Dear Well-wishers,

Greetings from RTU.

This month was a remarkable one for us as we celebrated International Women’s Day with the women from our Self Help Groups to create awareness of women’s rights. Organized by their governing body, Vidiyal Federation, 2,174 women and children from our village study centres took part. Kolams (drawings), speeches, folk dances, singing and the recognition of women for their extraordinary work marked the Women’s Day celebration in our campus. Mrs S Palaniyammal, Human Rights Advocate, Namakkal was the Chief Guest and she spoke on the challenges faced by women in the changing world. She also talked about women’s rights and their development in the present world. Mrs V Parimala, a poet from Pattiveeranpatti, delivered a speech on women’s main role in society.
Childcare in our Children’s Villages and Hostels

We also celebrated International Women’s Day as Mother’s Day in our Anbu Illam Children’s Village with all the foster mothers. Dr James Playfair from RTU- UK, Dr David John Orpen and Mrs Pearl Kittu were the chief guests. They greeted our mothers and demonstrated some therapy and exercises for neck pain. The children in our care also greeted the mothers and expressed their gratitude through poems, sketches, dancing and songs in their respective Children’s Villages. The mothers performed nice dances and enjoyed the day.

Ten of our girl students - Kanjanadevi, Mageswari, Chitra, Kaviya, Pandiswari, Sakila Begam, Selvi, Vannathi, Hasinabegam, Divya Bharathi – have successfully completed their 3½ years General Nursing and Midwifery courses in the prestigious Government Schools of Nursing in Madurai, Trichy and Coimbatore Medical colleges. All of them have applied for nursing jobs. They have been in our care since they were young children as orphans or because their families were too poor to feed them, and we wish them all the very best in this next stage of their lives.

One of our former students, Ms A Pandiswari married Mr Bubendran on 26th March. She first came to us in 2003 with her mother and they lived in our Miriam Children’s Village. Unfortunately, her mother died two years later from AIDS-related illnesses. She completed a one-year auxiliary nursing course and now works in an old people’s home in Madurai. We provided Rs.50,000 as a wedding gift to her and wished her a happy married life.
Michael Boys’ Hostel over on our Bodi site celebrated its 12th Anniversary on 25th March. There were a variety of stage performances by the boys such as singing, dancing and playing local drums which were appreciated by all. We congratulate the warden, Mr. Boopathi Raja, who is giving great care and guidance to the boys. The boys from Miriam Dean Hostel also attended the function and expressed their appreciation.

Miriam Children’s Village has always faced water shortages but the current severe drought here due to monsoon failure has made it increasingly difficult for us. This month we found a good water source at a depth of 350 ft which was totally unexpected. We drilled down still deeper to a depth of 900 ft expecting a greater supply but there was none. However, with the water we did reach, we can now manage the current water crisis without having to buy water in. The children and foster mothers were overwhelmed to see water coming from the bore well.

**Case study**

This month we welcomed a little 9-year old girl called Arini to our Anbu Illum Children’s Village. When her father died, Arini and her mother were neglected by his relatives. The mother became mentally ill, she lost her property and they were both sent away from their native village. They had nowhere to go and just travelled on the train until they reached Coimbatore. Here they were caught by the Railway Police and after making enquiries, the police handed over them to ChildLine. ChildLine staff settled the mother in the Holy Cross Deserted Women’s Home and Arini came to us. She is studying 5th standard at our St Peter’s Primary School, as she hasn’t been attending school for some time. She is a very active girl and is showing a keen interest in her studies. She wants to become a nurse when she is older so that she can care for her mother.

**Schools and Education**

Our 10th and 12th standard students spent the whole of the month sitting their 10th and 12th standard public state level exams. Our students worked extremely hard with the help of the teachers and did their exams well. 11th standard students also took their end of year exams in our St Peter’s Higher Secondary School.

To give them peace and quiet, we organized field trips for the younger children in our schools. 5th standard from St. Peter’s primary school and Arul Malar School went to Vaigai Dam on a field trip.
All the students really enjoyed seeing how the dam works and learning about its importance for storing water for drinking and irrigation. They also learned about important natural resources and water conservation, flood control, low flow augmentation, hydroelectric generation, water quality and wildlife.

Our St. Peter’s Higher Secondary School 8th standard students went to the Vaigai Dam and Agriculture College for their field trip. The field experts explained the importance of organic farming and the benefits of organic manure directly through experiments.

7th standard students went to the nursery garden and saw many types of tender plants including herbs and fruit plants. Students were very much impressed to see the beautiful nursery.

Our Nirmala Middle School 8th standard students went to Ayyanarkoil and the sugar factory as a part of their educational field trip. They learned how sugar is made from sugarcane and the various machines used in the process. The sugar factory is completely eco-friendly as they produce their own electricity and fuel by re-using the crushed sugarcane.

A traditional Food Festival was celebrated at Arul Malar School. All the children and staff tasted a variety of food items and learned about nutrient rich food and eating regularly to maintain good health.

Community Development Programme

As well as the International Women’s Day event, we also organized another day of training on Azolla cultivation this time for women members of our Self Help Group in Malapatti village. With the help of the horticulture department in Periakulam the women learned about Azolla cultivation, its benefits in improving cattle health and milk yields, and how to identify good yielding cattle.

Rural Housing Programme:

During the month, 13 new houses have been constructed for homeless families in our area including 7 in Ayyampalayam, 3 houses at M Vadipatti, 2 houses at K Pudupatti and one in Palapatti. All the family members are very happy to live in these safe houses. We thank all the donors who make this possible.

Our Annual Report 2016 is ready on our website. You can download it from this link: http://rtuindia.org/download/Annual%20Review%202016.pdf If you would like a hard copy please write to us.

To continue our dedicated services to people who are in great need of support and comfort, the kind generosity from people like you is of enormous help. We appreciate the help and support you are showering on our children and other beneficiaries. With your loving support, you have indeed made a difference to their lives. Your unconditional love, and the way you encourage us by your continued involvement are special memories that we will always treasure. Together we are in this work to fight poverty and discrimination. Thank you for your contribution.

May God bless you all!

Yours fraternally

Fr. J. Antony Paulsamy, OFM Cap.
Secretary.