

Bellary Bulletin

December 2022

Introduction

Once again, we send you our Christmas and New Year's greetings and thanks for your interest in this work in South India

The work of the hostels there continues and we thank you for the part you play in helping these young people break out of their own personal cycle of poverty.

In this bulletin we tell you about:

- What has been going on at the Halvi hostel,
- The status of the office construction project,
- India visit (sadly cancelled), and
- A special feature on the BSG and Safeguarding

Halvi hostel: Exams, Measles, and Christmas!

In the last Bulletin we reported that, primarily due to Covid disruptions to schooling over the previous 18 months, 4 of the 5 boys sitting "10th Standard" exams (age 15-16) had failed their May exams, so had to re-sit in July.

The great news is that all 4 passed and have not had to go down the alternative (and lesser) "Supplementary" exams route, or drop out of education.

This means that the Hostel remains at full strength with 40 boys in residence.

You may have heard over recent months that measles was becoming more prevalent in India and there were a rising number of cases including deaths.

This is of course of great concern in a rural hostel and whether we might ought therefore to pay for vaccinations there. Following our

enquiries to Dr Irvin Emmanuel, who manages the Halvi Hostel, he assured us that all the boys there would have been vaccinated in early childhood under a government scheme, and he was not concerned.

Finally, as is the custom at the end of term in December, Christmas celebrations take place in the Hostel and all boys receive a new set of clothing. (This is always included as part of the Hostel budget). It is great to see that normality is returning (even if some of their performances are very amusing)!



Photo: Some of the boys at the Halvi Hostel Christmas celebrations in their new clothes

We also received photographs and video of the Bellary Hostel celebrations from Mr Victor Immanuel – including an appearance by Father Christmas in full costume to the song "Jingle Bells"!



Photo: Christmas celebrations at the Bellary hostel – also all with new clothes (plus the Warden and his wife)

“Break the Cycle” office construction initiative

Progress with planning permission remains (very) slow!

We indicated in the August Bulletin that the Bellary Planning Dept has “cleared” the application and the next step in the process was to go to the city Engineering Dept for review. Well, it is still stuck there as it has not been possible to find the original building certificates from when the shops were constructed in 2006 (partly because the Engineer who oversaw the project for the Diocese then has since died).

These certificates are obviously important given the plan to build on top of the shops, as they should confirm that the foundations and concrete structure are adequate (as was originally designed).

The only way to move forward is through retrospective actions and inspections so this is in progress.

We continue to thank Victor Immanuel for his on-going work to make this project happen.



Photo: Showing the current shops, above which the offices would be constructed.

India Visit

Historically, it has been a quick 2 or 3-day process to obtain an e-visa for visiting India using the on-line system.

Some of you may have seen recently in the press that UK travellers experienced problems when this process was withdrawn for UK

citizens, so having booked flights for early November these had to be cancelled and the trip postponed.

Given the delays in planning permission and therefore the overall Offices project (which was to be the key reason for the visit and need for discussions), the Trustees have concluded we will await receipt of permission before further plans are made – hopefully early 2023.

Safeguarding

Although we do not have any direct responsibility for the management or running of the Halvi Hostel, after a number of high-profile cases involving some UK relief organisations, the UK Charity Commission understandably requires that any charity funding work with vulnerable groups takes reasonable steps to assure itself that proper safeguarding processes and practices are in place.

There is no 100% fool-proof solution, but to fulfil this responsibility, the BSG relies on 3 approaches:

- 1) The inspections and hostel certification process carried out by the local authorities in India
- 2) Our periodic (remote) enquiries to individuals within the Diocesan organisation structure
- 3) Periodic visits by ourselves (though to date, none of these have been possible since the rules came into place due to Covid and the recent trip cancellation)

Every 5 years under their Juvenile Justice Act, inspection teams in the state of Andhra Pradesh conduct a full, formal inspection. This first took place in 2018 and their 5-year certificate of registration was issued for the Halvi Hostel.

In November we received information that an 8-person inspection team had visited the Halvi hostel to conduct an interim inspection and they were satisfied. They are expected to return next year to conduct a full inspection and re-certification.

(We believe that what appears an irregular pattern is due to 2 years of Covid disruption).



Photo: Juvenile Justice Act inspection team at the Halvi Hostel in November

BSG Finances

We indicated in the August Bulletin that the current BSG outgoings to pay the running costs of the Halvi hostel are now considerably in excess of income.

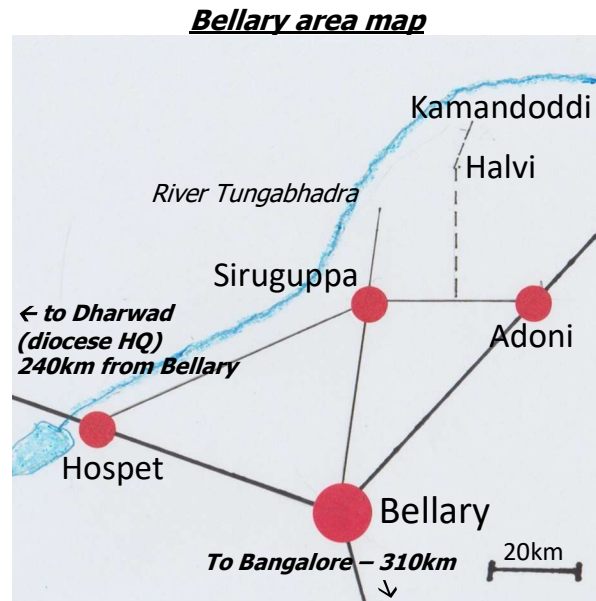
Thank you to a number of people who stepped forward and gave generously so that we did not hit a "funding crisis" of "unrestricted" funds dropping below 9 months' Hostel running costs (as per the BSG "Reserves" policy).

2023 looks like it will be a challenging year financially if the Planning Permissions are received and we need to raise the remaining balance to press ahead with the Office building project to place the Halvi hostel on a long-term, sustainable basis, whilst funding the day-to-day hostel running costs until rental income starts to flow.

If you can increase your contribution, or maybe invite others to become involved this would be very helpful.

With best wishes for a happy Christmas and 2023!

BSG Trustees



Bellary Support Group

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