

Nandri



Nandri means 'Thankyou' in Tamil Nadu, S. India where the Charity works to help very poor children

Mission Accomplished!

The Child Labour Prevention Scheme, which many of you have supported, was set up by Boys Town Society in 1993 to address the problem of child labour in very poor villages in Tamil Nadu. 'Child labour' is a term used to describe the employment of children, which denies them the opportunities of growth and development.



An enthusiastic group of school girls

It was largely aimed at girls who may otherwise leave school prematurely to do very badly paid work, or look after younger siblings so that mother can work. As this extremely successful scheme finally winds up after more than 15 years, experienced volunteer Terry Quadling has been visiting some of the villages and families who have recently taken part. He found everyone confident that they would do well, with the 12th standard children aiming for higher studies in college to become Engineers, Nurses

or Accountants. They're equally confident of their parents' support and encouragement, together with funding from government loans and help from their cows. The girls are emphatic that the important thing is to complete studies, get a good job and only then consider marriage.



Ready to start Further Education

Compared with 5 years ago, conditions at home are much improved; the family is happier and more confident about the future. They all endorsed a message to their sponsors, "We have been happy to have your help for five years, our family and children will remember you for life." Terry has concluded that the future looks bright for the families, their children and their cows. Without the crucial support they have received over the years and, the opportunity to generate additional income from their cows, the confident, outgoing and clearly happy girls he met in their



Tending the sheep – but illiterate

school could have been overtaken by the drudgery of child labour, working in a mill, match factory or on the land. For them, and the thousands of children who have taken part, completing the five-year project is just the beginning as they move on into further education and better jobs; for The Joe Homan Charity and the participating Sponsors, it's mission accomplished!



A graduate of the scheme, she will make sure her children go to school

Charity Review

Enclosed with this issue of Nandri is a Review of the Charity's work. We hope this latest publication will not only give you a broader view of our work, but also prove an attractive and useful booklet to pass on to friends or acquaintances interested in supporting the charity. Further copies are available from the Peterborough office.

The Joe Homan Charity – a Chairman's perspective

Following the Charity's AGM last October, former Vice-Chairman Peter Church has since been elected Chairman, and is already hard at work.

"I have recently returned from a trip visiting our projects in India. Despite the fact that I have been visiting India for 40 years now it never ceases to amaze me how fascinating a country it is. In fact even to think of India as one country may be wrong when there are so many contrasts between states – let alone those between north and south. In the difficult days of wars with Pakistan and the later assassinations of Mrs Gandhi and her son Rajiv it didn't seem possible that India could survive as a single country. But it always did. It recently enjoyed an economic boom that put it into the top world league. However the same boom also emphasised the huge contrasts between rich and poor. I left the country convinced that our Charity is needed just as much as before and that we are developing links with partners who are thinking in original ways about meeting the needs of the very poorest people. One example is the Child Labour Prevention project. Boys Town Society developed this as an innovative scheme that was way ahead of its time. Now BTS are winding it down as circumstances change and we are all looking at a successor to the CLP. In this process supported organisations are coming up with some very exciting ideas for the development of village schemes which give more responsibility to local

people and which work with the panchayat (an assembly of respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community) and with women's groups within the communities. Although there will always be a place for the residential homes - and they will continue to meet the needs of hundreds of our children in the future and inspire all those who visit



Peter Church opens Computer Centre at Nilakottai Boys Town

them – we can help change communities and help more people by schemes in the villages. So, back to the UK. Accountability is the buzzword at the moment particularly from our compliance organisation – the Charity Commission. That is not unexpected at a time when irresponsibility by the biggest and best in the banking world has brought the world to its knees. In our case accountability means ensuring that almost every penny we raise goes to alleviate child poverty in

India and Thailand. We think we do that quite well. From every pound we raise 23 pence goes to raising another pound and the rest goes directly to the projects and their administration. Accountability also means writing more policies and procedures for our UK and Dindigul offices. Our Trustees' Governance group has done this very efficiently under the direction of Julia Hutton-Squire and Charity Manager Jon Crouch. Writing many policies and procedures occasionally seems a bit over the top but at least it does remind Trustees of their responsibilities and reassures donors that we are using money in a responsible manner. However none of this is relevant if we cannot continue to raise the funds to send out to India and Thailand. Hence the Trustees' Fundraising group is a vital part of our organisation. John Bowman has taken charge of this and advises Trustees on fundraising and communication with our sponsors and funders. Finally Geoff Foster heads the Projects group which advises Trustees on which NGO's and which projects we should support. As Geoff lives part of the year in India he is well placed to see the need at first hand. We are also very lucky that Joe despite his retirement is still an active and critical friend of the charity as well as being its Founder. Joe's vision still inspires us and inspires so many of our supporters. Long may it continue."

