

**The Vidiyal Trust**  
**Charity Registration No. 1113691**

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Dear Friends

I am writing this from India, as I am anxious to get the up to date news out to you all. It is, at last, good news!

The Mavelikara project has finally cleared all the hurdles to get necessary registration and permission to go ahead with the buildings. I met the architect (a lady!) and engineer at Jacob's house on Saturday and the new plans are complete (with modifications that were thought necessary) and so, after a year of frustration, particularly for Jacob who has had to "jump through hoops" we are finally ready to start! We begin as soon as possible to build the Boys and Girls Homes/Educational Centres, which will be enclosed square buildings with a central courtyard. There will also be a separate dining and kitchen building between, shared by the girls and boys buildings. We will also extend the existing school facilities. There is a lot of room for play and we will have landscaped gardens apart from the play areas, in this beautiful rural location where there is a real need for the project.

Total cost will be £85,000, in an area where land and building costs are expensive. We will, on completion, have room for up to 150 children. Thanks to the funds from Norwich Diocese Lent Project, which will cover half the cost, and a very generous donation from Mr C. H. (who wishes to remain anonymous), we can virtually meet this figure. Costs of equipping the buildings are being met by very generous help from groups and individuals, who have worked extremely hard to support us, we are so grateful to all involved. (We plan to recognize their help on a display board when the complex is complete). The whole thing is an answer to prayer. Thank you everyone.

50 children attend our converted cowshed school, too many for the small building, so now we have one class on the veranda of the temporarily rented Girls Home. The children do not seem to mind!

So here is a summary of where we are:

**Boys and Girls Homes**

The homes are in nearby rented buildings pending the completion of the new homes. They are actually quite reasonable and will be fine for the children, who are able to see the building of their new homes and use the land area for play, as well as adjusting to their new schools. The homes are being built almost as boarding schools. There will be excellent residential facilities. Each child will have a personal area of 10 feet by 8 feet, with permanent beds and lockers. Ample showers and toilets will be available and we have space in each home for 30 resident children.

Integral to each building will be the school facilities, and although our children will attend local schools we have educational elements to each building with plans for a library and study facilities. These buildings will not just be home for our resident children but will provide multi use accommodation for local children, including those attending our tuition school; they will also have classrooms within the complex and will use the study and library facilities of the buildings. During the periods of daytime when there are no children in the buildings they will become "home" for the "Adopt a Granny scheme" - more of that in a moment.

The move to Mavelikara has meant that there have been changes for the children. Our Girls Home had a majority of senior girls and most of them have stayed with family members in Trivandrum, but still within our care. We will write to individual sponsors to fill in details. It is much harder to move girls away from their families, particularly as they reach higher education, so the number of girls in our care has dropped to 7 in the home. We do not plan to increase this number (unless there is really urgent

need) until we have them safely in the new buildings. There is still a great need for this sort of care and local churches and other agencies will recommend those needing our facilities when they are available. The senior girls left behind are the best recommendation for what we can offer. All have gone on to pre degree or vocational courses; all have reached A level standard. There is no doubt that this would not have happened if they had not been with us for several years. Jacob and Jessie continue to monitor their welfare and in most cases we will continue sponsorship of college fees, with maintenance grants if they live at home. On our last day in Trivandrum 11 of our older boys and girls who have remained in Trivandrum came to see us in the hotel. It was wonderful to see them and the visitors had the best possible example of the effect of work with them over the past years, particularly the boys, who were deemed by their previous carers to be "unmanageable."

The boys' move has been much easier! All but 3 of the resident boys have transferred, 2 have moved in to vocational training in the Trivandrum area and 1 on to a Masters Degree course. Currently we have 20 boys (including 3 new boys to replace those who did not move), and again we will wait for the move to the complex before we increase the number. They remain under the day to day care of Rajan and Santosh, who have great love for their charges. We continue to sponsor older boys at home.

So, with the school children we have 77 children, this figure should (and will!) reach 150 when our buildings are complete.

We took all 77 to a water theme park last Friday, the excitement had to be seen to be believed! Most of the children had never been on a coach, eaten in a restaurant, and never dreamed that they would be able to go to Veega Land, but they did. It was tear jerking to see the happiness!

### **The School**

This goes from strength to strength, and the children do not seem to mind the rather cramped conditions. Actually, it is rather cosy! There is a lovely sense of peace there and the children are superb. The change in them is remarkable. Health wise they look totally different. They are receiving high protein and vitamin diets now, having a cooked breakfast and tea with us every day, and we continue with multi vitamin supplements. These children are from extremely poor families where the income per family is often less than £50 per year, so by feeding the children we are actually helping the whole family unit.

