



one world foundation

HISTORY

1984

Construction of „Bogenvillya“ (named after the bougainvillea flower).

1995

Establishment of the one world foundation - free education unit with the initial school consisting of one building with three classrooms, a teacher's flat and a garden; opening of the school with a focus on the subjects of English and general education (mathematics, Sinhalese, geography, history, hygiene, Buddhism etc.). The school is based on the British system and divided into pre-school (Montessori) and grades 1-11 (secondary education, advanced education). Graduates of the school receive a certificate.

Students: 100, teachers: 3

1996

The school is enlarged by one more building with two classrooms.

Students: 200, teachers: 5

1997

The school infrastructure is expanded with another building for vocational training and a sports field.

Students: app. 300, teachers: 9

1998

Opening of the Tailoring Centre providing one-year courses for app. 25 women between 20 and 30 years of age in the field of textiles processing. Each course finishes with a fashion show or an exhibition and graduates receive a diploma.

Students: app. 500, teachers: 12

1999

Introduction of a computer workshop (with seven work stations, two printers). In the summer of 1999, three computer specialists from Munich set up the new air-conditioned computer room and hold a four-week training course for ten IT trainers. Today, one of the graduates runs a computer workshop teaching computer basics as well as the use of programs such as Excel, Access and Power Point. The young children are made familiar with new technologies through games in order to rid them of their inhibitions and to enable girls to have equal access. A branch of the school is opened in a rented room in Nelligaskale which is eight km from Wathuregama but has no public transport facilities to enable the children to attend the one world foundation school. One teacher teaches small children in the morning and provides general education to older students in the afternoon.

Outpost: app. 80 students, 1 teacher



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2000

In January 2000 we had 120 new registrations all of which were accepted. In grades 1-11, due to a lack of capacity only 50 of the 250 applicants could be accepted.
Students: app. 700, teachers: 15

2001

The number of school children was reduced from 700 to 500 to reduce the size of classes and to increase the quality of the education. Beginning of a co-operation with Margitta and Wolfgang Weber and their foundation Pro juventute Dortmund. Pro Juventute assumes sponsorship of all of the pre-school classes in Wathuregama, Katuwila and Galwehera (some five km from Wathuregama) and launches a training programme for pre-school teachers in Colombo. Construction of a house on stilts next to the lagoon of Bogenvillya after a design by the architect Carl Pruscha. Based on a simple modular system consisting of iron, wood and glass, three transparent living units were created for the owf.

2002

Extension of the school facilities through the purchase of an adjoining piece of land. The building there offers space for a medical unit run by Dr. Paul Leyen. Thanks to 50 lab examinations (carried out in Vienna), free treatment can be provided to the school children.

2003

Restructuring of the educational programme with a stronger focus on English and occupational training (computer courses, tailoring) and of the pre-school (with the addition of a new class and four more teachers). Launch of the Women's Cooperation – women are given the opportunity to do training and graduate with a certificate. First phase: two school classes (tailoring/Wetekeja = typical Sri Lankan processing of mangrove plants to bags, table mats, etc.). Official founding of Women's Cooperation in November 2004.

2004

27 teachers instruct app. 500 children, young people and women in education units of various age groups and occupational training programmes.

Tsunami, 26 December 2004

The natural disaster which hit Sri Lanka on December 26 2004 destroyed the owf school facilities in Wathuregama. Since by government decree schools could no longer be built within a kilometre of the sea, the new school had to be reconstructed on a new piece of land further inland.

2005

Reconstruction of the basic infrastructure of the Bogenvillya building lasted until December. In addition to the unharmed schools in Galwehera and Katuwila arrangements were made for temporary accommodation of the pre-



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school units in a Buddhist temple in Balapitya, two kilometres from Wathuregama. In March an empty villa was rented in Balapitya (later extended with open annexes) where the remaining units from Wathuregama found interim accommodation. The fast establishment of the temporary operation arrangements meant that the former capacity could soon be reached again. The search for a new school site began in January and in March a piece of land of about 16,000m² was acquired in Ahungalla, only one km from the destroyed former school site. Architectural planning was started at the beginning of February (architect: Carl Pruscha, assistance: Martina Püringer, Varuna de Silva; statics: Wolfdietrich Ziesel) and the laying of the foundation stone took place in July. The main campus in Ahungalla was designed as a freely horizontally and vertically extendable, modular structure for about 500 pupils and extended by a further five units during the course of construction.

2006

Despite unusually strong monsoon rainfalls the concreting work could be completed in June while parallel work was carried out on the interior fittings of the elements. Construction of the built surface of 2,000m² was finished in only 16 months. On 9 December the new school campus was officially opened with a huge school festival and on 14 December the traditional end of term celebrations of all the existing owf pre-schools also took place at the new school in Ahungalla.

