

☆ inTouch

THE SCOTTISH LOVE IN ACTION NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2011
No.09



This August, Brian Barron (SLA Trustee) and I spent 8 days visiting our Home-cum-Schools in Hyderabad and Tuni. We are happy to report lots of exciting new developments in the education and care of nearly 600 children.

DELIGHTED TO REPORT!

98% of the Hyderabad children have passed their annual exams.

60% of Tuni children who passed their 10th class exam achieved an A grade!

MORE GREAT RESULTS!



First to Hyderabad, where the delighted director Ms. Vijayamani was proud to inform us that **98% of the children had passed their annual exams in June**. She also reported that she'd added a further year's education so that **the school now provides education, in English, from Nursery to Class 8 (about 14 years old) for 58 live-in children and 80 fee-paying day pupils**. These pupils' fees help to fund the education costs of the live-in children.

On to Tuni, where we once again congratulated the children and the teaching staff on their 10th class exam results (high school graduation). **This year 29 out of 36 passed and 60% of them got an A grade!**

These children will now enter intermediate college (for two years) as a bridge to higher education at university level where we are proud to say there are already 26 students from Light of Love Home. To help the senior girls in their increasingly demanding studies our partner has recently converted the original Quest Hall into four bedrooms with bathrooms so giving more space to sleep and to study.

We were also very pleased to learn that our Indian partner has appointed a new headmaster,

Mr. Ramesh, who is determined to further develop teaching in English (English Medium) throughout the school. This year our English Medium classes will extend from kindergarten to Class 5.

On the sporting front, the children have so improved that they are competing in district association and Rotary competitions. **In the district knockout cricket tournament entered by 31 teams our boys won through to the final and triumphed!** And our own Praveen David won man of the match and man of the series! Just imagine their pride, delight and growing self esteem. **What a great success!**

Not only are the children in Tuni flourishing academically and sportingly, some of them are now actively helping the local community.

Some of the children training to be laboratory technicians and nurses are helping Dr. Sowmya and her sister, also a doctor, to hold free monthly medical clinics at the Home. They provide consultations and some free medicines to local people and two of the boys, Nagi and Kumaraja,

are now skilled enough to carry out blood tests. It was wonderful to see this much-needed service being provided by our children.

We also learned that our immunization programme, started in 2009, now protects all the children against a whole range of common diseases which previously caused much illness and suffering. We will always be grateful to Fiona Strachan whose 'Immunization Fund' established this vital programme.

Finally, a new and interesting steam cooking system has been installed in the kitchen replacing the old stoves fuelled by rice husks. The steam is far more efficient and improves the quality of the children's food.

As it is you, our supporters, who enable such exciting improvements, we wish you could have been with us to see them for yourselves and, even more importantly, witness the health and happiness of the children. As ever we thank you on their behalf.



Children take blood tests at the medical clinic.

Colin McRae (SLA Development Manager)



WANTED... VOLUNTEERS FOR SLA

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SLA FIREWORKS EXTRAVAGANZA!

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THE NEXT CHAPTER

Self-sufficiency is the Holy Grail for many charitable projects these days and for some time SLA and our Indian partners have dreamed of establishing a way in which our Tunji Home-cum-School could help fund itself.

This would not only reduce the amount of funds necessary to be raised here in the UK, but also give greater ownership and self-reliance to our Indian partners.

We were about to apply to The National Lottery and other big trusts for funds for an enterprise in India when we received the amazing news that we had been donated a large amount enabling us to employ a full time Project Manager to research and establish a suitable self-sufficiency project.

Iain Wood, a member of the original Qll youth group that went to India in 1999 and SLA's youngest Trustee for the past 10 years, has been appointed to this post and is already in India conducting detailed research.

Besides increasing self-sufficiency, we hope that such a venture will also generate job opportunities for some of the older children, giving them training which will enable them to move on independently.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity but will be no easy task. Iain is passionate about India and the children of SLA, has worked in Tunji 9 times, has a 1st class honours degree and a Masters in International Development, and is up for the challenge.

If you know anyone involved in this field or with business connections in India, Iain is very keen to hear from you.

We look forward to giving you more news on this initiative as it develops.

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Contact Iain at:
iain@sla.india.org

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Compared with her mother and grandmother, the girl in this photo should have more opportunities in today's India. But ingrained social attitudes mean that the odds are still stacked against her. That's why SLA is working hard to change negative perceptions about girls through education.



For sisters Santi and Satia, their future was clear. "The next thing is marriage," they told me. That's what they were working and saving for. They had worked in a cashew nut factory since leaving the Light of Love Home four years previously. They were 17 years old.