When we did the medical checkups we could see the improvement. Most of the anaemia has gone, there were no skin conditions needing treatment and all had put on weight. Thanks to equipment loan and training from Dr David Pilch I was able to check their ears, tonsils and teeth and the results of the checks were better than expected, although one or two will need major dental work, so Jacob is to arrange for appropriate professional help. Most important of all is that they are happy. For this a lot of thanks need to go to our excellent teachers, but most of all to our trustee Raju who works tirelessly (and voluntarily) on the project. He is a retired Police Inspector and if I am honest I was a little worried about that initially, with the reputation of some of the police here, but those fears are totally dispelled. At church on Sunday a local person told me that he had always been known as "policeman for the poor" because of his compassion. He is a deeply committed Christian and it shows in his actions. Also helping is Shibu our other trustee, who still works every day but when not working is on the project, and Belau, Raju's wife, who also glows with love for the children. Along with our dear Jacob and Jessie their dedication and love is a joy to see and the children really respond.

Educationally the standard of the children is increasing rapidly, they were all well behind the standard expected for their age groups but that has changed and the future is much brighter for the children. This is reflected in the constant request for places at the centre. We can and will eventually help a lot more, with a planned school capacity of 100.

### **Adopt a Granny scheme**

This has always been a dream and at last we are able to do something to help these dear old ladies, who live in awful conditions. So far we have 5 ladies who will attend the school every day (after the children have gone). We will provide tea, snacks and lunch. Their day will be spent resting, enjoying the gardens (when they are ready), watching television, and most of all being loved. We will also provide basic medical care. The ladies came to the school twice whilst we were there, they are a delight, and we hope that this project will eventually be able to cater for 20 ladies.

## **Church**

I preached at the local Christ Church last Sunday, as we strengthen our ties with them. It was the missing link in our previous work, where lip service to church contact and affiliation was always given but never real. The congregation of Christ Church and other churches (including a local Catholic church) are REAL and are a good safeguard against misuse of funds, as all of the congregations and therefore local communities, know what we are doing. The contact will continue and be strengthened. To underpin this I had a wonderful hour the next day with the Bishop for the Southern Kerala Diocese. I had preached at his church in Trivandrum twice in the past when he was still a parish priest, so it was good to meet an old friend. He will definitely be at our opening.

## **Scrutiny - Openness**

Everything we are doing has been done in accordance with local laws and expectations. Our Trust (registered here in India as well as England) owns the land and the subsequent buildings. They have been registered in the name of the Trust and anyone is at liberty to see the documentations. The land was thoroughly checked by our agents before purchase to ensure the long term future (i.e. that it is not in a development area). Plans are available for anyone to peruse and costing will be open to public scrutiny. Each section of work to be undertaken, from electrical connections to actual building, will go through official registration and permission processes. It is slow, but this is how it is done throughout India. Our accounts continue to be dealt with externally by a large registered practise, and all of our homes and projects are registered with local authorities and subject to random inspection.

## **Sri Lanka**

We had a short but lovely visit to Sri Lanka and our children there, and of course, Father Terence. The community centre is being well used and the children are obviously benefiting. I would like to reassure our friends from HOPE that the building is as they left it; it is spotlessly clean, really well looked after. Over 1,000 children a week use the centre. Our concerns about safety rails on the stairs have been dealt with.

The children (all victims of the Tsunami) are really thriving under the support given and it was wonderful to hear them talking about letters they have received from their sponsors, when we had a tea party together. Dear Patrick, the congregation member who looks after the project for Father Terence is so keen and willing to help. As he is a train driver we hope to have a trip with him in to the hills on the next visit.

Father Terence continues to be an inspiration. His heart continues to be with his people, and particularly those in the north of the country where the suffering (often unpublicised) is extreme. People there are starving. He wants to go there and is hopeful that his bishop will release him to work in the north later.

I, and others who have met him, have tremendous regard for his love of his people. His concern is for the poorest and he will put himself in the front line to help them. Please remember him in your prayers. If anyone would like to know more of what he will be doing at the end of the year please be in touch. He has our support and love.

## **Regional Cancer Centre**

I did not have time to visit before heading for Mavelikara but will do so on my return and will be taking a trip out on the ambulance that was co-funded by Rotary Clubs in Surrey and France. This means that we have two new ambulances on the road now, visiting those with terminal cancer who are too poor to get to the hospital. We (or rather 2 of our sponsors) continue to pay the fuel costs and the driver's salary. This is really relieving suffering at it's most extreme. It is a privilege to be able to work so closely with the Palliative Care team and this work will continue and expand.

