

UNITY FOUNDATION

Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.

CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION PROJECT

Introduction to the Project:

The Child Care and Education Project is implemented mainly for the children of scavengers in the District of Tirunelveli in Tamilnadu state, which is in the southern part of India. The socio-economic condition of the scavengers' families is extremely poor owing to the prevalence of caste discrimination in the society. The scavengers are treated as people of low esteem by the people of other castes, and are supposed to do only the dirty and contemptuous works. The following are the occupations of the members of the scavengers' community:

- (i) Cleaning of toilets, drainage, etc.
- (ii) Cleaning of sewage, septic tanks, etc.
- (iii) Removing all kinds of rubbish, dirt and filth and carcasses of animals and birds from houses and public places
- (iv) Digging of grave for the dead
- (v) Removing wasted food items, etc. and cleaning the premises after parties and public functions
- (vi) Cobbling

The lifestyle of the scavengers is very pathetic. Most of their houses have only thatched roofs. 70% of the people have no proper dwelling places. It is a pity that they eat the meat of dead animals like cows and goats, being unaware of the dangers of eating them. They also eat the meat of the country pigs, stray dogs, cats, foxes, etc. When they come to know about any parties or functions around, they eagerly rush to the premises and keep waiting outside the premises till the end of the function, longing to eat the left-overs.

Condition of the children of scavengers:

Due to extreme poverty, the scavengers are not able to send their children to schools. If some parents borrow money and send their children to a school, these children are

mocked at and ill-treated by the children of other castes. Though many of the children of scavengers are eager to go to a school, social and financial limitations deprive them of an opportunity to go to a school.

Therefore the aspirations of the younger generation are shattered. Their parents make them engaged into their own occupations. Apart from lack of education, the children of these families do not even have enough food and clothing because of the poverty in the families. Thus even from birth, a child belonging to the scavengers community starts experiencing the conditions of extreme poverty, and feels totally dejected in life.

The background of the Unity Homes:

Having come across all these unfortunate factors which keep the scavengers in the lowest level in the society, we were moved by the pathetic condition of their children, in particular. All the parents of the scavengers' community expressed their feeling that their community would have a real uplift only if their children get good education. We too analyzed their condition from different perspectives and finally understood that the best solution which would bring about a social as well as an economic transformation for the scavengers' community is "Education of their children", for education alone can empower this particular community. Under this background, we proposed the Child Care and Education Project in 2003 and started our Boys Home and our Girls' Home for the children belonging to the scavengers' community in order to provide them with quality education in good schools, bringing them up in a healthy atmosphere with good infrastructure, thereby molding them up to the standard of the other children in the society and empowering them to come up in the society in the competitive world.

Our Girls' Home is located in Tirunelveli, and our Boys' Home in a place called Reddiarpatti nearby. Though we are running the two Homes with 30 boys and 30 girls, there are at least 50 more families eagerly waiting for immediate help for their children's education. Lack of any opportunity often forces these parents to send their children to beg in the streets, or to work as child laborers.

Our objectives:

- (a) providing the underprivileged and uncared children belonging to scavenger families with nutritious food, good clothing and shelter;
- (b) giving comfort to the hopeless children, shelter and security to the homeless, and dignity and hope to the destitute children of scavenger community;
- (c) bringing up these children in a hygienic environment in our Homes, offering them opportunities to get education in good urban schools;
- (d) helping the children equip themselves through quality education and training to have a bright future for themselves, who are otherwise deprived of education owing to extreme poverty in their families;
- (e) molding their behavior, teaching them good manners, and values in life.
- (f) improving the social and economic conditions of the extremely downtrodden scavenger families through a holistic development of their children.

Children in the age group from 9 to 16 years are selected for admission each year depending on the vacancy available in our Homes. Children for admission are identified and recommended by presidents of local government bodies, missionaries, and social workers working in various tribal areas and remote and backward villages. Many of these children had been left uncared by their families. In certain cases, though the children have both parents, their parents are disabled or handicapped or unable to go for work due to chronic illnesses.

Life of those children after joining our Homes:

We have been able to observe great changes in the lives of the boys and girls in our Homes since the day we admitted them. We provide the children with nutritious food and a hygienic environment. The infrastructure contributes a conducive atmosphere for the boys and girls to concentrate on their studies. All the necessary books and other study materials are purchased and given to each child. The girls have their education in St. Joseph's Convent school and the boys have education in a renowned government school near our Boys' Home. In our Homes,

the children are helped with their homework and studies by our qualified housemothers and tutors.

