

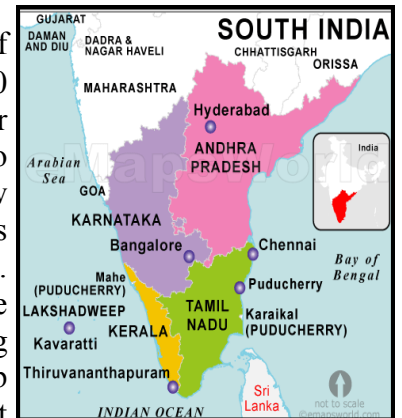
Little Drops Charity Trust—St. Joseph Centre



April 2017

Annual Visit Report 2016/2017 - By Muriel Thomson

Overview: Chennai was only just recovering from the catastrophe of the floods that engulfed the city in December 2015 killing over 300 people when disaster struck once again during the month of December 2016. The city was hit by a major cyclone with wind speeds of up to 130 Klm per hour. Nearly 20,000 people had to be evacuated from low lying areas. Flooding and fallen trees disrupted transport and schools and colleges were closed. The city was without electricity for four days. As if this wasn't enough to deal with, the people were then hit with the major problems caused by the sudden demonetisation. Without warning the Indian Government withdrew all 1,000 & 500 Rupee notes to curb 'black money'. The new notes were not readily available and this meant that Banks and ATM's were running out of cash. Tempers frayed as queues of up to 300 turned up at Banks unable to get cash. The limited weekly withdrawal was only 2,000 Rupees (£20). This resulted in complete chaos with India being mainly a cash economy and 85% of the currency in 500 & 1000 Rupee notes. Market traders and small businesses were unable to conduct transactions. The problems continued while I was in India with the weekly withdrawal amount only being increased to 10,000 Rupees. It is estimated that it will take until July to sort the situation out fully. South India now faces more problems with a major shortage of water after the monsoon seasons brought little rains. This can only mean a miserable summer ahead for all with an exacerbation of infections and diseases.



The St Joseph's Social Service Centre Society was born out of the initiative of Sister Bakkiam, in 1984. Being a Franciscan nun, her concern for the poor and the love she had for the marginalized in the society was unparalleled. Situated at St. Thomas Mount, Chennai, the Centre started taking care of 40 children providing education and medical care. Ten years later the Centre started to give refuge to orphaned children and children from broken families who had nobody to call a family. To-day the St. Joseph Centre is a home for 35 children, a refuge for women and it also provides a daily crèche for around 65 children. The Centre has touched the lives of thousands of children over the years.

The Project: The St. Joseph Centre Project was initiated in 2006 after I spent a month in India doing voluntary work with the children at the St. Joseph's Social Service Centre. "It proved to be a life changing experience for me in many ways and after living at the St. Joseph Centre for a month I had to do something to help. I just couldn't turn my back on them and walk away." *Muriel*



Children of St. Joseph Centre - February 2006

- * 100% of all donations go directly to The Project.
- * The Project supports over 120 children in Southern India.
- * The Project provides for the Health, Education, Welfare & Social needs of the children.



Hebciba - Half Term 'Topper'

Hebciba's Story: "Hi I'm Hebciba and I live in the neighbourhood area of St Thomas Mount in Chennai and I am one of 26 children who are supported on the English Education Programme. I live in a small house with my parents and my older brother Immanuel. My father was orphaned at 15 days old and brought up in an orphanage. My mother who is one of eight children worked as a maid. Her employers arranged the marriage to my father. My father works in a factory production line making instruments for hospital operations. He likes his job but after eighteen years of standing all day long he now suffers from knee and leg pain. My mother takes in stitching jobs when she can to make some extra money and I often help her by stitching on buttons and hooks to the sari blouses. My brother Immanuel has just completed school and is in his first year at Kings Engineering College. His college is more than two hours away. He gets up at 5.00am to reach his college bus and doesn't return home until 6pm. If I'd not been chosen to join the English Education Programme I'd have gone to the free Government school where I would have had a poor education. At the Montfort School we are fortunate to have a good all round education including drama, dancing, singing and sports. My parents both understand the value of a good education and encourage my brother and I to study well. I have produced top A1 Grades throughout my school years and I was the 'Topper' for my Half Term exams during 2016. I enjoy table tennis, dancing, singing and robotics. I am involved at the local Catholic Church as an Alter girl. At the church and at the school Annual Day Show I have performed Traditional Indian dances. For the past two years I have had table tennis coaching at the Montfort school and this year I won the Doubles Zonal Championship. I hope to go on to District & State Level. My aim at the moment is to become a Doctor or to have a top job with the Indian Administration Service - perhaps my table tennis and dancing might have to take second place in the future."



