



Friends of TREAD

in partnership with TREAD India Trust

giving hope and a new future to needy Indian children

November 2020

Dear Friends

Friends of TREAD Update

This year TREAD was 21 years old! In July 2000 Friends of TREAD registered with the Charity Commissioners and was officially born. However things had started in an informal way back in 1993, and in 1999, after TREAD India Trust registered as a charity and Friends of TREAD founding trustees made a fact finding visit to India, they confirmed they would support TREAD India Trust.

The millennium seems a long time ago and, indeed for TREAD and the trustees, much has happened and most importantly thousands of children's lives have been changed for the better. During the last 20 years new trustees (including myself) have joined the team in the UK, friends and supporters have visited our projects and we have formed lasting friendships with the team in India. Sadly Sounder Raj, the founder and visionary for TREAD, died of malaria in 2007 and more recently Compassion International had to leave India ending TREAD India's partnership with them and leaving a massive funding hole.

When we started back in 2000, FOT funded two small projects caring for about 60 children; this rose to six projects over four sites and at the peak we were helping support nearly 1000 children and young people. With Compassion International leaving the number has reduced, and we currently support just under 300 children and young adults within five projects.

In the years since Compassion left it became apparent that TREAD India suffered from a lack of leadership. Concerns about management issues led Friends of TREAD to ask for the advice of Pastor Matthew Kurian, co-founder of a well established Indian charity, El Shaddai. The Board of trustees for TREAD India was enlarged.

2020 has been a particularly challenging year for TREAD as it has for everyone. In March just before lockdown, three of our UK trustees, Tricia and David Owen and myself flew to Hyderabad for three days of meetings with TREAD India's trustees, management and our consultant, Pastor Matthew Kurian. As a result of this the intention is that there will be a higher level of external scrutiny of TREAD India. The measures will include a greater transparency between management and staff, external audit visits, funding from within India forming a greater part of their income and more detailed budgeting and financial oversight.

Within days of our return India and the UK went into lockdown and the projects have been closed since then. The TREAD staff in India have been on reduced salaries but continued to work when possible caring for the families in their villages and looking after TREAD sites. With the continued support from our donors in the UK, TREAD has distributed emergency food and hygiene supplies to the children, their families and the most needy in the villages. Friends of TREAD has also continued to support the Orphaned Assistance programme and give financial help to the Grace tailoring students who were not able to complete their course.

It was with a heavy heart in September that we decided we would not fund the Grace Tailoring project during 2021, as due to Covid restrictions, new students could not start during 2020. With reduced income since Compassion withdrew from India, we decided to concentrate on the core activity of Child Development Centres once TREAD India is allowed to reopen them. Friends of TREAD is very aware of the vulnerability of young women in rural India and sincerely wishes to fund projects in the future which would support them. This might be by reinstating the tailoring project in a new format or something completely different.

So what will happen in the future in the 'new normal' for TREAD? One constant unfortunately is that the work of organisations like TREAD will be needed in the future and especially after the devastation which is being caused during and after Covid.

As UK trustees we had been aware of the need for succession management for some time. Earlier this year we discussed many options for the future which included the possibility of Friends of TREAD closing down

completely. The stress of running an overseas charity has been particularly demanding in recent years and after the pandemic struck, all options needed to be explored.

I was personally unable to accept that closing down was part of God's plan. My wife, Elaine, and I talked at length to trusted friends along with our clergy team at B&A Church Bristol. After much deliberation, soul searching, and prayer Elaine and I, along with our team from church, proposed that Friends of TREAD should be 'reborn' with the direct support, practical and financial help from B&A church. Friends of TREAD trustees agreed to this proposal and as part of this process David Owen stepped down from being Chair of trustees after twenty years of dedicated service and I took on that role. Then at our last online meeting on November 12th, Friends of TREAD trustees welcomed 3 new members to the Board - Jane Davies, Alex Dart and Matti Shannon. Jane and Alex have both visited the projects in India and Matti can't wait to get out there once Covid allows.

Mandy and Colin Burling, Doug Robertson, Tim Overton, Clive Daniels and David Owen then offered their resignation as trustees. I would like to thank them all for their many years of dedicated service and unfailing love towards the children and staff in India. I know this has not been an easy decision for many of them. Janet Crawford and Tricia Owen will remain as trustees for a short while to assist in the handover.

We are not certain what the future will bring but as we continue to seek God's guidance, we will plan for TREAD to re-open the projects in 2021. When they re-open we want the centres to be able to offer the best possible support and care for those disadvantaged and needy children. In the meantime Friends of TREAD want to be able to retain the dedicated staff in India, and continue to support the children and families during the pandemic.

When the Child Development Centers are able to reopen, hopefully next year, it will be necessary to review all projects with TREAD India and agree which continue to serve our joint vision and how these are best managed. This may involve difficult decisions and new ways of working particularly with ever increasing government intervention in how charities can operate in India. The appointment of new Friends of TREAD trustees will inject new vigour in making the very best use of our resources and the reduced number of trustees streamlines more effective decision making. Your continued support will be vital.

We want to thank all of Friends of TREAD donors for your support and generosity over the last 20 years, we hope we can continue to rely on your continued support both financially and prayerfully and we look forward to working together to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable young people in India. David has asked me to include a few words from him to you all.

Jerry Dart, Chair of Trustees

PS A word from David Owen as departing Chairman

In the 20 years since TREAD began, India has modernized considerably. Gone are the days when as visitors we had to boil our own water and to make contact with home we had to pre-book a phone call from a booth 40 minutes drive away! Government assistance is much improved in terms of housing, provision of electricity and better infrastructure, food credits and an increase of appointed health visitors for every village. However there are still many vulnerable people within the multi layered Indian society who slip through the net so for the foreseeable future there is still a need for charitable organisations such as TREAD.

I am confident that the newly appointed trustees will bring a fresh outlook and new skills to the ongoing work of Friends of TREAD. These changes take place with the world in the grip of a pandemic which provides challenges affecting all our lives on a daily basis. Having stepped down as Chair of FOT, I have great confidence that Jerry is the ideal bridge between past and future for Friends of TREAD and I wish him and the new team in Bristol every success.

David Owen, former Chair of Friends of TREAD

Trustees: Janet Crawford (Hon Treasurer), Alex Dart, Jerry Dart, (Chair) Jane Davies, Patricia Owen, Matti Shannon

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