

CHIT CHAT OCT 2008

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Building Futures for Children

Moving on - It is just three years since George Kent and Howard Mathers sat down with Babu to earnestly pray about the future of the two Children's Homes in Andhra Pradesh, desperately close to closure. Their very survival looked unlikely, to put it mildly, but we had a peace in our hearts and felt it would become clear pretty soon if God wanted it to happen. If it did not, we would look a bit stupid, but more seriously, 250 children and their carers would be the poorer. Howard pressed on with organising charitable status for CHIT, and George found two more trustees and started fundraising. The situation now is so different it is hard to believe. God has certainly blessed us.

With 150 committed supporters, some very generous, we have felt able to spend £20,000 building a new toilet and shower block for the boys, made proper facilities for looking after sick children, and built offices to enable our senior staff to work efficiently. To reduce running costs and improve the environment, large capacity solar water heaters have been installed at both locations, with steam cooking introduced at Bapatla and Pressure Cookers at Nidamarru. The children's diet has been improved, vitamin supplements organised, and more water buffalo bought to increase the milk available for needy children.

Hepsy's brother Samson did a tremendous job supervising all the building work and we are very sorry to report that his health deteriorated and he felt unable to stay longer. His home, his wife and his daughter are in Guntur, an hour by motor bike. We hope he recovers soon.

Rachel Rani, who is married to Nelson, Hepsy's younger brother, is now sole Director, in overall charge of both sites. She will be building up her own team. If you are familiar with India you will know that the family is the unit that provides the loyalty and commitment that keeps things going. Babu, as the head of the family, although Secretary to the trustees, holds all the reins in his hands.

Now we hear the news that Babu might be seeking election to Parliament as the Congress Party Candidate for Bapatla. After 25 years of caring for children he is very well known and widely admired. His knowledge of child poverty and first-hand experience of the benefits of educating orphans will give him a firm platform for Social Reform. We wish him every success. It will be some months before a change may be apparent, but the way is being prepared with care. For some time and at our urging, Babu has sought new people of experience and ability to become members of



the Committee (equivalent to our Trustee body). Now, at last, we have them; all committed Christians.



Daggumalli. Johnson, Evangelist, experienced administrator and Hepsy's brother. Excellent English.



Mrs Florence Bharata Raju. Principal of William Booth Junior College Bapatla.

Mr Ratna Kumar from Chirala, early-retired Parcels Office Manager at the big Vijayawada Railway Terminus. Babu's friend since childhood.

We are now planning the fourth visit to Bapatla by Chairman George, Treasurer Howard, and Trustee Pauline Stanton-Saringer. Much attention has been paid to good governance. We carefully monitor the procedures agreed in November 2005. Health remains our greatest concern, Pauline's special responsibility.

With space freed by students finishing their studies, and confident of our further support, a record number of **31 new children have been taken in to our homes.**



The staff at the school had been underpaid and poorly equipped. These things have been put right. Our Indian friends are keen for the school to become English-Medium (where all subjects are taught in English) realising the great asset it is in India to be a fluent English speaker. This is a major challenge, as English-speaking teachers are paid 50% more. All State Schools in Andhra Pradesh are to move to English-medium. For us, getting new qualified teachers will be difficult, and costly re-training necessary.

Our friends Claire and Stuart Brown are coming out again for four weeks, on this occasion helping the school teachers to improve their rather traditional methods. We have been fundraising for whiteboards, pens and English text books (ten times the cost of Telugu). Claire organised a splendid sponsored walk, and George fixed a successful Indian Summer Picnic Party to raise funds. More donors are needed to finance the improved standards we seek.



Claire and Stuart will get a great welcome back from these chirpy children



Teachers have always been attracted to our cause. The eagerness of the children to listen and respond is so appealing. They tell us that they sense an almost tangible **“Yearning for Learning”**.

Only recently has it become the law for Indian children to attend school. Building a High School on the Bapatla campus 12 years ago was a staggering act of faith. Government Money was expected but never received. It is wonderful how character-forming a bit of hardship can be. Keeping this school going through the dark days of 2002/3 meant that only dedicated staff remained.

They are still short of much equipment, and the teaching techniques need updating, but the enthusiasm is there and remarkable results have been achieved in exams.

Money has been short and it was always a concern knowing that good results meant children wanting to stay in full time education and possibly preventing places being available for little ones coming in. For a while, student support was halved. Today there are 115 students aged over 16, 40 of them on 3-year courses, all supported to some extent.

K Srinivasa Rao came to the Bapatla home when he was eight years old. He was the seventh child of his widowed mother, destined to be a coolie like his siblings. This year he passed his MSc (1st division) in Mathematics. Purushottam, an orphan at Nidamarru, got a First in Maths, Physics and Chemistry and was selected through the competitive exam to do a Masters in Computer Applications in the Aventi Engineering College. Take heart!

A feeling of forward-looking confidence prevails.

Let us not forget the boys, outnumbered at both homes and needing a morale boost. The dining room has served as their dormitory/living room for some years. This became a health and safety issue, and a simple covered dining area is being erected adjacent to the old one, as you can see.



The first girl to decide on Nursing as a career, four years ago, and work hard to that end, set a wonderful example, followed, last year, by 24 more. They are fortunate that there are four colleges to which the girls can go, running 1, 2 and 3 year courses, according to academic ability. What satisfaction supporters can take from the fact that children from disadvantaged situations should end up becoming such useful members of society. Take heart!



These girls are all in colleges. Most want to be nurses.

India is in the grip of inflation. At 12% it is about double the rate in the UK. Getting suitable staff to work long hours, in very basic accommodation, is difficult. We have three vacancies. Incremental increases in India are rare. All our staff have been given a 5% increase this year and we are anxious to improve their poor living conditions.

Dedication is needed to look after children from such deprived backgrounds. Consider this: *Every* child returning from their summer holidays this year needed some form of medical attention. Several were sent for an X-ray.

Our Budgeted expenditure is £78,000. This nurtures 271 children from 6 to 20. Wonderful value! In these troubling times, we praise God for your loyalty. Please consider doing some fundraising, up your standing order, donate on-line, or make a cheque out to: CHIT, and post to:

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