Hebciba with her parents and Immanuel.



Dressed for a College 'do'

Venitha's Story: "I came to the St. Joseph Centre when I was 6 months old with my mother and 3 year old sister Jaya Marie. My father had died of yellow fever at the age of 36 years and my mother was unable to find work in our village in the south of India. She came to Chennai to work as a cook at the St. Joseph Centre and my sister and I were taken in under the care of Sister Bakkiam who was the founder of the Centre. Sister Bakkiam has been a big influence on my life and I often wonder what my life would have been like had I not been given a home here at the Centre. I would have lost so much. Sister Bakkiam was very much for ensuring we had a good education but she also allowed us time to take part in dance, music and sports. I have been given a great start in life with a good education at the local all girls Tamil school. All the girls living here are taught traditional Indian dancing by the many Sisters who have worked at the Centre over the years. Myself and the other girls have had the opportunity to dance for the public at various church events. I enjoy playing badminton and I also took part in a charity marathon a couple of years ago and enjoyed this very much. I've been encouraged to study at college and am at present taking a course in English Literature doing my MA. Had I stayed in my village and not been brought up under the guidance of Sister Bakkiam I would have probably left school at the age of fourteen, had a menial job and a marriage arranged for me at a very young age. My sister Jaya Marie now twenty three years old is married and living back in our home village. She is qualified as a kindergarten teacher and has a job working at the local school. My mother continues to work at the Centre and is happy for me to complete my studies, work for a few years to amass some money, then marry later when I feel I'm ready. I hope to join the Indian Police Service and one day be able to afford to buy my own house where I can look after my mother later in life."

Selva Lakshmi completes her nursing training and secures a job:



Selva at Miot Hospital.

Selva Lakshmi has been cared for in the St. Joseph Centre for the last eight years after the death of her mother. Her father was unable to take care of her and her two brothers. She attended the local Tamil school and completed her 12th Standard Board Exams. Selva Lakshmi was one of the group of older girls performing traditional Indian dance at church functions around Chennai. From an early age she was a great asset to the Centre. She was very supportive of the younger children whether tending grazed knees, cut fingers or just giving support to any of them when upset. It did not surprise us when she announced that she would like to become a nurse. She attended the Miot Nursing College taking a course in nursing and midwifery. The change from learning in Tamil at school to coping with lectures in English was quite traumatic for her as not only had she to learn English but also all the medical terms. It was amazing how well she coped and picked up the English language. Her three years training couldn't have ended at a better time for her and her father. Her father suffered a stroke at the end of last year. He has partly lost the use of his arm and is now unable to do much more than some odd jobs to earn money. Selva Lakshmi has secured a job at the Miot Hospital in Chennai and started working in the General Ward on 1st March. She now hopes to be able to give her father some financial support. Her father has selected a husband for her for an arranged marriage. Her future husband named Bala comes from her home village and works as an electrician in Chennai. Bala has been a great support to her during her studies. Seeing them both together it looks like a it's 'love match'. Selva Lakshmi said "Had I not been taken into care at the St. Joseph Centre I'd never have been able to complete my education and nursing training and would have likely been married at a very young age without any prospects of a career."

What this Project covers: This Project funds all the Hostel Care needs for 32 orphaned and semi-orphaned children of the St. Joseph's Social Service Centre. It funds the school fees for 26 children from the St. Joseph's Centre and the poor neighbourhood area to be educated at English medium Schools. School uniforms are provided for approx 50 children and uniforms for 65 crèche children. We employ 3 teachers to assist with homework, and a driver to transport the children to school. College fees are funded for numerous older children of the St. Joseph Centre. A Health Programme is funded for 65 crèche children who live in the poor neighbourhood area and medical care is provided for all the children living in the St. Joseph's Centre. Christmas gifts, a Sponsors Day Party, Annual Day Out, and many other treats are provided for all the children and staff. The complete renovation of the building has been funded to bring the St. Joseph Centre up to a suitable living standard. Support is also given to various other Projects in Southern India including Koodu Trust, GVC, CHES Home & Prema Vasam.



