



BefriendLetter

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Educational Development - Start of Empowerment School



We announced the extension for the home in the last newsletter. The building of a computer classroom, two partly covered areas as well as extra sanitary facilities has been made possible with subsidies from Wild Geese and NCDO.

This extension also made it possible to open The Empowerment School in Soorya Udayam Illam.

This is a school which has "education for life" as its aim, which means a much broader curriculum than simply basic skills like grammar and mathematics. Important subjects being taught include culture, nature, environment and *world* matters. These are the building blocks for the pupils' further development.

The live-in children get their daily lessons here and, no longer needing to attend the village school, they benefit greatly from this special form of education.

Many of the kids have a lot of ground to make up because they have not been able to attend school for a long period of time, they have dropped out of education (drop-outs). From a social and welfare point of view they also need a lot of extra care which is not on offer at an ordinary school.

New pupils who came to Soorya Udayam Illam were not able to immediately fit in with the current school year. These children received tuition from a special teacher in order to bridge the gaps in their knowledge. At the Empowerment School they will be able to catch up on their education and so be better equipped for higher education.

As soon as financial circumstances permit, the Empowerment School will also be open to drop-out children from the local community.



Many of these children already come to Soorya Udayam Illam for special educational projects (summer camp, winter camp, cultural projects etc.).

Schoolactions: 'Het Kofschip' and 'Jan Hekmanschool'

Envelope Action Catholic Elementary Scool 'Het Kofschip'

In addition to the Jan Hekman School in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, the Catholic Elementary School Het Kofschip has decided to support this orphanage as well. A film about this project was shown in all the classrooms; the children made nice drawings on envelopes which held the donated money and, of course, all these envelopes were sent to the House in India. This resulted in the collection of Euro 1.566,16. A –



– a magnificent result to which a bonus from the Wild Geese Foundation has been added. The money will be used in a very special way for the upkeep and extension of the Home. Many thanks for your support!

Sponsorrin Jan Hekmanschool

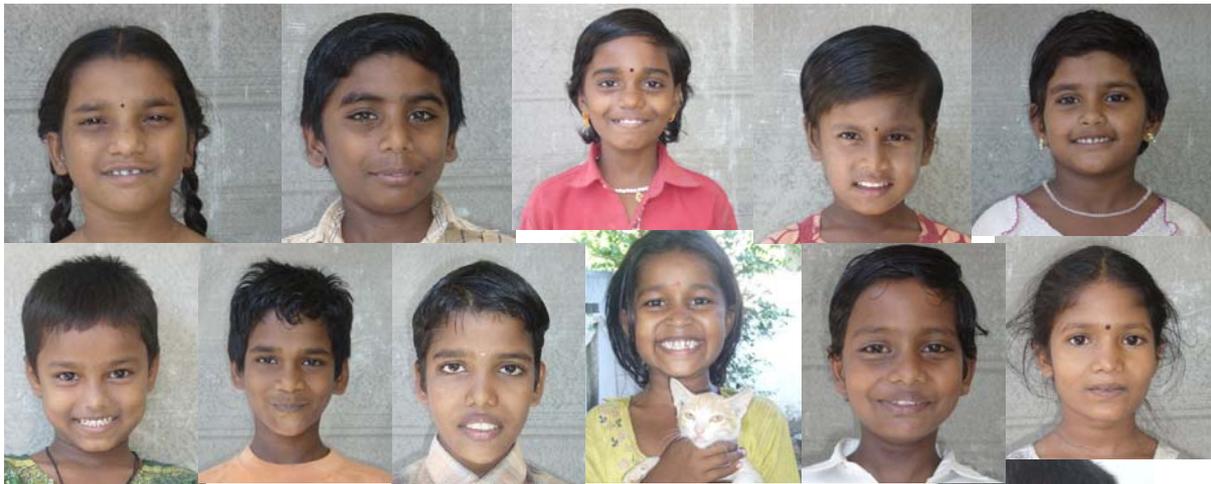
This year Friday 13th was not unlucky. Dressed in orange in order to cheer the Dutch team later that night, a large number of Jan Hekman school's pupils ran a number of sponsored circuits in Ouderkerk a/d Amstel for the Befriend Foundation. From nursery school to the top class, all were dedicated to this good cause, which they have now been supporting for two years.



The Sponsored Run fetched the princely sum of Euro 7.465,82 to which the bonus from the Wild Geese Foundation will be added. This means that the children, while running, have collected more than ten thousand Euros for other children so far away and in another world. We hope that this solidarity may continue to exist for a long time.



NEW CHILDREN



This "portrait gallery" shows the new children in Soorya Udayam Illam. The Home has grown rapidly during the past six months. 25 girls and 15 boys, between the ages of 3 and 16 years, are currently living there. Also, with the help of the Empowerment Foundation, and thanks to their greatly improved situation, a number of children have been able to return to their homes. For these children the Home provided a refuge during a crisis.



Highlighted: Three sisters

These three sisters come from a large family in the poorest part of the community in a small village in the province of Tamil Nadu. The parents owned a little business selling aluminum pans. They would be away from home for days on behalf of their business. The eldest girl had to leave school in order to take care of her younger siblings. The business went bankrupt due to the pressure of loans and the family became destitute and dependent on relatives. Another four daughters were born, after which the father left his family to go and search for a bride that could produce a son. The mother sold pots and pans in the street and had to leave her children behind in their hovel, with a little help from their grandmother. The girls spent their days chopping wood, getting drinking water, performing household duties, washing, cooking, etc. Eventually this situation became untenable and the mother took the three eldest girls to Soorya Udayam Illam. They now continue their education in the 6th, 3rd and 1st form at the Empowerment School. At first the girls were in poor health, had skin infections which healed very slowly. Now, after six months at the home, they are very healthy. They play and learn a lot of new things, such as singing, yoga and Bharathnatiyam dancing.



Plans for the Future

For the immediate near future there are plans to establish a computer centre in the new school accommodation. Long-term planning will involve an extension of the Empowerment School for drop-out children in the region. This means a separate, larger building of at least 4 classrooms. Fundraising for this project is already under way. This coming December Befriend will visit the project for evaluation. Ief Hiel, of Beertraining, will accompany us to train the children of Soorya Udayam Illam to defend themselves, called: Rock and Water. (www.beertrainingen.nl)

The teachers will also receive instruction on how to continue this kind of training



themselves. Empowerment Foundation and Befriend are brainstorming on activities that can raise money to increase the independence of this project.

Before this aim can be achieved, donations for the continuation of the Home are of the utmost importance. New supporters will always be welcome. Befriend has no overheads so you can be assured that your gift will be fully used to improve the life of the Soorya Udayam Illam children and to give them a better future. (see: www.befriend.nl).

CD presentation in Cambridge England GoodTV-TVNorthHolland-NRCNext



The Befriend Foundation and its project in India have received a lot of publicity. DoGood tv, a charity network, broadcast the Soorya Udayam Illam film several times a week during the month of September. The Sponsored Run of the Jan Hekman School was broadcast by RTV North Holland three times in August. It is fantastic that the attention of a large number of people has been drawn to the film about the Home. NRC next (a Dutch newspaper) together with Bulk Books, has highlighted ten projects from the 1% club. The computer centre project with device: Computer skills and chances of a lifetime were especially mentioned.

At the end of this comprehensive newsletter we wish to mention the launch of the Jazz CD BIG CITY CALLING in England. This beautiful CD was written, performed and recorded by John Heavens, who has put part of the proceeds at the disposal of the Befriend Foundation. Helmi van den Berg was present at this launch where a lot of information about the project in India was also made available. The CD has recently received the NCM Radio Mike.