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In this issue

Update

Our new patron

Our current plans

Where our money is going

How you can help and support us



..... From broken innocence to a healthy future

UPDATE

It is now a year since I first read of the awful things happening to infants, toddlers and small children in South Africa and around the world - about the incredible violence perpetrated against the innocent and those most in need of protection.

The year has been taken up with an initial 5 months of research, including my first visit to South Africa, then another 4 months doing all the usual but essential administrative tasks of setting up first a company, then becoming a registered charity, then sorting out all the banking arrangements [for all charitable gifts] and applying for registration with the Inland Revenue to claim Gift Aid.

It took weeks of dedication and frustration by my daughter, my sister and my nephew to do all the [free!] techy stuff to design and setup the website; then we wrote and published all the information leaflets and general publicity stuff.

We have got there.

We are now on the endless merry-go-round of raising funds, but also we are developing excellent contacts with existing or struggling services. We have a very clear idea of how we can help and support people who are working on the ground with these battered and broken children.

It is very encouraging that whoever we talk to about these horrors of violence against small children evokes an almost visceral response this is an issue that touches and affects everybody.

We have had the most enormous amount of help from people all over the place, there has been a universally positive reaction to what we are trying to do and although it looks like not much has been done yet, we are making great headway in developing good relations with services and Not for Profit Organisations [NPOs] in Southern Africa.

The infant trust does not plan to run any services directly, or offer long-term support to individual children, although we are very happy to pay for specific and short-term therapy for children in great need. We hold the strong opinion that we must help and support those projects and people that are trying to deal with the problems within the communities that they occur.

Lesley Rudd, Chief Executive



Our new patron

The very GOOD news is that we have a new patron. **Baroness Joan Walmsley** has agreed to join us, and help us to develop and continue our work. We are delighted as she has such an excellent track record on working with children; Joan is a Board member of UNICEF UK, a Parliamentary Ambassador for the NSPCC and one of the most prolific and passionate speakers on children's issues in the House of Lords.



Our current plans

We are Looking into giving a grant to Epworth Children's Village, near Johannesburg, where they can provide a safe and secure environment for children in need. Each child is placed by the Children's Courts. I am visiting in November 2005 and plan to talk to them about **the infant trust** raising funds for them so we can support the training of volunteers to fulfil some of the many of the psychological needs of these abused infants/children and to help fund their programme for safe harbours, so the victims don't have to return to the abusive home or remain in a children's home. Later we will consider applying to Comic Relief for funds.

We have already applied to Sainsbury's for project funds ... anyone who knows of pots of money please let us know

The infant trust has applied to Sainsbury's Fund to start projects with Childline SA www.childline.org.za and the Ekupholeni Mental Health Centre, Natalspruit Hospital, which runs a crisis centre for women and children attached to the Casualty Dept. of the hospital serving 2.5 million people in very deprived circumstances. This will be to help fund costs of recruiting and training volunteers for the crisis centre, to provide funds to train foster parents for local safe homes for abused children and to train community based home care workers to identify and deal with potential child abuse. During my visit in November I plan to knock together the details of this project which will provide the opportunity for unemployed women to develop vital and immensely useful skills, and therefore help them into paid work. In a place with 75% unemployment this is vital for families.

The Topsy Foundation in SA provides homes for vulnerable children. The aim of their programme is to provide a safe and permanent haven for children who no longer have access to food, shelter, clothing and schooling – basic human rights. Very often these children have arrested physical or cognitive development. We do not offer medication costs but will be offering single grants to specific children for short-term essential therapy.

This is another brief and very nasty reminder of why we exist



Two young sisters aged four and three were found to have been severely molested by their grandfather, father and grandmother, whilst their mother colluded and abused the children for many months and maybe years. The abuse from the mother was, in many ways, even more horrific because of the extreme betrayal involved. Both children have been very damaged both physically and mentally. They came to the attention of the authorities and were very battered and very broken. They are now in foster care. These are children in need.

Where the money is going



Apart from appealing for major funds our general fundraising has so far been very positive and, with already over £6,000 [in 6 months!] in the bank we are planning to allocate some one-off grants.

We have agreed to provide a grant to the Topsy Foundation [www.topsy.org.za] to supply occupational therapy for one year to 'Paul' - not his real name - a 4 year old who has been chronically ill for most of his life. As a consequence he has not learned to sit up, crawl or walk. We hope that this occupational therapy will give him a real chance to develop his physical skills and learn, one day, to enjoy playing on a swing as these two are doing

Our other partners are currently planned to be

- Bethany House, part of Child in Crisis Organisation www.child-in-crisis.org.za/
- The Johannesburg Child Welfare Society www.jhbchildwelfare.org.za/ ; they receive very abused and damaged infants and children – often as many as 20 a day.

I will be visiting each of these in November and will write about them further.

- In November I will also be meeting with Save the Children Fund, SA, with a view to doing some collaborative work with them.



I work closely with Claudia Ford – it was the dreadful but inspiring story about her daughter in an article in the UK Daily Mirror that sparked all this off and I am looking forward to meeting her again. She provides us with vital information about where and how to access those most in need; it is a huge help as I can then plan to visit the services, meet the staff and understand the work they do in trying to deal with this curse against these little ones.

We in turn act as their bankers for donations from UK sources to help both our organisations fight this appalling scourge. You can find out about her work at <http://www.princesstrust.com/> .

