

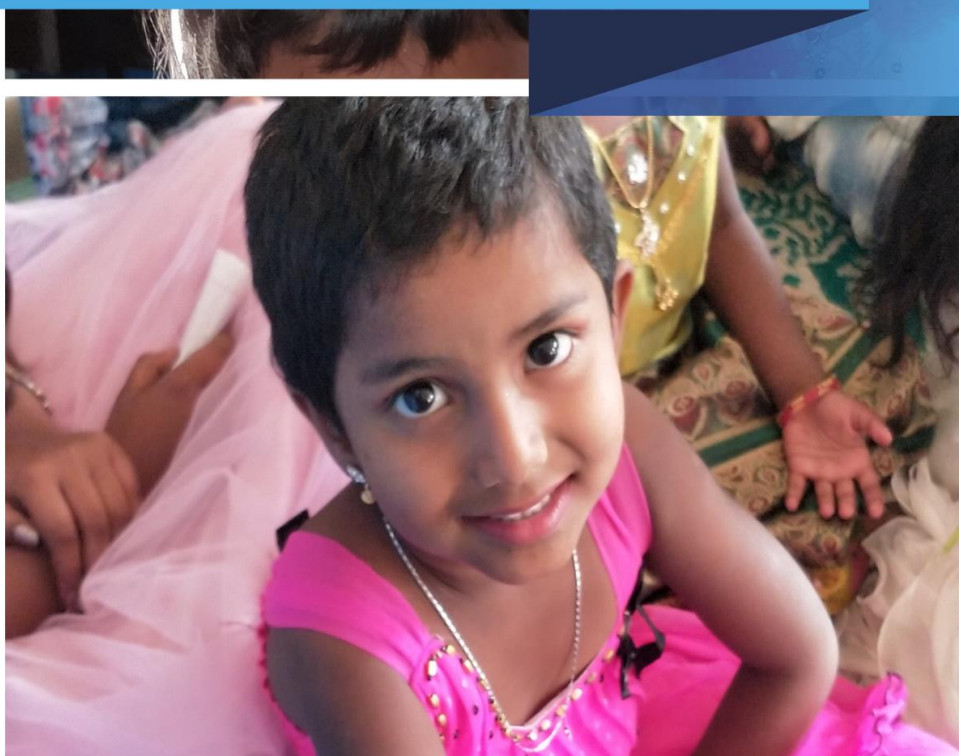


My Friend's Newsletter

# BETWEEN THE LINES

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## Thoughts from our President

Dear Friends,

It gives me immense joy to connect with you through this newsletter, hope you are doing well. We firmly believe that there's no better place to start a change than to begin in the life of little children. Over the past year we have been able to support 76 children, 39 children in Uttarakhand, 37 children in Ullal. We deeply appreciate the work of our partners who toil at the field to make it happen. Dear sponsors, your partnership with us in supporting the children through your generous contribution are highly appreciated.

We believe that our sacrifice today will guarantee a brighter and better future for our little friends. In this newsletter we are happy to share with you selected updates, success stories and take you through the challenges that have made this mission of changing lives worthwhile through this year. Happy reading!

- Abraham Charles

## Now we are here

I'm so excited to talk to you via this News Letter. I remember Charles, Arun and I used to meet every weekend with great passion to give back something to the society as beneficiaries of Compassion International which has made my life that testifies this verse from Bible, **"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour"**. I now hold Master of Technology in Computer Science and work as a Software Engineer at Accenture.

Bible also says **"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded"** I believe, I'm given much and it's a burning passion at heart that I want to share the blessing that God sent my way that marked an end to my poverty.

We've spent months together in planning to setup "My Friend". One day when Arun, Israel (my brother) and I met at Charles' place, our discussion went deeper barely realizing it was 12:00AM; It was that day, we decided

the name 'My Friend' that stood out of many other names like Never Alone, Ray of Hope as such, for the only reason that the sponsored child should be able to relate with the sponsor and Vice-Versa.

Even before we could name our organization, we had 30+ sponsors who were willing to sponsor. Then we sent out a registration form across the compassion alumnus, creating an opportunity to those interested in sponsoring a child. To our surprise we got 50+ sponsors in a week's time. It's unbelievable that we now have 76 kids sponsored through My Friend and it is only because of your constant support and your commitment, while we worked backend on the Trust Deed, Website, shortlisting deserving kids, Mentors, Partners, and other legal formalities and we did our best on every weekend to accomplish our plans.

Currently we are working on the program standards and process standardization, as you all know we get better every day as we learn new things. We are formulizing our program structure, working on policies, defining outcomes, documentations, partnership agreements, communications etc., and it requires a lot of effort in terms of time, finance and people availability. I'd like to extend my thanks to Rajeshwari, Nalini, Blessing and Anand for joining us. They are the pillars behind every success. Nalini and Blessing are the ones who worked on the letters you all received a few months ago. They designed it and effortlessly worked with our partner projects to get it out to you all. I thank those of you who shared your experience with us and we hope that you cherished the joy of receiving a letter from your sponsored kid. Rajeshwari and Anand are finance guys, very faithful. Receipts that you receive every month through WhatsApp, it's them!