2007

On 6 January the regular school year was started on the new school campus. The temporary arrangements in Galwehera and Balapitya became a thing of the past. The owf – free education unit now includes a total of four pre-school classes, four English classes, two primary education classes, four computer classes, three tailoring classes of the Women's Cooperation as well as an adult education programme for mothers, a music class and physical education.

2008

In 2008 the increased intensity of the civil war in the North-East of Sri Lanka brought with it not only human suffering and economic hardship but also warnings against travelling to the country and thus fewer guests at one world foundation. On top of this, there were initial signs of the worldwide financial crisis. Although this also made it a difficult year for the owf, the number of students continued to rise and endeavours were aimed at further consolidating school operations only one year after the opening of the new campus in Ahungalla. Furthermore, a spacious garden loft was built on the owf Bogenvillya grounds which is now available to owf guests and brings additional income.

2009

On 30 March 2009 the owf lost its founding director Joseph Ortner, whose untimely death in Vienna came as a complete surprise. The burial of his urn took place in April in Sri Lanka. The founding director Kathrin Messner now runs the one world foundation alone. Unfortunately, Joseph Ortner was unable to experience the end of the long lasting civil war, which was officially declared ended in May. In 2009, encouraged by this hopeful prospect for the peaceful coexistence of all ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka, the owf worked on the further professionalisation of the school operations. Co-operation was begun with state organisations (NAITA – National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority, TVEC – Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission of Sri Lanka



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for Computer Courses) in order to be able to award graduates with internationally recognised certificates. The curricula were brought into line with state curricula and external examiners now oversee the final examinations at the school, which follow the internationally recognised examination system NVQ (National Vocational Qualification).

Students: app. 1000, teachers: 31

2010

March 29 was an important day for one world foundation: During a “Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony” at the school an agreement of co-operation was signed between one world foundation and the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (www.naita.gov.lk). NAITA is a state organisation for the promotion of vocational training programmes in Sri Lanka. The co-operation means that important areas of the one world foundation – free education unit are now officially recognised as part of the country’s official education system. On 27 August 2010 one world foundation celebrated its 15th anniversary.

2011

Apart from our artist-in-residence programme one world foundation also started a writer-in-residence programme which is supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture. The curator of the programme is the Austrian writer Robert Menasse. The three months residencies are open to writers who either work on transnational and/or transcultural projects or who are interested in telling of a world we all share but do not always know. The two courses of the owf’s computer unit are now officially recognised by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission of Sri Lanka (TVEC) under their system of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), i.e.: Computer Application Assistant (NVQ - Level – 3) and Computer Graphics Designer (NVQ) Level – 4). 90 students completed the above courses in 2011 and were qualified according to the NVQ-Levels 3 and 4.

2012

In January a new bungalow in the palm grove was inaugurated. This bungalow was financed by private sponsors and created after a design by the architect Carl Pruscha. It contains two spacious living units for our guests with large and partly roofed terraces. In summer the swimming pool, the kitchen, the laundry room and a part of the ayurveda unit were renewed.

2013

The new website of one world foundation was published (including many images and texts). Within the residency programme the following artists worked in owf: Christian Eisenberger, Theegulla Venkanna and Karunasiri Wijesinghe as well as the author Brita Steinwendtner. Furthermore, the planning of a new bungalow for guests was initiated.

2014

Due to the great success of the photography workshops more courses were offered (under the direction of Elena Givone, Günter Mik and others). owf installed a darkroom for the students in order to provide them with access to



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training in analogue photography beside the digital standard. The following artists and authors worked in owf as part of the residency programme: Markus Hanakam & Roswitha Schuller and Ursula Mayer, Cordula Simon, Ilija Trojanow and Andreas Weber. Under the direction of the Sri Lankan architect Varuna de Silva the construction works of the Araliya Bungalow were started.

2015

In January the Araliya Bungalow with its four guest rooms was opened in a ceremony. It was built after a design of the Sri Lankan architect Varuna de Silva, and it was made possible by the generous support of Hans Ulrich Hardmeier. Furthermore, the Lagoon Bungalow was renovated, the roofs of the yoga hut and the pool hut were renewed, and in the school building the acoustic insulation between the school rooms was improved. For the 20th anniversary a comprehensive publication about one world foundation was compiled.

2016

Within the Writer in Residence programme the authors Rosa Artmann and Sabine Scholl worked at the artists' studio of the guesthouse Bogenvillya in 2016. Various renovation and maintenance works were accomplished at the guesthouse and the school buildings. A new website was conceived and installed at the end of the year.

