

The next steps

As the project has developed, the next steps have become clear.

- In Janakiram Layout, many children drop out of school. They are at risk of becoming street children or rag-pickers. These children work hard, very hard. Without education their future is bleak. The consequences of this lack of opportunity are all too common - exploitation, prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse, ill-health..... At present (May '07), 60 children who have dropped out of school are coming to the centre twice a week and we aim to enable them to return to education.
- The literacy level in Bangalore as a whole is 84%, but 51% of women aged 15-40 years are illiterate¹. When children do attend school, it is difficult for girls to be educated beyond Standard X and many leave school sooner. For them, we provide training including theory and practical sessions on community health and child care, value based life skills, basic computer skills and skills training for job placement. There is no upper age limit and mothers may attend with the school leavers. We are aiming to provide opportunities for better employment and skills which will benefit whole families. To make this more effective, we are now working to affiliate with a college in Bangalore, so that we can give certificates to prove achievement.

THE NEED

Currently, most operating costs are supported by donations and some earned income. However, Bangalore is seeing hyper-inflation and the legal framework for occupying property allows a landlord to increase rents every six months. While we are renting premises, we will remain vulnerable to these price hikes

In order to ensure the sustainability of the project, we are seeking to raise funds in the region of £50,000 to purchase premises in Janakiram Layout and would be extremely grateful for your support.



CONCERNS UNIVERSE FOUNDATION

... committed to the cause of the poor
and needy

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The purpose of this document is to introduce you to the work of Concerns Universe Foundation (CUF) and to seek your assistance with funding for the purchase of some premises in Bangalore.

Introduction

The charity CUF was established as a legal entity in 2001 in the deprived inner city area of Jeevanahalli, Cox Town, which is one of the 761 'registered slums' in Bangalore¹. It is run by a Board of Management and is under the direction of the founder, Mrs. Chitra Lancelot, who is the chief functionary of the foundation. We provide educational and health programmes with the main purpose of encouraging the members of this community to help themselves - i.e. to break the cycle of deprivation.

In achieving this, maternal education and involvement is vital. We also focus on pre-school education, on day-care for the children of working mothers, on homework support classes, on the education of young women leaving school and on striving to "*bring hope and happiness among the children of construction workers who are destined to live on the streets*"².

¹ Deccan Herald, 11th September 2006

² CUF information booklet

The cycle of deprivation

What contributes to this local deprivation? Bangalore is the sixth most developed city in India and yet we have already mentioned the number of 'registered slums'. There has been rapid economic growth in recent years, partly due to modern technology (information technology, call centres, medical transcription for Western countries etc.). In the meantime, rural poverty has increased due to land-division, climatic conditions and changes in social systems. This has led to migration to the city to seek work, adding to the existing population living in poverty.

Without sufficient education for the new industries, low-paid manual work (such as construction) is the only option. The effect on women and children is profound as they perform heavy work for low, irregular pay, may be subject to abuse and have little opportunity for education.

The virtuous cycle

What can we do about this? The strategy for promoting change for the better in the community is described in the virtuous cycle (Figure 1). This model has been used both at our centre in Jeevanahalli and in our second centre, more recently opened, in Janakiram Layout. Central to the initiative has been the training as trainers of 12 local young women (to date), who are from a similar background to the women and children attending the project. They have been key to the well-established child care and nutritional programmes, together with health and hygiene education delivered to the children and their mothers, as well as systematically contacting households. We have also established a savings scheme, which mothers are often using to save for a child's school fees. In fact, most of the local community now understand that educating their children is the best investment for the future.

As another benefit, superstitious beliefs about foods are falling and women are becoming aware of dietary needs. We also prepare a high protein mix which is available free to children attending the project and can be bought at cost for home use.

The benefit of this combination of maternal education and ensuring basic nutrition has been demonstrated by regular health monitoring of the children which has shown improved nutritional status.

Figure 1:
The Virtuous Cycle or *one good thing leads to another*

