

GRACE THIRD WORLD FUND

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Our Annual visit to GCH which was planned in 2011 came upon us very quickly, and before we knew what was happening, we were on the plane to Dubai, and on our way to India. When we arrived it was the usual shock to the system – having left the UK with a temperature of 6° and stepping onto Indian soil in a temperature of 33°. There was that ‘Indian aroma’ in the air, a lot of noise, the roads were packed with cycles, motorbikes, cars and lorries – each driver with his own version of the highway code! We had eight days ahead of us and a busy schedule.

Some of our supporters will already be familiar with part of this newsletter, as I wrote an article for the May edition of the Sponsor’s Quarterly magazine. However, I trust they will bear with me, as I tell you about the progress which has been made in various areas of the charity’s work in India.

THE IDEAL SCHOOL



As everyone is now aware, the ground floor of the Grace Children’s Home building incorporates a school – the King’s Ideal School. The school has a very proficient headmaster, or Principle, and a number of highly qualified teachers. The school fees pay for the running of the school, which has now become a respected and integral part of the Andhra Pradesh Education system, enjoying a high success rate in examination results, which are all important.

The building itself now has two entrances – the one belonging to Grace Children’s Home is where it always has been, but the school now has its own rather imposing entrance porch on what would have been the ‘gable end’ of the structure. The Principle, Mr Subrahmanyam greeted us at the entrance of the school, and he and Timothy Babu took the party on a guided tour of the school and its facilities. Mr Subrahmanyam was obviously very proud of the school and told me that the children were all very keen to learn and looked forward to a good future because of the education they were receiving at King’s Ideal School.

Discipline and respect play a major part in the life of the pupils and this is reflected in the behaviour of the children, which was exemplary. It was most refreshing for us all to see the children, and we were very impressed not only by how well the school was run but also because it was very apparent that the teachers themselves took a great pride in their work and in the children they taught.

During our tour of the school, we visited the library again, which is used by the Grace Children’s Home as well as the school. Two major fund raising events in 2011 enabled us to purchase quite a lot of books, and we mistakenly thought that the Library would be filled when we saw it again. However, although the shelves in the photo show a number of very good books, the other shelves look quite sad and in need of company!

Apparently books are not that much cheaper than in the UK, and it will obviously take quite a bit more money to fill the shelves. The Library itself is a very peaceful room, and we would love to see it full of books both educational and inspiring, for the children to enjoy.

THE LEPROSY COLONY—BUILDING BRIDGES

Part of the schedule this year was our usual visit to the Leprosy Colony. GTWF has helped this small community of leprosy sufferers over the past few years, and they have been very grateful. They receive no other support and

because of their condition they are not able to work, so the only money they have is gained by begging in the town nearby the village. A team from GCH takes rice every month or so, as funds permit, and also occasionally provides saris for the ladies and new 'lungis' (a simple male covering consisting of a length of cloth) for the men. The families live in very basic accommodation, normally a one room dwelling, and they cook their food on open fires in front of their homes.

One man we always enjoyed meeting on our previous visits was a leprosy sufferer who had no lower limbs, and part of his arms were also missing. He was always very cheerful, and got about on a sort of skateboard, which was basically a piece of wood with wheels attached and a length of rope at the front for someone to pull him around. I made enquiries about him this year because I couldn't see him around, and was told that sadly because of other conditions linked with his leprosy he had passed away a few weeks prior to our visit. This is not uncommon of course, as there is no medical help for those who cannot afford to pay for it, or for hospitalization. In spite of this, leprosy is in fact, very easily treatable now. Provided it is caught in time the disease can be halted by taking a short and very inexpensive course of tablets. It not only stops the disease and cures it, but the sufferer becomes immune to leprosy thereafter.



One very encouraging discovery we made when we visited the community, was that a bridge had been built between Annakappalle village and the Leprosy Colony. This is literally a ground breaking happening, because leprosy is very much feared, and people are terrified of catching it, consequently a colony must be situated outside the main villages and cities. In past years when we visited the colony we had to disembark from our vehicle in the village of Annakappalle and then walk quite some way via a very rough (and not particularly pleasant to the nose) area to get to the Leprosy Colony. This year we walked over the bridge which was about 20ft long and straight into the colony. This is a real sign that people are gradually becoming more educated about leprosy. They are not as frightened by the disease, and the result is that the sufferers do not have prejudice added to their problems.

THE ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES

The two centres have proved to be rather disappointing. There are many villagers who are very keen to learn to read and write, but they are being hampered by those who are not really interested, and cause trouble for them. Last year we were prevented from visiting the centres on the designated evening because of a fierce thunder storm. This year, although we managed to visit both centres, it was not entirely satisfactory. In the first village, many of the villagers were attending a wedding, and in the second our stay was disrupted by an extremely drunken man, who seemed to think he was missing out on something and was loudly voluble about it! Timothy feels that the best way forward is to move the centres into one of the GCH rooms. Instead of travelling to the villages themselves, it means that those who are seriously interested in becoming literate will come to the Home, or perhaps be picked up and taken there.