2017

In April one world foundation was admitted to the list of tax-deductible organisations in Austria, and also donations from Germany have been tax-deductible since. In Switzerland a sponsoring committee was founded, which is directed by Barbara Higgs. Through the cooperation with the Fondation des Fondateurs all donations from Switzerland became tax-deductible as well. The artist Ruchi Bakshi Sarma from Mumbai and the Austrian authors Alois Hotschnig, Andreas Jungwirth and Hans Platzgumer worked in our residency programme at the artists' studio.

2018

At weekends, the school started to offer fee-based IT and English courses for employees of local companies. This initiative reduces the dependency of the school from the revenues of the guesthouse and from donations. The Free Education unit was renamed one world college. The following courses are newly admitted up to Level 4 of the internationally recognised examination system "National Vocational Qualification" (NVQ): Computer hardware technician, photography and tailoring. New uniforms for the school children were introduced. The artist Franz Graf and the author Peter Rosei worked at the artists' studio. The renovations at the guesthouse included the Ayurveda Unit, the entrance area of the resort, the wash rooms and the wood panels of the Lagoon Bungalow.

2019

one world foundation presented a cookbook with Sri Lankan recipes by Chamil Priyantha and Wasantha De Silva, the cooks of the Ayurveda resort (see: <https://owf.at/shop/cook-book/?lang=en>). Horrid attacks in Sri Lanka at Easter led to a loss of revenues at the guesthouse. At the same time the attacks clearly showed the importance of the interreligious, peace-promoting school project of one world foundation. The author Tanja Raich and the artists



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Werner Reiterer and Claudia Larcher participated in our residency programme. At the end of August a film portrait about one world foundation was presented on Okto-TV, see: <https://okto.tv/de/oktothek/episode/22545>.

2020

The fashion project “Out of Garbage” was being realised under the direction of Bettina Reichl and her assistant Irma Denk. Although the workshop had to be interrupted after just two weeks due to school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, some fascinating garments have already been created from waste and natural materials (see: <https://owf.at/out-of-garbage/?lang=en>).

The pandemic has had a major impact on Sri Lanka and the one world foundation. Due to entry restrictions and closed airports, the Ayurveda Resort was experiencing a high loss of income. Nevertheless, no employees were laid off. Friends and sponsors of the one world foundation were providing support in this crisis situation through financial contributions and the purchase of vouchers for the resort. Many people in Sri Lanka were losing their livelihoods. As a small emergency aid, the one world foundation was distributing food parcels to the poorest families in the region. The school courses were switching to distance learning via the internet. In August 2020, the one world foundation celebrated its 25th anniversary in the middle of the pandemic.

2021

A long-planned leporello photo book with photographs by one world foundation students was published (see: <https://owf.at/shop/leporello-photo-book/?lang=en>). In April, a large charity auction was successfully held at Dorotheum with over 150 works by around 130 artists from 27 countries (campaign committee: Dr Ursula Krinzinger, Eva Schlegel and Barbara Higgs, supported by museum in progress and many more). 100% of the proceeds went to the one world foundation and ensured the continuation of the aid organisation in the current crisis situation.

After more than a year of standstill due to the pandemic, the Ayurveda Resort was allowed to welcome guests again after the Sri Lankan authorities certified it as “Safe & Secure” and declared it a “Level 1 Hotel”. The authors Robert Prosser and Martin Zinggl participated in the owf’s residency programme. Despite limited school operations and some distance learning, the number of pupils was increasing. The one world foundation distributed food parcels to around two hundred particularly needy families.

2022

Sri Lanka was experiencing political turbulence due to enormous national debt. High inflation was a major burden. The one world foundation already supported around 380 needy families in the region with new food parcels. The improved pandemic situation has made it possible to organise more community activities at the one world foundation’s school. Bookings at the Ayurveda Resort are beginning to normalise again. Thanks to the support of Traudi Messini, a new bungalow could be opened at the resort: The “House Above Trees” is a spectacular building by Carl Pruscha at lofty heights. The authors Alina Lindermuth, Margit Mössmerand, Tonio Schachinger and Eva Schoerhuber, and the artist Erik Schmidt participated in the owf’s residency programme. Kathrin Messner talked to Birgit Dalheimer about the one world foundation’s aid project in the Ö1 radio programme “Im Gespräch”.



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2023

The second part of the fashion workshop “Out of Garbage” culminated in a big fashion show full of imaginative fashion creations, with the whole process from collecting the materials to creating the models and the show being documented in a blog (see: <https://owf.at/fashion-blog/?lang=en>). The authors Verena Kurth and Barbie Markovic, and the artists Elisabeth Molin and Bernd Oppl participated in the owf’s residency programme.