

## **Darjeeling Children's Trust Annual Report 2015**

**Charity Registration No. 1143109**

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

### **Trustees :**

Katie Williams, Pasang Wangdi, Sharan Patel, Hugh Heron, Katherine Carr, Penelope Adams, Clare Blakeway-Phillips, Marilyn Adams (Chairperson), Vik Patel, Andrew Carr and Felicity Christensen.

### **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 2015 three additional trustees were appointed: Vik Patel, Andrew Carr and Felicity Christensen; and one trustee, Polly Martin, resigned from the Board.

### **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 2015**

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 four UK based trustees during 2015: Hugh Heron, Clare Blakeway-Phillips, Sharan Patel and Marilyn Adams and by DCT treasurer Robert Adams. These visits took place in April and October/November 2015.

The work that the Trust was able to achieve in 2015 was helped by the favourable exchange rate from Sterling to Rupees.

### **a) Improvements to schools**

Fewer school improvements were implemented in 2015 than in some previous years. Approval was given in 2014 for partial roof repairs at Soom Primary School for replacement of the school water storage tank at Maharani Primary School. Both projects were implemented in 2015.

In autumn 2015 Trustees made visits to 10 municipal schools to identify any improvement needs in discussion with staff and requests for cost estimates made. In addition stationery continues to be supplied on an as needed basis to these same schools.

### **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 nine primary schools, an increase of one over the previous year as she now also attends Maharani Primary School.

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 partly sourced from a publisher in Nepal and partly from booksellers in Darjeeling. 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 by visiting two additional schools where they are students.

As a result of a donation from a DCT supporter a small range of percussion instruments have been supplied to further engage the children in the music making process.

#### **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.

Five young people (three young men and two young women) started the hospitality training course at the Food and Craft Institute, a government college in Darjeeling, in summer 2015. They will remain at college until mid 2016 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 2016 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.

Two young women are now sponsored through the Trust to undertake nurse training. They were interviewed together with their parents in October.

One of the young women is now in her second year of study on a nursing course in Silguri whilst the second is in her first year of study at the main Government hospital in Darjeeling.

The young woman formerly sponsored by DCT wanted to take her training further and was lucky to obtain a place on a government sponsored nursing course in Siliguri and to receive an offer from another sponsor to help her.

Trustees decided in 2015 to try and broaden the vocational training opportunities available to girls with fewer educational qualifications. In the knowledge that there is great demand for beauticians and also that this is a job that can be done from home with very little initial capital outlay, three young women were enrolled on a beautician's course at a local salon in mid 2015. All three successfully completed the course which ran for 6 months and by autumn 2015 two had already started to work from home and the third had achieved a post in Hyderabad.

All three of the young women came from low income families and none had a job before starting their training.

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.

Too often for young women the main career option put forward is that of nursing and whilst it is right for some, it is not right for all. So in order to start to widen the horizons of young people from poor

economic backgrounds, visits were arranged to the girls' orphanage by one young woman who was studying on the FCI course and another young woman known to trustees who is now studying business and commerce. Both were a great example, especially their focus and desire to study.

The initiative was also applied to the boys' orphanage and one former FCI student who was himself a former orphanage boy went along with the two DCT volunteers to talk with the boys about the course, its entry requirements and the opportunities it might present.

#### **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. The young woman who lived at the orphanage and carried out regular health checks on the girls has now left so the Trust took the decision in 2015 to employ one of the young women who had previously been supported by DCT to undertake paramedic training to fulfil this role in future. Her appointment takes effect in March 2016. Continuing these checks are 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 Buddhist Mission which is a completely separate body and which has also been raising monies. The project team includes DCT trustees, members of the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission and a Delhi based firm of architects which has provided a significant amount of pro bono work.

Fund raising efforts are now being directed towards raising monies for the second phase for which the ground breaking ceremony was held in November 2015 although the need to fund the Trust's other core work continues to be recognised. Construction of a new stairway at the boys' orphanage to facilitate movement around the site during the building of Phase 2 took place, together with some selected demolition during December 2015.

Funds raised by DCT to support the project are transferred through the Kripasaran Mission's FCRA account. There was a small call in 2015 upon Trust monies for preliminaries (drainage work and fees) prior to the start of Phase 2 construction.

#### **g) Child Sponsorship**

A total of 71 children were being sponsored through the Trust at the end of 2014, which represents a significant increase on the previous number (52).

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.

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. 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. There were no such withdrawals in 2015.

#### **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. The annual Darjeeling Cup Golf Day was again 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.

**The report was adopted as a fair and true account of the Darjeeling Children's Trust's activities in 2015**

**5<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

**Marilyn Adams**

**Chairperson**

**Darjeeling Children's Trust**