

INNER WHEEL GIRLS TOWN

Annual Report 2017/2018



The Monsoon this season was “pretty good”. This means that some of the reservoirs are half full at the moment and the ground water has replenished to some degree. It will take several years of good rains for the land to really recover however. I rode towards IWGT on the back of a motorcycle this year and while it made dodging the thorny acacias more interesting, it was considerably less bumpy. The path is still twisty and made more challenging by huge piles of coconut husks haphazardly dumped in the way and the goats still roam but eventually we gratefully made it to the gates of the compound.



Ayyammal, the new warden

We were met by the new Warden Ayyammal who was brought over from Rengasamy Children’s Village (RCV) upon the abrupt departures of the previous Warden Valarmathi who after 8 years in the position has returned home to care for an invalid family member and Assistant Warden Tamilselvi who developed heart problems and has retired. They will both be sorely missed!

Ayyammal is hoping this is a temporary arrangement as her two son’s are still at RCV and apart from cook Rathinia Selvi who herself came from Anthony Abs Childrens Village (AACV) they are woefully short on staff. Fortunately the students have stepped up to help and are certainly familiar with the normal routines. In addition to these two permanent full time positions, BTS also needs to find part-time tutors as IWGT has been without any this entire year. Rounding out the group is the new night watchman Sakkarapani; IWGT also has a CCTV set-up which is monitored from the computer room to provide additional security.

Last year there were 46 girls in residence, this year there are 55 - 52 in standards 6 to 10, with 11 students preparing to write the all important 10th standard exams; two in 11th and one in 12th standard. 14 Girls graduated last year into apprentice or ITI programmes but none are presently living at IWGT. There are 12 entirely new girls, seven who transferred in from AACV after 8th standard, and four from RCV after 5th standard.

The campus has a well equipped library, sporting anatomical models and in-progress projects for the upcoming Pongal science fair and they have been able to add spoken English CD/DVD’s as well as those covering abuse awareness/sex education. The very pink computer room has three functioning Windows based desktops and a printer. Internet access is via a “dongle” which can be used on any of the computers.

They have a satellite dish and TV (strict rules for watching), a DVD player, discs; various and sundry electronic items include a new MP3 player for putting on plays, dances and musical events. Plenty of sports equipment is on hand as the girls are enthusiastic about their games (there are three bicycles on site for general purpose and a sponsor recently gifted the residence with an also very pink brand new bike for the warden to use). Not surprisingly, the auditorium sees a lot of use. It is due to be set-up with a solar powered lighting system in late January/early February, courtesy of a cost sharing scheme with the government.

The kitchen has both gas and wood cooking facilities although the wood kitchen really needs enlarging and repair; the food storage rooms are clean and neatly organized. Fresh vegetables are delivered once or twice a week and the dry goods delivered monthly are kept in bins in locked storage. There are two bore wells for laundry; the girls are responsible for their own clothes and washing; potable water is delivered twice a week and there is also a water filtration RO system (reverse osmosis). The computer systems are supplemented by an UPS (Uninterruptible Power System) for those times when the grid goes down - something which happens for regular maintenance about once a month.

There is no kitchen garden as such - it is a very small plot of land and while soil was brought in recently to ameliorate the poor quality dirt between two of the buildings where the girls in past years have had a small garden, at the moment nothing is being grown. Unfortunately there is no facility to capture and use the grey water so anything green inside the complex has to be watered by hand with a careful eye to usage.

The sanitation facilities are shortly to be improved as part of a larger maintenance programme for homes in the Tirumangalam area. This will offer better bathing facilities and give the girls much more privacy.

Although IWGT has been without any tutors this year, Ayyammal has a BSc Maths and very good computer literacy so she is now able to assist the girls every evening. In addition the girl's parliament has set up a programme whereby each good student works with and helps two poorer students. Three of the IWGT girls are ranked first, second and third out of the 30 students in 10th standard at Achampatti School. The expectation is that all 11 of the girls who will be writing their 10th standard exams will pass and five of them are likely to do well enough to go onto 11th which is the necessary precursor to a higher education.

Career guidance is handled predominantly by the BTS staff with sessions in July and February which include the parents or guardians and another in December just for the students. The Job Expos which now include the 9th and 11th standards cover theoretical information and practical hands-on visits to places like hospitals and ITIs. Half day workshops are being offered on educational opportunities by the HR department of the Madurai Institute of Social Studies (MISS).

