

Health Help International

Tidings



March
2024



The team on the shores of the Neyyar Dam

The HHI team are back from their annual visit to India – this time it was Edmund and Chris, plus Chris's nephew Sam. It was a great time – and an added bonus was that Tom was there for the first week.

It was a time to catch up with our Indian partners, to take stock and to plan ahead. Changes are happening at Asha Kiran Ashram, with new trustees from Grace Ministries appointed and the religious bits of Celestial Ministries (the Indian charity that runs Asha Kiran) being moved to Grace Ministries. Asha Kiran is now an educational, medical and social enterprise which should make relations with the authorities easier. Philip intends to retire in less than three years' time. I had agreed that he would recruit an assistant who would take over when Philip goes, but it turns out that we don't pay the going rate so no-one was interested. We will have to offer more – and pay Philip more as well.

Otherwise it is business as usual. Everything seems to be going well, but there is a huge demand for the help that we provide, so it was simply a case of expanding this as much as we could. Fortunately there are a few more Rupees to the Pound, so we should be able to accommodate some of that within our existing budgets.



The women's self-help groups / credit unions are going from strength to strength. Last year there were 137 of them; this year there are 212. They are a proven way of enabling literally thousands of families to lift themselves out of poverty, financing business start-ups, education and medical help, or replacing loans from loan sharks at

an exorbitant rate of interest. However, this huge increase means that the two paid 'animators' (administrators) are struggling to oversee so many groups, so I have agreed to pay for a third one. Their salary is just £60 a month each.

There were the usual needs that we were presented with. It seemed like our Indian partners had been saving them up! There was a constant stream of people who came to us, many clutching their medical records and prescriptions that they couldn't afford. We gave what help we could.



Lijina with her parents

A young girl called Lijina was one of them. She had already had an expensive operation for adrenal cancer, and now she needed a scan costing £60. Money goes a lot further in India, often ten times further, so this is the equivalent of £600.

However, her father had suffered an injury at work and so was unable to continue his job as a painter. We were able to pay £50 towards this.



Someone else who came looking for help was Shanta. She left school after 4th standard (year 4). Her four daughters also left school early. Her husband was a drunkard, but he is now an invalid. The family is entitled to a government pension, but this is not paid due to corruption – a story that I heard many times during the visit. She has kept goats in the past, so we

were able to provide for a goat – and we are going to send Philip to check that she actually does buy one and to send us a photo!

Gidija (aged 58) had a leg amputated nine months ago as a result of diabetes; she and her aged husband Sukumara (78 years old) were reduced to begging as their chickens were stolen whilst Gidija was in hospital. They are very poor. We were able to give her £40 to repair the hen coop and buy 25 young chickens, plus £10 for living expenses until the chickens start laying. She stared at each note in disbelief with tears in her eyes. Her life can be transformed – a new start for them both.



Manniyam is a former hotel worker who is now diabetic and suffers from high blood pressure and limited mobility. He lives in a very basic house. His friends and neighbours provide him with some food, but he needs medicines costing £10 a month which he cannot afford. We were able to provide him for the month's medicines, and have promised to help in future.



Rajappan is an older man who suffers from Parkinson's disease and heart problems. His village had permitted him to set up a small stall in the village, but he didn't have the money for this. Could we help? The cost for the stall, an awning, chairs and stock would be £110. Much better than regular handouts in every way. We were able to say "yes".

On a lighter note, a visit to Asha Kiran Ashram is always a highlight of our visit. One of the newcomers is John who joined just the previous week and who was already having help for his cerebral palsy. He is also mentally limited. Two years ago he had operations on his knees and wrists, but this was not followed with physiotherapy, so at the moment he cannot walk; the hope is that, by the time we return next year, he will be much more mobile.



John having physiotherapy



Beulah and Mum

A nice surprise was that Beulah came with her mother. It was wonderful to see her walking around confidently on her prosthetic legs which we provided. The knee on one side has now been unlocked; when she has had a bit more training the other side can be unlocked as well. She was really pleased with the video about her as well (available on our website).

The centre really wanted some more physiotherapy equipment. They said that some of it was very expensive – but the total cost came to about £200! Chris had some money with him, and he was able to pay for everything that they wanted.



