



**India update:** India went into lockdown in March 2020. The whole country was given only 4 hours' notice of the lockdown. Many of the migrant workers in the cities were immediately left jobless and homeless so they had no choice but to flee back to their villages. The number of Covid19 cases began to escalate with the country recording around 100,000 daily cases at the peak in September. Social distancing was near impossible with many families living in cramped conditions with up to six people in one small room. The hospitals at the height of the pandemic were overwhelmed and unable to cope. Many people were turned away as there were no beds available. Hospitals in the big cities had two patients lying top to toe in the beds in the emergency units and another patient lying on the floor below. In the rural villages things were no better. They had little access to medical care and poor or non-existent testing facilities. By mid summer it seemed to be a hopeless situation but despite the country having the second highest cases next to USA it has managed to pull through. It has somehow averted what could have been a major catastrophe. The Government began to open up businesses and industry at the end of October in an effort to prevent a total collapse of their economy.....an economy which was already on a big slowdown prior to Covid19. As things begin to get back to some form of normality the migrant workers are slowly returning to the cities seeking employment. India now has the unenviable task to deliver the world's largest Covid19 vaccination programme to its population of 1.38 billion. The vaccine has been heralded as 'A new dawn' for the country. However the government faces another challenge with 69% of Indians hesitant about receiving the vaccine.

**English Education Programme:** The Montfort School along with all the other schools in India has been closed since the lockdown in March. 2020 Ten of the twenty six children who are on our English Education Programme were due to sit their 10th Standard Government exams but due to the lockdown these exams were unable to take place. Montfort School was advised to assess the children's capabilities to continue to 11th Standard on their previous exam results. All but two of our children were allocated a place at the school for 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Standard. The school year resumed at the beginning of July with online classes only. Having little or no access to mobile phones or laptops most of our children were unable to take part in any online classes. Some were sharing a relative's phone to enable them to access at least one or two classes. We provided funding for mobile phones for all the children so they can now participate in all their classes and are also able to sit their term exams. 5 of our girls are due to sit their final Government exams this summer. It's been a tough year for them with the school closure and lockdown restrictions. Studying at home in cramped conditions along with numerous family members brings its own challenges. Internet connections are sporadic and problematic so that just adds to what has been a very stressful year for them. However there is some brightness on the horizon. The Montfort School students in 9th—12th Standard return to the school on 8th February for a 3 day week. The classes will be split into two sections with each section having three days of classes in the school. We have also resumed our after school homework classes. The two teachers we employ are conducting two classes each evening between 4.30-6.30pm allowing the children to study supervised while social distancing. However limited social distancing facilities means we are unable to resume the evening Maths tuition classes and most of the students are finding that a big concern.



5 girls sit their final exams.



Online classes by mobile.

**\* 100% of all donations go directly to The 5 Projects.**

**\* The 5 Projects support children in Tamil Nadu, Southern India.**

**\* The Projects provide for the Health, Education, Welfare & Social needs of the children.**

**St. Joseph Centre:** Worrying news came from the St. Joseph Centre back in September. Ten of the children, three of the ladies working in the Centre and one of the Sisters contracted Coronavirus. They were all taken to a local Hospital which is run by the Franciscan Sisters. There they were isolated and given treatment and after eight days were allowed back home to the Centre. After isolating in the Home for a further two weeks they all made a full recovery albeit some are feeling prolonged fatigue. Some of the children who are under the care of the St. Joseph Centre are from one parent families. These children had to go back to their villages when the lockdown started because their mothers who were working in the city found themselves jobless and homeless. With their mothers out of work and having no source of income they found themselves in a desperate situation. We provided 'Food provision packages' for all the families of the children that we support in school. The packages, dropped at regular intervals, contained rice, dahl, spices, vegetables and cooking oil. With no technology or internet in their villages the children were unable to have any schooling throughout all last year. Now with the country opening up their mothers have returned to Chennai to their jobs and all the children are back in care at the St. Joseph Centre. At the Centre they are now able to resume their school classes online. They are the fortunate ones.....for many children in India the impact of lost time at school will be devastating for their future. There will be many children who will never go back to school. Parents are unable to find employment so they will have no choice but to send their children out to work to support the family. There will also likely be a huge spike in child marriages. This was the norm when I first went to India back in 2006 but I have seen big changes over the years. It will be tragic if the effects of the pandemic undermine more than a decade of progress.



Keertiga receives her mobile phone.



Food provisions provided to village families.

**The other Projects we support:** Due to the Covid 19 situation I was unable to make my annual visit to the St. Joseph Centre and other Projects we support in Tamil Nadu. I have kept in constant touch with the Projects throughout the year and we have provided assistance to those who have been affected by the Covid19 situation. **GVC Project:** We conduct extra school tuition classes throughout the villages around Dharmapuri for the low caste Dalit children. Many of their families had lost their jobs when the country went into lockdown and they were left without any source of income or support. We provided 100 of the families with three monthly 'Food Provision Packages'. Since the country eased its lockdown over 70 of the families have now been able to find some form of employment. We continue to give support to the remainder of the families. The full time nurse that we employ to work throughout the villages has been running Health Awareness Programmes specific to Covid19. The Programmes have focused on the importance of personal hygiene, social distancing and wearing a mask in order to suppress the spread of the virus. **Koodu Trust:** This Project mainly caters for the children of tea pickers and tribal children. Our main concern was for the older children in their final year at school and those attending colleges. With the schools and colleges closed their education had ground to a halt. Mobile phones and internet access have been set up for many of them to enable them to complete their education. Other college students living in the Prema Vasam Home in Chennai were also given the same facilities.

**Thank you to all our supporters:** I would like to thank all who have donated to these Projects and the Sponsors who have committed to supporting 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. I thank Sister Jayaseeli & the staff of the St Joseph's Social Service Centre in Chennai, the 'Little Drops Charity Trust' in the UK, our 'Little Drops Charity Trust' Director in Chennai and all the staff at Montfort School. My thanks also go to Dr Sunny of Koodu Trust in Nilgiris District, Pastor Manoharan of Grace Vision Centre in Dharmapuri, The staff of CHES Home & all at the Prema Vasam Home in Chennai.

Little Drops Charity Trust—Registered Charity Number: SC028069

PROJECTS : \*St. Joseph Centre. \*Koodu Trust. \*GVC. \*CHES Home. \*Prema Vasam Home.