Counselling is taken seriously given the often difficult lives these children have led. Needless to say if a particular girl needs any other kind of counselling hopefully they are identified rapidly and helped by the social worker/councillors on staff.

After the Haemoglobin results of last year, the diet for all the children under the care of BTS has been improved. The menu now includes dates or peanut brittle twice a week, drumstick leaves which are rich in iron twice a week and jaggery with peanuts twice a week. More iron rich greens such as spinach are also included. The vitamin regime is unchanged at twice a week and vermifuge tablets are still administered twice yearly.

The IWGT girls and the boys of TBT organized a Dengue Fever awareness rally at the local village recently. In conjunction with the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), they also created a dance drama to educate about appropriate and inappropriate touching and general sex education which was also held in the village on Joe Homan's Birthday.

All the girls attend Achampatti Higher Secondary School. The campus new construction remains ongoing. BTS have recognised that the site is not perfect for the youngsters whilst work is ongoing and is in constant communication with the School to improve this.

The Head Master Ramasubramanian has been in the position since August 2016 and has post graduate degrees in Science and Teaching. He has a full-time staff of 22 teachers and three clerical and three part-time specialist teachers - computer science, PE and drawing. Standards 6 through 10 are split into Tamil (291 students with 18 from BTS) and English Medium (70 students of which 10 are from BTS) streams, though again the warden reports that the English teachers' grasp of the language is very poor with most subjects actually being taught in Tamil. Next year 11th Standard is scheduled to be included into the English



Trade visit for 10th std girls



Science exhibition during Pongal.

Medium. In the normal course of events, inclusion is determined solely by the parents and students level of interest in studying English.

The school is still offering 11th and 12th standard classes but only two of the four different streams are taught. As long as the students study (1) Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Math or (2) Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Computer Science they can stay in Achampatti. Otherwise they must go to another school for the other two streams.

Standards 6 to 8 utilize the Advanced Learning Methodology (ALM), 9 & 10 Std follow the Continuous Comprehension Evaluation (CCE) model and 11 & 12 Std use Active Learning

Methodology. In practice, the government mandates an "all pass, no fails" programme until students enter 10th standard. This may mean in practice, that by the end of 9th you have an older student but not necessarily an educated one. In 10th standard they are required to write a final exam worth 60% of their final mark. Their results will determine if they go onto a higher education through standards 11 & 12 and beyond, or be directed into vocational, Industrial Training Institute (ITI) or Poly Technical studies.

Achampatti Higher Secondary has the potential to be a great school, they have a large campus, new facilities which should all be operational by the start of the new school year and a number of government sponsored initiatives such as smart class rooms upcoming.

As we left at the end of the day, personal impressions were that these girls are being offered opportunities that simply would not have been available at 'home'. Whilst everything is not perfect, IWGT offers these girls' education, life skills, emotional and physical well being, and self assurance often denied to so many. The hope is that we have conveyed the opportunities that you, the sponsors, are giving to these young people. It is highly unlikely that without this support these girls could even dream of what might now be real possibilities.

Thanks to your continued support, the vast majority of the Girls here will go on to gain a trade, or even a degree, which will guarantee them well-paid job opportunities for the rest of their lives. The next generation of their families will be raised above the poverty line... the magnitude of this is almost too big to comprehend. None of this would be possible without the care and dedication of the BTS team and of course the invaluable support of the sponsors, so THANK YOU!

Kimberly Smith, Volunteer 2018.

All Project Reports are checked and when necessary amended by JHC Manager.

Many youngsters supported by JHC are seeking sponsorship; you may have a relative or friend who might help these youngsters?

We need volunteers who might help these children and others in projects JHC supports with their education and spoken English, do you know anyone who might be interested?

Want to read news from JHC and India? Then why not follow us at www.facebook.com/JoeHomanCharity or www.joehoman.org.uk. We need friends to spread the news of our work with needy children.

To write to your sponsored child, please use email via the charity website, or the following postal address.

Child name / IWGT
C/o Joe Homan Charity (India)
Post Box No 36
Dindigul – 624 001
Tamil Nadu
India