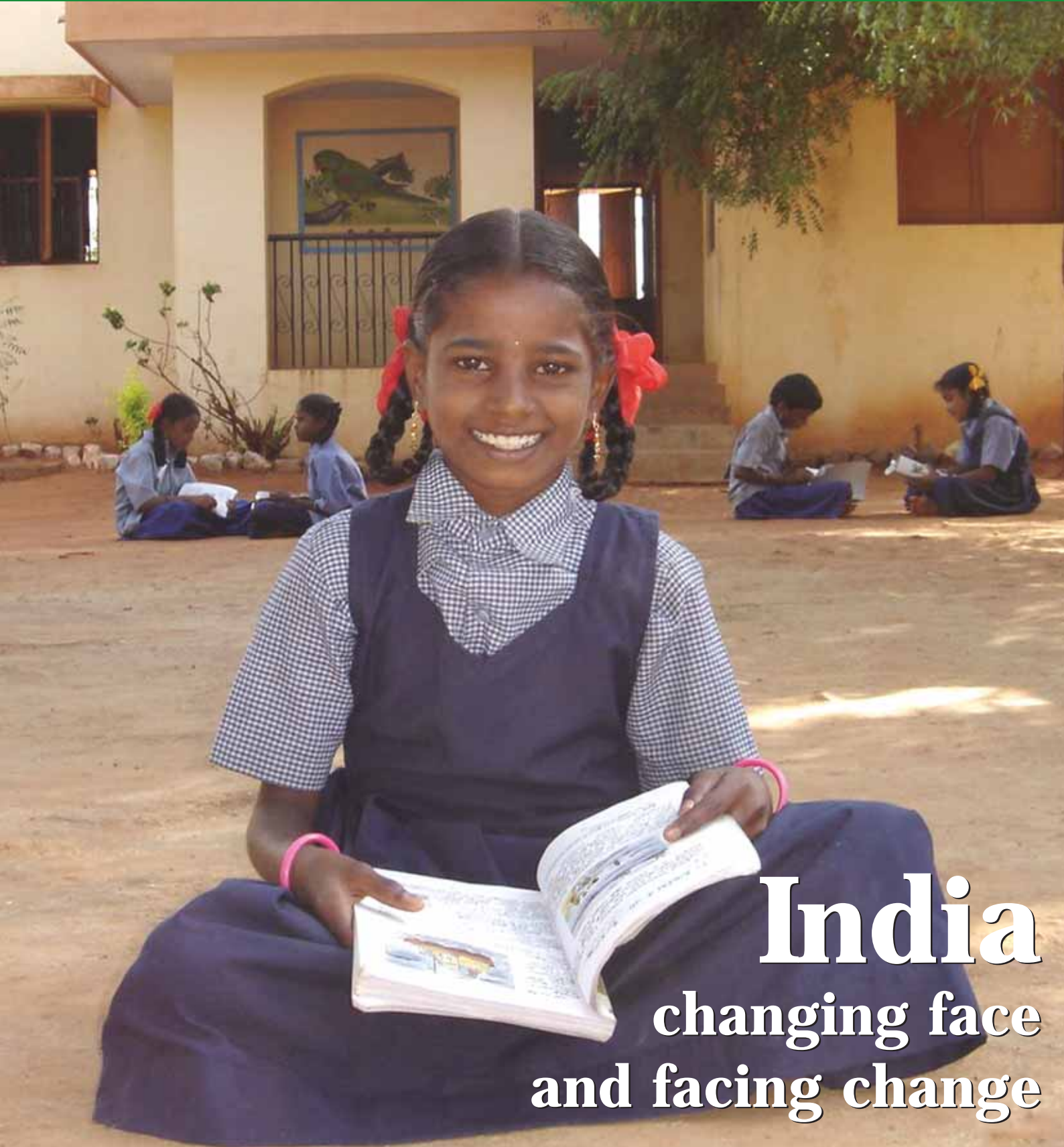


Nandri

The Joe Homan Charity – Bringing Hope and Opportunity



Newsletter Summer 2009



India changing face and facing change

Relief or development? ● HIV/AIDS – an increasing problem

WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of our new style Nandri – 2009. I hope you agree that it looks good and that it is full of interesting and challenging news about our work in India and Thailand.

