

# THE EAST·WEST OVERSEAS AID FOUNDATION

News Letter

Issue 2. December 2006

[www.tewoaf.org.au](http://www.tewoaf.org.au)

Hello and welcome to the second edition of The East West Overseas Aid Foundation newsletter. Things have been extremely busy since our last issue with many exciting new developments and plans put into action, and as 2006 draws to a close we look forward to what the New Year will bring. Seasons Greetings to all of our wonderful supporters without whom none of our recent progress would have been possible.

## ULURU CHILDREN'S HOME

### THIRTY THREE TALENTED AND BUSY CHILDREN...

A lot has been happening at Uluru in the past six months as a result of the invaluable contributions made by so many. With two beautiful new dormitories, a new library, regular lessons in IT, karate, English, German song, music and singing, dancing, yoga, craft, etc., it's a wonder the children have time to go to school, let alone achieve good marks. Nonetheless, the children recently received their half-yearly results and as usual most have excelled and were justifiably very proud of their achievements.

The number of volunteers giving their time at UCH has been on the rise and the interaction between volunteers and the children brings much joy to all involved.

### NEW DORMITORIES

One of the most exciting events at Uluru this year was the opening of The Merkel Family Fellowship Building on October 6. Ron Merkel and Beth Charles, and a team of TEWOAF supporters and volunteers were on hand to witness this proud moment in TEWOAF's history. The Merkel Family Fellowship Building and another new dormitory have been built to accommodate 50 tsunami-affected children thanks to the amazing response of so many wonderful people following the terrible tragedy in 2004. The oldest girls at Uluru moved into the Merkel Building recently, which has provided them with a well-earned rest from some of their younger 'siblings'. The UCH team is currently looking for new children in need and it won't be long before both dormitories are full. Our heartfelt thanks to all of those who contribute to our work: your generosity helps to dramatically improve the life's chances of so many children who have struggled since that tragic day when the tsunami hit the region.



## COMPUTER EDUCATION CENTRE UPDATE



Local gentleman Vijay continues to hold computer classes in the centre for UCH children before and after school, while lines continue to form outside the centre on weekends as local village children queue to receive their weekly lessons. The plans for the new 40-unit computer centre are looking fantastic and will be extremely beneficial to locals in providing them with valuable IT skills, as well as communication and information via the internet. There have been some hurdles in starting to build the next phase (permanent building) of the project, mainly due to increased material and construction costs leaving us \$130,000 short!

“Preparations for the new computer centre are well underway with a small ‘pilot’ network currently being constructed in the library room. Software and curriculum are being developed for the children, which will assist in the teaching of IT skills, English and other subjects once funding becomes available and the building is complete,”  
*Alex Craven, Engineers Without Borders volunteer based at UCH*

## RAINWATER HARVESTING PROJECT

Thanks to the efforts of Tony Godbold and Rotary Monash, finance has been approved by Rotary International for the rainwater harvesting project. Uluru will soon enjoy reliable, clean water after the previous supply was destroyed by the tsunami. Special thanks goes to Rotary Monash co-ordinator Tom Williams and TEWOAF supporter and water expert Stephen Fulford for helping to get the project off the ground.

## NEW PLAYGROUND AT UCH

In collaboration with a team of volunteers from World Expeditions, TEWOAF recently constructed a playground for the children at UCH. The children now have swings, a slide, merry-go-rounds and more, and as you can see much joy is being gained from these facilities... and so far only one broken arm!!!

“As a volunteer, I feel the most valuable contribution we can make is in our interaction with the children in whatever form that may take. Personal attention, whether a piggyback, a push on a swing or a hug before bed, is something we take for granted, but is something that means so much to these children. This is my second stay at Uluru and after spending time getting to know these beautiful youngsters – who have endured such trauma in their short lives – it is hard to leave UCH the same as when you arrived. And yet somehow I seem to go away feeling like I get more out of the experience than anyone.”

*Megan Nutbean, Australian Volunteer*



## ULURU HEALTH CARE CENTRE

The clinic is busy as usual, with the number of new patients continuing to increase. A recent outbreak of the flu-like virus ‘Chikungunya’ has seen Dr Selvam run off his feet...luckily he has had several highly competent and motivated UK medical students assisting him in recent months. The centre will certainly need to recruit another doctor in the near future – especially with increased emphasis on maternity health.

The Health Education Program has seen the introduction of posters, a TV and DVD player showing health promotion films (for some reason the waiting room seems significantly fuller since this development), and regular visits to Alampara Primary School by UHCC staff. This, in conjunction with work carried out as part of the Post-Tsunami Health Care and Research Project, has seen tangible advances in raising awareness about public health issues in the local villages.

Planning is underway for the addition of a maternity wing at UHCC to provide the community with ante and post-natal education and care. In a region where such information and care is virtually non-existent and infant mortality rates are unnecessarily high, the maternity wing is a top priority.

“Dr Selvam and the nursing staff at UHCC continue to do a fantastic job in serving the local community’s health care needs. Despite efficient consultations, the waiting room is always full, with waiting patients now able to watch videos promoting health and hygiene. With help from Celestine and Dr Selvam, Peter, Zoe and Sarah made posters on the risks of smoking and alcohol; and Tine, Doreen and I made posters on nutritional deficiencies, and hygiene.”