Peter Church

Remembering Jeannie

Our former chairman, Jeannie Philpott, and her husband Colin, travelled to India many times and regularly enjoyed visiting the Boys Towns. After Colin died Jeannie continued to visit the country they both loved so much, and we all drew inspiration from her commitment, dedication, and love for the children. From chairing meetings, to fundraising, to working as a volunteer in India or the UK, she did everything in her own quiet and unassuming modest way, always with a smile. Nilakottai Boys Town in particular, was held in great affection by them both, and boasts the best library in any Boys Town. Jeannie herself opened this in 2001, in memory of Colin, and now her portrait hangs alongside his. As its own tribute, the Charity has further improved the facilities offered here, and the facility now also comprises a computer centre with three brand new machines. It is a Tamil custom to have a picture of those whom we have loved in a prominent place. Photos of the two are displayed in each room, and a special stand has been made for the Book of Remembrance, where anyone visiting this splendid resource centre is able to read the many

tributes to Jeannie and her devotion to the children of India. During his visit to India during January, current Chairman Peter Church took part in a ceremony at Nilakottai Boys Town in remembrance of Jeannie. Fellow Trustee, Geoff Foster and his wife Catherine were also in attendance, together with Joe Homan, Dr Narayanaraja, Rajkumar from our India office, volunteer Terry Quadling, and the boys of Nilakottai Boys Town who really enjoy this excellent facility.



Enjoying the library at Nilakottai Boys Town

Rising to Meet the Challenges, Reaching for the Stars

Here in the UK, 2009 introduced itself somewhat startlingly with temperatures as low as -18 and heavy snow and ice for just about all of us. Fortunately to cheer us all up, we received the 2008 annual reports from our projects, compiled by our marvellous volunteers – this year we have to thank Terry Quadling and Catherine Foster, both of whom have given long and generous hands-on support to JHC and the children in our care.

Always our children do well and the continuing successes year after year are truly inspirational. Here are but a few of the dazzling accomplishments and accolades earned by JHC children in the past year – they make for happy reading indeed.

Dedication, discipline and dancing! The outstanding achievements of the youngsters at Rengasamy Children's Village (RCV) shine like a beacon. Each of the 63 children holds a top ten place in his or her school class; four of them are actually top! With a breath-taking flurry of first place prizes at sports days, debates and cultural dance competitions, reaping the rewards of their dedication and hard work. But it's not all work and no play.

Hobby groups are madly popular; favourites include stamp collecting, art, crafts, gardening, domestic skills, computer skills, cultural dance and sport. And with such enthusiastic youngsters, imagine how well received are the trips to the seaside, picnics and temple visits!

Spiritual needs are certainly not neglected and are attended to every day with prayer, meditation and yoga. An excellent range, we think you will agree. The children receive a highly nutritional diet, and are helped with their personal issues, education, hobbies – and chores! – by the project director R Lalitha and her team of six foster mothers. This holistic approach advocated by Lalitha not only reflects the inherent values of JHC, but also is proof-positive that every child, regardless of original circumstances, can be helped to achieve their maximum potential with the right amount of love, care and attention. A huge thank you then, to Lalitha and her team and congratulations to the children.



Lalitha – a kindly mother figure

Raindrops... Madurai Sevashram Girls Home (MSGH) continues to go from strength to strength, with facilities improving, our delightful girls flourishing, gaining confidence with the realisation of the opportunities that lie ahead. The Primary School girls now have bench-

desks to work at, provided by several generous supporters, which is a big improvement from sitting on the floor!



Picnics (outings) are always popular

Their toilet and shower block is now fully functional and fundraising has now turned to the need for a dining hall. Day trips are frequent with picnics a big favourite. One exciting day saw all 130 girls taken on a train journey (a first time experience for many) to a picnic by the beautiful Courtallam waterfalls. Excitement was tangible and the trip hailed a fun-filled success. Good luck to these charming young ladies as they continue on their merry way to success.

... and Roses Also blossoming are the 10th standard roses in our well-tended Inner Wheel Girls Town garden, who yielded a stunning 100% pass rate in final exams. All are going on to either skilled apprenticeships or further education - a magnificent achievement for all concerned. Bravo, girls!

