

FRIENDS OF SANGAM FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER 2

JUNE 2003

Greetings to all our supporters - and to others to whom this newsletter is sent for information.

Our Aim

The aim of Friends of Sangam Foundation (FOSF) is
"To promote and provide quality education for children at Sangam School, Indri, Haryana and elsewhere in India, giving preference to those from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds".

As the title implies our support will be channeled through the Sangam Foundation which is a Charitable Educational Society registered in India.

Up to now...

For several years Eleanor Nesbitt has been collecting funds for Sangam School, as well as encouraging people to visit it. When Kamla Sawhney, the founder and principal of the school, came to Britain last August it was decided, at a meeting in Coventry, to form an organisation that could seek charitable status, to continue her work. A committee was formed, with Eleanor at its head.

Our main task has been to set up the formal organisation, including its management committee, convene a meeting, consider our priorities, set up a bank account,

and to establish financial control procedures. This is our second newsletter. We have also amended the web site that had been so well established by David Tall.

All this has taken longer than expected. But now, 10 months after the Coventry meeting, we are ready to roll into action! We need our supporters to consider how they can best help, and we need more supporters! So please pass this newsletter around, and persuade your friends to join us.
Stephen Petter, Administrator.

Friends of Sangam Foundation is a company limited by
guarantee registered in England and Wales, number 4627919,
registered office The Friends Meeting House, Hill Street, Coventry, CV1 4AN.
Website www.sangamschool.org.uk Email: admin@sangamschool.org.uk

Needs and Priorities

Our original plan was simply to have supporters become Sponsors by taking out monthly standing orders. For each sponsorship there would be an additional pupil at the school. However this was later thought to be too simplistic. What about extra teachers, extra classrooms and resources, and some secretarial help? We decided to consult with Kamla Sawhney who besides being Principal of the school, chairs the governing Foundation. They met in Delhi and decided that there was need for consolidation and that expansion should be by adding two higher classes - years 9 and 10 - to the school. In fact this was urgent in part because the village had given the land on the understanding that the school would educate children to this level. Following this meeting Kamla produced a five year strategy and a prioritized list of the school's needs. In this she was helped by Carole Taylor, a volunteer teacher from Southport, UK. There were some surprises, for instance we had not realised that fresh water was a problem and would be given high priority.

Priorities

- 1. Office Assistance.** At present Kamla Sawhney does all the administration. This would cost £525 a year.
- 2. A Tube Well** to provide fresh drinking water and some vegetation. This would be a one time cost of up to £1600.
- 3. Three more classrooms**, for instance at present two classes are held in the assembly hall. These would cost up to £5000.
- 4. Higher staff salaries.** At present the staff receive much less pay than teachers in the state schools. (There are some compensations, for instance state employed teachers are liable to be posted anywhere, often far from home. Sangam's teachers all live locally.) Not only do they deserve more but there is a need to attract teachers with certain qualifications. Another problem is that Kamla works pro bono but agrees she must retire soon. A replacement will need a salary. Extra staff costs would be about £900 per month.
- 5. Help with running expenses**
- 6. Setting up classes 9 and 10.**
- 7. Better provision for non-academic activities.**

From this we see that our first targets (1 to 4 above) are:

- a. to raise £6600 for a well and three classrooms and
- b. to obtain sponsorships to the value of £950 per month.

Formal Organisation

Our British organisation - Friends of Sangam Foundation (FOSF) - was formally established ('incorporated') in January as a Company Limited by Guarantee and we have applied for it to become a Registered Charity. 'Limited by Guarantee' means we do not have shareholders, and this implies the fact that we are 'not-for-profit'. Many charities are incorporating this way as it provides legal and financial protection for the Management Committee (in our case, the Council), while also requiring us to observe certain standards such as conducting business properly and presenting annual accounts of a specified standard to the Government and to our members.

Sangam Foundation itself was formally registered in 1993 in the state of Haryana which is near Delhi. It is "A Registered Charitable Educational Society" with a governing body of which Kamla Sawhney is the President. The Foundation is required to submit annual accounts to the state government under FCRA Rules. (Presumably FCRA is an accountancy professional body.)

In a later newsletter we hope to be able to give more information about Sangam Foundation's governing body. So far, however, we (FOSF) have been communicating directly with Kamla and with Hari Khurana, the Foundation's Financial Secretary. We aim to keep the Governors informed, for instance we shall send them this newsletter.

