

Darjeeling Children's Trust Annual Report 2014

Charity Registration No. 1143109

Principal office address: 151 Abbey Road, Westbury-On-Trym, Bristol BS9 3QH

Trustees :

Katie Williams, Pasang Wangdi, Sharan Patel, Polly Martin, Hugh Heron, Katherine Carr, Clare Blakeway-Phillips, Penelope Adams, Marilyn Adams (Chairperson).

Governance and Management

The Darjeeling Children's Trust (DCT) was originally constituted by Trust Deed in early 2008. This document was amended in June 2011 to comply with a suggested amendment from the Charity Commission to allow full registration to proceed. The current Trust Deed is dated June 2011 and registration by the Charity Commission was confirmed on 27 July 2011.

New trustees are invited to join the Trust when either a vacancy arises due to the resignation of a current trustee or when a gap is identified in the skills available to trustees and which needs to be filled. The procedure followed is in accordance with advice published by the Charity Commission.

During 2014 one additional trustee was appointed: Clare Blakeway-Phillips.

Objectives and Activities

The Trust seeks to advance the education and preserve and protect the good health of the children and young people of Darjeeling through the provision and improvement of education facilities, through improvements to their living conditions and through sponsorship.

In September 2012 trustees approved the Trust's second five year plan to cover the period 2013 – 2018 which provides detailed targets which are consistent with the Trust's aims and objectives. This plan sets the context against which suggested new projects are assessed. The plan states that Darjeeling Children's Trust will work with the local community to:

- Sponsor individual children to attend better schools;
- Help improve the physical fabric of schools where conditions have an adverse impact upon children's health and where this work would contribute to the quality of the educational experience, including by inviting supporters of the Trust to adopt individual school improvement projects;
- Fund a travelling library to visit at least 6 primary schools to encourage literacy, access to information and a love of reading and hold an annual story telling competition;
- Provide music teaching in primary schools and for all sponsored children and provide tuition for musically gifted children within these groups to enable them to enter music exams if desired;

- Fund and provide support for young people to undertake hospitality training and nursing training and provide vocational training in needlework at the Girls' Orphanage;
- Fund health improvement measures for girls and boys at a local orphanage;
- Support the rebuilding of a boys' and girls' orphanage to provide an improved living environment for the children and young people;
- Facilitate volunteering in Darjeeling as and when candidates with the appropriate skills and aptitudes present themselves.
- In addition Trustees will ensure a full range of management skills is available to ensure the long term sustainability of Darjeeling Children's Trust and that visits are made by UK Trustees twice a year to Darjeeling so far as is possible.

Achievements and Performance in 2014

Major Pasang Wandu, a trustee of Darjeeling Children's Trust, lives permanently in Darjeeling and oversees the work of the Trust on the ground. Visits to Darjeeling were made by three UK based trustees during 2014: Hugh Heron, Clare Blakeway-Phillips and Marilyn Adams and by DCT treasurer Robert Adams. These visits took place in April and October/November 2014.

The work that the Trust was able to achieve in 2014 was helped by the favourable exchange rate from Sterling to Rupees.

a) Improvements to schools

A request to DCT for help with the funding of school improvements was made in 2013 by Mahatama Ghandi School which takes pupils of both primary and secondary school ages. The school was seeking financial support for the replacement of the roof to the school hall which was in poor condition. It was decided that the estimated cost of the repairs (£5000) was beyond the resources of the Trust in 2013 and the works were consequently deferred. Due to the changes in the exchange rate the Trust was able to identify adequate resources to allow the works to proceed and these were carried out in early 2014. The new roof was inspected by Trustees in autumn 2014.

Two further requests for financial assistance with school improvements were received from schools during the year. Soom Primary School sought funding for partial roof repairs and a request was received from Maharani Primary School for a grant to allow replacement of the school water storage tank. Resources were provided to allow both these projects to go ahead.

