



Novi Survat

Charitable Organisation

(New Beginnings – for the destitute of Goa)

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Newsletter 025 December 2009.

Welcome and apologies for a rather late newsletter. I can't claim it is because I have been too busy Christmas shopping because I haven't even started it yet! Fortunately Pat does most of it. Since my return from Goa at the end of October the weather has been rather inclement with high winds and gales, but we are not the only ones to experience such conditions. In Goa they had torrential rains & even a cyclone that resulted in loss of life and a lot of damage and this in November which would normally be very settled, hot and sunny.

Starting Point.

There are currently just over twenty children attending regularly with a further eight due to start in January. The children will be preparing for Christmas and like all children everywhere excited at the prospect of the Christmas Party that Cat & Theresa are organising and which will be for all past and present children of Starting Point. In addition the volunteers will be making up 'goodie bags' for the children to take home to their siblings who would otherwise get nothing.

Jane is due back to work this month following the birth of her little boy and Rozie has announced that she will be getting married in May 2010.

Damedem.

The monsoon rains eventually eased off and we were able to move the boys back to the Convent. The children are all growing up fast. Thomas, Seby, Arwind and Ajay are now handsome 'young men' and Asha & Prema 'elegant young ladies'.

Clive's visit in October coincided with school holidays so he enjoyed celebrating Diwali with the children and taking some of the boys fishing.

Diwali, the Hindi Festival of Lights, is the most popular and important of all South Asian Festivals celebrated by all regardless of creed.

It is surrounded by many myths but the most favoured is that it celebrates the return of Rama & Sita to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile. As it was a dark moonless night the people put little lamps outside their house – hence Diwali from the saskrit word 'dipavali' meaning row of lights. The festival which celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness extends over 5 days. On the first day effigies of the Demon Ravana are burnt on pyres followed by 4 days of feasting & fireworks. Diwali also honours Laxmi the Goddess of Wealth, thus prior to the start of festivities, the home is spring cleaned, new clothes bought & various sweets & dishes prepared. The doors are left open with fruit & sweets placed around to welcome the Goddess in the hope she will bestow prosperity upon them.

Because of all the lights, fireworks & sweets the festival is especially loved by children. Damedem was no exception with wonder & delight showing on the children's faces in the candle lights and little Poonam fearless in the midst of all the fireworks.

Seby & Arwind successfully completed their computer course in Mapusa & now Theresa & Cat are doing a great job teaching computer skills to all the children.

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Also during Clive's visit we took Thomas, Seby, Arwind, Ajay & Laxmi to Bidi in Karnataka for the weekend. (Holy Cross Sisters run a school there). We all thoroughly enjoyed it. The children thought it was great sleeping away for a night and not least having lunch in a restaurant on the way there & back. For our chauffeur (Clive) however it was a rather gruelling experience. The road through the Western Ghats has to be experienced to be believed. A nightmare of hair-pin & S bends, deep (& I mean deep) potholes, mud, rocks & sheer drops into ravines. Not to mention the continuous train of Tata lorries who claim the road as their own!

During the rains, apart from the usual coughs and colds the children kept fairly well except for Pavitra who had acute pneumonia and had to spend 2 days in hospital on oxygen. Thankfully with high doses of anti-biotics she recovered quickly and was soon back to her cheeky self.

Unfortunately Chickenpox is now doing the rounds and even Sister Jayanti has succumbed. Not that chickenpox has dampened the pre Christmas excitement. Parties are already underway and the children are busy making decorations and building the crib.

Thanks to the Portuguese legacy, Christmas in Goa is celebrated very much the same as in Europe. Each house in the village will have a beautiful star outside with a nativity scene & fairy lights in the garden. The inside of the house is not decorated until the day before Christmas Eve. There won't of course be any turkey, sprouts or mince pies! Christmas lunch will be taken sitting on the floor in a circle & eating pulao or biryani from banana leaves. Then about 4 o'clock, 'chai' with samosas and various Goan sweetmeats will be served.

The new building is nowhere near completion & it seems doubtful if it will be ready before the next monsoon.

The children & Sisters look forward to seeing those of you who will be visiting Goa in the next few months.

P.s. Sania is happily settled with her new adoptive parents.
My thanks to Hazel for this write-up on Damedem – Clive.

Day Care Centre.

Unfortunately staffing of the Day Care Centre is causing a headache at present. As reported in the last newsletter Dr Ashika is taking up a new post at the GMC hospital and we were able to recruit two new members of staff (Svetlana and Smisha) who were to be job sharing and providing full time cover between them. Unfortunately due to family reasons Svetlana has had to cease work altogether which has led to the closure of the centre on some days but it is hoped that a replacement will be found for the New Year.

Educational Sponsorship Scheme.

Although my visit to Goa coincided with the Diwali holidays I was able to meet nearly all of the children who attend the formal schools and get an up to date photo for their sponsors. In addition I obtained a number of Birth Certificates and school reports all of which have now been posted to sponsors.

Volunteers.

Hazel returned to the UK at the end of October as she needed to renew her passport and her Indian visa. No problem with the passport but her visa application was completed and fees submitted exactly as in previous years. However it was returned with a request for an additional £5 so Hazel has had to reapply and hopes to receive her new visa in time to return to Damedem to spend Christmas with the children. Catherine (or Cat as she prefers to be called) and Theresa tell me they are enjoying the experience of volunteering. They are visiting the school each day and helping the teachers in addition to giving the children computer training. They also visit Damedem regularly to give computer lessons to the children there and when possible go to the Day Care Centre to assist the doctors.

In addition they have been buying goods for sponsors to bring back to the UK for us to sell and have visited the children I could not meet to obtain the photos for sponsors.

Sponsors.

A number of you will be visiting Goa on holiday and we hope you will have the time to visit the children. Please contact Cat (9552277080) or Theresa (9552277079) to make arrangements.

I hope to be in Goa from 9th February until 9th March so please let me know if you will be there during this period.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you all for your continued support during 2009 without which we would not be able to continue our work with the children.

On behalf of the children and trustees may I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful & Prosperous New Year.