(Back in the UK) The visit happened, and we were also able to meet with the 4 elderly grannies that we support through the Cancer Centre (who are mothers of advanced cancer patients and have no means of support), and Linnet, Yvonne and I went out on a palliative care visit – a short journey – just 48 km each way! The relief that the two ambulances bring is wonderful. We are particularly grateful to the sponsors who cover the driver's salary and fuel costs, without which the ambulances could not run. We thank again the Rotary Clubs who purchased the second ambulance, which has enabled doubling of the work undertaken on a daily basis.

## **Buffaloes**

Shortly before I left for India we had contact from a group of churches that are desperately trying to save abandoned children and babies on a main highway area in Andra Pradesh. The plan is to keep buffaloes for milk that will be sold to maintain funds for running a home for these children. Each buffalo will produce enough milk for a child, and the surplus when sold will cover daily maintenance costs. They just need the money to set it up! Initial investigation indicates that this will work but we will get one of our local agents to thoroughly check before we give a one off set up grant. I shared the idea with the residential Camp Under The Son children, volunteers and helpers from Meadow Way Chapel and they were really enthusiastic and raised enough during the camp to pay for the buffaloes, so we hope to be able to help with this. One of our agents in the area is going to visit the project to ensure safe and proper use of funds and subject to his report we are planning to go ahead and use the idea in other areas. £4,500 will save dozens of children who would otherwise have no chance. The Trust money used for this will come from general donations, so you are all part of it!

## **Research Project**

For the past year we have been working with someone who was a senior member of the project we left in Tamil Nadu. The work is purely research and our contact and work with him did not start until almost a year after we withdrew from the project. Unfortunately he has experienced extreme persecution and harassment as a result of working with us, as he was accused of giving the information that led to the withdrawal. One of his friends was also threatened who has nothing whatsoever to do with us. Our researcher did not give us any information, we were aware of problems and withdrew long before the contact was re-established but I am deeply concerned that such action has been taken against him. He has been told that he will be ruined and worse, and the person threatening said that he has "great political and financial wealth" and can make bad things happen. However, in spite of the harassment, which really scared him and his family, he has continued with us to research the reasons behind poverty. He has produced some amazing work, after conducting hundreds of interviews, and we are now analysing his findings with a view to publishing the work.

I hesitate to give the bad side of this, particularly in a report that otherwise gives such good news but we feel that this should be in the open. When we met at the end of the visit he told me that another senior member of that organisation has been sacked and lost her livelihood, accused of giving information to us. For her sake I would like to state clearly that we have had no contact with her in anyway whatsoever. Enough said.

Tomorrow we head back to Trivandrum. The group, Linnet, Yvonne, Hayden, Maggie, Rosie, Howard and Geoff, who are on this journey with me, have gone to the Ghats to see tea plantations and spice fields, giving me a chance to catch up on the admin that increasingly takes up my time here!

## **Back in the UK**

So another visit ends, it has been excellent! Thanks to the group for their encouragement and support throughout, thanks to Howard for arranging the excellent cricket match for the boys, and to Adam Drury (of Norwich City) for donating his personal shirts for our boys.

As always our sponsors have a concern about gifts, particularly as Christmas approaches. It is expensive to send gifts to India and corruption affects the postal system, so we are continuing with our gift scheme. To remind everyone, or give the information if you have recently started sponsoring, this is what we can do if you are happy to be part of the scheme!

For **all** of the **Indian** children we ask you to send us £10 plus 2 gift tags, signed by you with your child's name and a message saying "Happy Birthday" and "Happy Christmas" (or whatever you want to write). We then buy the gifts in India, wrap them and attach your tags at birthday and Christmas time. It has worked extremely well to date and of course the money goes a long way out there.

For the **Sri Lankan** children we have been asked by Father Terence NOT to provide gifts (but birthday/Christmas cards are of course welcome). This is because the sponsored children make up a small percentage of those he cares for and he does not want them to be singled out in this way. What they know is that £2 monthly goes into their bank (from your sponsorship money), which they will eventually receive.

You can send the £10 and 2 tags to Suzy Doherty at 86 Orchard Close, Norwich, NR7 9NZ. We will need your tags no later than **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December**, as the last postal date to send items to India in time for Christmas is 5<sup>th</sup> December.

After going through the great difficulties that we did, to have reached this point with all of our work in less than 2 years is amazing. I can only thank all of you for your continued support, and the amount of hard work that goes on to provide it and perhaps the best testimony to the rightness of what we are doing can be seen in the school, our children, current and grown up, old ladies, ambulances, and the general goodwill that is the benchmark of our work now. 250 children in India and Sri Lanka will have a brighter future, the ambulances will bring relief to hundreds suffering from terminal cancer, and real joy will be finally given to our grannies. It's thanks to all of you. Every blessing.

Pat