

## A LITTLE CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE, AGAIN

It is hard to believe that it is already a year since we made our last trip to Bali. In the intervening twelve months “Bali Kids” has been registered as a charity and fundraising has continued a pace. In 2009 the charity raised just over £1,700 - we leave this time with over £3,000. The contributions of everyone who helped us achieve this figure are greatly appreciated. Without you we cannot make a difference. The charity has also obtained its first direct child sponsor - more of which later.

It will be interesting to see what has changed in Bali over the last twelve months. Have the charity’s efforts of last year to help the disadvantaged of the island made a noticeable difference? Should we continue to support the same projects or are there different areas the charity should be looking to support this year?

After the long journey from Scotland to Bali we take a couple of days to relax before we begin to ascertain what is happening on the ground. We are assisted in this by Gede Suarsa the hotels HR Manager and our main contact for the hotels Community Involvement Programme (CIP). The CIP is targeted at malnourished and illiterate children in need. If the CIP is not supporting children directly it uses trusted foundations or organisations to deliver on the ground. The Melia Bali Hotel is at the forefront of sustainable poverty alleviation amongst corporate bodies on the island. It is therefore, an ideal conduit for “Bali Kids” to identify the key areas where our support can provide additionality to the work already being carried out. Mr Suarsa is also a leading player in the HIV Aids Awareness Programme on the island.



Our first fact finding visit, accompanied by around twenty other hotel guests and a number of hotel staff, is to SLB.B in Jimbaran. SLB.B is a school for hearing impaired young people which follows a Ministry of Education certified curriculum from Kindergarten (age 5) through Senior High School (age 21). The school also offers places to autistic children and children with other mental health problems. The main aim of the school is to make their students capable of becoming productive members of the community. Currently the school has 220 pupils of which 65 are boarders.



We are greeted at the school by the head teacher and ushered into the school hall and as is the case the world over we are then entertained by the children. First on stage are some young girls in traditional Balinese dress preparing to do the “legong dance”. The music starts the girls begin to dance and you are watching a sight seen all over Bali. Then you remember that the girls are deaf and cannot hear the music. Our gaze is then directed to the rear of the hall where one of the teachers is signing to the girls and they in turn are transferring the signs into dance steps. It is quite fascinating to watch. Next up are two young men who perform a witty and expressive mime based on daily life on the island.



After the entertainment we have an opportunity to visit some of the children in their class rooms.



There is a great emphasis on vocational skills and we see workshops for vehicle maintenance, carpentry, ceramics, spa services, computer science and textiles. After our tour of the school we are then invited for lunch which was prepared and served with the assistance of children studying food and beverage.

Overall this was a very interesting trip and our first opportunity to see one of the areas which “Bali Kids” may be able to offer support as the school has funding issues especially with regard to the children who board.

We are due to make the long journey to the north of the island, tomorrow, to visit Setiwan’s family. This is one of the projects from last year and we are keen to see what difference the charity’s support has made. Whilst in the north we will also visit an orphanage which has come to the hotels attention. Today we are shopping with Ian and Margaret Black from New Zealand for small gifts to take with us to give out to the children in the orphanage and to Setiwan and his twin brothers, Yogi and Yoga.



Its five o’clock in the morning and the alarm has just gone off. We are due in reception at 5.45 to get our transport north. Unfortunately Ian and Margaret will not be able to join us as Margaret is unwell. However we are joined on the journey by several members of the hotel staff. Arriving in Pemataran around lunchtime we head first to Setiwan’s school. We receive a warm welcome from the children but that seems to be the case with all Balinese children, always smiling. A small school of only three or four classrooms and with only a limited supply of textbooks and other educational materials it is quite amazing the

results the teachers and pupils manage to achieve. Setiwan is called to the front of the class to meet us. This causes much embarrassment to him and offers his classmates the opportunity to point and giggle. Before leaving the school Shona presents the head teacher with some English language textbooks. The gift is clearly very welcome.