I know how difficult it is for many supporters during the current recession. The fact that you are still giving, by sponsorship or donation, is of enormous encouragement to staff and Trustees alike. A big THANK YOU for that – or as our children would say – NANDRI. Some of the very best ways we are using your money at the moment is in helping children with HIV/AIDS, and developing the potential of children represented by Jamal and Latika in the film Slumdog Millionaire. We have many like them in Tamil Nadu. Government programmes for education and welfare have to be on such a huge scale in India that individual children and their families – particularly in

rural areas – sometimes miss out. Government inspectors are happy that children are on school rolls but less concerned that many are functionally illiterate. The supplementary education centres you are supporting provide nutrition or medical intervention, or remedial education beyond school hours, and are holding out a hand to children like Chinnarakaiya, a schoolboy who failed in 4 subjects and dropped out of school. After counselling, he is now continuing his education and receiving extra tuition in evening study classes. This is not 'Gradgrind' education but a happy experience – usually conducted outside under the shelter of a large mango tree and usually culminating in games and laughter! Sponsored children with Boys Town Society or Madurai Sevashram or Inba Seva Sangam already get this degree

of love and care, and although the Child Labour Prevention Scheme has now ended, we are able to extend some aspects of the BTS model to many children in rural communities through village-based schemes. If you are able to visit India please do make a point of seeing some of the village SEC's in action. I hope you'll enjoy this edition of Nandri and once again many thanks for your support.



Peter Church
Chairman

PS We welcome your feedback so please contact us jhct@btinternet.com



About The Joe Homan Charity

The Joe Homan Charity works in South India and Thailand to support the development of very poor individuals and communities, with particular emphasis on ensuring that children have the opportunity for a quality education and subsequent transition into vocational training or higher education. This is achieved through support of local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in residential and non-residential projects.

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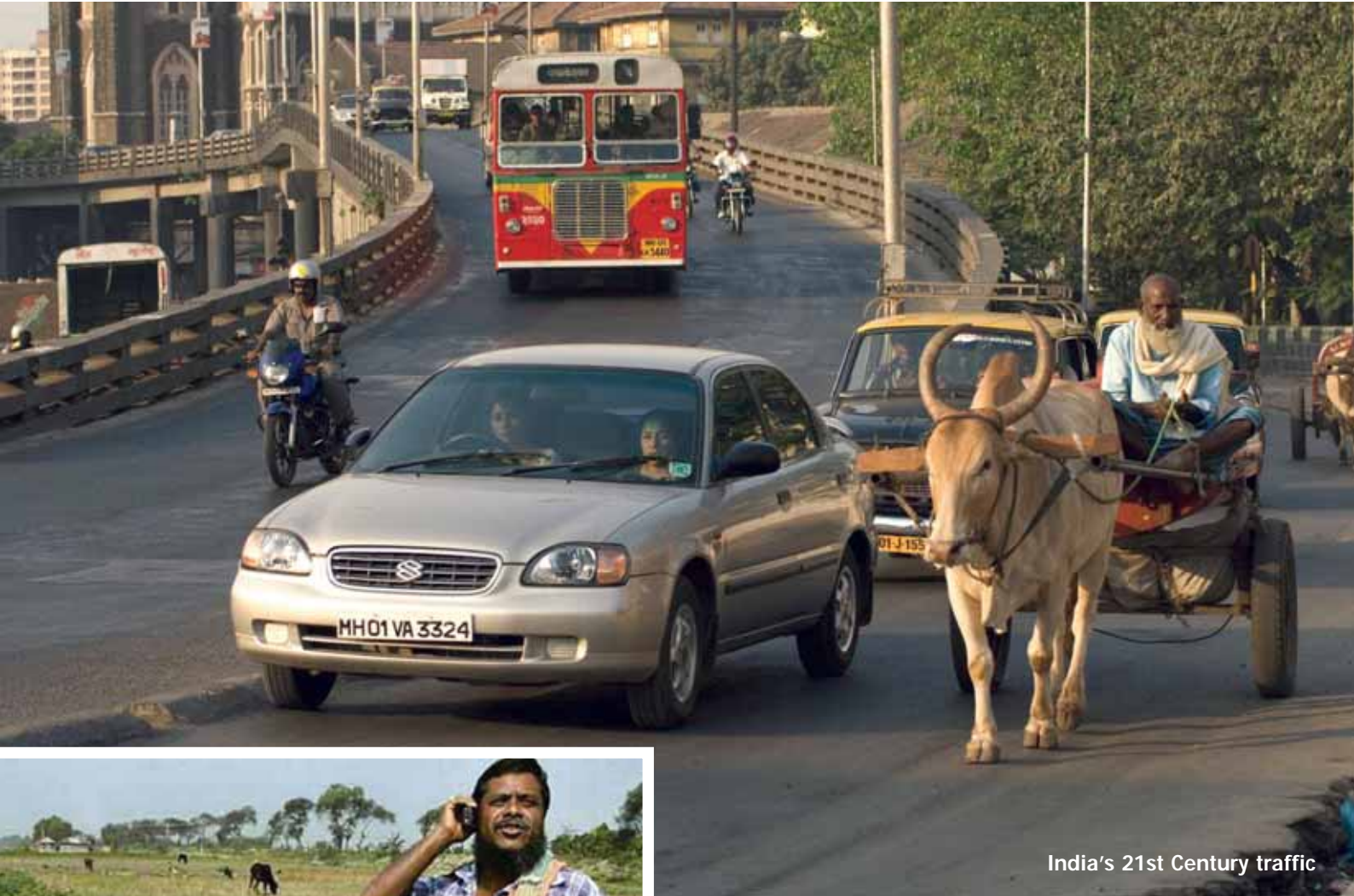
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India's 21st Century traffic



