



NEWSLETTER



Meet Sidikha

Sidikha (above) is only seven years old, and has lived alone with her father since her mother disappeared during lockdown. This shy young girl often has to make her own meal in the evening because her father works as a labourer and regularly gets home late. In spite of this, Sidikha's attendance at school is excellent and she works hard. We are so glad that Roseberry School is able to offer her both refuge and support through what must be a difficult childhood. We hope very much she will eventually manage to complete her education and earn the chance of a brighter future for herself and her father.

Letter from Helen Jones

Soon after School Aid India first became a reality, an old friend wrote optimistically "Great oaks from little acorns grow". The school we built in Darjeeling has indeed grown to be an important part of the community it serves. It is wonderful to see how Roseberry School is improving the life prospects of under privileged children from the locality, children who would most likely become trapped in poverty like their parents were it not for the early education and support they receive at Roseberry.

At SAI we continue to be motivated by the strong belief that every child deserves the kind of good start which comes from having the best education possible, regardless of ability to pay. Sadly, underprivileged children cannot afford an education. This is where the school needs our help. We operate against a backdrop of world and local problems, and the cost of living has left many behind, even here in the UK. Charities tread a tricky line when they ask for financial contributions, perhaps even more so when it is for children in other lands. We chose to open a school in India because we could, because the locals desperately wanted it, and because one British pound buys some twenty times as much in India as it does in the UK, so with small amounts of cash we really have been able to make a huge difference. The thirst for education in India also makes our interventions especially valuable.

SAI's income is very small, insufficient to employ even one professional administrator. But our charity is staffed entirely by volunteers who give their time and skills for free, as does our director in India. This makes it possible for us to educate a child at Roseberry for the price of just one cup of coffee per week in the UK, thereby transforming prospects for whole families. That must surely be good value in anyone's book.

We are especially pleased this autumn to welcome an additional trustee to our team. David Jones has long been a supporter of SAI and even completed a challenging solo sponsored walk for us, raising thousands of pounds. He has considerable experience working with other charities, and his contribution will be invaluable as SAI prepares for its third decade of operations.

Banking matters

In the summer, NatWest bank notified us that after December 1st it would no longer accept payments to our account by standing order. We contacted all concerned and would like to thank everyone who completed a new standing order form valid for our account with CAF bank. Please contact Helen Jones if you have any difficulties relating to this changeover. Anyone wishing to make a one off or regular payment to SAI can do so at any time via www.schoolaidindia.org. We apologise for any inconvenience.

Darjeeling

Schools in Darjeeling close for the three winter months at the end of November and open for the new school year during the first week in March 2024.

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More news from Darjeeling

In our 2022 newsletter we introduced the charming and impressive Bareily family. Mr Bareily was scraping a living as a subsistence farmer and was desperate for his 3 children to receive a proper education; the passport to a better life. However, they lived in the countryside far from the nearest school and even though the children managed to walk there and back each day, their father knew they were learning nothing. Then one day a friend told him about a new school in Darjeeling which helped children who couldn't afford the usual private school fees and already had a good reputation. Mr Bareily left his farm and brought his family to Darjeeling where he obtained a labouring job with the municipality so that he could enrol his children at Roseberry School. They quickly settled down, and Bibek (pictured below), the second oldest, went on to become head boy. He and his brother Abishek did well enough in the secondary entrance tests to go to the school of their choice and eventually passed all their end of school exams. At this stage the two brothers both enrolled at college to study Business. What had once seemed an impossible dream for this family was actually coming true.

Meanwhile, their younger sister Anju was in year 11, the equivalent of lower sixth, studying science. She was the brightest of the 3 children and was planning to become a biology teacher.

Just after we had sent out the newsletter with their story, disaster struck the family. Mr Bareily's employers made him redundant. With no family income, the 3 youngsters were faced with having to abandon their education and seek work. 20 year old Bibek applied for a lucrative and highly sought after army post. He passed all the tests and entered the army last spring. His enviably large income is sufficient to support the whole family as well as allowing his siblings to continue their studies. Poverty makes it very hard to plan for the future, but it seems that through his education Bibek has been able to give his family some much needed security and the chance to progress in life.

