



Dear Friends,

We start this newsletter with the very sad announcement of the passing of Val Dorey in late August. A full tribute to Val and the immense contribution she made to the Fund is inside. We send our heartfelt condolences to Trevor.

Our last newsletter, back in the summer, appropriately covered the visit that had been made in February to our partners in southern India. It felt appropriate this time to remind you of the excellent work which we support in Kenya and South Africa and bring you up-to-date with those partners.

From the Kawangware area of Nairobi, Nicholas has recently written to us about CODI's response to the issues in Kenyan society. Inflation (similar to UK levels) and high taxation on essential commodities has led to demonstrations, some turning violent with around 30 deaths of young people. CODI works with young men from the most disadvantaged communities trying to give them purpose and keep them from gang culture; essential work in such an environment. Nicholas maintains contact with the barbers and laundries which we have helped to set up; those in busy locations are managing through the difficulties; he is giving extra help to others.

In East London, South Africa, the Loaves & Fishes Network continues its support for pre-schools around the city and region. Some 17 centres are currently within the intensive phase where their staff receive training and resources are provided. Our funding helps with provision of food, essential for toddlers from families affected by significant unemployment,

and last year we sent funds for books to help with an initiative to improve reading skills (recognised as needed across the nation). We held a video call with Pateka, the general manager, in June; she was very positive and grateful for the support from the Fund.



Early reading at a pre-school in East London

Val Dorey (1930 – 2023)

We asked former trustees Christine & Brian Tims and Trevor Dorey for their memories of Val's contribution to the Fund from which the current trustees have compiled this tribute.

In the 1960s Miriam lived about 100-yards from Val and Trevor in Friern Barnet, North London. Over time the three became close friends, and in 1977 when Trevor became a trustee, Val was already heavily involved with the packing room operating from Miriam's house - Watcombe.

Trevor says: "it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that Val did the most to keep the Fund alive when Miriam died in 1980". They were now living at Oxleas in Burghclere, Hampshire where Val quickly opened a packing room, recruited a band of local volunteers, and so enabled the weekly "post-van full" of clothes and baby bundle sacks to continue flowing out to Africa and India. In those days that was the heart of the operation. Val (who did most of the work!) and Trevor hosted an annual garden party at Oxleas for supporters, which became very popular, with people coming from all over with their donations.

Neighbours Christine and Brian were drawn into the operation of the Fund with Christine joining the volunteers in the packing room and noting Val's "boundless energy and enthusiasm for life". That life centred on Trevor, her three children, family, friends and especially the Fund.



When young, Val had played hockey, although tennis became her main enthusiasm. She jogged a bit and enjoyed walking, so much so that she joined Trevor in a trek to Everest base camp, no mean feat as she was troubled by altitude sickness.

She travelled extensively for the Fund; on her own on the first hazardous trip to Tanzania (where she went three times). The work there became effectively her domain, greatly assisted by Gina Livermore.

She shared many visits to southern India and to the Tibetan refugees in their widely scattered settlements in the Himalayan foothills and met the Dalai Lama several times in Dharamsala. Christine and Brian recall accompanying Val and Trevor on their first trip to southern India, and saw "her friendliness and how easily and effectively she interacted with both the leaders and, just as importantly, the beneficiaries" of our partners there.

As the Fund's operation changed towards grant-making, Val adapted with it, becoming an excellent advocate for the Fund. Another recollection from the Tims is of her addressing the National AGM of Rotary Wives Branches, doing so with confidence and skill, answering questions fluently and without hesitation.

Christine and Brian reflect their sadness in witnessing her decline with Alzheimer's, but her ready smile, laugh and willingness to engage was undiminished. With so many others, "we valued her friendship, loved her dearly and miss her a lot".

Final words from Trevor: "Val in her quiet way shared Miriam's commitment and work ethic. Her contribution can best be appreciated in retrospect; she would have approved of that!"



