



FRIENDS

Newsletter of the Ragpickers Education & Development Scheme (REDS) Bangalore, India
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"Young adults at risk: a value enhancement workshop"

We have been working extensively with ragpicking children for the past 25 years and are in contact with over 100 children quite a few of who are above the age of 18 yrs. Some of these boys have been in this profession from a very young age. With the introduction of 'Swachha Bangalore - the door-to-door waste collection program' of Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (the local Municipal cooperation) the very livelihood of these boys is at stake. With the unavailability of recyclable waste, the boys have been looking for other means to earn a living. Some of them have even taken to theft. To add to their problems, they are exploited by the retail shop owners who encourage the boys to steal.

In our efforts to help these boys look for alternatives and better living conditions, a 10 day residential camp organized from 10th to 19th May 2005 at the REDS- Skill Training Center at Deepahalli. This program was organized in partnership with SATHI, an organization from Raichur. Working with children at the railway platforms in Raichur, SATHI has been conducting residential camps to motivate these children to go back home. Using their expertise, we hoped to help the boy involved in our programs here in Bangalore.

This 10 day camp was inaugurated by Fr. Ignase Arulappen - Regional Superior of the Marainist Province of India. He encouraged the boys to participate wholeheartedly in the program and make use of the opportunity give. He used the lamp that was lit to inaugurate the program as an example and told the boys that, like the lamp, which gave light to those around, they would have to be the light of their families as well as the society.



Initially 32 boys enrolled to participate in the camp, but in course of time some boys left. The objective of the camp was to help the boys reflect on the quality of life they lead and decide on what they would like to do in the future. On the first day of the camp a group exercise was organised to facilitate the boys to reflect on issues like; why they choose ragpicking as a profession, what does their work involve, what is their perception of the work they do, how does their family, people they know, and the community at larger react to them and the work





they do. This was a very enlightening sessions, with boys sharing real life experiences of how they have been shunned by society.

At the camp they were also introduced to the vocational training facility available at REDS. The boys visited the training units and interacted with the trainees. Ms. Sharada of Parivarthan (a counseling agency) through group games help the boys understand the importance

of decision making and responsibility.

The boys were introduced to meditation to help focus on their emotions, especially anger and unhappiness. Since most of the boys had either never been to school or had dropped out, an attempt was made to rekindle their interest in education through literacy classes. Games and cultural activities brought in a few light moments.

The camp ended on 19th May with a valedictory program at Chaminade Nilaya, to which the parents of the children were invited. Fr. Pragasam, Executive Director of REDS, thanked the staff of SATHI and those from REDS for organizing and facilitating the program. The boys thanked REDS for giving them the opportunity to participate in a camp of this nature. They were happy to have learnt many new things, most of them were happy to have learnt how to meditate, especially when it come to helping them in handling their emotions.



Parents of the children who participated in the program expressed their gratitude to both REDS and the Society of Mary for the help they have received. They said that not only their children, but their families too have benefited from the programs.

A Visit to India ...

Mr. Samuel Wukusick, Mr. Joshua Richard, and Ms. Annie Devine from University of Dayton. Mr. Thomas Callaghan, Ms. Maria Naeth, and Ms. Gaudalupe Ruiz-Jones from Chaminade University, Hawaii participated in the month long Immersion Program at REDS from 12th of May 2005 to 9th of June 2005.

After an orientation about the history and development of REDS, the vision of the program and the activities undertaken, the students spent the next few days getting participating in the camp for older boys that was being organised at the STC. They visited the training units on the campus and participated in the games and cultural activities together with the trainees at the STC.



Armed with information on the social and cultural mannerism of the people they ventured out meet and interact with the children and the communities where REDS



works. They visited the areas where REDS - Bangalore is working, and interacted with the children at the Day care centers and Play schools.

They spent much time at Parvathinagar - Hosur, one of the new areas that REDS has ventured out to work in. The families in the area remember

fondly. In a community where caste system is still prevalent, they were moved, when the students visited the families and ate the food that was offered to them. They also visited Senaha Nilya - residential home for orphans and children from broken families, Abhayadhama - residential Skill Training Center and open school for boys, and Asha Deep - home for girl children on the street.

The seriousness of their visit was lightened with a picnic to Mysore & Ooty, a visit to some of the temples here in Bangalore, Shopping and a personal experience of an Indian marriage.

They had also been to Velankani, along with the shrine of Our Lady they also visited the villages in Velankani affected by the Tsunami. They visited the Mothers Theresa's Charity Home at Velankani where children and women affected by the Tsunami were being helped.

The program concluded on 9th June with a farewell program where the staff and children of REDS bid then farewell with heavy hearts but with also happy moments to remember. We wish them the very best for their future endeavors.

News in Brief

REDS - BANGALORE

We welcome the four Marianist Brothers, who will be involved in the REDS-Bangalore program for the next three years. Bro. Xavier Raj as Area Coordinator facilitates work at the play schools, day care centres and tailoring units in the areas, Shivajinagar, Tannery Road, and Bagalur Layout. Bro. Dennis Lobo as Area Coordinator facilitates work in L.R. Nagar, Neelasandra, Madiwala, and Vinayakanagar. Bro. James assists with Self Help Group program and Bro. Lucian handles the accounts as well as works at Vinayakanagar area.

The SHG Mela and Women's Saving Day was celebrated on 27th May 2005. The program began with the SHG members walking towards the venue of the program holding banners and placards communicating the work done by REDS and the



purpose and benefits of SHG along with the names of the groups. The Chief Guest Fr. Pragasam, SM-Executive Director of REDS, inaugurated the program with the lighting of the lamp. Mr. J. Lourdasamy presented a brief account of REDS Self Help Program. The program then took on a lighter note with cultural program being staged by the members. Skits and Song were put up by members Self Help Groups. The items highlighted the present conditions of the families and the Sangha's service in maintaining the peace and harmony in the families.

The last few months have been busy with school admissions. Efforts have been made to admit children from the area to schools and hostel for education and vocational training.

REDS - SKILL TRAINING CENTRE

Religious Brothers from the Capuchin Post-Novitiate, Raichur, and the Christian Brothers from Bangalore were at the training center for a week for an experience of working with children. We appreciate their wholehearted participation in the program and wish them the very best.

On 2nd June the children went on a picnic to 'Shivasamudra'. They had a good time and enjoyed themselves. A medical camp was also organised for the children in the same month. With support of the sr. Anthony from Augustinian sisters Dr. Hsieh, Ping-Tung and his team from Taiwan were invited. The children were given a thorough check up at the one-day camp.



REDS - RANCHI

With heavy hearts staff of REDS-Ranchi bid farewell to Bro. Basant Kujur at a get-together, this was organized on 13th May 2005. We take this opportunity to thank him for his encouragement and support and wish him all the best. We are also happy to say that Bro. Paulus Lakara who has been associated with REDS is now the acting Director.

Staff development programs were organised on 3rd May by Bro. Tom Oldenski and in the month of June facilitated by Bro. Augustus. While Bro. Tom spoke to the staff about the Society of Mary and the characteristics of the Marianist way of teaching, Bro. Augustus did a SWOT analysis with them on their work at the centers and the slum.