We are looking forward to a greater plan for My Friend in coming years. Once we work through the details, we will begin our search for more kids who are looking for an opportunity to prove themselves. We appreciate your continued support while we sail through this wonderful journey.

- Samuel Sudarshan

# Trash! On rag picker children

## Cover Story

She carries a bag on her shoulder, topples now and then under its weight. What do you think she is carrying? A luggage? A School bag? No... She carries a rag picking bag.

Yes, this is the story of hope that arose from the land known for beggars and rag pickers.

**Kanchan** - a girl child belonging to the beggar community, once shunned by the society, she is now an example of one who was able to transform and uplift herself from a life of abject poverty and misery into one of hope and joy.

Nothing short of a miracle! None would have given her a chance in her yesteryears, as she remained unhygienic, forgoing even daily bath. But life changed for better with her joining our partner Jeevan Jyothi Bal Vikas. Her confidence and self-esteem were restored and now she pursues life with zest and fervour.

She is not only a pleasant and happy child but also keen about education and pursues it with trust and hope that one day she and her family will be able to break free from the cycle of curse and shackles of the society that kept her and her parents in an abysmal state.

Begging, stemming out of poverty is a reality. People below poverty line continue to live in unhygienic conditions and are also prone to health and psychological problems. The vicious cycle of poor health, lack of education and poverty will continue for people at Khatima unless we step in and help.

Today an estimated 70.6 million people live in extreme poverty conditions in India. The need is great.

We, at My Friend with our projects at Khatima and other places in India, will continue to provide education, skill development programs, and physical education programs to these marginalized and downtrodden ones in our society. We will continue to work with dedication as we transform the lives of these precious ones around us.

## From our Partner in ULLAL

We are privileged to partner with My Friend, they support 37 Children at Ullalu Upanagara. Through this programme the children are immensely benefited.

The project provides a safe space for children to spend their evenings in useful ways. We monitor the children's performance in their academics and provide extra tuitions to the children. This prevents the children from becoming school drop outs and ultimately landing in child labour. Thereby we ensure better future for the children in the days to come in the areas of education and skill training in the days to come.

Sponsorship develops a bond between the child and the sponsor. This relationship gives happiness and confidence in a child that someone loves and cares for them. This also gives the child a sense of gratification that they are part of the larger family. The birthday gifts that are sent by the sponsors create a lasting impact in the lives of these children, while many of the parents do not even remember their birthdays.

By and large, My Friend strives to make a difference in the lives of the children. I wish the My Friend team all the best in the days to come.

Yours in the child's cause,

M. Devanand Samuel,

Director - Karnataka Evangelistic Association.

## From our Partner in KHATIMA

Jeevan Jyoti Bal Vikas (JJBV) is our partner for North India; it is based in a village called Saijana in the town Khatima in Uttarakhand.

Khatima, despite its agricultural lands, handful of Government offices and a few small-scale industries offers very little scope for employment. Majority of families who remain here are sustained by mothers who are the sole bread winners struggling with alcoholic husbands.

Our partner is mainly working with two communities called Gihar and Tharu. Gihar is a begging community who are traditional beggars and rag pickers. Although government has started detaining beggars in cities, especially women along with their children go for begging in public places. They are a land less community and also, they are treated as untouchables as they lead unhygienic life style. Child marriage is still being practiced in this group because they don't give importance to education. Our project is determined to give them basic education.

Next important community, they are working with is Tharu. Tharu is a tribal group originally from Nepal. The terrible part of this group is alcoholism by which every second a family is affected and destroyed. More than 50% of the children enrolled belong to these communities.

But, in the midst of such hopelessness, are many heart-warming stories of children, who, instead of sinking into despair and anguish have raised themselves from ashes and become symbols of hope and dignity for their communities and the outside world.



## Happenings

Here is a selected update of the various events that happened across our projects.

### Computers for progress

**Khatima:** Computer classes are being conducted in the project Centre. Based on the classes they study in, the children are taught basic computer operation skills, Software programs like Paint, word, Excel and PowerPoint.

### Celebrating Freedom

**Khatima:** Independence Day was celebrated with full enthusiasm and in its true spirits at the project. Events included various forms of dance, singing patriotic songs and recitations of patriotic poems. Mr. Daniel Masih, Mr Jerald Gill (Project Coordinator-Saharanpur), Mr. Sanjay Abel, Mrs. S.N. Kumar (coordinators and project staff) hoisted the flag. Mr. Arun Augustin shared about the various struggles of freedom fighters and Mr. Jerald Gill shared his thoughts and ideas that will enable individuals to be useful to the society. Refreshments were served post the celebrations.

