

Friends of India

September 2008

Dear Friends of Friends of India

*In January 2009, our mission to help education at grass roots will already be **10 years old**. We have achieved so much, thanks to you, our loyal supporters. Especially touching is when children give to children less privileged than themselves. So many generous gifts have come from schools where children have run "marathons," sold cakes, and collected school materials.*

One of the highlights this year was the inauguration of a school for 75 mentally and physically handicapped children from the streets of Chennai. This was made possible by the funds raised at a concert organised by the Don du Choeur featuring a choir of 500 Geneva primary school children. FOI partnered with the Don du Choeur in this project, proving that much more can be achieved by joining forces.

Similarly, FOI is studying a partnership with several prominent Indian business figures in Chennai who have shown keen interest in joining forces with us. This would fulfil our objective of encouraging local partners to sustain our projects. So as we embark on our 10th year, the future of FOI promises to be an exciting one.

This newsletter describes our projects and our need for your continued support through your membership and donations.

We hope that you will join us on Friday 14th November to hear more about our projects and to enjoy a musical interlude.

*Happy reading!
With warmth and sincere gratitude, Pam*

**FOI evening of
classical and modern music**
Save the date NOW
Friday November 14th
See website for full details

Our Mission

Our mission in Tamil Nadu is to work exclusively for the poor and underprivileged:

- By improving educational infrastructure and the learning environment
- By empowering women through social development programmes and vocational training
- By seeking to ensure the sustainability of our projects



Reminding you of the statistics

The state of Tamil Nadu has:

- A population of 66.4 million
- 32 million women
- 56'000 schools
- The largest number of business enterprises in India – 10.5%

And yet...

- 6% of schools have no teacher
- 25-35% have no sanitation
- 7.5 million children under 15 do not attend school

These are some of the reasons why we ask you to help us continue to support education and vocational training.

PROJECT NEWS

Empowering women through vocational training

A multi-purpose community and skills training centre ARANI

This is the biggest and one of the most exciting, yet challenging, projects we have tackled to date, thanks to a generous private family donation. After 2 years of planning permission delays, the three storey building is now finished and is ready for a brand new intake of students.

Arani is a former silk producing town some 100kms outside Chennai where high unemployment means that families and young people struggle to earn a living. The building was inaugurated earlier this year and provides:

- Vocational training in hospitality and catering. FOI have funded the equipment and courses are due to start.
- A computer training centre.
- A venue for women's self-help groups
- Administrative space for a regional office of our partner, SUEB.

We will watch the development of this centre with great interest as we plan to create similar centres in other depressed areas.

While we continue to support activities in these buildings by providing both capital and running costs, our objective is for them to **become self-sustaining within three years!**



Vocational Training and Guidance Centres

These centres are usually set up in disused buildings with the specific purpose of providing a venue for vocational training, counselling and guidance – particularly to girls who have dropped out of school - as well as providing a village knowledge and resource facility that can be used by the whole community.



Our first centre - the IJ Martin building in the northern suburbs of Chennai - was opened in 2006 and has proved to be a great success.

FOI has recently sent CHF 7'000 for the establishment of the Christopher Powell Vocational Training and Guidance centre at Krishnagiri, which is one of the most backward districts in Tamil Nadu. We are so grateful to family and friends who have enabled such a fitting tribute to Chris to be created.

We have been asked to fund another centre in a Tribal belt close to the Kerala State border. These Tribes by tradition, superstitious beliefs and illiteracy, have not been able to benefit from the developments taking place elsewhere.

Please help us raise the CHF 7'000 needed

Assisted Micro-Credit Schemes

One of our partners of long-standing, the Coastal and Rural Development Trust (CARDT) in Kovalam, is still suffering the effects of the Tsunami. We have provided boats, a community centre and toilets. We are about to purchase 20 sewing machines for the local self-help group women to enable them to generate income for their families as well as make school uniforms for local children. Recently, 20 cows were donated to needy families in Kovalam through our "Gift a Cow" micro-credit scheme.

An extra floor is needed in the community centre for more women's self-help groups and more children. We're looking to raise CHF 12,000.



