

Chennai – Trip report Nov. 2010

Our first meeting was with Mr. Vetrivel, the forwarder who generously offered us the clearance through customs of our 250 kg delivery in December 2008/January 2009.

He mentions that, as from the first of January, 2011, the import of second-hand goods into India will be prohibited. This regulation has been in existence for some years but will be implemented as from 1.1.11. It is a question of retaliation for restrictions put by countries to their import of Indian goods.

As is unfortunately often the case, this results from proud reactions of high placed civil servants who do not give a damn to the distress of their own countrymen to whom these objects are addressed. As far as cloths are concerned, provided they are clean, ironed and properly packed, it might still work. Mr. Vetrivel will keep us informed but new deliveries to India seem to be seriously in jeopardy.

Then we go and visit Mr. Ajay Goyal who delivers monthly to our kindergarten 25kg of chickpeas and 50 kg of rice which are being paid by our friend Pavan.

Together with Philippe we review the various projects that Happy Kids are supporting in Gandhi Nagar slum through Speed Trust.

- the kindergarten
- Ilayadasan
- educational sponsorships

**The kindergarten** – nothing to mention in particular. Between 40 to 45 children are coming every day and are split in two groups (younger ones and older ones) with a teacher for each group. They are all learning English as, after the kindergarten, the next step is to join an English private school. Philippe will tell us in due time which kids will require a financial support to ensure their further education.

The children were all very curious and wanted to have one's photograph taken. When shown the picture they would recognize themselves and burst out laughing and the ones who were not on the picture would ask for another one.

The toys sent in 2007 and 2009 are still there and the children seem to particularly enjoy the Lego.

**Ilayadasan** – a very emotional meeting and I must confess that I am not good at facing pain, emotion is taking over and I feel like crying looking at him and understanding how much he is suffering all day. His courage is commanding my admiration as he is obviously very much in pain; every step, every move he has to do to get into the ambulance makes him wince. However when given the gifts and photographs from each of his sponsors and told how many people are keeping him in their thoughts, he smiles and thanks. His mother is very much present and goes along with him to each of the dialysis.

Philippe assures me that the photographs with your names will cheer him up when suffering the most and we do hope that it will give him the heart to fight and defeat the disease.

The doctors are reserved when making a diagnosis as it could shift either way at any time. When leaving I told him that I wished that next time we could converse in English as it would mean that he would have been able to go back to school and to his remedial courses at the kindergarten. He smiled when we took leave of each other and waved good bye when he left with the ambulance holding the chocolate and Sugus offered by Nicole.

**Educational sponsorships** – this new project began in June 2010 and is aiming at finding sponsors who would each be ready to financially support the complete school education of a child whose parents are too poor to afford it. It represents a commitment stretching over about ten years at the cost of about CHF 350.- per year including the fees of a private English school, transport, equipment, uniform and health insurance.

In this first school year 2010/2011 we have 11 children. For 2011/2012, 5 have already been identified and the sponsors found and more will be announced at the beginning of next year according to the children finishing kindergarten and beginning with school and whose parents are too poor to send them to school.

We take stock of each child and the every sponsor will be kept informed personally about his family and school situation.

We met with the woman director of one of the two schools where our sponsored kids are going, E.V.E is a catholic school directed by Mrs Roselet. The classes there go from nursery school to secondary school.

Mrs Roselet tells us that, due to the arrival of our little protégés some well-to-do families have withdrawn their children so that they do not mix with kids from the slums. But in her view it was a matter of principle and of religious conviction to accept children from the slum.

In summary our projects in Chennai are doing well thanks to Philippe and Denise whom we heartily thank.