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Mala News

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Mala children work to support their families

Most of the children who attend Project Mala Schools work during their out-of-school time.



Babalu is a student in class six at our Guria School. His father died in October and it fell to Babalu, as the oldest son of five brothers, to find a way to feed the family. Most boys would have dropped out of school to get a job, but Babalu loves school so he decided to work at night and weekend and keep up his studies. He sells vegetables in a local market which earns him Rs 500 (£7) a month.

Whilst visiting the village of Chadraha near to Guria School, we noticed Raj Kumar, a student in our Middle School, carrying a sack of Bajra (millet) on his head whilst still wearing his school uniform.



The tall and the small

We have always found it difficult to tell the exact age of our children and academic ability is no guide. Children enrol with us when their parents think it is the time or when we have enough places to take them. Once they are at school they move up at the same pace. We have no system, at present, for fast tracking children when they are clearly older. The first picture is of Salik Ram and Dhananjay who are both in class six and started at Project Mala at the same time. Both were clever enough to make it through to Middle School.



The second picture is of ..., a girl who was enrolled at Turkahan school in April 2007. She is clearly older than her classmates, but as we are only able to take in new children every three years at Turkahan, she missed out last time. We are now building a new school so we can take in children each year.



Baal Dan brings hope for children at Turkahan

Baal Dan is a registered charity based in Dallas, USA. They were set up specifically to help children from poor families in India. Baal Dan have been searching for an NGO working in India for some time and when they discovered Project Mala it fitted perfectly with what they wanted. We submitted a proposal to build a new school to replace our Turkahan School which is far too small for the area. We had bought some land to replace the school over a year ago but did not have the funds to erect a building. On receiving our proposal, Tanya Pinto, the Founder of Baal Dan, quickly made a visit to see our work and assess the project. On her return she approved the scheme and agreed to provide \$30,000 for the new school. Construction work has now started. Picture shows Tanya with the children at Turkahan.



New glasses for children

It has always been a concern that none of the children at Mala schools wore glasses. We were aware that a number had problems with their eyesight but the facilities were not readily available in the area. Recently, however, we have started to tackle the problem and get the children's eyes tested. As we could not transport all our 1,200 children to the optician we have trained our teachers to carry out a simple eye test to establish which of our children had an eye problem. The first school we tackled was Guria school where we found 21 of our 380 children needed glasses and 8 had more serious problems for which they are having treatment. What was more surprising was that 7 children in Middle School needed glasses, yet they had managed to pass all their exams with this handicap. Photo shows the 21 children at Guria who needed glasses.

Visit by sponsor

We encourage all sponsors to visit our schools and see the child they sponsor in class. Some have taken the trip to India to do just that. This November, Gary Jackson and his wife Christine paid a visit to Project Mala's Amoi school to see Preeti, the child they sponsor. Their comments can be seen on the website under "what people say / sponsors comments".



New Teaching Officers

Following Annu leaving us to get married we have now appointed two new Teaching Officers. Mukesh has been a Teacher in our Middle School for two years and he will look after four Primary and one Middle school in the outlying areas. A new person has been recruited to supervise Guria and Mujehera Schools. She is Dr Dimple Gupta.

The determined Salik Ram

Most children in Project Mala schools face problems of one sort or another, but there are few who work harder to fulfil their dreams than Salik Ram. Salik's mother and father are both illiterate and physically disabled. Salik is a student in class 6 of Project Mala Patehera School but is a lot younger than his classmates. He is also small for his age at only 114 cm (3ft 10in) and weighs only 19.5 kg (3st 2lbs). When he passed the entrance exam for Middle school his parents worried how he could attend Patehera Middle school as it was 12 km away from his home. But he was determined to join the school and pedals his bicycle 24 km per day to attend. He is performing well and secured 76% in the half yearly examination. Salik is one of our 600 children who are not yet sponsored.



Sports day a great success

Sports day at Project Mala schools is always a gala day in the lives of the children. They compete for many small prizes and particularly they want their house to be the top. Here we see Mother Teresa House (foreground) against Netaji House in the final of the Tug of War. The eventual winner was Mother Teresa House, who also took the overall house prize. At the end of the sports day the children were treated to a special feast.