India changing face and facing change

After 10 years of visiting India, experienced volunteer, Terry Quadling, has taken time to take stock and consider the nature and impact of change, especially its effect on our Charity's work and those with whom we work – our partner NGOs and more importantly the poorest most vulnerable children.

Changing face

From the instant your plane lands at one of India's modernised, expanding airports, where there are ever more frequent flights by ever more airlines, much change is highly visible. Your taxi driver probably chatters on his mobile phone as his smaller, modern car weaves nimbly through traffic on new four lane highways and bypasses, avoiding kamikaze drivers... and animals. Oxen's days are numbered. Motorcycles are flashier with louder horns

but still carry dad, mum and 2.4 children (or sacks of rice, goats or building materials) and – volunteers. The indestructible auto-rickshaw soldiers on, some with truck and bus bodies – there's even an articulated version! Travel by train and your journey could be quicker but you'll walk farther to find your seat on longer trains. You still need a torch despite the efforts of wind, water and soon atoms to keep your power flowing. This is India – enjoy!

Industry has developed hugely in ten years, not least construction and agriculture. Many villages no longer rely on a single pump for water, but boast their own water tower and street taps. Modern machines are taking over, creating new skilled jobs but eliminating traditional work that is the mainstay for most folk, including our children's families. Mum, Dad and Granny no longer find enough work in the fields; tractors and combine harvesters have elbowed them out.



Girls have the opportunity to complete their studies

Facing change

What of the less obvious but no less significant changes affecting culture and attitude? They too impact on the families and children that JHC, through its partner NGOs in the field, strives to

commit to go anywhere to get a good job with good money, with their family's full agreement. Moslems are able to freely wear their distinctive dress and child labour is declining. Child labour laws were tightened but

“Now girls are taking advantage of the vastly increased opportunities available to them”

help. Happily many changes help, impinging on the role of and opportunities for women. Not long ago some families viewed their daughters as liabilities. They would stubbornly claim “there’s no need to educate a girl; she’ll marry within her (extended) family and within her caste – why spend money on further education for another family’s benefit?” Now those same parents are loudly and publicly emphatic “she will continue in education as far as she is able, get a good job, and then think about marriage! The groom can wait!” Some parents even accept the possibility of a daughter marrying at her new educated status and outside her caste.

