necessary support designed to enable individuals to generate a sustainable income and be self-sufficient.

As we go through the report it may be useful for you to reflect on this statement and note any refinements you may wish to put forward.

Key Achievements - April 2024 to March 2025

Date	Activity and Impact	Cost
January 2024	Support to Samasha begins - payment of tuition fees	£30 per month
March 2024	Support to Maheesha begins - payment of tuition fees Payment sent to Karuna Sri Lanka - Give Now account	£30 per month
25 th April	Registered charitable status achieved	n/a
April 2024	Business Loan to Piyumi - £62 loan plus £62 donation - paid back in full	£62 donation
May 2024	D Day Raffle - raised £500	
June 2024	Trustees appointed Birthday fundraiser (Sarah's 60 th)	
August 2024	Inaugural Committee Meeting	
August 2024	Support to Esandi, Mosandi and Monadi Rashmisara begins - travel costs to school	£50 per month
August 2024	Draft website	
October 2024	Gift Aid is now registered Lap top donated to Samasha	

	Christmas Gin Raffle launched	
November 2024	2 nd Committee meeting Newsletter sent out 2 new monthly donors recruited	
December 2024	Gin Raffle raises £500 2 new monthly donors recruited We supply The Moravinna Girls' Orphanage with new ceiling fans and fittings Fundraiser on Facebook for the Rashmisara family mushroom business raises £610	£271 to set up
January 2025	The first mushroom harvest for 'Three Star Mushrooms' 72 dresses bought for the Moravinna girls Contribution sent to Karuna Sri Lanka - tuition fees for Piyuma to attend The British Way	£341 £300
February 2025	Three Star Mushrooms - loan of £150 to expand the business	£150
March 2025	Piyuma completes The British Way International Women's Day appeal raises £200 Period pants purchased Single donation of £1,000.00 - agreed with the donor to use this to fund 3 years' education for Timalka	£272
March 2025	Support to Timalka begins - school fees and a little extra for her mother for food (£30 + £5)	£35
March 2025	Two members of KSL visit Sri Lanka - June Foote and John Woods. They have both visited Samasha and the Rashmisara family - some great feedback on both. They also visited Moravinna and delivered the dresses we purchased.	

Activities and Projects

This section provides an overview of major projects/initiatives, detailing successes, lessons learned and improvements. In summary, we are now assisting individual girls with tuition/travel:

Samasha, Esandi, Mosandi, Monadi, Maheesha and Timalka in Sri Lanka. The agreement we have with each of them is to continue this until they finish high school at 18. Thereafter, I will seek guidance from you regarding any future funding eg university, vocational training.

We are working with Karuna Sri Lanka to support their work. Notably at The Moravinna Orphanage which is in a rural area about 2 hours drive from Galle. KSL's President, Justin, is the main contact and he visited them recently and separately their treasurer, June Foote and Vice President, John Woods visit regularly. Justin was able to find out more about their funding and how we can best assist them. At the moment KSL provide

cooking gas and food each month. They have also provided some essential kitchen appliances. Free Town paid for new ceiling lights and fitting, 72 dresses for the girls and period pants/underwear, the latter are en route. Justin is in regular contact with the Matron there and John (KSL's Vice President) is our courier – he lives in London and also has a house now in Sri Lanka – around 40 mins from Galle and 5 minutes away from the Rashmisara family. Having this partnership with KSL enables us to find people/organisations who need our support, using the local knowledge of their 2 community workers we find out exactly what is needed, and then ensuring goods are purchased at a favourable price and delivered.

Over time I have learned that we must be careful giving cash to organisations as corruption often exists in Sri Lanka. The approach being taken with Moravinna is to build up our relationship with them – and agree jointly with KSL how we can better support them moving forward. There are around 20 girls there, and we now have their names and birthdates – they stay there until they are 18. One area KSL is keen to look at is provision for them post 18 and the possibility of them moving to the Safe House in Galle and continuing their education there. I will keep you posted as this develops.

Financial Overview

In addition to the Treasurer's Report, which gives more details, here I summarise key financial data, income sources, expenditures and reserves. It was always my aim to be as transparent as possible, well before we achieved charitable status. In this regard, we now provide clear accountability and have many recorded examples of joint decision making which ultimately assists our beneficiaries.

Beneficiary	Monthly Amount
Samasha	£30
Rashmisara Sisters	£50
Maheesha	£30
Timalka	£35
Total	£145.00
Regular Monthly Donations Total	£327
Bank balance as of 31st March 2025	£4,845.27

Challenges and Risks

Utilising my experience of managing this charity for almost 20 years, I am fully aware that the need in Sri Lanka far outweighs our resources as a small charity. And therefore, it is one of our fundamental duties to ensure

that those who receive our support, not only fit our agreed criteria, but that the assistance we give can have a sustainable outcome for them. Lifting people from poverty, giving hope, providing resources which practically contribute to an individual's health and prosperity must remain our central tenet.

