

February 2013 – June 2013

This time of year brings to the fore summer, school holidays and the *Summer Camps!*

As always, the Belaku Trust ran summer camps with the funds generously donated by our long-time supporters, The Overseas Women's Club (OWC). Children of all ages, castes and social backgrounds joined in on a variety of activities at the camps, which were held across April and May in 10 villages, with over 900 children aged from 3 to 16. Most activities aimed to deliver important messages to the children, and all were fundamentally designed to be fun and enjoyable and as far removed as possible from the structured repetitive routine teaching they experience at school.

It was clear that a great time was had by all. Children enjoyed making masks and were introduced to origami. They were provided with the resources to really go to town and express their creativity, being limited only by their imagination. From the intense concentration on the children's faces as they worked, and their big smiles on finishing the activity, it was clear that they thoroughly loved it.



Other activities used entertaining games to demonstrate life-saving messages of hand washing and food hygiene. The groups of children enjoyed playing the 'musical toilet' game -- musical chairs with cardboard cut outs of toilets for chairs! Organizers implanted effective messages about hygiene by using this game and also another involving tug of war. The children participated with high spirits and undoubtedly many enjoyable memories were created over the course of the 3 days.

Activities highlighting environmental issues also created great interest, particularly amongst the children aged 11-16. The issues of drought, saving water and waste management were heatedly debated, demonstrating the children's awareness and concerns of these issues and their appreciation of the need to protect their environment.

The older children were also given the opportunity to develop their 'techy' skills. Laptops that had kindly been donated by the OWC were the source of much interest. They quickly familiarized and immersed themselves in math games and it was difficult to pry them away from the screens at the end of the sessions.

Also this year a new activity was piloted which was based on learning about human rights. It proved to be a worthwhile activity with lots of room for further development in future camps.



Esteemed director, Mr. Nagabharana donated a copy of his well-received children's film, 'Chinnari Muttha'. The film was played on our brand new projector funded by The Overseas Women's Club (OWC). The children were glued to the screen and watched with rapt attention in spite of the sweltering heat.

If you have documentaries, health-training related videos or children's films to donate please write to us at belaku@belakustrust.org

The Belaku Trust staff organized the camps, which were then facilitated by the *gelathis*, who are local women who work in the pre-schools. It is a massive operation, but each year the feedback received from the children and helpers' evidence show how important the camps are to both the children and the local communities. The camps grow from strength to strength each year thanks to fantastic teamwork and commitment from the *gelathis*, field workers, Belaku staff and volunteers. Looking forward to next year's already!

Focus on malnutrition

Over the past few months it has come to Belaku's attention that there are 7 children from the surrounding villages of Kanakpura who are suffering from grade 3 malnutrition. Sadly, existing government programmes seem of little help in addressing this problem. With the help of Dr. Usha Abraham and advice from nutritionist Anke Schuermann, Belaku staff and our volunteer Lisa Sengupta are currently investigating the diet and social histories of these children. This will be followed by developing strategies that will address both the medical and social issues that are the root cause of the poor nutritional status of these children. Hopefully in the next newsletter we will be able to update you with some positive results from our interventions.

Volunteers and visitors

Volunteers Casi Martin, Raji Mohan and Rahul Mathai did a tremendous job helping to organize and run the summer camp this year. The multi-talented Raji is now assisting the Income Generation Projects and Casi has been busy writing up recommendations for next year's summer camp. Samuel Monteiro from France will be with Belaku for 2 months starting in June. Samuel is studying development economics. He is planning on working with the Income Generation Projects and using his French charm at sales to make Belaku lots of money! Lisa Sengupta came back to volunteer for the third time. Lisa is currently studying to be a dietician in the UK and whilst at Belaku she helped with nutrition issues and also entertained staff with her attempts at Kannada and Hindi with a Yorkshire accent.

Mr. K.T Ganapathy was the driving force who ensured that our revamp of software and security of our computer systems was accomplished perfectly.

Mr. Keshav Desiraju, the current Health Secretary, visited various Government facilities in March and met with Belaku staff and *gelathis* at the time. His obvious concern for the optimum functioning of the local health facilities heartens us and has provided a link between the government staff and Belaku.

Other visitors came from far and wide:

Aroon Shivdasani of the Indo-American Arts Council, Eric Vivien and Delphine Marie-Vivien with their three children, Jane Ogilvie of Youth Challenge Australia and Prof. Birgit Weller visiting German professor at NID. Marc Blessin brought Stephanie Volpini and little Marius to meet us at the Bangalore office. Anuradha Pati came along for a visit to our women's income generation groups.

If you would like to read more about Belaku, click on the link to the India Today article by Ayesha Aleem

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/shes-every-woman.../1/251949.html>



Our website urgently needs a makeover! If you are someone who has design skills and are open to volunteering at Belaku, please contact us at the email address below.

If you are receiving this newsletter by mistake or wish to be removed from our mailing list please let us know, email us at: **belaku@belakustrust.org**

Thank you and Warm Regards,

The Belaku Trust