In all cases Trustees make site visits to schools to ratify the extent of any need, schools making requests provide estimates of cost and receipts and follow up visits are also made to check the works have been implemented satisfactorily.

b) Travelling Library

The Trust's librarian/storyteller is an experienced teacher who joined the Trust from her position in a privately run primary school. She has continued the work of the travelling library with visits being made to eight primary schools

The project itself continues to work well. Books are being lent to the children who take them home to read and they are looking after them well. We have a good stock of books suitable for a variety of abilities and ages which we have mainly sourced from a publisher in Nepal. Some of the stories are in nepali, some in both nepali and english with a few just in english and we also have a stock of books in hindi. Almost all are based on local folk stories or relate in other ways to the lives the children lead.

c) Music teaching in schools

The teaching of music in primary schools was identified as a target in the Trust's revised five year plan, which was adopted in 2013, as access to and participation in musical activities has been shown by research to have a beneficial effect upon a child's emotional and intellectual development. The Trust's peripatetic music teacher has now been working with the children for over four years. He visits eight municipal primary schools and also provides singing lessons to the children sponsored through the Trust.

A second DCT music festival was held in early November 2014. The event sought to emphasise that DCT makes no distinction between children and young people on the basis of race, caste or religion. The festival was a wonderful mix of traditional and modern dance and Indian and western songs. Past and present students who had been sponsored by DCT to undertake the hotel management course were there to pass round teas, orange squash and biscuits to the audience and distribute over 200 picnic boxes to the children, some of whom had travelled a couple of hours from home to take part. A vote of thanks to the organising committee was given by Trust Treasurer Robert Adams.

d) Vocational training

DCT has continued to provide financial support to young people undertaking vocational training courses, including paying for course fees, books, uniforms and where appropriate for travel and hostel accommodation.

Six young people (five young men and one young woman) started the hospitality training course at the Food and Craft Institute, a government college in Darjeeling, in summer 2014. They will remain at college until mid 2015 after which they will do their practical training in hotel placements arranged by their tutor. Subject to their successful completion of the course in summer 2015 and the 6 months' work placement, they will each gain a nationally recognised Diploma. All come from poor families and without support would be unable to do the course

Experience has demonstrated that this training provides a successful way into employment by young people who previously were unable to gain work.

One young woman continued with the second year of a two year course in paramedic training at a private hospital in Darjeeling. This course will conclude in summer 2015. She has expressed her wish to undertake a nursing and midwifery diploma course and the Trust

agreed to this in principle in November 2014, subject to her acceptance on the three year course which is based in Siliguri.

The training in needlework skills has continued at the Girls' Orphanage with an experienced teacher. The girls have continued to enjoy the course and the quality of their work has improved.

e) Health improvements at the orphanages

Funding for health improvement measures originally concentrated on the Girls' Orphanage in view of their more apparent needs due to the cramped nature of their site and consequent crowded living conditions which have an adverse impact upon their health. Early measures concentrated upon provision of goods such as combs, medicated soap and towels. This has expanded over time to include water deliveries to allow better personal hygiene. In addition the girls benefit from visits from a qualified nurse paid for by the Trust who advises them, provides health education and has an overview of their health. She also advises the Trust of specific needs, such as for medication, as they arise. In addition, the Trust now pays the young woman who is undergoing paramedic training and who lives at the orphanage, to carry out regular health checks on the girls. This is especially important for new arrivals and as girls return from their home villages in order to try and reduce the occurrence of problems such as scabies.

This activity by the Trust was expanded to include deliveries of medicated soap and towels to the 60 boys in the Boys' Orphanage. Even though the boys' living environment improved immeasurably when they moved into their new dormitory accommodation in November 2014, the Trust is continuing to provide soap and towels on an as needed basis.