While that change probably has most impact on the girls’ futures, others are working in their favour. Earlier, apprentices always returned home to help support their families, while many parents refused to let their daughters travel, even to a distant higher-secondary school. Now our apprentices

implementation remained slack, and unfortunately it’s still a means of survival for some, while bonding of older girls to amass capital still prevails.

For the poorest children, education at government schools has changed. It’s still “free” but continues to burden families with various costs. ‘Education for All’ became the slogan – up to age 14 or 8th standard. Schools expanded to take the numbers but often lacked resources or teachers. More recent changes have replaced learning by rote with self-paced discovery, and exams with assessments. The children prefer it, so too do the more progressive teachers. It’s early days and future 10th standard results will tell. Girls now have much more to aim for. Ten years ago low-caste village girls only went to school if their families were convinced of the benefit, could afford it, school was accessible and, the girls could be spared. Now girls are taking advantage of the vastly increased opportunities available to them, competing with the boys at school – and beyond.

No longer is tailoring their only career choice; they too take computer studies, engineering and the sciences. Their motivation has to be high, – they only have one chance to change their lives.

What is driving this mind shift? Usually NGOs implant the idea, with field staff dangling the carrot and projects showing how it’s done. Once role models emerge, momentum gathers. The first girl (or even boy) in the village to pass 10th standard, then 12th and so on, raises the sights as achievement benchmarks are passed. Peer pressure plays an important part; sow the seeds, let them germinate and soon there’s endemic motivation and commitment. Regular nurturing by NGOs helps to consolidate thinking, maintaining ambition and direction.

Where these NGOs have penetrated, the children’s menu now offers not only schooling but supplementary education facilities with assisted study at evenings and weekends. In their village groups they develop new life skills and attitudes, become aware of their rights and, enjoy their leisure together. They start to regulate their own lives, make decisions about themselves and become active and responsible in their communities, earning the respect of elders and getting results for themselves. But – and it’s a big BUT – competent NGOs are thin on the ground. So while some communities and their children are fortunate, many still follow familiar, almost feudal paths, espousing old attitudes.



Relief or development?

Worldwide there is continued need for relief or aid; India is no exception despite its rapid development. Donors willingly help after natural disasters but wonder when countries will be able to solve their own problems. The good news is that day has dawned in the parts of Tamil Nadu reached by JHC; here relief is already distinguishable from development, and considered successful when the last man, woman or child is plucked from the water or rubble, or leave their sick bed. What follows is another story.



The survivors have played no part and their circumstances are no better. Such relief runs on aid; when the funding stops, the project shuts down, regardless. In contrast, development is community-based, identifying need and stimulating action. Typically an NGO works with a vulnerable group to find solutions to its own problems. Affected individuals participate from the outset and become empowered. The group members own their project; the NGO merely facilitates. The dominant need is escaping poverty.

What's the bottom line? Not only do groups and individuals become empowered, but they can decide and afford their own wish list, without aid from outside. The most common desires are to educate children or grandchildren, develop group or individual businesses and, improve family life and living conditions. Many groups are motivated to benefit their community, by improvements to school or village; this civic responsibility is another valuable aspect of development. The real test of development is its sustainability. When the various schemes are up and running, the participants contentedly do what they choose to do, no longer a drain on the NGO's resources or time, although access is always there if needed. It's time for the NGO to move on and help another community. That's sustainability at its best.

Conclusion

While India continues her impressive development, in the transition, especially in remote areas, acute poverty continues. Responding to children in distress remains the role of NGOs such as The Boys Town Society, Inba Seva Sangam, and Madurai Sevashram. Their Children's Villages, Boys Towns and Girls Towns, continue to be relevant and essential. JHC's support of other NGOs like CEDAR and SPPD, seeking and perfecting the development approach is bearing fruit. These NGOs are now up and running, taking their brand of development to widely dispersed and vulnerable groups in their areas. For us and for those children and their families who have found a new life of hope and opportunity, this quantum shift from relief to sustainable development has to be the most important change in the past 10 years. Hopefully donors and supporters will agree.

