

# CHIT CHAT Dec 2016

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## Overview

Christmas and 2017 will soon be upon us. For many it is a time of celebration, of family and expectancy for the new year ahead. For the families of the children in the Christiana Children's Homes, all this is a luxury: the slog of keeping going consumes every waking hour. We desire that through the work of the homes that you support, we can alleviate this hardship and provide hope for the future. The Christmas message is quintessentially one of hope: that the creator God chose to enter the world and live with mankind, to demonstrate his love for us. 250 children and 40 staff are preparing their Christmas festivities - Indian style. No Christmas tree, and one of the hottest dinners in the world, with singing, dancing, sketches, and presents. Yes, every year, your gifts to CHIT enable us to afford a gift for each of the staff and children (in their case a set of clothes), a reminder that there are people on their side in a tough world. Thank you for your support through 2016.

Howard (CHIT Chair)



## The hazards of working across continents

In April, the State Bank of India froze our account and for several weeks, bills and wages, couldn't be paid and it was only when the bank manager was invited to visit the Bapatla home to see the difficulties the bank was making for the children, did he agree to a temporary fix. Things ran smoothly until September, when it happened again, but by then the situation was better understood and overcome, hopefully permanently.

Then, on 8 November, the government annulled the Rs500 and Rs1000 notes. A short period has been given to exchange old notes, but the banks cannot give out more than Rs4,000 (about £47) per day, which isn't much use when paying the wages of 40 people, even in India.

Meanwhile, following our vote for Brexit, the value of the pound fell, eventually to just over 80% of the rate at the end of June. When George Kent wrote to many of our supporters in August explaining the effects of this, your response was amazing. We received about £20,000 (inc Gift Aid), including some new and increased regular giving.

We think the fall in rupee value of our income is likely to be enduring, and we need to spread the word about CHIT and discover new supporters. **Could you help by inviting us to talk about CHIT to your school, club, church or other group? Please contact us if you can.**



## Home life

We are thrilled to report that all 29 school leavers at Bapatla and Nidamarru passed their exams and secured places in higher or further education! This signals new challenges ahead for their funding, because all the evidence we have shows that these young people will stick with their courses to completion.

In June 33 boys and girls were admitted from the 78 applications received. All passed their medicals.

Other big news is the marriage of Mary our nurse at the Bapatla home to Mr J Ravi Kumar. We are delighted that she has taken on the same duties at Nidamarru, where her new husband has joined as a house parent in place of Raju, who died suddenly in February. Mrs Indira Priyadarshini has joined Bapatla as nurse.

There have been downsides too, a reminder of the fragility of life in S India. Sickness and bereavement ring a constant bell, and it was heart-breaking to hear of the death of one little girl from dengue fever. Another little boy has been diagnosed with a hole in his heart, but the hospital cannot attend to it until he is first treated for TB - just a couple of examples of the pastoral load on Rani and her team of house parents.



## HIV

On top of the 17 HIV+ children already supported, 10 have applied for help. Together this will cost about £300 per month above the existing budget, and is likely to increase. **Is this something you would like to support? Please contact us if you can.**

## Education

In our last CHIT CHAT we made an appeal for £3,500 to equip the science labs. Yet again, we have been thrilled with your response, with which we were able to give the go ahead. We have also been able to complete the re-equipping of the computer lab with some new machines and a projector so that the teacher can demonstrate more easily. A picture paints a thousand words...

*biology*



*maths*



*library*



*physics & chemistry*

*computing: with primary teacher David coaching staff outside school hours*



## Communications

We have relaunched our website this year - [www.chitonline.co.uk](http://www.chitonline.co.uk). We have sacrificed style and presentation for content that is easy to keep up to date.

We try to include a news bulletin every fortnight or so. We want to show up to date stories of changed lives, but by their nature, we have to be careful to meet data protection expectations in India, the US, and France (where a new support group has formed) as well as here. A breakthrough here will be an important objective for the Trustees' visit in January.

Skype continues to be an excellent resource. Another church link at St Swithins, Bath, is planned for 11 December, which will involve staff and children from the Bapatla home. We are clear that we have hardly started to exploit the potential of this technology, and need to put some solid plans in place to move it forward. Developments we would like to see in 2017 include:

- the start of coaching in English conversation for India staff and students
- periodic UK-India progress meetings
- occasional UK-India-US-France meetings to discuss our internet presence and data protection
- more use of video links to enrich promotion in UK



## Formalities

Please let us know any changes in your contact details. If you are receiving this by post please let us know if we can switch to email. Our contact details are at the top.

Please make donations by cheque, payable to CHIT, to Mrs V Gillman, Littlecombe, Portsmouth Road, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6TQ, or BACS transfer to CHIT Acc No 04631086 at sort code 30-90-54.