We have observed in our children first of all, that a great change has been seen in their sound physique and healthy growth in our Homes. Secondly, we could find that the boys and girls have got a great motivation in life to study well in order to equip themselves to have a bright future in their life. Thirdly, it has been noticed that the boys and the girls have developed a sense of unity and responsibility among themselves in their respective Homes. Fourthly, we have observed that the children have learned very good manners, and that they have become well-behaved. Finally, as an impact of this project of ours, the children from extremely poor and scavenger families have a holistic development and have become better children in our Homes, in the schools, and in their families as the first generation to go to schools.

Encouragement from the local community:

The local people and families around our Children's Homes appreciate our work, and show their encouragement by visiting our Homes with their family members to celebrate the birthdays of their children in our Homes, and giving our Home children sweets and snacks. The government of Tamilnadu also regularly gives free bicycles to our 11th grade students, and free laptops to our 12th grade students every year through the schools where our children are studying.

Urgency and need for continuous support for the child

We are sending this particular letter to express our urgency for your kind consideration of our immediate need for the near future. Any child, once admitted in our Homes enjoys the care, concern, protection and support which a good family can give. Hence, we would also like to bring for your kind consideration that the costs of each child have to be met continuously for 5 to 7 years. A donor who can contribute €120 per year can sponsor a child for one full academic year.

Regarding the needs of these children and of the project, we would like to furnish the following details:-

Monthly requirement -- (€10 x 60 children)	-- € 600
Annual requirement -- (To keep a child in our Home for one year (€120 x 60 children)	--€ 7,200
For sports & extra-curricular activities, for one year -- (€10 x 60 children)	-- € 600
Construction of room at Boys' Home upstairs for Library and study	-- € 7,000
Laying of roof in Girls' Home upstairs	-- € 5,000

Our Home boys in front of our Boys' Home:



Boys with their bicycles given by the government:



Our Home girls in their school uniform dresses, in front of our Girls' Home:



Girls with their bicycles given by the government:



Our Home girls from scavengers families, with three of their mothers:



CASE HISTORIES:

Name: **Mercy**

Age: 13 years

Class: 7th grade

School: St. Joseph's convent, Tirunelveli.



Mercy is a seventh grade girl. She comes from a very poor family. She has never seen her father. Her father who had gone out from their home one day even before she was born, never returned back home. No one knows until today where he is, or whether he is alive, or what happened to him. Because of this, Mercy's mother became mentally disturbed. Her poor grandmother who is very old brought her to our Girls' Home.

At the time of admission in our Home, Mercy was physically very weak because there was no one who could afford to give her good food in their house. She had been a gloomy and unhappy child. Now, after an year and a half since she joined our Girls' Home, Mercy is not only healthy and active, but is also happy and cheerful. She is delighted to have joined our Home, and studies very well. She is talented in singing. We have encouraged her to sing in various programmes and meetings and she has been applauded by many, including her school teachers. Now she is a member of our Home choir.

Name: **Esakimuthu**,

Age: 12 years

Class: 7th grade

School: Reddiarpatti Higher Secondary School, Tirunelveli.



Esakimuthu comes from an extremely destitute background. His father, a drunkard and an irresponsible man, deserted his family and absconded when Esakimuthu was a small baby. Esakimuthu's poor, illiterate, and sick mother could not afford to provide him with food, clothing and education. She works as a housemaid in a family and, with her meager income, she is unable to meet the expenses for Esakimuthu. She had spent several sleepless nights shedding tears, wondering how she could bring up her son.

Under such circumstances, she came to know about our Boys' Home, and she brought him to our Home. In our Home, Esakimuthu is a very active and smart boy. He feels very happy to be here and is studying well. His mother is now extremely happy that her son is growing up in a good Home, getting nutritious food, good clothing and quality education.

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VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROJECT

Unity Foundation has also started another project called the Vocational Training Project as a worthy alternative for children who cannot afford to go for higher academic education after leaving our Home. We started this project in consultation with the local officials, social workers, parents or guardians of the poor children, as everyone felt the need for such a project which would offer vocational training to those children who cannot go for further studies after finishing their school education. The aim of this project is to give these children job-oriented training in computer, typewriting, and tailoring & garment making, in order to equip themselves to go for an employment or to be self-employed to earn for their families.

Any of the following amount could be of great help for the children who are beneficiaries of the Vocational Training Project, to purchase materials and to meet their travel expenses:-

€10 A trainee child can meet the travel expenses for the training period of six months

€15 A trainee can purchase training materials to be used in the training

€50 A sewing machine or a typewriter can be given for one beneficiary after the training to help the person earn for the family.

€250 A computer system can be given to a beneficiary after the relevant training in the computer field, to enable the individual to earn for the family

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Beneficiaries of Vocational Training Project:-



Some of the beneficiaries of our Vocational Training Project, accompanied for Photograph, by some children of our Girls' Home and the Director's family:

