

Factsheet / Nov 2013



Project Update

November 2013

Project Name

Educating tribal children from Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

Project Objective

To enable 230 children to attend school and continue to their graduation by providing safe access and covering the cost of their education.

Project Funding

£30,000 to purchase 3 school buses, £6,000 to build a block of latrines, £31,050 granted annually to cover children's education.

Project Started

June 2011

The Project

Adventure Ashram is funding the work of education and welfare charity, Grace Charitable Trust. It is an Indian registered, grass roots charity based in Masinagudi, Tamilnadu run by Solomon Daniel and a board of trustees. Solomon is a local man, well known for his passion and drive to help children take advantage of the opportunities that come as a result of education. Solomon recognised that there are a number of barriers preventing children in his area from attending school. The 3 main barriers were the expense, the lack of transport to and from school and the absence of a parent to help get the children ready for school each day. Solomon set about helping these children access their education.

The Why

The plight of the Indian Elephant and tiger is acknowledged both within India and internationally and protected reserves and corridors are being created. As a result the elephant and tiger populations intensify and heavy policing from the Indian Forest Department restricts access and activity taking place within the reserves. Animal human conflict increases, as does the feeling of isolation for the people living inside or on the outskirts of the reserves.

The people living within the forests have lived there for generations. They are some of India's poorest communities and their family incomes are notoriously low. Finding the money to cover the children's school expenses is so often out of the question.

Every child in India has a free place in a Government run school and can use Government run buses' to get there. However the schools often have a poor reputation and the buses schedule mean the children need to leave home at 6am and will not arrive back until after 7pm on a daily basis. Parents fear for their children attempting the journey on the bus or walking through the forest and their own bad experiences at school mean they often do not value education and therefore children are not encouraged to go.

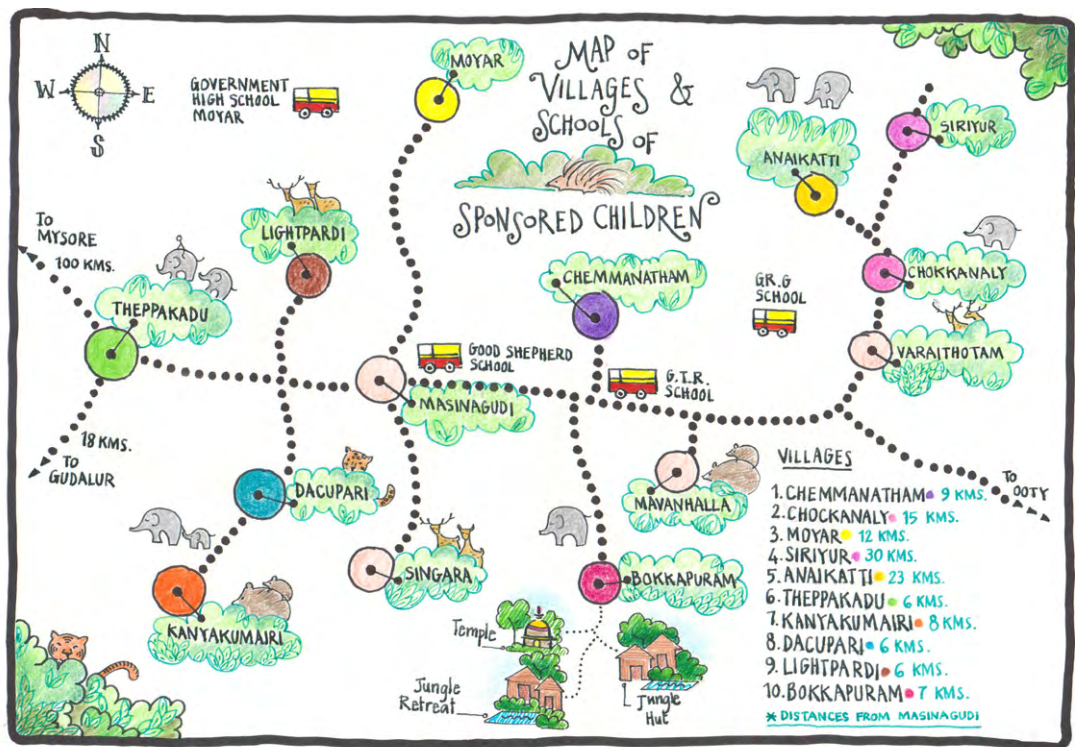
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Generations ago these villagers survived through hunting and collecting sort-after produce from the forest to sell, like honey. Many of these activities are now illegal in order to protect the environment and villagers find themselves earning an income by working for a daily wage in the fields or repairing the roads. Days are long and parents often leave their home at 5am and will not return until late in the night. So those parents who do want their children to go to school are not around to make breakfast and get the children ready.

