

Letter from Anita Williams, Street Child Project

30th March 2010



Anita with Prabhakar and Abha Goswami, Founding Directors of I-India

I fell in love with I-India all over again this trip. It was a very emotionally rewarding time for all of us. I felt every cell tingling and am so happy that we can do such great work here to help.

The school, the home and all the vehicles we purchased are very much needed and appreciated.



Just arrived!



Maliha (in pink) enjoys time with the Ladli girls

The home is such a happy place - now with 33 small boys.

They attend school in the morning till approx 1pm. When they come home they do homework and play games together in the large common room. All the games and toys are kept carefully and neatly on the shelves when not in use. When the sun is not so fierce (around 5pm) they run around outside, playing serious cricket, on the playground equipment, playing hide and seek and all the normal fun activities kids enjoy. Dinner is around 8pm.

The beautiful school is utilized again in the evening when the local children get picked up via the school bus (donated from Singapore supporter.)

It was amazing to be on the bus to see the homes in which they live. Mud homes mainly.





They got on the bus excited but tired after a full day working in the fields. Their parents allow them to go to the school only in the evenings. Some children looked out quietly whilst others sat on their knees peering out the front of the bus in anticipation. The lessons were held on the large back verandah.

This project has been going on for 3 months and already they know their alphabet and are writing simple sentences. The children were very interactive and proud to show me their work. After class they played on the playground equipment - laughing and running around happily.

They receive a hot meal before they are bundled up and returned home again. The hope is that the parents will enrol the children into Jhag school full time.



There were four children newly arrived at the shelter home while we were there. It was so lovely to see the transition process. The boys arrived serious, sad, quiet and anxious.

Three brothers sat closely together, the older one protective over the two smaller ones. It seemed impossible to get them to smile, even a tiny bit. No wonder, their father had regularly beaten them. Their mother, a prostitute at the station asked I-India to please take care of them for their own safety. The children missed their mother and were frightened of their future. Their whole demeanour changed when they saw the Jhag home and all the other little boys. Within a few hours they too were playing cricket and smiling.



The other boy was forced into child labour after his father died, his mother left him after finding another man. He was found wandering after several days on the street. His feet cracked and dirty - clothes torn, his eyes, lost and sad. He said to Abha he felt safe in Child Inn - but he remained serious and unsmiling. We went back to Child Inn on the last day and he was sitting with the other boys, clean and relaxed reading a Hindi book. He looked up and smiled in recognition when he saw me and I could barely believe it was the same boy. It is still early days and his full story is not known but the plan is that he will go to Jhag too.

The trip was so heart warming – it's impossible not to feel a protective love for these children so much in need. We have to get a girls shelter built asap - as the homes for girls are all full.

We spent 2 half days with the small girls doing art work. Anna did some amazing work with them. I was lucky to have time just to sit with them and enjoy getting to know them better. The respect and care they have for each other is really touching. The ladies looking after them treat them like their own children. The atmosphere is bright and welcoming. Thanks to their English lessons they were able to share their stories, their hopes and dreams.



One little girl was busy in the kitchen making Marsala tea for us all. She had a big scar on her chest visible above her t-shirt.

She said it was due to being burnt when she worked in her parents shop as a small child (now 11 years old). Her mother died in a road accident and she is unsure where her father is. She has lived in Ganga girls for four years with her two sisters. She asked me why Rosy, Amanda and Kate were not with us. I was so surprised she remembered their names from a trip a year ago (not including Rosy who has been back since). She then told me she wanted to be a doctor when she finishes school, which I was not surprised to hear.

A girl spent half an hour doing beautiful henna work on my hands, looked up at one stage and said very seriously (and unexpectedly) "thank you for all you do to help us in Singapore" - her eyes so sincere - it was hard not to cry!

There is so much to tell you about so many special experiences. I have only touched the surface. I can only say how motivating this trip was to continue working hard here in Singapore.



The names of the children have been removed to protect their identity