

## Supporting of a children's home

### Introduction

India has millions of children who are born and raised in the streets. These children need love, care and education. Various social organisations and orphanages play an important role in providing them with shelter, education and vocational training. The orphanages face many obstacles as they lack basic facilities, competent staff and adequate educational materials.

Orphanages and children's homes in India are often oversubscribed due to a shortage of appropriate facilities; they can host between 50-300 children at any one time. Together with the high incidences of poverty and illness there is always a need for more volunteer assistance. These orphanages face many problems such as inadequate facilities, a lack of funding, poor resources and a shortage of staff.

### Our Support

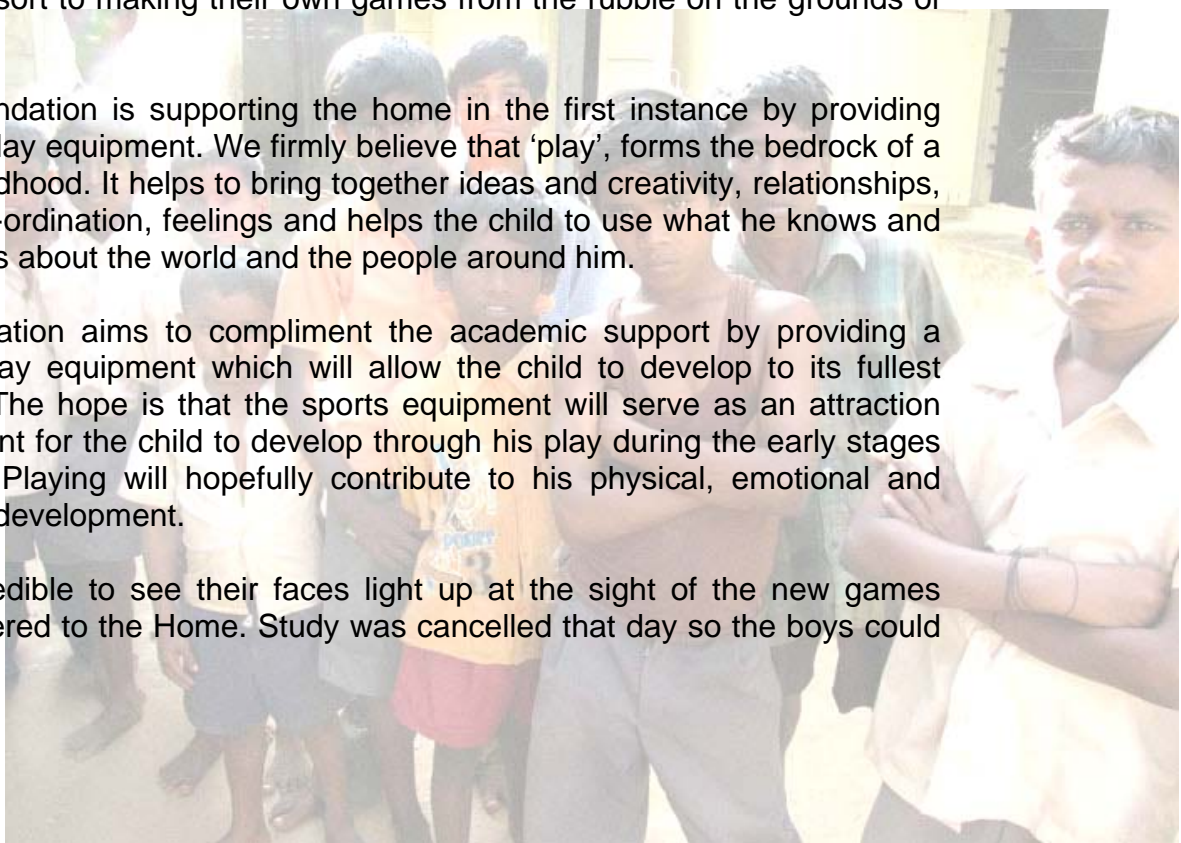
On my recent trip to Tamil Nadu, I visited a government run children's home which caters for the needs of 50 boys who are either orphans or their parents do not have the means to look after them. They are housed, fed and educated in a concrete building run along military lines. Play is very minimal and the emphasis is on study. The older children (age 7 and upwards) are woken at 5am and bar perhaps an hour of recreational activity, they study until 10 pm. Schooling consists of learning by rote with one female teacher to 50 pupils, some as young as 4 years of age.

The facilities are very sparse and just enough to meet the basic needs of the children; shelter, food, clothing and education. There is not a toy in sight and the boys resort to making their own games from the rubble on the grounds of the home.

Kamla Foundation is supporting the home in the first instance by providing extensive play equipment. We firmly believe that 'play', forms the bedrock of a healthy childhood. It helps to bring together ideas and creativity, relationships, physical co-ordination, feelings and helps the child to use what he knows and understands about the world and the people around him.

The Foundation aims to compliment the academic support by providing a range of play equipment which will allow the child to develop to its fullest potential. The hope is that the sports equipment will serve as an attraction and stimulant for the child to develop through his play during the early stages of his life. Playing will hopefully contribute to his physical, emotional and intellectual development.

It was incredible to see their faces light up at the sight of the new games being delivered to the Home. Study was cancelled that day so the boys could



test out and vet the new equipment. The sounds of joy and laughter, echoing across the rubble strewn playground was enough to justify the action taken. Play also provides an invaluable window to a child's personality. By observing how he plays, one can learn how he reacts to obstacles, victory and failures. The manner of playing will provide insights of his emotions, aptitudes and preferred learning styles.



In terms of our future commitment to the home, support has been provided by a Volunteer Teacher (Anisha) from the UK, who worked with the children to bring out their creativity which to date had been stifled. Anisha introduced alternative teaching styles, resources and other aids to help widen the experiences of the children and develop a firm legacy for the Home to build on. Over a number of weeks Anisha worked with the boys encouraging them to express themselves through a range of creative exercises culminating in the mural you see above. We hope they are able to build on this experience through enhanced self-esteem and a belief that the children can attain their dreams no matter what situation they were born into or faced with.