Terry Quadling (May 2009)



Scope for Schools

Several schools are now making regular contributions, and we are hoping that with the aid of modern technology we may be able to link them more closely, in the near future, to the children they are actually supporting.



People we would like to thank

- The lady who made £83 selling home-made marmalade
- The retired gentleman who kindly donated a consultancy fee to the Charity
- The donor who is sponsoring a child in celebration of his Mother's 80th Birthday
- The lady who pruned all of her friend's roses for a £10 donation
- All of you who, although you are no longer sponsoring an individual child, have decided to continue your support for the Charity by making regular donations towards general care and education costs.

Favourite Aunts

Ladies of Coldstream Parish Church Women's Guild in the beautiful Scottish Borders, recently became 'aunties' to a young Indian boy, Balamurugan. Their sponsorship will provide for his care in Watrap Boys Town and also give him an education that should allow him to escape the poverty into which he was born.



"We have been told that Balamurugan comes from a little village called Charapatti in the central southern tip of India. There are just 300 homes here, one of which is rented by his family. It has only one room with a tiled roof and mud walls. Water is obtained from a tap in the street. Although initially a shy and nervous boy, his excellent achievements in class and involvement in all that the Boys Towns offer has boosted his self-confidence. His favourite subject at school is English

and though he is not brilliant at mathematics he enjoys school with its computers. He and his best friend Raju enjoy playing cricket and Kabadi together, and he is part of a bird watching club."

The Coldstream Guild's sponsorship of Balamurugan is initially for five years, although they tell us there is no plan to end the sponsorship until he is grown up and leaves. They recently sent a small personal gift for him, together with a further donation for treats/necessities for his friends. Balamurugan now has his much longed for pencil box; our photo shows him and his friends at Watrap Boys Town, proudly showing off their new sports equipment.

An inspiring run

Nick Prior recently undertook the 26.22 miles of the Paris Marathon, running from the Champs Elysees throughout the streets of Paris before finishing back at the Avenue Foch, because he wanted to do more to help the children he met, earlier in the year, as a Volunteer in India. With funds still arriving, he has already raised over £100 per mile – WAY TO GO Nick!

In 2008 thirty seven thousand competitors started the Paris Marathon and only twenty eight thousand finished, so don't dismiss Nick's achievement lightly. The marathon is named after the distance a Greek soldier ran to declare to the people of Athens the news of a Greek victory at the Battle of Marathon. At the end of the run the soldier died of exhaustion.

Nick found it required more will power than he had ever needed before. He had previously done a sky dive and a bungee jump; both incredibly scary for the short term but in reality only needing a very short commitment. A marathon is quite different, firstly months of training beforehand and then on the day over three hours of self-imposed pain, with the mental battle being the hardest part of all.

Nick vows this will be his first and last marathon... the children of Tamil Nadu are hoping he may be persuaded to change his mind!



Healing Hands

Through the pages of Nandri, we have followed the fortunes of Pitchaimani over some 10 years or more.

This young man, now in his twenties, was selected for the Child Labour Prevention Scheme at the start of his Standard 6 schooling. Although a large and bustling place Maharajapuram, his hometown, is very poor with a significant industrial sector – a cotton mill, paper factory, rope factory and match factory. Many young children have worked here in order to supplement the family income, but fortunately for Pitchaimani he was able to complete his education rather than be forced to work in the factories.



Having grabbed this opportunity he completed his education in 2000 with outstanding results at Standard 12. With the further support of this Charity and Boys Town Society he then went on to take a 4-year Bachelor of Physiotherapy degree. We are sure readers will be really pleased to know that Pitchaimani is now working as a Research Physiotherapist for the Leprosy Mission Trust in West Bengal. Not only has this young man succeeded beyond all expectations, but is now improving other people's lives with his skills and knowledge.

HIV/AIDS – An Increasing Problem

AIDS is often seen as "someone else's problem" – as something that affects people living on the margins of society, whose lifestyles are considered immoral. HIV emerged later in India than it did in many other countries, although today the epidemic affects all sectors of Indian society.