The Solution

To break the cycle of poverty these children need to appreciate that education is the best way to improve their lives in the long term. They need sympathetic support to sustain their engagement with education throughout their school years. Solomon has spent time getting to know the children and their parents and building trusted relationships. He offers a fresh perspective on education by setting up and running after school clubs in the villages. These clubs run from 7-8pm in a rented building known by the children as the education centre.

A teacher who also lives in the village, is employed by Grace Charitable Trust to run the club, help the children to read and write, build moral awareness and develop new skills through play and games. Children's confidence starts to grow and a love of learning develops. Solomon will enable those ready for school to enrol.



When the children are ready to enrol in school Solomon will ask their parents if they would like their child to go on the list of Adventure Ashram sponsored children. Award winning schools like GRG Memorial School, Vazhaithottam, have developed as low, fee charging, private schools exclusively educating tribal children and the parents can choose from this school and 7 other schools in the area for their child to attend. Solomon will follow their request. £150 is given by the child sponsor through a monthly standing order commitment. This covers a child's school fees, school uniform, bag/books, regular health check, attendance to after school club in their village, a contribution toward the salary of a village teacher and a place on the school bus (diesel, maintenance and driver's salary). Adventure Ashram has inspired support for 230 children to be supported in this way.

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A further 170 children, are able to ride the school bus, attend the village education centres and are given a pair of school shoes. This means a total of 400 children have had their education improved.

Adventure Ashram and Partners granted £30,000 to buy 2 school buses and renovate a 3rd. This fleet is run by Grace Charitable Trust. This enables all the children to arrive and leave school safely and at the right time. Parents trust the drivers employed and know their children are safe, so allow their

children to attend school regularly. Each morning the village teacher will walk from house to house and offer support to the children, who's parents have already left for work, get ready for school. The teacher will count the children onto the bus ensuring each child has their school bag, whose uniform looks tidy and their shoes are on. If a child is missing the teacher will make the bus wait and she will go off and find them. If the child is ill, the teacher will makes sure they visit the doctor that day. So the children get to school safely, on time, properly prepared for the day and happy.

A special project took place last year with the help of an Adventure Ashram Partner. £6,000 was donated to build a block of latrines in one of the villages where the sponsored children live.

The Outcome

Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention of the Rights of a Child recognise the right of the child to have an education that develops their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities. Time and time again education has been proven to be the key to breaking cycles of poverty by increasing employment opportunities, enabling greater social mobility and reducing family sizes. Since the project began many different people have commented on the progress of the children including Head Teacher of GRG Memorial School, Mr Kumaran. He spoke of the difference he sees in the children now, from when they first arrived at the school. He says that they are completely changed. He sees how they act and behave differently. He believes this is because of the value they feel and see being put into their education, from the happiness at having their own school bus, and the individual love and attention they receive from Solomon and their village teachers. The children now can recognise the rich knowledge and talents they have, they can use them and develop them and through constant coaching they are beginning to envisage a future where they can put them to good use. Mr Kumaran said for every sponsor a child's life is being changed.

The Benefits enjoyed by educated children

The children will benefit from having the opportunity to:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of the world they live in
- Create a structure into their lives at an impressionable age
- Learn about themselves and become positive role models for the community
- Utilise their ancient knowledge and talents and their new academic skills
- Mobilise themselves socially through their ability to speak English and Hindi and use computers
- Understand the importance of protecting their environment and unique surroundings

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The Reality

Adventure Ashram's child sponsors have funded 230 children to access their education each year. These children are linked to the child sponsor and their progress is monitored by their village teachers, Solomon and visiting Adventure Ashram Trustees, volunteers and adventurers. The other 170 children from the villages who are not included in this number also receive support. They are invited to the after school classes, are given shoes and encouraged to use the school bus.

The first 230 children are selected because they come from a lone parent family, live with relatives or come from a family where one of the parents is unable to work or from a very poor family. Adventure Ashram's trustees have committed to support this project until the children have reached their graduation and have underwritten the project with £20,000 to ensure loss of sponsorship will not disrupt the children's ongoing education.

Join Us

Sponsor a child or group of children, click here to download a pack. Alternatively you could link your child's class in the UK with one of the classes in the Good Shepherd School, Masinagudi, which is attended by some of the sponsored children. Click **here** to download the *School Link-UP* pack.

Plans are being investigated to design and build the first village education centre. This special project will be developed throughout the next year. If you are interested in knowing more about this, please get in touch.

Thank You

Thank you for the money you are raising and donating, you are helping to ensure projects like this one succeed to improve the standard of living for some of India's poorest people.

For more information

Grace Charitable Trust www.gracecharitabletrust.com
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Adventure-Ashram>

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