The resources provided by the Trust continue to make a significant difference to the children and young people's health and well-being, especially since problems are more quickly addressed as they arise. It is hoped that when all 100 children have new accommodation and adequate water supplies are more readily available, the improvement in living conditions will result in fewer health problems and the support which DCT provides can then be reviewed.

f) Supporting redevelopment of the orphanages

DCT has continued to work in partnership with the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission, acting as supporter, adviser and fund raiser to the Mission in order to achieve the redevelopment of the boys' orphanage site so that it can eventually accommodate 60 boys and 40 girls. Responsibility for managing the project, however, lies with the Kripasaran Bhuddist Mission which is a completely separate body and which has also been raising monies. Funds raised by DCT to support the project and which have allowed the completion of Phase 1 have been transferred through the Kripasaran Mission's FCRA account. The project team includes DCT trustees, members of the Kripsaran Buddhist Mission and a Delhi based firm of architects which has provided a significant amount of pro bono work.

Achieving Phase 1 of the project, which was officially opened on November 4th 2014, has been a major achievement for DCT. The new building provides dormitory accommodation for 60 boys and in its design seeks to provide an exemplar of good practise, including incorporating an on-site septic tank and water harvesting.

Fund raising efforts are now being directed towards raising monies for the second phase although the need to fund the Trust's other core work has been recognised.

g) Child Sponsorship

A total of 52 children were being sponsored through the Trust at the end of 2014.

The main challenge facing the Trust is ensuring the continuity of funding for each child, although reserves are sufficient to match any shortfall generated in this way. This is an increase of two children on the previous year.

There has been a significant increase in costs attached to the scheme resulting largely from rises in school fees. Consequently requests for sponsorship have resulted in a doubling up of some sponsors now being attached to some children. Increasing costs are likely to continue as the children increase in age and further costs eg computer fees and more expensive books are incurred.

The scheme is of significant benefit to the children who are now in better education. They appear to have a developing self-confidence and the majority are making good progress in their studies. It is however a difficult process for the children to adapt to a more rigorous education system and some take longer than others to do so. Consequently a small number are being required to repeat their last school year to ensure that they achieve the required standard. Experience has shown however that once these children settle down they generally do well at school.

Although Trustees seek to ensure that families are completely supportive of the process and are settled in Darjeeling, there can be no guarantee of each child continuing in the scheme. One of the young boys sponsored through the Trust appears to have left Darjeeling with his family without notice in late 2014. It will be necessary to wait for a few months to allow a conclusion to be drawn as to whether this departure is permanent. Such an event represents a lost opportunity to another child and a waste of resources to the Trust. Nevertheless such incidents are infrequent and do not invalidate the programme in any way.

h) Fund raising

Donations, fund raising events and sponsorship are the three largest sources of income for the Trust. Whilst the total amount derived from gift aid and interest is not large it is significant when expenditure is considered. The challenge for the Trust in the next few years will be to maintain the level of income under these three heads to ensure that funds are available for core activities whilst also increasing the amount available for Phase 2 of the orphanage redevelopment.

Trust running costs are the smallest area of expenditure. The major components of this are fees charged by electronic cash transfers and by Just Giving. None of this expenditure relates to the payment of personal expenses for Trustees and the Trust remains fortunate that all trustees are willing to cover all such costs themselves. It should also be noted that the total running costs remain significantly lower than the amount of income from Gift Aid.

In the current difficult economic climate, DCT is grateful to its supporters for all the monies donated and for the funds which individuals have raised through sponsored events. In addition two major events took place in 2014: the annual Darjeeling Cup Golf Day and the

second Bricks and Mortar Ball, both of which were significant in raising funds towards DCT's core activities as well as to the orphanage rebuilding project.

i) Policy on reserves and other financial issues

The Trust's policy on reserves is to maintain a minimum cash balance of £5000, a figure which will be periodically reviewed. None of the funds held by the Trust are in deficit.

The Trust does not act as the Custodian Trustee for any assets.

Recommended that:

The report be adopted as a fair and true account of the Darjeeling Children's Trust's activities in 2014

Approved 28th March 2015

Marilyn Adams

Chairperson

Darjeeling Children's Trust