Even as it moves into the general population it is misunderstood and stigmatised among the Indian public. People living with HIV have faced violent attacks; been rejected by families, spouses and communities; been refused medical treatment. In a country where poverty, illiteracy and poor health are rife, the spread of HIV presents a daunting challenge. JHC is now working with local organisations to try and help children who are affected.

Thankarchan, the kind man who cares for these children and mothers, gathered them together and had no hesitation in accepting this opportunity to move. No longer do they have to sleep head to toe, or hang their washing across dirty wasteland, and the kitchen is immaculately clean and well scrubbed. They have fresh air and space to play. Along with a nutritious diet and access to expert medical care and drugs, this new start will further their chances of extending and improving their quality of life.

Aid for AWDS

Thanks to the hard work of two trustees, Julia Hutton-Squire and Russell Smith, we have received funding from employees of Accenture, to help the Amutha Surabi Womens Development Society (AWDS) in their work with AIDS victims. Families of children identified as HIV positive are so poor that even feeding their children one meal a day is a struggle, and they are unable to afford the nutritious diet



necessary to maintain good

New Home for Aids Children

The pitiful accommodation at the Anbagam Home in Dindigul (see Nandri Spring 09) where HIV positive children and mothers in Dindigul were struggling to survive was really depressing, but now generous donations from our supporters have now provided an escape to a superb new home.

health. Often isolated from their family and community, their health is not monitored closely and they are more prone to opportunistic infections. AWDS is working to establish sustainable community based home care and support for children infected with HIV/AIDS, and provide an environment for improved health and education throughout their community.

A moment of madness



The Classic Rickshaw Rally is in its 5th year, and in a moment of madness, Alastair Paterson, James Curran, and Mish Barton decided to spend the first week of 2009 racing across the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, in a three-wheeled, two-stroke autorickshaw nicknamed 'Bouncy Bouncy Bang Bang'. Charity has played a big role in past races, and this year was no exception, with our boys raising funds for the Madurai Sevashram Girls Home.

Described by the organisers as "an amazing race for the clinically insane", their journey took them almost 1000 kms from the bustling city of Chennai (formerly Madras) on the Cormorandel Coast to India's southernmost point at Kanniyakumari. They swiftly learned the rules of Indian driving: right of way is determined by how large your vehicle is, no one ever looks behind, keep honking the horn at all times. No other rules apply. All along the way people waved, smiled, and looked in disbelief at the little 3-wheeler.

On the fourth day, they negotiated with the organisers to miss the morning flag-off, in order to visit Madurai Sevashram Girls Home, the girls' home for which they were raising funds. It was a welcome change of pace, and they were struck by the calmness of the environment and by how contented the girls were. The value of helping the children gain skills and qualifications, so they can be self-supporting when they leave the charity, was very clear to them. The girls were enthusiastic to show them



Getting to know you
– the team meet
the girls at MSGH

around the home, and to spend time chatting and describing their lives with the help of translation from their teachers. After several hours the three finally managed to drag themselves away, but not before the kids had tried a world-record attempt at how many children could fit into a rickshaw! Afterwards, they realised that their visit to this orphanage had been a very moving experience and a particular highlight for them.

As they travelled on, the gruelling roads took their toll on the little rickshaw, however despite several breakdowns they were helped by many wonderful people they met along the way, all of whom were friendly and anxious to assist, including the mechanic from a 'tinkering' shop who, on the day the exhaust fell off, lay beneath the rickshaw with all safety gear absent and sorted it out with his blow torch – all for about 50 pence.

Fortunately, they had no breakdowns at all on the final day (probably because almost every component in the rickshaw had been replaced by then), and as they entered Kanniyakumari and pulled up at the finishing line, they celebrated their phenomenal experience! They had finally made it, two hours early, and finished in a creditable 8th place.

Thanks to the team's fantastic effort, three more girls now benefit from sponsorship, and we have been able to make improvements and provide additional equipment for Madurai Sevashram Girls Home.

If you would like to hear a personal account of this exciting adventure, then come along to our Annual Meeting in Kenilworth on 10th October 2009, when Alastair and James will be talking about their experience.