How will we raise the funds?

We hope to raise the regular monthly income by appealing for sponsorships. The figure which the Council likes is £6 per month - they felt that to ask for more would be counter-productive. (However, of

the first four standing orders, one is for £10 and another for £18. That's before an appeal!) £950 divided by £10 is 95 - which by amazing coincidence is one less than the number of supporters on our current list! Elsewhere in this newsletter there should be a bankers standing order mandate form.

The intention is to see how many supporters become sponsors, then if necessary the Council will consider advertising an appeal in appropriate magazines. (I suppose this means we shall need to appeal for funds for advertising! -SP)

As for the lump sums, the Council has not yet considered this. However some of the supporters have been very good at fund raising and/or have been very generous in the past.

How Sangam Changed My Life

Trupti Taylor shares a brief biography.

Born in Mumbai and moved to the UK at the age of ten. Left school at 16 to work in the travel industry. In 1991, travelled alone to India for a period of 6 weeks to undertake voluntary work. Stumbled upon Sangam via an organisation in Delhi and completely blown away by Kamla's determination and commitment. Witnessing children walking 2 miles every day, barefoot in the scorching heat just to get an education struck a cord and on return to the UK, gave up work to go back to college. Having obtained a degree attempted to gain employment with a charity linked to third world development. Owing to lack of success in this area, decided to organise a charity fashion show independently in aid of Sangam. The project took just under a year and was challenging due to lack of any previous fund-raising experience. However, the show was a great success raising £1,000 and general awareness via the local media. The show also had another very life changing impact. Whilst trying to find potential models for the show, met future husband Ian, even though he declined to be a model, preferring instead to help in the background. A year later got married and moved to Worcestershire. Shortly after the wedding I received a hand painted greeting card signed by some of the children wishing us a happy marriage. Presently working in financial services. Sangam has had a very direct impact on my life. Without Sangam would not have a degree or met my husband. As corny as it sounds, Sangam has quite literally changed my life.....

Trupti Taylor is a member of the management committee.

Registered Charity.

One of the advantages of incorporation is that it is supposed to make registration as a charity easier. However at time of writing our application is still being processed, there having been two sets of detailed questions of a technical nature. The Charity Commission seem to work on an assumption that a charity operates for some years before applying for registration, but we applied as soon as we were incorporated. Once registered, our Council will become the charity's Trustees.

The two principal advantages of being registered are, first, that there are additional financial and legal controls, which give potential supporters greater confidence, and secondly, that donors' income tax can be refunded in favour of the charity. -SP

Visiting Sangam School

Stephen Petter discusses his and others' visits.

Since the school was founded there has been a steady stream of visitors, many of whom stay with Kamla Sawhney and travel with her the few miles from her home in Sohna to the village of Indri. (I was going to write 'commute' but the word seems inappropriate for such a fascinating journey. Packed in a small minivan, the driver hooting continually to warn walkers, cyclists, ox carts, wagons loaded with bundles of fodder so wide as to occupy the whole width of the road, jeeps acting as buses so crowded that some passengers sit on the driver's cab.... As one passes homes and hamlets the range of sights is extraordinary. People washing, dressing, scolding, sleeping eating and doing many other personal chores! Commuting? No! 'Adventuring' might be better!) The children always seem to surprise visitors by their neatness, keenness, and charm. Visitors are introduced to one or more classes. Conversation is not only a break in the routine, but a chance to demonstrate their excellent English. One gets the impression that the teachers enjoy the break, and recognition of their dedicated hard work.

When I and my partner visited we took over the English lessons of the top three forms for two weeks. We used a variety of teaching methods - formal lessons and exercises, songs, rhymes, tongue-twisters and word games. The pupils' standard was extraordinarily high, especially in grammar, but they were rather unwilling to speak. It reminded me of the essentially written approach my O level French lessons, many years ago, so different from the Conversational French I studied more recently.

Kamla still takes the more senior pupils for Maths, which is her specialism. This despite her heavy load of work as Principal and Administrator, dealing with everything from supervising the man in charge of the land and buildings and relations with the village leaders and the local education authority, through to keeping the detailed accounts. She also leads assembly which includes some spiritual and ethical content that respects the various faith traditions.

