

Friends of India

News update

March 2011

A report from 'on the ground' in India

FOI President Pam Walsh has spent the last two months in Tamil Nadu - visiting FOI projects old and new, and meeting some of the individuals who are benefiting from your support. Here is just a taste...



The inauguration of the extension to the **Richard Walsh Music School** at the **Amalarakkini School for the Blind** was held on 17th February, and was attended by Pam and seven FOI supporters from Switzerland. The programme included music, Braille readings and singing of the specially written 'Richard Walsh Anthem'.

SELF- HELP GROUPS

A self-help group is formed of 12-15 women from the same village who come together for mutual support, encouragement and learning. The results can be amazing in empowering women (e.g. one group successfully petitioned for a speed bump in their village).

FOI have been involved in the setting up of more than 750 self-help groups - directly impacting 11,500 women.



During her visit, Pam addressed 120 women from self-help groups in **Kovalam**, near Chennai. Our multi-purpose building here was one of FOI's first projects and is now being used for women's life skills and vocational training, and after-school tuition classes for 150 children.

As reported previously, we are currently expanding our team in India, and in February we were delighted to hold a joint Board meeting in Chennai – with 4 members from Switzerland and 4 from India!

WHAT is SUEB?

SUEB (*Society for the Upliftment of the Economically Backward*) is one of FOI's major implementing partners in India. This group of social entrepreneurs focuses on the empowerment of women and has been working in this area for over twenty years.



Completed 5 years ago, the '**Yvonne Educational Development Center**' in Arni has become a very important focal point for the surrounding area. It is now the hub for training and development in life skills, computer skills and tailoring for women's self-help groups in the wider Arni area.

Set up by FOI last year in conjunction with SUEB, the **Eyakulathur tailoring project** was created from a women's self-help group. We are now raising money to provide them with a production unit.



62 children currently attend the rural **Rantham School** in the Arni area - without this school the children would have to travel 4km to the next village.

Opened by FOI in association with SUEB back in 2005, the school would now like to add a playground, play equipment and a smokeless stove for the kitchen – and need CHF 2,750.



UPDATES ON ONGOING PROJECTS

Vision has become reality for our main new project down in Tirunelveli in the south of Tamil Nadu:

FOI Residential Learning Centre, Tirunelveli



(A care and support centre for orphaned and vulnerable children living with HIV).

Since this project was highlighted in our September 2010 newsletter, FOI has provided CHF 56,000 to cover half the construction costs of the first phase. On 10th February, in the presence of FOI President **Pam Walsh** and Treasurer **Ted Talbot**, the foundation stone was laid.

Building work is now pressing on, with an aim for completion before the new school year starts in June!

► **But we still need to raise a further CHF 56,000 to complete this first phase. Can you help us?**

St. Joseph's Primary School, Arni

FOI supporter **Kathrin Baetschmann** was in India last month to cut the ribbon at the inauguration of St. Joseph's two new classrooms.



As explained in our December newsletter, these have been funded by FOI and will provide a senior school for the girls so that they can continue their learning in English. However, in order to meet local government standards, the school needs to expand further, and construction work has already begun - but the school still needs a further **CHF 35,650** to complete this project.



KK4K - Following on with our successful KK4K project, providing 'Kleen Kitchens for Kids, we are now working with the Government of Tamil Nadu to provide clean-burning stoves to more *anganwadis* (mother and child care centres for children aged 0-6 years). This means that we have helped 100% of the *anganwadis* in four whole districts in Tamil Nadu.

Friends of India

Volunteering at St Ebbas School, Chennai

As reported back in September, FOI volunteers are helping with an *English training programme* at this school for slum children in Chennai. **Muriel Rusillon**, Director of Studies at La Decouverte School in Geneva, was described as 'a God-send' when she spent time teaching here in January. FOI supporter **Sarah Browne** and her sister **Felicity** have also been teaching at the school during February and March.



FOI is very grateful to all our volunteers.

Pam with St Ebbas Headmistress, Kitty

NEWS FOR MEMBERS OF FRIENDS OF INDIA

► Did you know when membership fees are due?

Our membership year runs from **1st January** each year, so if you have not already renewed, please do so now! Or if you would like to become a member, please email us with your details and pay as shown below. Your minimum annual membership of CHF 100 (160 for a couple) helps fund our ongoing work. In return, you receive news and updates on our projects and events.

► Date for your diary

Our AGM will be held on Thursday, 26th May 2011 at 18h00. More details will follow...

► **And remember** - we welcome donations any time of year – and 100% of your donation will go directly to our projects in India.

Another way in which you can help us...

Join our Events Committee! – We are currently recruiting to our team, so please just let us know if you would like to help us organise some fun events. Our first meeting will be in April. We look forward to hearing from you!

To make a donation or pay annual membership

Bank: UBS Geneva
Bank account name: Friends of India
Bank account number: 240-439931.40 D
IBAN number: CH 68 0024 0240 4399 3140 D

Post Office: CCP17-753012-7

► Or you can do this online at www.friends-of-india.org

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