THE LAND

Each time we visit India, we feel truly humble when we see what has been achieved. Timothy gave the piece of land the GCH stands on the name "The Promised Land", because he had promised to build an orphanage on it. That promise has been mightily fulfilled, and what was once just a piece of scrubland is now a pleasure to the eyes. We stepped out of the taxi and were once again amazed. As our visit was in March, it was before the hot Indian summer and everything was lush and green. The grass grown for the buffalo was rich and abundant, the teak trees which were planted a few years ago (and are still planted regularly), have grown tall and strong. There is a plentiful supply of vegetables, tomatoes, chillies and fruit, and we were treated to the most delicious fresh mangos and papaya—picked straight from the tree. The banana plantation has grown even more, as they are used not only in cooking for the Home, but also to sell in the market. The buffalo look sleek and healthy. All in all, Timothy and his team are working as hard as they can towards self sufficiency, and it is extremely encouraging.

THE CHURCH

The church at N.G.Palem is very dear to our hearts. It is not, part of the charity, and is not supported by GTWF funding. However, the church was planted by charity founder Matthew Else, and most of our supporters will

remember him well. I feel sure many of our supporters will be interested in how things are progressing in the work he began there, and I am therefore including a brief item here on the newsletter.

The church is a Baptist church, and Timothy had arranged quite a few baptisms which took place during our visit. It was encouraging to see the oldest member of 'the Buffalo Family' going through the waters, and also his grandson Sai with his wife. They were not alone, however, as a total of twelve people were baptised, some of whom were from very strongly Hindu backgrounds.

In the morning service, Medisetti Demudu gave a moving testimony telling how the Lord has been with him through the difficult period he has been going through. Last year when we visited, we saw a very different boy, who looked very poorly indeed. Demudu had not long been diagnosed with a brain tumour and has since undergone surgery and then chemotherapy. He has had a very difficult time, because he was in the middle of examinations, and his education has been severely curtailed. The tumour affected his memory, and it will be a while before he catches up. During the visit we were pleased to see how much better he looks now. He has also taken up his position as one of the musicians in the church, and those of us who have known him since he came to the Home in 2002, were happy to see him look so well again.

The Junior Church was another encouragement. The evening service is dedicated to children, and as well as all the children from Grace Children's Home, the church is packed with youngsters from the surrounding villages. I was privileged to be able to speak to them about The Lord Jesus being the Only Way, and used an acrostic on the word ONLY as an illustration. (O = One; N = Now; L = Love; Y=Yes) The children have fantastic memories and were able to answer my 'quiz' afterwards—even in English! The children are quiet and well behaved—even the very small ones—although the very tiny ones find the heat a bit too much for them, and one by one succumbed!



THE CHILDREN

As the Home has grown, the organisation has become more efficient—and with 100 children living there it needs to be! Kumar and Kumari, the House Parents now have more specific roles—Kumar is responsible for all the boys, and the accounts and paperwork, whilst Kumari is responsible for the general running of the Home. A lovely lady called Bibi is now responsible for the girls. When the annual photos were being taken, Kumar and Bibi had the names of every child at their finger tips, which was very impressive indeed.

DAYS AHEAD?

A Security Fence—We have been talking of this for quite a long time now, and it still seems to be quite a long way from being a reality. The picture on the left here shows the rather pathetic fencing which is currently the only form of 'security' around the property. Unscrupulous farmers are known to lead their buffalo onto the land to get at the grass grown for the GCH herd, and as you can see, the perimeter is very close to the very busy Calcutta Highway, which makes the Home vulnerable to passing lorry drivers. Although there are security guards now, it is too expensive to employ as many as are really required, and it is therefore impossible to make absolutely certain the children are safe, although the best is being done in the circumstances.



Sponsors—There are still some children who have no sponsors, so if anyone feels they could sponsor a child (£25 a month), please contact us for more information. Timothy keeps the number of children living in the Home to 100, and those who have no specific sponsors are supported by the extra funds that come in. This means that the children are looked after when they need it, but obviously it would be better if each and every child was sponsored, so that any extra funds can be used elsewhere—such as to purchase rice for the Leprosy Colony.

IN CONCLUSION

For my own part, it was a real joy and a pleasure to be involved in the 2012 trip. Even now my thoughts turning to the 2013 visit. Everyone who comes on these visits will tell what a unique effect it has on you. In the meantime, the work goes on and Timothy Babu has my personal greatest respect and admiration for the way he looks after the many aspects of the work on The Promised Land, which figuratively speaking, began as an acorn and has become a mighty oak. Thank you for all your support.

Ray Richardson

Grace Third World Fund Visit May 2011



- This year's group
- Learning Centre
- View from the top floor of the staff houses.



- Ray with Mediseti Demudu
- Kumar & Kumari
- Bibi