### Persuading patriotism through art

**Khatima, Saharanpur:** Drawing competitions were conducted on Independence Day on the theme 'India'. It was mind-blowing to see children draw their thoughts about the country showcasing Unity in Diversity. Rangoli and Greeting card making events were also held to persuade patriotism through art.



*Greeting Card making*

### Combating Malnutrition

**Saharanpur:** Parents meeting was organized on 20<sup>th</sup> of August '19 to create awareness about malnutrition. Parents and guardians of the sponsored children were present. Mr. Jerald Gill was the guest speaker, and he explained about the health seeking behaviour. He stressed upon the importance of the children's health, balanced diet and the significance of Body Mass Index (BMI). As per the reports, 30% of the project children fell under malnutrition category. The BMI reports were shown to the parents advising them to ensure healthy meals for the children. The project has also revised the food menu to provide food with necessary nutrients.

### The sports way

**Ullal, Khatima, and Saharanpur:** Every Saturday Sport and physical activities are conducted at the project Centre intended to inculcate team spirit and sportsmanship in the children and to promote outdoor sports and physical exercise for their good health, aiming at the holistic development of children.

### Gandhi Jayanti celebrations

**Khatima:** Children, along with their parents and teachers, at Khatima came together to celebrate Gandhi Jayanti. The children paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi, by singing a few patriotic songs. A workshop on hygiene and cleanliness was conducted for children and their parents. Later a cleanliness drive was also organized in and around the Centre which saw enthusiastic participation from the kids.



*Children taking part in activities*

## Heart-warming stories from the field

### From streets to school

**Khatima:** Jasmine's days are always early. Every morning, she used to set out with her parents who make their living through begging by the lanes of Khatima. She had no access to education, no good meal once in a day, and very little options to choose from until a sponsor from My Friend chose to be a friend. Upon learning about Jasmine's life, she was enrolled at the school through My Friend's support. A new phase began in Jasmine's life that she has a positive attitude towards life now. She is doing well in her studies. She is a very friendly child and has made a lot of friends at school. There are days when she does not get to go to school or attend the project as her parents take her to beg, when they find it too difficult to support their family. The project staffs regularly encourage her parents to take up other jobs. We hope that they do so, then she never has to beg again.

### A beacon of hope

**Saharanpur:** Ilma hails from Saharanpur. Her parents enrolled her in a local anganwadi (rural child care center) as they could not afford education.

Through 'My Friend', she is now enrolled in a formal school. She attends school and project activities regularly. Her reading and writing skills have improved a lot. "We are very thankful to her sponsors for her education" say Ilma's parents.



*In picture: Food being served at Ullal Centre*

### Counselling early

**Ullal:** The social behaviours of children hailing from slums were found to be inappropriate. The community set up has induced in them the act of speaking abusive words. In order to address the issue, counselling sessions are being conducted regularly and improvement is observed post counselling.

### Beating Hunger

**Ullal:** Yamini is an active and healthy child studying in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at St. Patrick's school. Her father, an alcohol addict committed suicide and is no more. Her mother being the only breadwinner of the family struggles to meet the needs. She barely earns enough to meet the basic needs of 3 hungry children. With support from the project centre, she is now appointed as a cook at the Centre. She is thankful that her kids don't have to starve for a meal anymore.

# Birthday Bash

## A note from our sponsor - Helen

**Ullal:** I consider it a real blessing to share my birthday with my little friend Vijay. This year I got an opportunity to visit Ullal project, to meet Vijay & celebrate our birthday together. I was very excited to meet him at his own place. When I arrived at the project, Vijay was waiting with his brother (Ajay) and Mother (Uma). My first gaze at him was priceless as it reminded me of my sponsors (Nathan & Lauren Benesh). Then I started interacting with him. Though, in the beginning he was hesitant, later he felt very comfortable and enjoyed being with me. He was very happy and excited at the gifts I got him. I was surprised to see him gladly share those with his brother. We spent some time together playing cricket. Project coordinator (Mercy) helped me know more about Vijay’s progress in project and school. He sang rhymes, songs and recited mathematical tables and also shared a lot about his friends and teachers.

After talking to his mom, I came

to know about his family and their financial struggle. It was disheartening to know that she is the only breadwinner of the family as his father is an alcohol addict and does not offer any support. She goes to work and returns home late and so the kids don’t get to eat on time. Now being enrolled in My Friend, they receive nutritional evening snacks every day and get to spend their evenings learning at the center. This has helped Vijay a lot. His mother is very happy and grateful that Vijay and Ajay are enrolled with “My Friend”. I thank aunt Mercy, the project coordinator who arranged this meeting. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to “My Friend” organization for making this happen. I can’t wait to meet him and his family again.



## On a final note

We want to thank each one of you for making this journey so meaningful for our little friends, we appreciate all the love and support you have lavished. If you want to know more or share how you feel about your sponsorship journey, please feel free to email, call or simply text us, let us together make a difference.



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**My Friend**  
*Life Will Never Be The Same*

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