

95-96

THE 7TH YEAR ANNUAL REPORT OF DON BOSCO ANBU ILLAM

On 24 May 1995, the new Director Fr. Vincent Xavier and Bro. Meril took over the charge of Don Bosco Anbu Illam, Salem. Due to the completion of studies abroad, Fr. Vincent Xavier assumed office as the Director of Anbu Illam on 1 July 1995. During his absence, Bro. Meril saw to the smooth running and maintenance of Don Bosco Anbu Illam.

On 1 July during a prayer service the new Director assumed office. The new Director studied the projects and assessed the situation of Anbu Illam because of which the progress of Anbu Illam received a new impetus depending on the nature and the phase of the work.

ESTABLISHING THE STREET CONTACT CENTRES:

During the past 12 months we have contacted nearly 300 run-away children from home in and around the old and new bus stands, Bazaars, and Cinema theatres of Salem. They have come to the streets for want of love and concern and particularly because of the enforcement of child-labour. We have convinced many children to go back home. Around 50 children are remaining in our shelter home because of their family conditions. In order to enliven these contact centres in the new Bus stand, the Old Bus stand, Gugai, Kitchipalayam, the Railway Junction and Sanyasigundu, we have trained our Street Leaders to animate the work. The following boys have been appointed as animators: Govindaraj, Meril, Michael, Raja, Velumani, Elumalai, Kumar, Mr. Alphonse. They have been visiting different areas in different timings from 6.30 a.m. in the morning till 11.30 p.m. at night. Including the Director, all are involved in this process. We visit Run-away children, Vagrant boys, paper-pickers, hotel workers, children who are involved in silver smith jobs and children who work in the automobile units. Sometimes and in some areas we come across some anti-social elements, namely the hotel Brokers who take the children for child-labour and some harsh hotel Managers who perpetuate child-labour in the city, to stop our street contacts. In order to have protection we have requested the social-Defence department of Tamil Nadu to issue identity cards for the contact persons. The street children are of two types:

1. Street children who have affinity with the parents.
2. Street children who have no affinity with the parents.

In order to cater to the needs of both the present and the future of these street and working children, we have started non-formal education classes in eight different places. We also admit the probable school drop-outs and thus we try to prevent vagrancies. By the grace of God and the co-operation of the authorities the non-formal classes were successfully conducted between 5 to 6.30 p.m. in the Government school premises. We have contacted 1000 children in these areas. The Honourable Collector of Salem, Mr. Hans Raj Varna I.A.S., and the late Commissioner, Mr. Manickavasagam, officially inaugurated these evening classes on 23 December 1995.

The poor section of the people of Salem have welcomed this scheme as it is economically sound. The 'parents - teachers meeting' that was conducted in the months of March, April, and May in each of these areas would confirm this fact. Seeing the need of the situation, we have added one more centre in Nehru Nagar. Many children frequent this centre. In order to have street

contacts and to establish the prevention of vagrancy scheme for the street & working children, we have employed 18 part-time teachers to work in these 7 centres.

We have given these children educational and economic assistants to continue their studies. We are grateful to Rev.Fr.Geuzou S.D.B., the teachers of Holy Angels, Salem Ladies Club, Rotary Club, and also to those who have voluntarily extended their help to these children.

Through prevention, action and follow-up method, we are reaching out to around 1039 children. Of these 1039 children we have categorised different groups, according to their needs, interest and regular attendance. These children are badly in need of our educational assistance, care and concern to continue in their education.

ATTENDANCE		NO. OF STUDENTS
Street Children		70
Orphans		49
Group A	above 80%	124
Group B	above 60%	121
Group C	above 40%	208
Group D	above 40%	467
TOTAL		1039

PHASE II : SHELTER HOME SERVICE

The most deserving street and working children who have no contact at all with their parents, stay in our shelter home. At present there are 70 children in our shelter home. Some of them go out for some work, like paper-picking, painting, auto mechanics and to do decorations for festivals and marriages and come back to this shelter for stay. Eleven boys, proficient in driving, have obtained their driving licences. In addition to this shelter home, we have two other Day-care centres one at Sanniyasigundu and another at Kondappanaickanpattti at the foot of the Yercaud Hills. In each of these centres there are about 30 working children attending these non-formal education classes. 21 candidates of both sexes attend tailoring classes at Sanniyasigundu. For all these 3 centres we have employed Street Educators-5, Street Animators-2, Part time teachers-2

PHASE III : MODEL TRAINING CENTRE (Special School for street & Working Children)

In the past, we had been sending the most deserving street children to Government Reformatory and Boarding schools in and around Salem for their further studies. It was not a good alternative for this kind of street children, and consequently, many of them left those institutions. In fact, when the children meet us on the streets, they have the fear that they would be sent to such reformatory & boarding schools. Hence, to remedy this fear, we have established a model training centre in our Shelter Home itself. 50 of them remain here and we give them 3 meals a day and refreshments. We conduct also non-formal educational classes and vocational training programmes, such as, tailoring, electric wiring and book binding, for them. These boys show much

interest and enthusiasm. This gives us also a lot of hope and encouragement. We firmly believe that with your co-operation we can make a steady progress in this venture.

