

Friends of India

News update

Summer 2011

New FOI Residential Learning Centre begins to take shape

Progress is now clearly visible as building work continues on the first phase of the new FOI Residential Learning Centre down in Tirunelveli in the south of Tamil Nadu.



This residential care and support centre will provide a home for 50 vulnerable and orphaned children living with HIV. It will also allow these children to

receive an education, as they will be able to attend the existing school within the same campus area.

The aim is for all these children to be living on site by the beginning of August, once the residential centre building has been completed.



► **But we still need another 40,000 CHF to complete this first phase.**

► **Can you help us with this?**

► **Do you have some ideas on how to help us raise this money?**

(See next page for contact and donation details)

.....**SAVE THE DATE**.....
for our next
Friends of India fundraising event:

When? Friday 11th November 2011
What time? 19h00
Where? Salle Communale, Nyon
What? WATCH THIS SPACE....!!

Members show support at FOI AGM

Friends of India supporters filled the room at the recent Information Evening and AGM in Versoix.

Board member **Michel Firmenich** gave an update on current projects in India accompanied by a slide show of photos taken earlier this year. And Treasurer **Ted Talbot** explained that despite some difficulties in raising funds and persuading people of the need for continued giving to India in the current climate, our circle of supporters is still growing.

FOI President **Pam Walsh** shared some personal, heart-warming stories of how individuals' lives have



changed as a result of FOI's work over the past 11 years. She spoke of a little girl at the **Richard Walsh Music School**, who was blinded when her mother set fire to herself when pregnant. This young girl now loves to sing and dance, and wants to make music her career. Volunteer **Muriel Rusillon** talked about her own experience of one of our projects - her challenging, but extremely rewarding 4-weeks of teaching at St Ebbas School in Chennai. The children here are indeed very poor, and resources very limited, but they were so grateful for Muriel's valuable contribution.

Introducing Advitya Thapa

Advitya Thapa has recently joined our team in Chennai as Operations Officer. With a Degree in Philosophy and a Post Graduate Degree in 'Counselling and Guidance and Advanced Organizational Behaviour' from the Madras School of Social Work, he has previously worked with people suffering from HIV, socially marginalized individuals, and Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees.



He says: 'I have always been moved by the suffering of the countless many around me and have felt driven to contribute positively towards their betterment. There has been no greater reward than witnessing one's actions lift another's spirit.' It is with this attitude he embarks on his work with FOI and having already seen some of our 'wonderful projects' he wants to 'strive to facilitate quality implementation of our existing projects as well as identifying new opportunities and methods for progressive developmental activities.'

New photography of our projects



Earlier this year, photographer **Cindy Bajema** (pictured above with Pam Walsh) volunteered her time to visit and take photographic records of some of our projects in Tamil Nadu. You will have started to see some of her photos on our website and newsletters. Having a stock of good quality photos is essential for promoting our work and showing you what we are doing, and we are extremely grateful to Cindy, who is currently based in India.



Particularly inspired by the self-help groups, Cindy was impressed by the strength of the women and felt she could relate to their struggles. In her own words:

*"I was greatly impressed by the work that FOI is doing in conjunction with SUEB in Tamil Nadu. When dealing with charities and NGOs in India, it is easy to feel like your contributions are but a very small drop in a mighty ocean rather than a bucket. I know that I only saw a small glimpse of how individual lives are being impacted by the support of FOI, but I can honestly say that those "drops" are making mighty waves and have accumulated to create a healthy rain shower! I was honored to see this work first hand and to contribute, in my small way, to spreading the word about Friends of India. **Jai ho FOI!**"*



Planning for the future

Feedback from our members at the AGM highlighted the strength of FOI – they choose to support our projects because they know and have confidence in the people behind FOI, and they trust that their donations will be used in the most effective way.

Also at the AGM, FOI Vice President **Nigel Majakari** explained that after 11 successful years of working in India and with all the valuable experience this has brought, FOI is now developing a new overall strategy. It is important to address the changes that have taken place in India over the years, and some of the current issues such as the need to stop the flight from the countryside to the city. This could mean some changes in direction and we may also look at assisting in agricultural or other types of projects.



To further develop this new strategy, Nigel is currently in India, together with FOI Board member Diana Smith, meeting with our partners and contacts. As previously reported, we have already strengthened our committee in Chennai, and we are now delighted to welcome Advitya Thapa as our Operations Officer (see first page). The team in Chennai is in regular communication with the FOI Board in Geneva, so that we can work closely together.

It is an exciting time ahead and will be back to you with the latest news in the autumn. In the meantime, we hope you have an enjoyable summer!

Ways in which you can help us

Become a member – your annual membership of CHF 100 (CHF 160 for a couple) helps fund our ongoing work.

Make a donation - 100% of your donation goes directly to supporting our projects in India.

Volunteer your time and skills – just let us know what you can offer.

Organise a fundraising event

Tell your friends about us!

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

How to contact us

Address: Friends of India, 28 Chemin de la Combe,
1260 Nyon, Switzerland
Telephone: +41 (0)22 361 0440
Email: info@friends-of-india.org