Happy Valley is also doing sterling work with disabled children. Amina has Downs' syndrome and had a stroke last year which has affected one side badly. She also has a dropped foot. She gets physiotherapy which has restored some movement in her arm and leg, and has an orthopaedic boot to straighten the foot. She now has better control over her limbs and is also communicating. Fortunately, Happy Valley got to her early.

Vishnu is now walking with calipers and support and is now able to feed himself, albeit messily. Considering how floppy he was when he first arrived, this is a significant improvement.



Annisery suffers from cerebral palsy. When she came to Happy Valley one side (leg and arm) was disabled, but physiotherapy has rectified this. She also needed a heart operation. She continues to suffer from autism and a low IQ. Her mother also has a low IQ, and her father ran off when she was born – sadly, a common reaction to a disabled child in India. She originally came to Happy Valley in 2016-2018, but then went to a government school which failed to cater for her needs, so she

has returned to Happy Valley recently where proper special needs teaching has enabled her to learn the alphabet (no mean feat – it has several hundred symbols), basic arithmetic and the ability to understand simple words.

This does illustrate so well the benefits of flexible and tailored special needs provision, something that Happy Valley does so well and government schools do much less well.



One newcomer is Kuatena (Kartu), a small six year old girl who looks a lot younger. She has very severe cerebral palsy. After about six months at Happy Valley, where she has been having intensive physiotherapy to build up muscles and prevent tightening, she is showing significant improvements – she is now smiling a lot, recognises sounds and objects, and responds to questions and instructions – all things that, just a few months ago, were impossible for her.



It wasn't all doom and gloom. We got to meet a number of people that we have helped recently as well. One such person is Prida, who was in agony with fibroids in her uterus. The government hospital would not operate for 18 months, but the cost of a private operation was way beyond anything that she could afford so we paid about half the cost; she was able to borrow the rest from a relative at a low interest rate, the operation was successful, and she is back to living life to the full. She has a school age daughter and an alcoholic

husband. She works at the craft centre, leaf painting and screen printing and also helps with Wilson's food distribution at the local hospital / health clinic.



Leema working at her sewing machine

Leema was poor but could sew. She is married with two children at school and an alcoholic husband who doesn't provide for his family. We provided half the cost of a treadle sewing machine (£50 of £100) and she borrowed the rest from a credit union (which we also fund) at a very low rate of interest (1%). She is now making clothes to order (dresses, churidars and children's clothes) and is on course to pay for the machine in a few months – she expects to make £30 a month in due course. She can now feed her family and ensure that her two children go to school, as well as paying for medicines for her liver, arthritis and diabetes.

Our sewing training programme is very successful. About three quarters of the women who finish the course go on to use their skills, either through employment or working at home. There seems to be an insatiable demand for hand-made clothes in the area, so much so that we have been asked to set up a second training centre in Kandam Thitta, another village. This would cost about £800 to set up and £1400 a year to run, the biggest item being the teacher's salary.

We were able to visit a well that one of our supporters had paid for a few years back. The family are now going on from strength to strength on the back of a good supply of good clean water, and are currently improving their home.





Padmardavy came to Pastor Wilson some months ago, having gone blind in one eye as a result of damage to the optic nerve. She had been prescribed a series of very expensive injections that she could not afford. We helped her with the cost of these, and her sight has been partially restored. Now the other eye is degenerating in the same way. I was able to help her with the cost of tests and scans, and promised her further help if there is another series of injections.

All in all, it was a very successful visit. It was hugely inspirational to see just how many lives are being transformed by our dedicated partners and their teams – all because of you, our wonderful supporters, and your incredible generosity. Thank you so much for making this possible.



Big Bertha in Action

It is with great joy that we can share the good news that the new Big Bertha Autoclave has arrived in Monze Mission Hospital Zambia. It has been successfully installed and it is in use. This autoclave cost £17,000!! As a result of your generous donations HHI managed to purchase this much needed piece of equipment and we were also able to contribute to the cost of transporting it to Monze from Bedfordshire. The autoclave will enable all medical instruments and operating packs to be sterilized with high temperatures killing micro-organisms and spores. It ensures that everything is decontaminated. This is so essential, particularly at this time when we have been informed by HHZ that there is a cholera epidemic seriously affecting the southern province of Zambia.



We give thanks to you, our caring supporters for enabling HHI to meet these extra costs and ensure that the hospital can continue to keep the high standards required to operate and save lives.