*Davina Hensman. UK Medical Student, volunteer*

## THE POST-TSUNAMI HEALTH CARE AND RESEARCH PROJECT



When the tsunami hit on Boxing Day 2004, its effects were devastating throughout Asia. In Kadapakkam (predominantly a fishing village), the livelihoods of many were destroyed as boats, nets and other equipment were damaged beyond repair. Thanks to the hard work and contributions of so many, TEWOAF worked quickly to set up a team of staff and volunteers to work in Kadapakkam and other nearby coastal villages. Their goal was to commence what would be long-term work, identifying local people in need and helping them to eventually overcome the effects of this tragedy. The team has been working extremely hard, regularly visiting villages with a mobile health service to cater for the medical and psychological needs of those affected.

Upon completion of extensive research into the long-term needs of the area, the next phase of the project has been underway for some months. Dr. Selvam, Mr Parasivam, Chandra and the rest of the PTHCRP team have been making weekly visits to a number of tsunami-affected villages surrounding Kadapakkam, and in addition to providing free medical care and counselling, a range of additional programs are now being run. A presentation was made recently by Dr. Selvam

and Mr. Parasivam at the First National India Disaster Management Conference (FIDMC) in Delhi – their presentation was most successful and was met with much interest and support. For a full report on the PTHCRP’s activities, please visit: <http://www.tewoaf.org.au/postts.html>

“Mr. Parasivam and the community nurse Chandra are really doing a great job with their work in the community. Personally, we have been involved with one village in particular which we visit every Thursday. The locals are always extremely excited to see Mr Parasivam and Chandra and we have been really touched by the warm welcome we personally continue to receive each time we visit...we are constantly being dragged away to people’s houses for chai and fresh coconuts. Their work with the children goes a long way to encourage self-awareness and resilience in the children. Chandra has established relationships with each person in the village and is building on the sense of community. Both Mr Parasivam and Chandra are extremely kind, and this is obvious in the wonderful work they are doing.”

*Christine Krüger and Doreen Ludewig, German Social Work Students, volunteers*

## EDUCATION

### ALAMPARA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Things are continuing to improve at the local school, although there is still much to be done. With the toilets now in full use, the school children are no longer forced to go to the toilet by the main road. There are nearly enough teachers to man each classroom which is a big step up from three teachers for seven classes this time last year, and the school almost has adequate classrooms with children no longer forced to sit outside on the verandah to learn. Finally, all of the classrooms (except for one, fingers crossed!) have desks.

In the near future, TEWOAF plans to provide desks for the final classroom, build a fence to define school boundaries and hopefully prevent it from being used as a public thoroughfare (and toilet), and invest in the provision of a range of additional resources to improve the quality of education at the school.

### SECONDARY SCHOOL

Plans are under way to establish a secondary school in Alampara for children currently attending the local primary school. At present, there is no secondary school in Alampara and not many children can afford to travel to the next village. There is also a serious lack of quality educational institutions available in the area, with the divide between the standards of education in rural and urban areas widely acknowledged in India. The poor quality of rural education makes it exceedingly difficult for students to achieve at a level sufficient to gain entrance into university.

It is the intention that the TEWOAF-funded and constructed school will be a small step to bridging this divide, by establishing an institution that will not only provide an excellent and well-rounded education, but will also enable students to go on to achieve further educational success if they so desire. TEWOAF is currently preparing to fundraise for this worthy project and hopes to involve Australian secondary students in the process. Two schools in South Australia - the Wilderness School and Glenunga International High School - have already expressed interest, with potential involvement from The Victoria League of Commonwealth Friendship in Adelaide.

## IN AUSTRALIA...

### 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DINNER DANCE

This year's Dinner Dance was an overwhelming success, raising record amounts for TEWOAF. Held on October 27<sup>th</sup> at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne, the event attracted a record number of guests, as well as a record number of donated raffle and auction prizes. Guests wined and dined and danced the night away - all for a good cause. Thanks to all of those involved for their hard work and generosity and we look forward to next year's event which promises to be bigger and better than ever!

### FESTIVAL OF INDIAN MUSIC IN AUSTRALIA (FIMA)

TEWOAF was recently presented with a cheque for \$15,000 from CHARINDAA, the organisers of the Festival of Indian Music in Australia (FIMA) in Melbourne and Sydney. Proceeds from the event, which featured some of India's finest musicians, were divided between TEWOAF and The Fred Hollows Foundation. We would like to thank CHARINDAA for supporting our organisation with their kind and generous donation.

### WE NEED YOUR HELP!

As our work to help the poor and disadvantaged expands, our running costs continue to rise. By supporting TEWOAF you are helping to improve the lives of those less fortunate and you can contribute in a variety of ways. Please see the enclosed donation form or visit our website [www.tewoaf.org.au](http://www.tewoaf.org.au), for the various ways you can donate. Donations of more than \$2.00 are tax deductible.

*"Light is the task when many share the load" - Homer.*