The chance given to youngsters in the Boys and Girls Towns is the door to so many opportunities. Many of the boys and girls – or rather, young men and women - have already opted for either further academic schooling or skilled apprenticeships such is their confidence. They are a credit to themselves and to The Joe Homan Charity, and we are so proud of them all.

Top Marks for our Boys!

The boys are coming on strongly and working hard to overcome their personal hardships and achieve great things. For instance, young Kubendran at Athoor Boys Town (ABT), achieved an incredible 100% in his maths exam. He has now been selected to attend a nearby Dindigul



Cricket champions

school for high achievers. Encouraged to be confident and self-sufficient, ABT's latest project is to raise funds from selling home-grown Oyster mushrooms, carefully cultivated under coconut matting in the roof space of an old cowshed! It has so far proved a delicious success.

Tirumangalam Boys Town is awash with sporting talent, with first places across the board from local sports competitions; the volleyball team are district champions, and 17 year old Manoj Prabhakaran is a district athletics champion! The attractive, rural setting of Rajapalayam Boys Town with its neat flat-roofed bungalows and smart, gated entrance is a delightful place for young boys to grow and mature. With all 12 of the 10th Standard boys passing their all important examinations this year,



No shortage of green fingers in the gardening club

the younger boys consistently taking 1st and 2nd place in their schooling and gaining top prizes in local competitions for poetry, culture, folk singing, athletics, kabbadi and cricket, the future is definitely bright for these boys.

Home of Love

Anbagam Orphanage (translation – Home of Love) provides a home and care for mothers and children who have been affected by HIV/AIDS, and are now rejected by their own community in South India. Volunteer Catherine Foster describes her recent visit.



Mothers and Children affected by HIV/AIDS

Within minutes of arrival I am biting back tears. We're in Thankarchan's so called 'office'. By the side of his desk sleep six toddlers on rush mats and in a cot next to me a whimpering baby twitches her bone-thin limbs. It is our first visit during last August to the home. Thankarchan sits behind a mountainous slippery heap of files and plastic wallets and tells his story.

envelope of loving and practical care, restoring the dignity that has been wrested from them in the outside world. Schools greet the children with fear and they are made to feel unwelcome. The government treats them all with retroviral drugs, but far too late. The home was run on a shoestring budget: profit from Thankarchan's banana chip stall in the market and help from local donors being his only income. There are enormous challenges. The accommodation is pitiful but all he can afford. His office is bursting at the seams; the bedroom is bare, with pockmarked concrete walls and floors; the kitchen blackened by wood smoke and smudged with years of grease. Outside a skein of washing flaps between two thorn bushes; the area hard baked mud with tussocks of yellowed grass struggling around the edge. As we leave the 'DETH' book slithers onto the floor. It is a hand



Rejected by their own community

His tough life as an orphan inspired him to reach out to some of the most despised and dispossessed members of Indian society. The small house, with one other room beside the office, houses six mothers and nineteen small children. The children may never reach adolescence, as they will possibly die before this. Thankarchan is a modest man who seeks funds to delay the children and mothers' ultimate fate by giving them a good diet; essential to keep the disease at bay for as long as possible. Each one is placed in an

written account with a small photo of every life snuffed out by this hideous disease. Those who have heard this story have dug deep into their pockets and we are now giving financial support to Thankarchan's food, rent and welfare programme. Many thanks to those who have contributed. A brighter more spacious building is being sought for this so worthy project. We'll keep all JHC supporters posted.

Catherine Foster

Important Information for all Sponsors

Since the start of the new year Rajkumar and Gopinath in our India office have been travelling to the various projects, assisting our wonderful Volunteers, and providing translation services for them as they talk to the staff and children, and prepare the Annual Project Reports. Now, as the school year draws to a close and the children escape their studies for a few weeks, they will be distributing these reports, together with photographs, to everyone who sponsors a child. This is quite a major undertaking, and severe postal problems over the last year have made it very disappointing for our staff and volunteers, as well as for our sponsors, when their letters fail to arrive at their destination. After a trial period, it has now been decided that all future reports from India will, where possible, be sent by email together with relevant photographs (a wonder of the digital age). A large proportion of our supporters now have an email address, and we hope you will keep us updated when you become an email user for the first time or if you change your email address. This information will not be divulged to any third party, and will be used by our India office for the sole purpose of despatching information to you. All other correspondence will continue through our Peterborough office as before. Greetings cards and other correspondence from the children will continue to be sent in the traditional way. Sponsors who do not have an email address will also continue to receive information by post.

For all enquiries

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