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# Mala News

**Patrons:**

**The Maharaja of Benares**

**Felicity Kendal CBE**

**Sir Mark Tully**

**Lady Young**

**Madeline Weinrib**

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## Generous donation makes dream expansion possible

Project Mala has had a windfall that has made it possible to extend the project into areas we have, until now, only been able to dream about. The funds have enabled us to bring forward plans for a middle school and other projects, including a mobile clinic and extension to our adult education work. The picture shows Mala children posing on the construction work for their new middle school at Guria which is due to open in April 2008.

Out of the 330 that will be passing out this year, we will now be able to offer 80 of the brightest children a place in our new middle school. Competition for the places will be fierce, so the selection process will have to be fair. Selection for the places will be, firstly, by nomination by their school of the children they feel are capable of achieving high grades. Secondly, by a written entrance exam, which will be a lengthy paper and finally by interview with their parents to make sure that if they are offered a place then they will complete the course. The new school will ultimately take them through to grade 12, after which we hope many will go on to University. Sponsors whose children are selected will be contacted to ask if they wish to continue to sponsor the child through middle school. We will still have a number of children in middle school who will be available for sponsorship.



## Another child dies

In previous newsletters we have written about how life can be very cheap in rural India. In recent years we have lost several children through accidents. Three have died in road accidents, two from bites from rabid dogs, one was drowned in a pond and another died from a stomach illness. This time we are sad to report that Ashok Kumar, a pupil of our Patehera school, was accidentally shot in the leg when he was attending a village celebration. He died through loss of blood as no medical facilities were available and no transport to take him to hospital.

## Money raised in India

We take the view that our project in India should not rely totally on foreign funds and we have always tried to raise some money in India itself. It does, however, give us particular pleasure when young people contribute and it was, therefore, very nice to receive over 6,000 rupees (£70) from students at the Banares Hindu University who had visited one of our schools and decided to raise money to buy the children shoes.

## See My New Bike!!



Following an item in the last newsletter about a teacher who had to ride 17 kilometres to work at Turkahan school, a kind sponsor, Mr Arora, rang us and offered to buy a new bicycle for him. After we pointed out that he was not the only one that had to ride a long distance to his job as a teacher in Project Mala schools and, in fact, we had six teachers who had a similar long ride to their job, he offered to buy all of them a bicycle. Their new bikes were presented to them at a staff meeting on the 25 November.

## Literacy test

As part of our constant measures to assess how successful we are in achieving literacy with our children, we recently conducted a test for children due to pass out early next year to see how much they had learned in the time with us. The five question paper covered reading, writing, numeracy, general knowledge and a simple English language question. The paper was given to all our 330 class five children and had to be completed in 15 minutes. The results were interesting. Some of our very bright children found the paper easy and completed the paper well within the time limit but others struggled. Overall, 28% got all the questions right and 52% got over 80% but 11% got less than 10% and could not be considered literate. As a result of this study we are making three changes to our programme: 1. we are recruiting an assistant teacher at each school to give slow learners more attention; 2. we are asking the low achievers to stay on at school for another year; 3. we are introducing weekly homework. The picture shows children taking the literacy test.



## A child's story

As part of their class work, the children write about their life and ambitions. Some of the stories are interesting and we print below two from six year olds which have been translated into English by their teacher.

My name is Sunil. I live in a small village. My parents are working in the field. They did not go to school. I daily walk 4 km for coming to school. I want to see city & movies. I love to play cricket and want to meet Sachin Tendulkar. I like to wandering in hills and jungle in my free time. My goat is too beautiful. She is my best friend. I like to study with her. I love my school, my favourite subject Hindi. I play games eat rice & guavas. My teacher is very good. She tell us many stories. I always pray God to give me such knowledge that I also may open such good school for poor people.

My name is Rita Kumari. The name of my father is Mr JokhanRam and Nivmal Devi is my mother. I live in village Amoi of Madihan Subdivision of District Mirzapur. I have three brothers and one sister. Agriculture supports my family. Though my father did not go to school, still he cares for our education. To contribute in the development of my nation, we want to work hard and get better education. Majority of population don't want to do hard work and get better education. I believe in old saying, they don't know the importance of education. My home is made of mud, there is a well in front of my home. I love studies, helping others. I love to improve performance of my friend. I help my mother to carry out work at home. I enjoy attending school. I love to serve people, I love my grandparents. I love my school. Its God grace that I study in such a good school. I love Hindi, science and want to become Vice President of India.

## Supporters collect money and toys



We have been fortunate in this period in a number of supporters who have made a lot of effort to raise money for Project Mala. Danielle Erridge ran a Marathon in Barcelona and raised £1,000. Mohit Dutta and his friends at the Badminton Club at York University played for twelve hours through the night and raised several hundred pounds. Many of our sponsors, too numerous to mention, sent toys and toothbrushes. Members of St Mary's Church, Ruabon, Wales and friends collected over 1,000 toothbrushes. The children really appreciate these toothbrushes and have made a toothbrush rack out of papier mache to stand them in. The brushes are placed on the holder against each child's class number.