Managing challenges and risks comes with experience and understanding the culture of the communities with whom we work. By carefully considering each approach for assistance, we will continue to make decisions which will not only maintain our donation levels but provide the recipient with a clear pathway of the support and crucially their personal obligations eg the duration of a regular payment, the repayment conditions of a loan, our expectations for educational attainment etc.

It is accurate to say that this last 12 months has seen the highest level of donations since we were founded in 2006. Partly due to our ability to receive charitable donations from organizations like PayPal, the eligibility for Gift Aid and the increased number of regular monthly donations. One of the big advantages of having a board of trustees is that the 'reach' of our work increases, and our reputation grows.

Governance and Compliance

I am proud of the contributions each of you has made to our small but mighty team. Each of you bringing a unique set of skills and each of you show a genuine commitment to the success and development of our work.

Learning the various pieces of legislation we must comply with is a steep learning curve for me but I am reassured by having such a wealth of knowledge on this board. From ensuring we undertake the required number of meetings, recording them in an appropriate way, complying with GDPR guidelines, practicing good governance and accounting, developing a robust safeguarding policy and designing a web site which is not only attractive but also inclusive.

Fundraising and Partnerships

We continue to grow our partnership with Karuna Sri Lanka (KSL) and I would like to publicly acknowledge the positive impact this collaboration has had on our ability to work with the most vulnerable. Due to their frequent trips to Sri Lanka (particularly their London based Vice President, John Woods) we have been able to ship items such as a laptop, girls' clothing and period products. This enables us to focus our fundraising campaigns on practical items - our supporters tell me time and again this is their reason for wanting to donate to our work. They know where the money is spent, and they see what a difference it makes. Our ability to communicate with local people, provide photographs, videos, quotes etc all adds to the stories we can share with our supporters.

Combining our ability to raise money, with Karuna's presence in Sri Lanka and their two community workers (Shashi Rowland and Jayani Abeydeera) our impact is continually growing. I remain a committee member for KSL and this allows us to work seamlessly and provide the best and most effective assistance to the ones who need it most.

Future Plans and Vision

It is my belief that the way people 'give' has significantly changed post covid. Less interest in attending events, increased opportunities via online giving platforms, a quiet move away from large, global charities to smaller, direct impact, on the ground operations.

What does all this mean for The Free Town Trust? Careful consideration when expanding our portfolio of projects, ensuring we don't give false expectations and that we do have enough money to fulfil our undertakings. Alongside this, constantly seeking funding opportunities such as fundraising, grant applications, occasions we can evangelise our work.

I have always been a firm believer in storytelling. And this is where our social media platforms and web site come into their own. Exposing our audience to the success stories, showing them the impact their donations have made – tangible, real and in some cases lifesaving. All done with sensitivity and dignity – and this can also be a challenge for us. The balance between sensationalising a situation to exploit the fundraising potential and protecting a person's identity and dignity can be hard.

Our focus continues to be to assist vulnerable girls and adults with disabilities – often two marginalised groups in Sri Lanka. We will work with our partner KSL and use local intelligence to identify those who have no other means of support. Our focus will remain on ensuring those we assist are safe and free from harm, have access to food and clothing, are given the opportunity to receive an education – whether that be vocational or academic. Giving a person hope, through holistic support will ensure they have a sustainable future, free from poverty and the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

Closing Comments

Of course, none of the above could be achieved without money. Let's be honest. But with wealth comes great responsibility. And it is our collective responsibility to give hope and opportunity to those individuals who come our way. It's impossible to assist all the people who need help. We know from visiting Sri Lanka and Kenya that abject poverty and despair exists at every turn. So, we must remain focused and that is the true value of you, the Trustees. To offer guidance and expertise, combined with a healthy dose of empathy and a huge spoonful of life experience. I look forward to our next year together, and I am humbled

and privileged to be able to steer this very small charity, with your invaluable contributions.

I send each of you my genuine thanks, in friendship and in solidarity and I know that the people we impact are in a much better place because of your hard work, dedication and commitment to The Free Town Trust.

Sarah Parry
Chief Executive Officer
The Free Town Trust
8th April 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SPM' with a stylized flourish.

Freetown Trust

Income & Expenditure statement

April 2024 – March 2025

Income:

Regular donations (DD)	3349
Gift aid	837
Single donations	1650
Gift aid	412
Other gifted income	1648
Fund raising (raffle)	575

Total income	8471
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Expenditure

Projects	2479
Purchases (project)	654
Total Projects	3133

Bank Charges	134
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Total Expenditure	3267
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<u>Surplus (inc gift aid)</u>	<u>5204</u>
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<u>Cash at bank</u>	<u>4870</u>
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Ian Parry - Treasurer