Like tens if not hundreds of millions of girls in India, Santi and Satia had disturbingly limited vision. It had never occurred to them to spend their earnings on education, training, a plot of land or a business. Even girls being educated at the Light of Love Home often struggled to imagine their future options beyond marriage and motherhood. That's not their fault, of course. That's because their options are extremely limited by a highly patriarchal culture.

"In India girls are a burden because you have to spend money on education and a dowry," explained my translator, a teacher at the Home. "The family's thinking is that if a girl does not mature sexually until she is 15 rather than at 12 it is three years' money wasted."

Dowry costs can be cripplingly expensive, explained another teacher, Celine, and scupper a girl's chances of education.

"In Tunji, if a woman gets more educated she will need a bigger dowry because she will need to marry a more educated man...Girls never look for boys of a social status above them...The dowry system sustains class and caste division."

She recalled the fate of a friend of hers: "She had finished intermediate college and was working as a teacher. She wanted to do more education. However, her parents did not want to pay much for her dowry, so she was married off to a blind and deaf man. She must support him financially and nurse him. I was very sad, as she was very confident and beautiful. Her parents have ruined her life."

So girls are a financial burden, and therefore less valued than boys who generally bring in a dowry, inherit a family's wealth, and look after their parents in old age.

"The Indian woman was born to be a servant to the males in her family," explains Dr. Sowyma who cares for the children in Tunji. "She has to give up her individuality, her freedom once she is married."

And in case one assumes that sexist attitudes are confined to the poor and the ignorant, a close look at the Indian Census tells a very different story.

The 2011 census preliminary results show that for every 1000 young boys in India there are just 914 young girls. That's actually a worse gender imbalance than in 2001 (927 girls). Even more disturbing, it is most noticeable in India's more prosperous regions.

So as India has boomed economically, sex-selective abortion has increased, especially among the emerging middle classes. An ultrasound scan costs about £150, far beyond the means of the poor.

Thankfully in Andhra Pradesh state where the children SLA cares for live, the gender imbalance is not severe and the state government's 'Girl Child Protection Scheme' provides financial support to poor parents who only have girl children.

Consequently, as Dr. Sowyma puts it, "the girl child is coming into the world instead of dying in the womb." She is also being helped through school and, compared with Indian women in the past, she has more opportunities.

Only through education are they made aware that they have a choice. This is why SLA's partners are not just providing the best possible education for girls, but also sheltering them from the worst of the dowry system. Such support and encouragement helps girls to have the courage to withstand social pressures and grab those new opportunities denied to their mothers and grandmothers.

James Tulloch (SLA volunteer)





Wanted... Volunteers for SLA

**WE
NEED
YOU!**

For the last 10 years, we have been fortunate to have a core of faithful, committed and hardworking volunteers, mostly from personal networks. Increasingly, the economic climate dictates that to continue to raise the funds required charities need to organise more innovative and varied fundraising events.

If SLA is to expand its activities without putting an unacceptable strain on its valued volunteers, we need more willing helpers to join our existing volunteer group. In order to widen our base geographically, and to increase the number and skill mix of volunteers, we have launched a new project and we need your help!

Here's how it will work. To make it easier for people to volunteer, we identified areas where more help is needed and initially plan to set up 7 teams in Edinburgh. As this is the initial stage of the project we hope these might later be replicated in other towns and cities that support SLA.

There will be a **Resource Team** to facilitate recruitment of volunteers, an **Edinburgh Fundraising Team**, an **Events Team** to provide practical help for events, a **Catering Team**, a **Speaker and Sales Team** and **Ticket Sellers Team** and finally a **Street/Shop Collections Team**. Which team could you support?

Each team will have a leader, nominated by the Board, who will keep details of volunteers' availability, which will enable them to approach and coordinate volunteers for specific events.

In addition we are planning to hold two annual events in Edinburgh, a Fireworks Extravaganza in November and an extended street collection in February. Both events will require a large number of volunteers to be successful and these are where the most urgent need for volunteers lies. We are hoping that even if you only have time to help annually, you will sign up for one or both of these events. They have the potential to make a big difference if each of us does a little.

Members of VoSLA, including Trustees will have the opportunity to meet together every six months to hear updates on SLA activities at home and in India and to exchange ideas in a relaxed and social setting.

We need your support now more than ever if we are to continue to move forward. This is clearly a new venture for us and we plan to review the VoSLA project, noting its strengths and weaknesses after a year so we can be sure that this reflects our aims, helps us achieve them and we will welcome the ideas and views of our volunteers as part of that review. By working together we know we can and will make a difference to the children in our care.