Improving educational infrastructure and the learning environment

In the poorer rural communities school attendance can be difficult - particularly for girls. Why? Long distances and no sanitation! We continue to support the construction of new classrooms and toilet blocks. **A sanitation unit costs CHF 1'200.** Many girls face a long and potentially dangerous walk to school. We would like to provide a school with 40 bicycles which can be loaned to girls for their journey to and from home. **We would like to raise CHF2'000 to test out this project.**



Cleaner Learning Environment

Our 'Klean Kitchens for Kids' (KK4K) initiative has already brought a smoke-free learning environment to more than 90 day care centres ('Anganwadis') for 1 to 5 year-olds by providing gas cookers to replace the open wood fire. **We have just sent another CHF1'000 thanks to the children of La Châtaigneraie but are looking to increase our contributions to this simple but effective activity, which benefits the health of so many young children for just CHF250 per centre!**

English Teacher Training

The acquisition of English language skills provides yet another opportunity for women in poorer communities to earn a living. We are launching a teacher training programme and new multi-media language centre at the SUEB headquarters. A qualified and experienced teacher (Kathrin Baetschmann) is spending six months to work on this and other projects for FOI. Her voluntary work with FOI has been approved by the Swiss Government. **We would like to raise CHF 3'000 for software and other learning materials.**

Building futures for the handicapped

Here are two very special educational institutions which we support:



The **Amalarakkini School for the Blind** provides essential education, training and skills as well as residential accommodation for visually impaired children. In order to be financially self-sufficient the school has established a herd of 50 milking cows and a further 50 cows are being donated locally. We have already funded the building of a second cow shed –



BUT we are now seeking funding for a generator for the milking machinery – power cuts in this part of India are part of daily life. CHF 12'000 is needed.

Through the Don du Choeur, the construction of **Anbumalar II** has enabled 75 children with severe learning difficulties to benefit from loving residential care, education and training. We are working hard on helping the centre become financially independent of our help – but this will take up to another year. **It costs CHF80 per month to support a child and maybe you would be prepared to sponsor a child for a year? Visit their brilliant new website for more details:**



www.anbumalar.com

The **El Shaddai Nursery and Primary School** provides English medium education to children from poor families in an impoverished area of Chennai. The school currently operates in the Church hall, which can accommodate five classes with movable partitions. We found a sponsor for the building of a first floor to accommodate a further six classes of children up to age 16, for which the school has received Government approval. **Unfortunately the building costs in Chennai have increased to such an extent that a further CHF 20'000 is needed to complete the school building. Can you help?**



FOI Summary of Needs		
Project		Cost
Arani Community and Skills Training Centre	Running costs for 3 years for hospitality and computer training	CHF 30'000
Vocational Training and Guidance Centre	Computers, sewing machines and typewriters	CHF 7'000
Kovalam Community Centre	1 st floor extension to the multipurpose building	CHF 10'000
SUEB adopted schools	Sanitation units for schools	CHF 1'200
Smokeless classrooms "KK4K"	Gas cookers to replace open wood fires	CHF 250 each
Teacher training	Help with volunteers' expenses	CHF 2'000
Bicycles for Girls	20 bicycles for one school	CHF 2'000
School for the Blind	Power generator	CHF 18'000
El Shaddai Nursery and Primary School	Completion of construction	CHF 20'000
SUEB Language Centre	English language teaching software	CHF 3'000
Anbumalar School for Mentally Challenged	Sponsor a child	CHF 80 per month

FOI Membership 2008-2009

Are you a member?

Individual @ CHF 100

Couple @ CHF 160

See below for details



Bank details: UBS Geneva
IBAN 0240 4399 3140DCH 680024
Post office: CCP17-753012-7

Our committee members:

Pam Walsh OBE President
Ted Talbot Treasurer
Trevor Greenwood Secretary

Alydia Seidell
Emma Greenaway
Robyn Renaud

You are invited to an evening of
Classical and Modern Music and Indian Cuisine
to celebrate 10 years of supporting Education
in rural South India

Friday 14th November 2008
 19h00 at the Ramada Hotel
 Cocktails, Indian Buffet Dinner, Musical Interludes,
 Tombola, Auction and more!
 CHF 120.- per person
 See website for further details.