

WHAT'S NEW

NEW ORPHANAGE OPENED!

The doors of the new orphanage are open! The new orphanage is located in Uppal, an area of Hyderabad which is clean, safe and close to public schooling (where the children are now enrolled). As planned, we do not own the building but lease it at a very attractive rate (\$2,300 per year). The landlord was happy to make all the needed changes to accommodate 45 children. Lynne Guhman, Agape's Executive Director, has spent much of the past few months living at the orphanage to help comfort the new children and to work more closely with Agape house parents, husband and wife Srinu and Lily.



Agape Board member Dr. Daniel Muppidi and his wife Mary visit India and the new orphanage this summer.

Since this is the first orphanage officially under the Agape name, We have been very careful to comply with all Indian government requirements and to do everything possible to establish a welcome and trusted position for Agape in the community. These considerations have influenced the process for taking in new kids. We are looking for children where we can be assigned legal guardianship. For the time being, this has meant that the children who have come to us all have an existing guardian – in most cases this has been a surviving parent who is also ill with the HIV/AIDS virus and is no longer able to care for their children. Imagine the pain of knowing you will die and giving up your children to “a stranger”. Each of these parents has expressed relief and gratitude that their children have some place to go.



Lynne plays cricket with the kids at the new orphanage.

Our plan for 2005 includes two additional orphanages in the Hyderabad area. We have already found several possible locations and will keep you posted on progress!

*“The poor are hungry not only for food,
they are hungry to be recognized as human beings.
They are hungry for dignity and to be treated as we
are treated. They are hungry for our love.*

- Mother Teresa

AGAPE FAMILY

MEET SOME OF OUR NEW KIDS



(Back row) Sai, Venu, Anil and Satish and (front row) Navya and Laxmi off to school for the first time in their new school uniforms.

Each new child that has come to the orphanage is simply beautiful. Each of their stories is heartrending and yet, they have settled in and are able to laugh and play. In so many respects, this is a miracle.

Six of our new children come from two different families from the same rural village. A pastor in their village heard about Agape and called Lynne when he learned these six children were likely to be thrown out of their homes and village. Lynne drove four hours to their village and by evening, loaded the six into her car.

Venu (11), Sai (8) and Navya's (5) father died of AIDS leaving the mother, who is HIV+, to care for the children. The mother's illness has progressed to the point where she is no longer able to stand or walk much. She has no extended family – both her parents are dead. Venu has been working in a hotel for the past couple of years to bring in the family's only meager income. He has never been to school, nor has his brother Sai.

During Lynne's discussions with the mother, the mother clearly struggled with not wanting to part with her children, in particular Navya. Lynne spoke frankly with her about her daughter's prospects after the mother's death. Many orphaned girls end up in homes or on the street where they are frequently sexually abused. We agreed to send back Navya if she did not make the adjustment to her new home. A week after Venu, Sai and Navya came to us, the mother made the arduous trip by bus to the orphanage. Our heart's sank because we suspected the mother had come for Navya, but the mother, after seeing and speaking to the children, told Lynne "I give you my daughter. I am very happy."

The second family also has two boys and a girl, Anil (10), Satish (9) and Laxmi (6). Their mother died a few years ago of AIDS. The father, after finding out his wife was HIV+, left the family and remarried despite the fact that in all likelihood, he passed the virus to his first wife (he too is HIV+). He now has a new one year old child. There is so little understanding of the virus – this is how the epidemic grows. The children's aunt, a widow, has been caring for the children but her only means of income is selling vegetables and she can't fully provide for them.

All of the children have become very attached to the Agape staff – it is clear they have not received much affection to date. They have adjusted to their new home quickly and recently started school for the first time. Thank you for what you are doing for these kids.



Smiling Sai!

HERE IN THE US

LAUNCHING A NEW NONPROFIT

Agape International was officially established by the Board in October, 2003. We were approved as a 501c3 organization early in 2004 (so any donations made in 2003 or 2004 are tax exempt!). This was a somewhat arduous process (isn't anything that involves the Internal Revenue Service?) Our application was over a hundred pages long. The US government has become particularly careful about organizations that will be sending money overseas given current terrorism concerns. Many who are familiar with the 501c3 process were surprised that our approval came through as quickly as it did.

We are currently launching a "matching donation" fundraising campaign. We are thrilled to have received a commitment from Paul and Sandy Edgerley to match all 2004/2005 donations up to \$75,000 so any money you give will have a double impact! While this seems like a lot of money and we are still small, we project we will need to raise more than \$800,000 over the next three years to support planned programs. Details about our planned budget will be included in our upcoming fundraising campaign.

LIFE AND CULTURE IN ASIA

POLITICS IN INDIA

Some of you may have followed the Spring, 2004 elections in India. If we think our politics in the US are complicated, we have no idea. India has some 220 political parties. The elected Prime Minister of India is the leader of the largest party in a winning coalition of parties. Thus, Sonia Gandhi, the President of the Congress party (and wife of assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, son of Indira and grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru) was effectively elected Prime Minister in the most recent elections in India. While the Congress party won only 145 of 543 parliamentary seats, seats won by other parties in their coalition gave them a surprise victory over the existing BJP party led government (existing Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee).

Sonia Gandhi declined the Prime Minister position in response to opposition to her foreign born status. She cited the importance of stability and doing the best for her country in announcing her decision. Another winning coalition leader, Manmohan Singh, a former Finance Minister, was signed in instead with the support of Gandhi.

Economic issues were a focus of the recent elections. India's economic growth has been strong – 6.2% average GDP growth in the 90's – but much of this growth has not resulted in improved conditions for India's poor. 300 million people continue to earn less than \$1 a day; India's average annual income per capita is below \$500. Nearly 40% of Indians remain illiterate. 75% of India's land is not yet irrigated. The challenge for the new government is to maintain economic growth *and* make significant improvements for India's poor.

Agape International

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Please contact us if you can help.

GET INVOLVED

We need help, lots of help! We are currently looking for volunteers who are willing to:

Help support Agape financially. We are currently 100% funded by private donations, so your support is critical to helping these desperate families.

Help organize others to support Agape financially! We will help you to design your own fundraiser – whether it be a letter campaign, small gathering at your home, or larger event. We can do this so that it is NOT a major time commitment on your part...

Help spread the word. The global AIDS epidemic is the most devastating humanitarian crisis our generation will face. Incomprehensible numbers of people are *suffering* in ways we can't begin to understand – please urge others to respond. We *can* make a difference.

Donate your time. We are a lean organization and we can use you.

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Agape
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