If you are interested in volunteering for SLA please contact the office on 0131 629 9112 or email us at: enquiries@sla-india.org



WELCOME NEW SLA TRUSTEES

JIM YOUNG



I first became aware of the work of SLA through Greenbank Church and the involvement of my children and their friends in SLA events. As a result I have long admired the work of SLA and the energy and commitment shown by the Trustees and its supporters and so I am very pleased to have the opportunity to make a contribution. I have not yet been to Tuni but look forward to getting there soon and, as someone keen on cricket, being bowled over by the school cup winning cricket team!

I qualified in law from Glasgow University and the bulk of my professional practice was a partner in the firm of McGrigors, latterly specialising in employment law. I retired from that practice at the beginning of 2006 and since then have served as an Employment Judge on the Employment Tribunals on a part time basis.

CHRIS HORNE



Chris has been Head Teacher at The James Young High School in Livingston for the past 14 years and has worked with young people throughout his career. He spent a year in India as a 14 year old, but hasn't yet visited Tuni. He has a strong connection with SLA, however, since his son Michael went on the original QII visit and then returned with his sister Jennifer a number of years later; they were privileged to be present, with two friends, at the opening of the Dougal Smart Block in the Gillie Public School.

JIM INCH



I retired from the City of Edinburgh Council earlier this year after 38 years of Local Government service having held a number of positions before becoming the Director of Corporate Services in 2002. I was also the Council's designated Monitoring Officer (a statutory role designed to keep a check on possible breaches of legislation or of the numerous codes of practice which control the Council's operation) and the Council's Depute Returning Officer.

I was educated in Edinburgh and am a graduate in Economics and a Fellow of the Institute of Management Services. I am married to Susan who as many of you will know has been actively involved with SLA for many years. We have four more or less grown up "children" two of whom were fortunate enough to be on the original trip to Tuni in 1999.

Having been a silent witness to the wonderful work of SLA over the years I am looking forward to becoming involved in a more direct way and to contributing whatever I can to secure a sustainable future for SLA and for the children in our care.





SLA FIREWORKS EXTRAVAGANZA!

**REMEMBER, REMEMBER
THE 6TH OF NOVEMBER...**

Come and join in this fantastic, family-friendly event and make this year's Bonfire Night unforgettable. SLA is launching an explosive Fireworks Extravaganza to rival any Bonfire Night party in Edinburgh!

Sponsored by Ryden Lettings, this exciting new annual event will take place on Sunday the 6th of November at George Watson's Rugby Ground at Myreside Road, Edinburgh.

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THE BIG ATTRACTIONS

PyroCeltica, a mesmerizing troupe of up to 30 fire jugglers and drummers; World Champion pipe band - George Watson's College Pipes and Drums; and the main event, a fabulous aerial display of fireworks from Pyromancer Productions.

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There will be BBQ tents with hot rolls, soup and snacks for sale so parents can even get a night off from cooking! From the overwhelmingly positive response to the event it is expected to be a sell-out so book early to avoid disappointment.

Gates open at 5pm and, as tickets are unallocated, get there early to bag the best spot from the viewing areas; both covered seating (just in case it rains) and standing areas.

Ryden
Lettings

**£22 FOR A
FAMILY TICKET**
2 adults and 2 children
(UNDER 2'S GO FREE)
OR
**£6 FOR A SINGLE
TICKET**

You can buy tickets online at the
SLA website www.sla-india.org
or by calling the SLA Office on **0131 629 9112**

An Incredible JOURNEY!



What lengths will people go to for the children of SLA? In Philip Long's case, all the way to Mongolia. In a Corsa! Here he recounts an inspirational fundraising effort.

Why drive a Vauxhall Corsa from Edinburgh to Mongolia? For two reasons: to raise money for charity and to see if you can make it.

The Mongol Rally boasts over **300 teams** nursing low-powered cars (or emergency vehicles) across some of the most inhospitable terrain in the world. It is a brilliant charity fundraiser, which this year managed to raise over **£435,000**.

We were proud to be supporting SLA in our sporty wee 1.2 litre Vauxhall Corsa named '**Darty**', which boasted squeaky scrapyard wheels and a dodgy oil leak before we even set off from Goodwood Racecourse. We had a total of 2 maps for 21 upcoming countries. It was looking good.

The journey that ensued was a 44-day run of constant adventure through some of the most amazing scenery I have ever seen. While it's hard to believe, not a day went past without an exciting or interesting event along the road.

