

THE  
NOT BY BREAD ALONE  
PROJECT

*Introducing play into the world of orphanages in India*

22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2004

Jacob M. Puliyeel MD MRCP MPhil  
Head of Department  
Department of Pediatrics  
St Stephens Hospital  
Tis Hazari  
Delhi 10054  
E-mail [puliyeel@vsnl.com](mailto:puliyeel@vsnl.com)

To  
Ms Anna Berrie  
Assistant to Steve Hocking  
Blue Peter  
BBC Television Room E 600 East Tower  
TVC Wood Lane  
London  
W12 7RJ  
UK

Dear Ms Berrie,

This is a project the viewers of Blue Peter may be interested in.

Heard the expression All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy?  
Everyone assumes intuitively that this may be true but can this be tested? Is there any proof?

Unfortunately the proof comes from orphanages in India. The Development Quotient (DQ) of children under 2.5 years of age was noted to be around 66 in one orphanage. 3 months after starting a programme of play, lasting just 90 minutes a day, the DQ of the children rose to 90.

This paper won an award of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics and was published in the UK journal, Child: Care, Health & Development (2002;28:95-100). There are follow-up studies also. One is to appear in the April 2004 issue of the Indian J of Pediatrics and another is again with Child: Care, Health & Development

**The proof is there, but the conditions in orphanages remains the same.**

1. The work of keeping babies fed and clean takes up all the time and resources of the care takers that play is considered a frivolous distraction that has no place in the serious work culture of the orphanage.
2. There are no properly trained play specialists of the type seen on the Pediatric wards in the UK and I assume in orphanages in the West

**Ultimately in a country as large as India, probably play in orphanages will have to be mandated by legislation, so that orphanages that don't provide the facility are shut down. Prior to that, teams of play specialists need to be trained. Facilities for this are literally non-existent. We need capacity building and training of trainers. This is where Blue Peter could help.**

It is estimated that nearly a million children are abandoned each year in the country. Many are abandoned due to social and economic pressures. The impact of such a programme will be tremendous, for a very large number of children.

For Blue Peter the project offers nearly unlimited photo opportunities. For the viewing children there is the chance to recycle toys. They learn to look at the educative value in each of the toys they have outgrown. They learn the importance of playing with younger sibling and also deprived neighborhood children. For the slightly older audience there is the issues of gender bias (most children in orphanage are girls - more girls are abandoned and the boys in orphanages are adopted quickly). The contemporary issues like death of both parents from AIDS and the future for such orphans could be considered by older viewers.

#### **What we have done so far**

The story has featured in the national press in The Tribune and The Hindu.

Mrs. Ann Shepherd who is a retired Play Therapist in the UK traveled all the way here on our invitation, to see the project and suggest how it may be scaled up to a national scale. She also looked at setting up training for play therapists in India, with help on course contents from the UK.

She envisages getting children on the streets also into the play scheme, as they are also technically orphans. I have asked her to write to you separately to support this appeal.

Dr Z Mughal Consultant Pediatrician St Mary's Hospital Manchester ( E-mail MMUGHAL@fs3.scg.man.ac.uk, zulf.mughal@man.ac.uk, Zulf.Mughal@CMMC.nhs.ukhas) has visited us twice since we launched this project and he will be happy to give the BBC technical help as a pediatrician in the UK.

Can Blue Peter take this up as a project? The task is enormous. As a clinician and pediatrician I am aware, there are likely many aspects I have not considered. Planning the project will have to begin with that. I think all I have done is provide a small idea that has potential to make a big difference for a large number of deprived children. Please contact me by E-mail if you need any more details. Your local correspondent may come and meet me here.

Truly,



Jacob M. Puliyeel

## Preface

*This project was initiated at the request of a Sister Superior of the Mother Teresa Missionaries of Charity Orphanage in Delhi, for help in stimulating the children in her care.*

*I would like to state that the sisters at the Missionaries of Charity (MOC) work tirelessly to serve these neglected children. Lack of funds, training resources, and limitations on the people available for the numbers of children they care for, may keep them from providing the care and nurture a child can only get when cared for by 2 loving parents. The job they do is not ideal, but the children are far better off, than if they were not looked after by the sisters! When looking at the situation from outside it is easy to point out deficiencies in the service. I feel it is easy to portray our work in stimulating the children as a critique on how things were in the past. That would be a tragic distortion of the purpose and intentions of this project. I am aware we cannot take over the work they are doing. This monumental task is way beyond our abilities. We are only trying to help the sisters by providing them small resources to help them do better. We have done this because they asked for the help.*

*Jacob M. Puliyel*

*22/3/2004*

When we started, we found that infants remained in their cots most of the time and were handled only for feeding and cleaning. They cried little, had expressionless faces and responded poorly to overtures. Even 3 year old children were not eating by them selves but were spoon fed sloppy food so as to minimize the mess.