The girls looking smart in their school uniforms.



Smiles from the Children of St. Joseph Centre.

Continued support for our other Projects:



Visiting the Prema Vasam Home.

Over the years I have visited a number of other Projects in South India. It's been very encouraging to witness the work being done to help those less fortunate. This year I had a very moving visit to the Prema Vasam Home in Chennai. Prema Vasam is a home for over 200 mentally & physically challenged and less fortunate children. It is the only home of its kind that caters to the needs of a large number of special children along with normal children. Prema Vasam believes that the integration of able-bodied children with special children plays an important and therapeutic role in the lives of their special children. This also makes the able-bodied children more sensitive and caring. We will provide 60 sets of school uniforms for their school going children.

Having been associated with the CHES Home now for the last four years my sister Ruth and I always look forward to our annual visit. The Home caters to the needs of orphans of AIDS, children infected and affected by HIV. This year we treated the children to a picnic day out to a theme park in Chennai. A great time was had by all - I have a funny feeling that this could now be an annual event! We continue to support two other Projects that we have visited in recent years, Koodu Trust & Grace Vision Centre. Koodu Trust works to improve the living conditions of the many tribal people in the Nilgiris Hills of Tamil Nadu. Support is given for the Dalit farmers in the form of Bio Gas Plants. Koodu Trust also run education and health awareness programmes for the children of the rural villages. We provide five teachers to conduct after school classes for the village children. The Grace Vision Centre in Durmapuri is run by Pastor Manoharan. This is a Christian organisation that works with the rural poor and tribal communities assisting in the children's education and development. We have provided educational gifts and Christmas treats for the children.



Children from CHES Home enjoy a day out.

Thank you to all our supporters:



The boys love Tunnock's Caramel Logs.

I would like to thank all those who have donated to this Project and the sponsors who have committed to supporting the children on the English Education Programme. Without your generosity and support we would not have been able to improve the health, education, welfare and living conditions for all the children. Thank you to the various businesses that have provided 'snack treats' for the children.

I thank Sister Jayaseeli & staff of St Joseph's Social Service Centre, the 'Little Drops Charity Trust' in the UK, our 'Little Drops Charity Trust' Director in Chennai and all at Montfort School. A special mention must go to the doctors from Punch Charity & our Aberdeen Dentists for their voluntary support.

Little Drops Charity Trust—Registered Charity Number: SC028069

Project : St. Joseph Centre Project.

Single Donation

If you would like to give a donation, please fill in the details on this part of the form. All donation cheques should be made payable to 'Little Drops Charity Trust' and sent to: Muriel Thomson, Little Drops Charity Trust, St. Joseph S.S. Centre Project Lead, 26 Deeside Crescent, ABERDEEN, AB15 7PT.

Name.....

Address

Postcode.....

E.mail address



I want this charity to treat all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as 'Gift Aid' donations.

please tick the box & sign

Signature.....

Date.....

Little Drops Charity Trust

Registered Scottish Charity
(Registration Number SC 028069)

100% of your donation goes directly to the Project. All administration & postage costs are borne by myself.

Donation amount enclosed £.....
Cash/cheque

Standing Order Mandate

If you would like to give regular donations by Standing Order, please fill in the details on this part of the form and send to: Muriel Thomson, Little Drops Charity Trust, St. Joseph S. S. Centre Project Lead, 26 Deeside Crescent, ABERDEEN, AB15 7PT.

Please Pay- Bank of Scotland, 48 Upperkirkgate, Aberdeen, AB10 1BA
Sorting Code No 80-05-17, Account Number: 00995396
For the Credit of '**Little Drops Charity Trust**'

The Sum of £.....

Amount in Words

Commencing on as date of first payment and thereafter monthly/annually until you receive instructions from me to cancel this standing order. Please debit my/our account accordingly.

Name of your account to be debited

Sort Code No..... Account Number.....

Name and address of your Bank:

Signature Date.....

I want this charity to treat all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as 'Gift Aid' donations

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