Leaving the school we head to Setiwan's village to meet the rest of the family. Last year when we visited they were in very poor health. Hopefully, our support will have improved their situation. Setiwan certainly appeared much healthier and more alert. The sight which greeted us as we arrived was most heart warming. The families underlying living conditions may not have improved but they quite clearly are much healthier especially the young twins. Like Setiwan they too are much more alert and they have lost the doleful hungry look that they



had last year. The parents too look much better as a result of the medical help they are getting from the islands Aids Programme. . We also got to see Setiwan's report card and you can see clearly the improvement in his school work .We leave in very different spirits from last year and it is very clear to see we have started to make a difference to this family.

From Pemutaran it is another hour's drive to Giliminuk at this point we are almost in Java the journey from here being only a short ferry crossing. We are here to visit the Krisna Rajasa orphanage. This is not the first orphanage we have visited on our journeys to Bali but it clearly is one of the poorest. Situated as it is in the north of the island very few tourists visit so there are very few donations forthcoming and little or no sponsorship of individual children. The orphanage houses 35 children from different areas of the island. The youngest is Gede (4 years old). He has been in the orphanage for over a year having been handed in by neighbours covered in blood following repeated abuse by his step father. He clung to Shona for the two hours we were there and I am sure she would have brought him home with her if that had been possible.





We left the orphanage saddened by what we had seen and heard but uplifted by the wonderful work that is being done there. Once again we see children with no real

possessions but still they all smile and appear happy. We arrive back at the

hotel at around 6.30 tired but happy in the knowledge that we have started to change the lives of one family and will be able to help others.



Another day, another visit, this time to the Anak Anak Bali Orphanage and Care centre. Like last year we have a small present for all the children but before we distribute them we ask if the children remember us. No nodding heads just spontaneous singing of "If your happy and you know it" which Shona taught the children last year. The children's English is much better and I am sure that is a tear in Shona's eye. After handing out the gifts to the children we are shown round the orphanage. It is quite clear that a lot of work has been done on the décor of the building since last year and in discussion with the director we learn that there is a fair amount of



sponsorship support coming into the centre. Before we leave we give the director 5 million Rupiah to allow him to buy medicines, as and when they are required, for the care centre. The centre services the care needs of many of the orphanages on the island.



One last day of visits, before we can decide finally, how to distribute the funds we have raised this year. We return to SBL/B to visit the boarder's quarters. Run down, tired, inadequate just few of the adjectives to describe the living conditions. The basic conditions here are poorer than those of the children at Anak Anak Bali. As a first step, a coat of paint all round and some new doors on the toilets would be a good start before tidying the gardens and updating the sports facilities.

Our final stop is at a new project called Shining Heart in Denpasar. The project for single mothers is being run by Yayuk who until recently managed Anak Anak Bali. Yayuk's new project is in its early days and has quite a way to go however we can help a little and before leaving we present Yayuk with a donation of 840,000 Rupiah which was donated by Alexandra Mumford, a work colleague of Shona's, specifically for the project.



Alexandra is also the child sponsor who was mentioned earlier. Last year we decided to give some support to a local family whom we had met. They have three children a girl of 9 a boy of 13 and a girl of 16 and we are supporting their educational costs. Before we left for Bali Alexandra agreed to take over the ongoing sponsorship of the youngest girl, Ayu. Alexandra will continue to relay that money to the child through the charity in future years. The charity will at present continue to support the other two children. Should you wish to sponsor this

family or any of the children at an orphanage please let us know.

Having finished all our visits it was time again to sit down with Gede and agree where our funds could be best utilised this year. It was quite clear that the funding given to support Setiwan and his family was bearing fruit and it was agreed that that should continue. A contract between Bali Kids, Melia Bali and YDPA, the providers on the ground, would be signed prior to our departure. Shona and I had also come to the conclusion that the boarders at SBL/B and the Krisna Raja orphanage were most in need of our support and we agreed to give funding to both those projects. We have also learned that Setiwan's family do not own the land on which they live and there is a distinct possibility that they could be evicted. We therefore, also agreed that funds would be made available to purchase land in order to secure the long term future of the family.



Charity work over we have time to relax now before we return home, not quite. On our last day in Bali we are invited to the general manager Mr Boyle's office where he makes a presentation to us in recognition of the work Bali Kids has already done for the underprivileged children on the island.

All in all, it was a busy, but rewarding holiday and we now understand the Balinese mindset of "tri hati karana". Oh and I don't think I even mentioned the 6.4 magnitude earthquake we experienced along the way.

Russell and Shona Fleming