They were not put on the floor for fear they would get dirty or catch some infection. When we put them on the floor they sat quietly not knowing what to do.



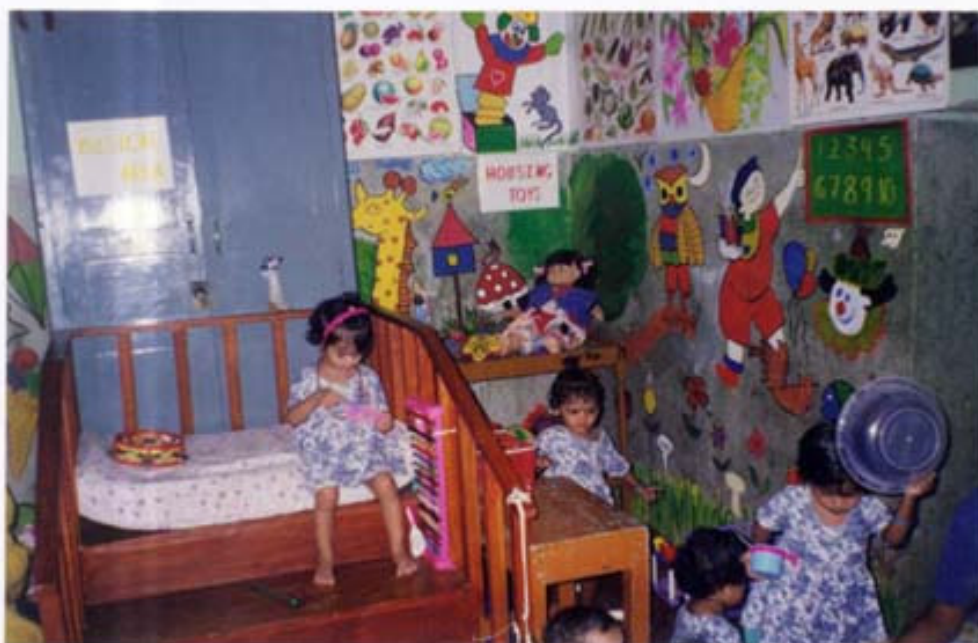
When presented with toys their reaction was to cry



One of the first things we did was to make the environment more colorful and cheerful with paintings on the dull walls and mobiles.



We also designated an indoor play area with different kinds of toys in different corners and a 'dressing-up' area



Slowly they were introduced to new activities day by day. The sessions of 90 minutes catered to motor, cognitive and language stimulation. We see them here painting on old news paper, playing on the drums.



To avoid monotonous and provide variety, different activities were scheduled for different days of the weeks. The caretakers also found this useful because it saved them effort to think up new activities for each day.



There was also an outdoor play with swings and slides



Children were encouraged to eat by them selves. This was more messy than being spoon-fed but the children enjoyed the mealtimes.





There was fun in the sand pit.



Playing in water was more fun. It took a bit of persuasion to convince the orphanage authorities that playing in sand and water was not 'unhealthy' and that the children won't all catch a cold and fever.



Out door activity included playing in the garden with plants and flowers play with pets like rabbits and cats - Oke?

They were taken for trips outside the orphanage. The Railway museum and the park were not too far away and provided lots of excitement to the children and also those looking after them



There was a real snake charmer too - doing a David Attenborough, bringing home the marvels of the natural world.



Thus where 'order' had prevailed, 'delightful chaos' now reigned





**Thus the photo opportunities for Blue Peter are limitless and the benefit it can do to countless tiny lives is inestimable**

## Conclusion

### What is needed

**Scaling up** so that every orphanage in the country will be included

This will involve **capacity building** and training of play therapists

Initially toys may need to be gifted

Volunteers from schools and colleges can be mobilized to make the orphanages bright and child-friendly

Finally perhaps legislation may be needed to ensure that this basic right of the orphan child is not denied her/him under the UN Rights of the Child

It seems a distant dream, but Blue Peter may just be the catalyst, to bring this about