This semi rehabilitation and model training centre was recognised as the working children special school which was inaugurated on 23 December 1995, and in the future it will be a full-fledged government recognised special school for street and working children. We thank the honourable collector and concerned authorities for recognising this work. We do assure them that we will come up to their expectations and make it an exemplary institution. We have also employed 2 full-time educators and 3 vocational training instructors (tailoring & electrical wiring and book binding) in this project.

This centre awaits further development of vocational training such as auto-mechanics, driving, welding, printing and carpentry. We have to improve the dormitory and other facilities to give better accommodation. Our aim is to reach out to at least 100 deserving working children in this centre.

PHASE IV : REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR THE STREET YOUTH ABOVE 18 AND THE VALUE EDUCATION - AWARENESS CAMPING SITE

Due to the hard work of my predecessor, Fr. Edward Xavier SDB, the government of Tamil Nadu identified a site for the Rehabilitation of the street youth. Due to unavoidable reasons, the efforts to acquire the land did not materialise. Now we have revived the process and have taken possession of the land. At present, the non-formal education for the vagrant children around that area is going on this site. Once a week, our street and working children have an animation programme at the site. We also conduct animation programmes for working youth on sundays with the help of young Salesians from the Retreat, Salesian College, Yercaud.

On 11 December 1995, we celebrated Christmas and we also commemorated the human rights day. Our chief-guest of the day, honourable collector, Mr Hans Raj Varma, visited the site and assured us of the ownership of the land and further encouraged us to proceed with the programme. We are hoping to acquire the necessary legal documents in the near future and it was indeed a meaningful gift to the street and working youth and children of Salem who were commemorating human rights day and Christmas.

THE SCOUT MOVEMENTS - DON BOSCO ANBU ILLAM

On 15 February, we introduced the scout movement for our Anbu Illam inmates. The newly appointed scout master Mr. Nasurudin took active part in it. The purpose of introducing scout movement is to bring discipline, unity and awareness. On Easter Sunday the Scout uniforms were given to the boys and the scout movement was successfully introduced. On 8 April, 16 of our boys participated in a Mini Boscoree at Katpadi. The Salem Anbu Illam group received the third best group award in Vellore zone. They received the first prize for tent-making.

We really appreciate the scout master and the children for their superb performance and we wish them a better tomorrow.

MOTIVATION CAMPS - AWARENESS OUTINGS, SUMMER CAMP (it was organized both for bigger and smaller Anbu Illam inmates).

AWARENESS OUTINGS:

Awareness outings were often organized for our children to introduce new boys to the old boys and the old boys to the new boys. We have taken them regularly to different places such as foot of the Yercaud hills, Yercaud, Pulampatti etc. Through these outings boys were brought together and they were open to the new atmosphere at Anbu Illam.

MOTIVATION CAMPS :

It was organized both for big boys and small boys. From the 28th of March to the 2nd of April small boys were taken to Yellagiri hills. Fr. Guezou is very fond of our children. He sponsored all these camps. We are really grateful to Father Guezou for his generosity.

In the new natural ambient we acquired, with the help of inmates social awareness talks, long walks, treasure hunts and camp fires for the boys which brought the boys together and made them participate in all the activities. Around 44 young children were participating in the camp. We have taken them to Idayadeepam, jawathi hills and Tirupattur Don Bosco. It was a memorable event for the children. We remember with gratitude the whole hearted co-operation rendered to our boys by the local superiors of the different places. On 2 April we walked down from Yellagiri hills and came back by train.

On 26 April, around 25 working boys of Anbu Illam were taken to Hogenakal. The camp was conducted in the scout camping site. Bro. Victor was the co-ordinator for this camp, the bigger boys were made to recollect and speak about their past. And they were able to think about what they were doing so that they can be responsible youth of tomorrow. It was a very happy moment for the boys. Many came out with a lot of bitter feelings of the past and made to make a good plan for the future. Thanks to Fr. Guezou for the financial help.

SUMMER CAMP :

Summer camp for the Anbu Illam inmates and the evening class children was conducted very well. The purpose of conducting this was to know more about the children, provide healthy recreation, bring out their talents and to motivate them to study better by giving coaching in the weaker subjects. So that this will enable the children to continue their scholastic year. From the 1st of May till the 10th of May it was conducted in six different places. On final day all the children were brought to Anbu Illam for sports and cultural get-together. All the children really enjoyed the day in Anbu Illam. Mrs. George and Miss. Gomes were the Chief guests. Around six hundred poor children participated. The camp came to a happy end with a one-day picnic to the Biological park situated at the foot of the Yercaud hills. Thanks to the salesian clerics, Bro. Victor, Bro. Anthony raj and to all the teachers of Anbu Illam. Special thanks to Mr. Pandian who was the co-ordinator.

AIDS AWARENESS CAMPS :

Mrs Solomon Victor of Madras sent three of her representatives to conduct Aid's awareness programmes for the street grown-up boys who were above fifteen. All the bigger boys participated very well. They learned to defend themselves from this deadly disease.

We are really grateful to God for the progress we have shown in the apostolate last one year. We had the joy of looking after 80 inmates and contacting thousand and hundred children in crisis, in different street base centres. We really appreciate Fr. Provincial and the council members, Fr. Rigby, Fr. Antony Smit SDB, Fr. Mcferran SDB, Fr. Oerder SDB, Fr. Schoolz SDB, Fr. Guezou SDB, and all the teachers of Anbu Illam, for their support and encouragement in the apostolate towards the uncared, unwanted, poor street children.