The Choongo Challenge

2024 is a very significant year for Health Help International as it is 25 years since it became a registered charity. It is our silver Jubilee year!! Many of you have been loyal supporters since 1999 and we sincerely value your commitment to helping those in greatest need. Choongo school certainly does have some real needs, as it is an all-inclusive school in Zambia with 60 disabled residential students, catering for learners from preschool to grade 12 both able bodied and those who are differently able bodied.



Over the last 25 years HHI has had a strong relationship with the school providing equipment, funding individual students, maintaining wheelchairs, repairing classroom window panes, and providing solar panels. Last September we saw the building of the long-awaited new kitchen come to fruition, enabling the house mothers to prepare food for the students in a purpose-built brick structure with electricity and water. A new boys' toilet has also been completed allowing disabled students to access the facility with ramps and handrails. All these improvements have been beautifully captured in a four-minute film which you can easily see on our website www.hhi.org.uk/films.



The biggest challenge which faces the disabled students at Choongo school is the lack of dormitory space. There are 60 students with various disabilities but only one dormitory for 48. This means that the students need to share a bed! Residential places are in demand but there is no dormitory space.



A new dormitory would be a wonderful gift for these students, some of whom have been abandoned by their relatives because of stigma and poverty. What a coincidence that, in our 25th anniversary year, the cost for a new dormitory with electricity, plumbing, and painted interior and exterior will be £25,000.

A significant amount to celebrate our 25 years of action. Can we meet the challenge?

Mr Musila the Choongo Head Teacher has written to HHI already to express his appreciation for our efforts.

"The expansion of the school from early childhood to grade 12 has come with its challenges. Due to overwhelming demand for education, children are now sleeping two per single bed. We are very mindful that this is not acceptable, but we have no choice, and we have to find room for each and every child in need of education. Recognising the fact that this is a big project that needs a lot of money, we are happy to note that HHI is doing everything possible to raise money. It is for this reason that us as a community and the school, we have been praying to Lord for HHI to successfully raise the money."



Mwansa Kamwaya (Grade 8)

"I can't turn my wheelchair around in the dorm. It's too small. I don't know why we are treated like this...?"

Orlando Mweetwa (Grade 12), sitting on his shared bunk, says "There is no space to put our property and we don't sleep properly. When we get up, we are tired."



7,000 bricks are needed. Could you buy one for £4, or six for £20 as a special offer, or indeed a whole row for £40? Visit our website <https://hhi.org.uk/choongo-school-needs-help/> and be a brick by buying a brick! Or fill in the form on the next page and return to the HHI office (address on back page) with your Silver Anniversary Gift to HHI.



In your prayers, please give thanks to God for His wonderful provision, and for all that He has achieved, though HHI, to improve the welfare of the less fortunate in our world.





CHOONGO SCHOOL DORMITORY APPEAL



I would like to help Choongo School build a new dormitory for its students.

Please purchase, on my behalf, the following:

_____ brick(s) @ £4.00 each £ _____

_____ set(s) of 6 bricks @ £20.00 per set ... £ _____

_____ row(s) of bricks @ £40.00 per row £ _____

Total: £ _____

I enclose a cheque for £ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Tel. _____

If you would like to **Gift Aid** your donation, and thus increase its value by 25%, please tick the box below:

☐

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference.



Our next Supporters' Event

will be held, starting at **3.00 p.m. on Friday 17th May 2024**, at
Nant Coch Church, 68 Fields Park Road, Newport NP20 5BH.

Please drop in for a chat, refreshments and crafts for sale in support of HHI.

Meet the team, ask questions, and see the videos from India and Zambia.

Then join us at 7.00 p.m. for worship and thanksgiving for all that God has achieved through us in India and Zambia.

A Reminder

Indian Leaf cards (both Christmas and general) are available via the Strathaven website <https://www.sfhhi.org.uk/shop2/>

Please use the **Alternative Gift** catalogue

online at <https://hhi.org.uk/get-involved/alternative-gifts/>

or by post (in which case, ask us for a form by email or phone).

Have a good look at our **website**, particularly the **films** section, at

<https://hhi.org.uk/films/>

Need a mid-week speaker or someone to lead a Sunday service?

If you would like one of our team to speak about the work of HHI at a meeting of a church group or of an organisation to which you belong, or to lead worship at a Sunday service, please contact us using the 'phone number or the email address given at the bottom of this page, and we'll do our best to accept your invitation.



We wish you all A Blessed Easter



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