In Europe, the joy of pushing Darty to 100mph on the autobahn sped us to the scenic Croatian coast and a hair-raising nighttime drive into Kosovo. The urban jungles of Turkey were good training for the manic drivers in Iran. However, the incredibly friendly Iranian culture maybe meant that the bribes that were demanded in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan came as more of shock.

The stunning drives through the Kazakh steppes brought us to a lake larger than Northern Ireland that, thanks to the 4x4 sand tracks, took four days to circumnavigate.



**GREAT
EFFORT!**

A few more encounters with local authorities, including a nerve-rattling visit from some truncheon-wielding troops, and we were through Russia into Mongolia. Eagles, Gers, wild horses, the Gobi Desert and local fire water saw us to the finish line in Ulan Baatar where battered (but not defeated) Darty limped over the line 10,105 miles after leaving Goodwood.

do a little...
change a lot
CHALLENGE

It takes very little on our part to change an awful lot in the lives of destitute children in India. Take inspiration from some of the many imaginative ways SLA supporters are showing their love in action. What can you do?



Greenbank WAGS

Greenbank WAGS, a group of young women in the Greenbank area, chose SLA to be one of their 2 charities to support last year. They managed to raise a whopping £2650 for SLA through some fantastic fundraising events, everything from 'Trinny and Susannah by Sonia' evenings, Christmas Fairs, and phenomenal fashion shows. Meeting whatever the weather (even when the snow was knee high) the constant factor is fun and wine, reflected in the group's expanding numbers!



THE
Sportsman's
CHARITY

**Sportsman's
Charity Ceilidh**

SLA was this year's featured charity at the annual Sportsman's Charity Ceilidh thanks to our Sue Valente. Guests danced the night away in true Scottish fashion to a live band at Prestonfield House on Saturday 24th September and also helped to raise funds through a raffle and silent auction. Special thanks to James Thomson for the gift of the brilliant venue.

SLA received 75% of all profits; thank you to the Sportsman's Charity for all your marvelous efforts on behalf of the children of SLA!

Ladies Cinema Night

Time to get out your posh hats, weddings frocks and dancing shoes girls! Prizes for the best dressed! Join us for our next Girls Cinema Night on Monday March 5th 2012 to watch the hilarious rom-com chick flick Muriel's Wedding and dance to ABBA. Fizz, love-themed canapés and raffle in gold class seats are a recipe for a fabulous, pampered night out with the girls.

All this for tickets at just £20 each, tickets can be bought in double or triple sets.

Purchase tickets through the SLA website www.sla-india.org or contact the office on 0131 629 9112 or email us at: enquiries@sla-india.org



CAMERON EDGE

Cameron Edge is an IT sales and consultancy firm set up by John Cameron and based in Melbourne, Australia.

John Cameron donates 100% of his personal consultancy fees and income from product sales to charities including Oxfam, UNICEF, the Red Cross, and SLA. Over the last three years Cameron Edge has donated over £60,000 to SLA.

Thank you, John, for your incredible generosity.



Meadows Marathon

If your New Year's Resolution will be to get fit then we can help! SLA is looking for runners for the Meadows Marathon in Edinburgh. Don't worry, it's not really a marathon but a half marathon and 5km fun run on Sunday March 4th 2012.

You can take part in either race and you can wear fancy dress if you like! To sign up, email enquiries@sla-india.org or phone the SLA office.

SLA Christmas Sing-Along!

Come bring all the family, sing your heart out on Sunday 11th December, 6.30pm at Greenbank Parish Church for 45 minutes. All your favourite carols plus some surprises, followed by refreshments. **Wear something Christmassy!**

Bid & Buy Art Sale

Artist Wallace Fyffe held a public exhibition and sale of his watercolours and works by other artists including Tricia Daly, Pam Hamilton and Elizabeth Brown at The Merchants of Edinburgh Golf Club in May. People could either 'bid' for pictures starting from £5 or 'buy' for between £15-£25.

"I spent a sleepless night before the opening, as this was my first exhibition and I was worried that nothing would sell and I would end up making an exhibition of myself," admitted Wallace. He need not have worried! The event was an amazing success and raised an incredible £818 for SLA.

Thank you, Wallace, for hosting such an innovative fundraiser!

SCOTTISH LOVE IN ACTION ☆ CARING FOR CHILDREN IN INDIA

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PASS IT ON! SPREAD THE SLA MESSAGE

When you've finished reading our newsletter, don't just chuck it in the bin or stick it in a drawer, **Pass it on!** Spread the message to your friends, families and work colleagues. Introduce them to the wonderful, charming, resilient and determined children of SLA. Perhaps ask your doctor, dentist, college or community group if you could leave the newsletter in their public places.