



25 Church Lane
Nether Poppleton
York YO26 6LF

Telephone : 01904 786880

E-mail : mail@projectmala.org.uk

Website : www.projectmala.org.uk

Mala News

Patrons:

The Maharaja of Benares
Felicity Kendal CBE
Sir Mark Tully OBE
Lady Young
Madeline Weinrib

Issue 23 - June 2010

An action programme for the elimination of child labour in the hand knotted carpet industry in India

A family disaster

One of the hardest parts of our work is to witness some of the disasters that happen to some of our children's families and not to help. In February, Ashish and Yogesh, two of our students, had a house fire which completely destroyed their home. The family lost everything and were then faced with the cost of rebuilding their house. It would have been satisfying to help this family but all we dare offer was to replace their school uniforms. Disasters happen every week to our children's families and if we were seen to be helping one family we would be inundated with requests from families of our 1,400 children. Our staff in India would not be able to cope and it would divert our limited funds away from our main role which is to educate the children.



Mehndi still popular in India

Mehndi is a 5,000 year old tradition and a modern craze. The form of hand painting mainly used at weddings in India became fashionable in the west in the late 1990s, where it is sometimes called *henna tattoos*. Recently a competition was held in Mala schools. It was a popular event by children who were accomplished in art.



Dr Gupta, one of our teaching officers, commented that judging the entries was a big problem because all the designs were very good. At last, Neha of class 8 was judged the winner.

School starts at 6.30 am

India has again had record summer temperatures. At almost 50°C (120°F) it is too hot for school, so staff in India decided to bring forward the opening hours to start at 6.30 am. Classes ended at 10.30 am after which the children were given lunch and sent home.

Gardening a very popular lesson

Life skills are an important part of the curriculum for Mala children. Initially we taught carpet weaving and tailoring but we expanded this to include other subjects: gardening for the boys and domestic science for the girls. The boys love to grow plants.



Alam has exceptional attendance

Attendance has always had a high priority in Project Mala schools and prizes are given for good attendance and punctuality. Deciding who should get the prizes becomes a problem when so many children have full attendance and whole classes are never late. It was a big disappointment for the teacher when Raj Kumar's father died and Raj had to drop out of school to support his family. In four and a half years he had not had a single day's absence. Now Alam has taken over the record as he has reached class 7 and has not had a single day's absence since he enrolled in April 2006.

Bicycle made for three

Some children have to walk up to 5 kilometres to get to school. If you have a friend who has a bicycle then getting a lift can be easier.



Sponsors' communication

Since the last newsletter we have started to send important messages to sponsors via emails. We also now inform sponsors by email when new photographs or school reports are posted to their logins, so they don't have to check.

If you have not had an email from us in the last three months, please let us know as we may have a wrong address for you.

Those sponsors without email will receive correspondence, photos and school reports by post.

New Mala film

We would like to record our grateful thanks to Nairrit Das, an Indian journalist, who has made a new Mala film for us. Nairrit discovered Project Mala whilst at Ulster University when he chose the subject of child labour in the carpet industry in India for his dissertation. The film he made for that can be seen on Youtube and is well worth viewing.

The new Project Mala film is available on our website or a copy can be sent to you if you request it from the Project Mala office.

Admissions again prove a challenge

The absence of good schools means that we get a lot of applications for our schools. Staff in India have a problem in deciding who to reject. Such is the growing reputation of Project Mala schools that we had children coming from 30 kilometres to try and get in. In total we had over 1,500 applications for the 350 places on offer.

Cricket talent

Guria middle school staged a cricket competition which brought out some outstanding performances by several boys. The class six boys scored 66 runs in just 7 overs to knock out class seven. In the final they lost out to the older class 8 but Umesh of class 6 was voted man of the series as he scored 41 runs (not out). The staff feel that with some professional coaching we might be able to develop some fine cricketers amongst our children.