There seems to be no suitable hotel in Sohna (and certainly not in Indri) other than a rather grand place a mile or two out of town, run rather desperately I felt, by the area Tourist Board. Another problem is that the bus service between Sohna and Delhi is not good. It is very crowded (we probably would not have got on with our luggage had not the school's bus driver got us an embarassingly privileged position). The taxi costs well over £15, depending on one's bartering ability. As a westerner one is not in a good bargaining position!

There has been a suggestion that we should organise a regular flow of volunteers to visit the school. Supporters who plan to visit the school are advised to talk with Eleanor beforehand. -SP

Letter from a Supporter

Dear Stephen

It is very heartening to see, at last, an efficient body has taken over to collect funds for Sangam School and I wish every success.

Being a pensioner with just state pension I'm in no position to commit money regularly. Since my contact with Sangam School three years ago I have been instrumental in raising nearly £2000, and I intend to continue to raise awareness of the school.

In my opinion Sangam School needs:

- 1. Good maintenance, bricks and wood;*
- 2. A better school bus, and measures to keep it rust free;*
- 3. More school buildings so as to increase student numbers;*
- 4. Create a reserve fund so the school does not face financial crises periodically;*
- 5. Build a self contained flat for use by visiting teachers.*

Naturally I'm keen to know all about your work. Please keep me informed if not too inconvenient. I'd like to make contact with anyone who has been to Sangam School or is going there. Good luck with your sterling work.

Your friend

Robin Roy

Dawnmoor, Torrington, Devon, EX38 8LZ

What you can do

Sponsorship. What we currently hope many supporters will do now is to become sponsors. A suitable form will be attached to this newsletter. Supporters may duplicate it if they wish. The amount suggested is £6 a month, a

figure that was arrived at by calculating the cost per pupil including the cost of some essential improvements. Of course, more is acceptable. So far sponsorships range from £6 to £18 per month. .

Lump sum donations. In the past most of our supporters have donated lump sums in response to requests from Eleanor Nesbitt.

Fund-raising events. Several supporters have raised these sums by organising fund-raising events. It would be good to report these in a later newsletter. Please share your methods.

Links. The teachers and pupils are delighted to have contacts with individuals and classes of schools in Britain. Letters and pictures can be exchanged. Books and craft materials can be sent. It would be good if someone came forward to advise and co-ordinate this sort of activity, but meanwhile anyone wanting advice should contact Eleanor.

Summary of the Minutes of FOSF Council Meeting, 23rd February, 2003.

We agree to adopt the Quaker Business Method and record our Minutes in the Quaker style.

We appoint the following to serve on this Council: Joy Barrow, Hugh Boulter, Trupti Edwards, David Fish, Jo Hallett, Jennifer Kavanagh, William Waddilove and Elizabeth Whittaker all subject to their consent.

We approve the following appointments: Chairperson: Eleanor Nesbitt, Treasurer: David Fish, until the next Annual General Meeting.

We approve the appointment of Stephen Petter as Company Secretary.

We agree that the Chairperson, the Treasurer and the Administrator be the authorised bank signatories. (*Note: Cheques, etc. need to be signed by two of these.*)

We agree that The Friends Meeting House, Coventry, be our Registered Office, and express gratitude to Coventry Friends for the facility and for agreeing to forward mail when necessary

We agree for planning purposes the following schedule:

31st December: Accounting Reference Date

February: Annual Reports and Draft Accounts sent to members

March: Annual General Meeting (Audited Accounts available)

Announcement of funding to be sent to Sangam

April: First tranche of funds to Sangam.

September: Council Meeting

November: possible second tranche of funds.

We agree that our first AGM shall be held in March 2004.

We ask Stephen Petter to edit a bi annual newsletter. (June and December)

We have had a lengthy discussion on how best to help Sangam School and Foundation.. We considered pupil sponsorship, teacher sponsorship, clerical assistance for the Principal, school to school linkages, consulting with the Foundation Committee and with Kamla Sawhney, planning to allocate specified proportions of funds to pupil sponsorship, teacher sponsorship and capital expenditure, and other ideas. We ask Stephen Petter to draft a letter to Kamla Sawhney for our approval, to ask Kamla to prioritize her needs.

Joining FOSF

You may apply to become a member of Friends of Sangam Foundation (a Company Limited by Guarantee). Members receive annual reports and accounts and are invited to general meetings. (In fact it is intended to offer all supporters these facilities.) Members will select the management council. They agree that in the event of the Company winding up they will contribute to repaying any debts up to a maximum of £1. If you wish to become a member of the Company apply to the administrator.

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UK Registered Charity number 1098382

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