Returning to our theme of providing brief histories of our relationships with partners, in this issue we cover DEEPAM.

Dynamic Education & Empowerment Programme for the Marginalised

One can readily see why an accurate, but rather wordy, title for an organisation becomes an acronym with zing: hence DEEPAM! It was the brain child of Sister Doctor Hilaria Soundari whose academic subject is social work.

DEEPAM is the most recent of our partners in southern India, but even so our relationship dates back 18 years. It emerged from our occasional support of the Leonard Hospital in Vathalagundu, Tamil Nadu; Sr Hilaria is from the order that runs the hospital and used buildings on the campus as the base for DEEPAM. In the Winter newsletter for 2005, DEEPAM was briefly introduced in anticipation of a meeting during the trustees' visit the following January. Some £5k was sent initially, and this was nearly doubled in 2006 after the successful visit.

DEEPAM provides a range of services including to widows and women's self-help groups, but what impressed us from the start, and still does, was its programme to help children in the lowest caste to make best advantage of their schooling. Often these children are the first generation to attend school, so there is little family expectation or support. After-school and mostly open-air classes are organised in communities to provide help with homework and pursue skills. The programme grew, with our encouragement, and today there are 80 communities around Vathalagundu where these sessions are held. We visit about three groups on each trip (see the last newsletter). During the pandemic, with schools closed, this mode became the sole source of learning for many youngsters.

Relationships with DEEPAM have not always been smooth; there was a period when we felt they had lost direction. Happily that was corrected; our funding has risen (about £20k last year) to support the work of the dedicated staff, and we have great confidence about its future.



After-school class in 2008

Snippets

One of the annual tasks of trustees of a charity is to complete a report and accounts relating to the operation and submit it to the Charity Commission. Our “year” is aligned with the calendar year, but it’s always surprising how long it takes to assemble the data, satisfy the auditors and send it in. We extract the words from the report onto our website, and the full document is available to download.



Another annual happening is a Coffee Morning. St Nicolas Church in Newbury has a practice of offering facilities for charities to hold such an event on Thursdays. Our turn this year was on 26 October. Local supporters made some excellent cakes, donated prizes for the tombola and cleared out some bric-a-brac. Over £330 was raised for the Fund (a much better result than last year); many thanks to all who helped.



We have made reference on several occasions to video calls with our partners. As we write this newsletter, another set of calls has been planned, and we will spend a couple of mornings being “transported” from an English November into the experiences of the wonderful leaders that we write about. For southern Indian partners in particular it will be good to follow up on some of the seeds sown in the February visit.



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About the Fund

We are a small charity, founded in the late 1940s, when it operated out of Miriam Dean's home.

We reach overseas to some of the world's poorest people in partnership with established local groups, providing financial resources to turn their ideas into a positive reality. Our partners work in: physical & mental disability; education & training; health and the elderly. We are in touch with them regularly.

At home, we aim to maintain personal contact with our supporters, hoping to make the Fund feel like an extended family.

We do all this voluntarily. We have no staff or premises and minimal expenses (covered by income from funds awaiting allocation), so that we can send overseas every penny given to us in donations. This year that will be around £120k.

Miriam wrote in the early days of her recognition that she could "lift only tiny corners of human suffering". We accept that today but still feel motivated to follow where she led.

Postscript

Carrying the batten that others have entrusted to you can be quite daunting and comes with a sense of both pride and responsibility. Val's recent death reminds us that we, the current trustees, are proud to stand on the shoulders of our forerunners who took personal responsibility for the suffering of others, and were powerful indeed at addressing their needs.

We are grateful for their example and the structure they have put in place.

The circumstances they faced were ones of inequality and inhumanity, and their response was to put their faith-borne love into action. Similar challenges still exist and form the basis of our current programmes of giving, and it is thanks to our predecessors and to you, our supporters, that we in our turn are able to address a small part of the enormity of human need.