

NEWS-CHIT MAY 07

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The idea of supplementing three Trustees with four intelligent benefactors on our visit to India proved to be a great success. Being a party of seven enabled us to make good use of numerous opportunities, limited mainly by the language barrier. To assist in that respect we were delighted that Babu's charismatic brother-in-law and full-time evangelist, Johnson, had arranged to be in constant attendance, initially with a ten-seater bus.

We had been rather anxious to see the Senior Management team at Bapatla strengthened, and were very pleased to find a Director (administration) on site called Samson. His appointment was confirmed at a most harmonious committee meeting which George, Howard and Pauline were invited to attend.



Samson

Samson is a Bachelor of Commerce, a good English-speaker, and computer-literate. He was formerly Administrator of the Bethany Leper Colony in Bapatla. For the last 3 years he has been with the American charity *Habitat for Humanity*, overseeing the tsunami rebuilding programme of hundreds of homes. We are delighted to have him in post so that Rani, now as Director (Welfare), can concentrate on implementing the newly agreed policies on safeguarding children, health and safety, and in-house staff training. Three other new members of staff have been recruited, and two teachers, filling gaps which the management previously had not been able to afford to fill. Praise God.

The task of caring for nearly 300 children continues to grow. Welfare expectations in India are increasing, much as we have seen in UK. With success in education, the key element in our strategy to "break the cycle of poverty", comes the challenge of supporting children beyond High School up to degree level, and questions like whether we should embark on a student-loan system. After three years of under-investment, the boys' toilet block is only the start of the re-building programme, with sickbays, dispensary and offices all in the budget this year, and the need for much

improved water supplies next year. All these need good decision-making, careful supervision and close control of costs.

The Indian management have agreed to have Rani covering her former job as Warden at Bapatla, together with her duties as Director (Welfare).



We took the opportunity to draw closer to the headmistress and staff of the High School, attended by all the Bapatla children up to age 16.



**Headmistress
Mary Salome**

No visitor could fail to be impressed by the **Rani** commitment of the 12 teachers, and it was personally rewarding to sit in classes, and contribute to some of them. On our team were Pauline Stanton-Saringer, a Trustee and experienced teacher, and Jane Templeman, Special-Needs adviser to Bedfordshire Schools, who wrote an excellent report revealing a very serious shortage of basic teaching materials. There is such a gulf between their educational approach and ours, we have to tread carefully. They are probably quite capable of finding and purchasing suitable materials IF they had

the funds. They have been short of money for years and it shows.

Technically this is not our responsibility but since it is our children who will benefit we feel we can ask you who are interested to chip in to an **Educational Materials Fund**. £500 would give them a great boost.

Our latest Health-and-Safety risk assessment, independently carried out by supporter Sue Whitehouse, identified some practical actions, not burdensome, for Samson and Rani to take. We are confident these audits help manage risks and stimulate appropriate attitudes to Health and Safety.

Ultimately the biggest Health and Safety issue is the boys' Toilet Block, which continues to take shape, and should be ready for the new school year in July. This is closely followed by the need for an effective sickbay. Plans have been agreed to convert the current bare single sickroom and three offices to a dispensary and separate boys' and girls' bays with toilets. New offices will be built as a second storey, which will also provide some protection to the sickbay from the heat of the sun. In anticipation of this,



and following some false starts, the Bapatla home recently engaged a 23 year-old nurse. Her name is **Madhavi**.

Last year we had some generous gifts and grants, which have given us the confidence to go ahead with the building programme and complete the pay rises for the home staff and teachers that we started last year. We want to be bold as we believe God is blessing the work. Accordingly we ask you to continue to pray, not just for our friends in India, but also for the fundraising in this country to help them. A

relevant concern we have is that we will receive 3% less in tax recovery from Gift Aid as a result of the reduced standard rate. If you are a regular supporter, please consider increasing your giving and contact Howard and your bank, or telephone Stewardship 08452 262627 who will alter your direct debit.

Nidamaru continues to thrive. Most of the older boys from Bapatla have moved there, as more convenient for the Sixth Form College, where increasing numbers of them go. On our first visit in 2005 we felt that, even under severe financial pressure as we were, it would be wrong to close the home. We are now sure this was the right decision, and will try to spend more time there on our next visit. It is smaller than Bapatla, but has spare accommodation in an area of great poverty where HIV/Aids is common.

SAVE. Reading the background details of the children's families, one soon realises that many of the children come from grandparents who have been left to cope after the death of a married son or daughter. When a man dies, the only work his widow can get is likely to be travelling about working in the paddy fields: backbreaking work 12 hours a day for seventy days. If it is the man who survives, he is likely to re-marry, but his new wife is often reluctant to be a stepmother. Either way the child ends up without the loving care of its mother most of the time.

We had been wondering how we might provide the working mothers with more reliable work, if possible close to their children. It came as a lovely

surprise to find that Babu, Secretary of the Indian Committee, and Wilson the Treasurer, had started a new venture called **Social Action for Village Economy**. We attended the inaugural meeting and George opened their new offices. It is a micro-financing scheme to enable small groups of working women, *after becoming savers*, to borrow money at very low interest rates to set up a little business. 300 women attended the meeting which started with worship and bible reading. Once up and running such schemes get support from Banks because they become self-financing.

In our view, SAVE reflects several of our core values. It is about thrifty investment; it is about helping very needy people; it will benefit children indirectly; and it is in the name of Christ. We shall be very interested to hear from you if you think that it sounds the sort of development CHIT should support. All we



SAVE meeting opens with worship

offered was prayer and publicity. What they need is a starting-up grant. If you know of any trusts with criteria likely to cover this sort of venture do let us know. Our own funds really need to be kept for the higher costs we face for further education.

We are most grateful for the ongoing support from sponsors and regular donors. Could any of you give talks or form support groups?

Next year we *have* to provide more drinking water at Bapatla. Can we *arrange to collect and store large volumes of rain, free from the salt that spoils all the ground water near the coast of Andhra Pradesh?* They could then undertake serious horticulture: bananas? melons? pineapples? dates? bougainvilleas? the mind boggles! Perhaps they could employ our not-so-academic drop-outs, and some of those mums. Self-sufficiency beckons.

In **2008/9** a major project to build ring-wells and elevated water tanks with solar pumps would cost about **£15,000 over 2 years**. What a challenge!