



Novi Survat Charitable Organisation.

(New Beginnings – for the destitute of Goa).

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Newsletter - March 2004.

Much has taken place since our last newsletter.

A number of volunteers have, since last October, been involved in assessing the needs of the various groups of impoverished people living in Goa which has resulted in us deciding to support a number of cases to varying degrees. These are:

1. 'Christobelle'. A 20yr old girl suffering from Cerebral Palsy who lives with her parents in a single room measuring approximately 12 ft by 10 ft in terrible conditions. She lies on matting covered by a blanket on the floor, and is unable to move except for kicking or moving of her arms. She seems very alert and her eyes light up when you visit her. She last saw a doctor four years ago and receives no medication. Her teeth are blackened rotting stumps. Her parents do not seem to have received any instructions as to how to look after her. They feed her by lying her on her side and putting rice etc in her mouth: drinking is by way of lying her on her side, holding her nose and spooning liquid into her. Not surprisingly she chokes and is reluctant to drink. Her father used to work in a local bar in the tourist season and on the building sites in winter. However he fell 40 ft last July and fractured his leg in five places. He is unable to work, and consequently they receive no money for the basic necessities and have to rely on handouts from well-wishers. We are providing limited financial support as we do not want the family to become dependant on us, but we are visiting on a weekly basis to spend time with Christobelle and hopefully, to be able to take her out in a pushchair. We have made contact with a paediatric doctor who is arranging for a home visit to assess her needs and hopefully offer more adequate support and training for the parents.
2. Starting Point. This is a day school catering for children of very poor families whose parents go to work. Without schools like Starting Point the children (of all ages) would be left alone and exposed to all manner of dangers throughout the day. At Starting Point they are taught up to a standard which will allow them to pass the entrance exam qualifying them to be placed in a government school, providing funds are available to pay for uniforms, books and transport. In addition they are given a nutritious meal and taught hygiene and social skills. At present there is one class comprising 10 children and a qualified teacher supported by a cook/cleaner. There is room for two additional classes and we have agreed to purchase the necessary equipment needed to start a second class and to financially support this for a period of twelve months. In addition we have offered volunteer help.
3. Candolim Boys Home. This is a government-funded home for 31 boys aged from six to eighteen years. Regrettably 'government funding' seems to apply to providing a run down building, the minimum of food, and very little else. The conditions these boys live in are appalling. The kitchen is disgusting and the food is stored in plastic bins, which have holes in made by rats, which then eat and contaminate the food. They have a large saucepan in which they boil water on an open fire at the back of the house to enable them to wash and bathe. No purification for the water (which comes from an open well) was available, and the children are responsible for cooking their own meals. We supplied a basic water purification system costing £14 and will continue to purchase items such as metal dustbins, in which to keep the food, together with other items we can afford to provide better surroundings, and limited recreational facilities. We will also provide volunteer help to assist the boys to complete their homework as they attend local schools.

4. Childline. We received a request from Childline to help them resolve a 'housing' problem. The circumstances involve a slum family. The mother works as a domestic and the father as a gardener – for which they will receive the equivalent of a few pence a day, just about enough to feed the family. Two years ago, whilst the parents were at work, the girls (who are now 8 & 10 years old) were attacked by a 29-year-old male who savagely raped one girl who needed hospital treatment. He was arrested and spent eighteen months in custody awaiting trial, with little chance of the case being successfully proven. Based on this he was released on bail in July 03 back into the slum where the family live. He made serious threats, which resulted in Childline arranging for the children to be taken into a care home. The children and parents are very distressed at this and are now being the victims once again, by having to live apart, especially at a time when the children need parental love and care. Childline would like to re-house the family so that they can live without fear, and we have agreed to assist financially once the details are available.
5. Tivim Care Home. We were advised of a "Care Home" being run by two nuns of the Capsicum Order, looking after seven children and four young ladies having the HIV virus and two cases of Aids. The children are aged from 5 months to ten years and one of the young ladies is 8 months pregnant. Unfortunately there is widespread ignorance concerning HIV and those with the virus are treated like lepers, although they do not present any danger or threat to other people. The two nuns do the best they can, relying on the goodness of the house owner letting them stay without charge and donations of food from the few people who understand their plight. We were very saddened to realise that these people are virtually imprisoned and destined to spend the rest of their lives lacking basic care and dignity.

We managed to arrange a meeting with the head of the Paediatric Unit at the GMC hospital, whose ambition is to provide an environment whereby these people can receive adequate shelter, nutritious food, medicines, schooling, recreational facilities and most importantly loving care. We have decided that this will be our major project and have pledged our support to, in the short term, give financial assistance to improve the conditions in their present premises, and in the long term to provide adequate permanent premises and the finance to run it. This will be a Care Home for children suffering from the HIV virus, and a Hospice for the terminally ill.

To provide everything needed i.e. special food, medicines, schooling, nursing etc, is going to cost £500 per month (for 15 patients), so we are appealing to you all to consider making regular monthly donations (to suit your budgets) so that we can honour our promises.

To adequately describe the desperate conditions and the life these children lead is virtually impossible, but if I tell you that just about all the volunteers who visited (and who are used to seeing poverty) were shocked at what they saw, and the fact that the memory haunts me daily, then maybe you will understand why we have to help these children.

If any of you would like some brochures to give to your friends or colleagues please let me know. If you are in any way able to fundraise for us and would like display photos and literature just ask. If you have any ideas for fundraising please let us know.

Thank you to those of you who have taken clothing etc out to Goa and brought back goods from the Anjuna market for us to sell to raise money, and those who have made donations (which includes some of the small bar & restaurant businesses in Goa). Without your continued support we could not survive to help those who need it so badly.

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to all those in Goa who have worked so hard over the last few months, researching the problems, meeting with people who may be able to guide us, arranging meetings for me during February and especially to Trish & Graham, who very kindly welcomed me to stay with them and made my stay very enjoyable.

Regards,
Clive.