

## Welcome to the SFAC newsletter

Recently I read an inspirational story highlighting the ethos and heart of SFAC. Margaret, a Ugandan grandmother like many farmers in her region of Mbale scraped a living off the land with the few goats she owned. One day she ventured into a swamp to provide water for her thirsty animals. At first Margaret thought she was hearing things, perhaps her imagination was playing tricks on her, yet there it was again the panicked cries of a baby. Looking ahead the grandmother noticed her goats nudging a small straw basket that lay wedged in the mud. Margaret looked inside the basket to find a baby naked, skin encrusted in mud and with finger bruising around her neck. She could think of only one reason why the child had been abandoned in such a remote site - a desperate mother had felt she had no choice but to abandon her sick child to die.

Margaret searched for the parents; when none were found she named the baby Doreen - the grandmother of six had become a mother again. This was no short sighted commitment; she had seen enough children die in her village of the symptoms Doreen presented. Margaret knew that Doreen was HIV+.

Over the coming months Doreen's health deteriorated and Margaret knew if nothing was done the child would die. With little money and no husband Margaret could have given up on the child and placed her in an institution. However as poor as she was, she was determined to provide Doreen with a family. Through Margaret's persistence she found an initiative run by Compassion International and a local church for children who were HIV+. Doreen received the medication and extra food she required and is now an active four year old full of life and part of a loving family.

Why do I share this story with you? For me it illustrates that no matter what part of the world or how difficult the circumstances there are always individuals willing to open up their hearts and home to

abandoned children. Mick and I have spoken to many organisations about the potential for foster care in the developing world. Occasionally we hear statements like "foster care couldn't work in poorer countries, families are too poor and too big or, how can we be sure that western values of family life are culturally acceptable and appropriate?". Margaret and Doreen's story gives a different perspective. SFAC's experience is that regardless of geography, culture or economic factors there are families who, given appropriate support and training would be willing to open up their homes to abandoned children. Margaret could barely feed herself let alone another, particularly a child in need of special medical attention. Despite the stigma and rejection Margaret faced by looking after a child who was HIV+ she could not turn her back on a child in need.

Will you help SFAC promote the message of family based foster care so local organisations can find 'other Margarets' to provide a home for children like Doreen.

**John Ellerington SFAC trustee (info@sfac.org.uk)**

## SFAC in Tajikistan



A group of young people at a non government project in Tajikistan, to the north of Afghanistan – Central Asia. Due to having no alternative some of the young people have lived at the project for a number of years. Over a period of 9 years approximately 200 ex street children have received great benefit from the programmes provided. That includes 'Back to School' for ex-street children and 'Moving to Independence' programmes.

The project is now developing foster care; something advocated by UNICEF and is actively recruiting potential foster carers. SFAC have been asked to train their workers so they can prepare the foster carers well. All the training material is translated into Russian.

## Why?

### A poem by Brian 'Peza' Perrins

Used with permission

*Why did you leave me all alone?  
So young in years, not even grown  
Is there no one who cares in my family?  
Unloved and neglected is difficult you see  
Face at the window, someone may come  
Time passes by, my heart does succumb  
Mother and child holding hands on to school  
As I watch with some sadness, life seems so cruel  
Maybe it's me, have I been bad in the past?  
Children happily playing, my life does contrast  
I can't understand this emptiness that I feel  
The tears and the sadness I try to conceal  
There must be something wrong with me, I guess  
So the sadness and sorrow I'll just have to suppress  
How I long for a cuddle, a tender embrace  
The sort of compassion a dream can't replace  
As I look to the dark and grey angry sky  
Please answer my question, just tell me why?*

<http://www.poemhunter.com/brian-peza-perrins/>

After coming across SFAC's web site Brian wrote to us with this poem and agreed that we could use it in our newsletter. We think the poem captures a very poignant message from the heart of an abandoned or orphaned child.

## SFAC in Nepal



Social workers Diane Bell & Arlene Edgehill in Nepal in October 07. Arlene writes: - Although the trip was a very difficult one both physically and emotionally we believe the training was an absolute success. Training ordinary Nepali people who have such love and compassion for homeless and abandoned children yet are highly

motivated to care for them with little finance or support was very encouraging. For example we visited a Pastor and his wife caring for 22 children in their home; it was wonderful to see how much the children were cared for and how well they interacted together.

Krishna and Sita are long standing Nepali Foster carers and have a real vision to see as many new fosters carers in Nepal come together to benefit from ongoing support and training from SFAC. The next event promises to be a much bigger one which would be an exciting development. There is a genuine desire among Nepali people caring for children to receive support and training to become foster carers.

One organisation PCDM want to set up a foster care programme as well as an income generating schemes to help poorer families. They plan to give a goat to a family to sell some of the milk and baby goats. It could also be used to help support future foster carers and their family.

Since returning to the UK we have already received gifts and pledges to buy goats for this organisation. If you would like to support this project please contact me or Diane via [info@sfac.org.uk](mailto:info@sfac.org.uk)

## Did you know?

- It is estimated that in China 70,000 children are stolen and separated from their families each year. If those sold voluntarily were also included the figure could reach 250,000 a year. China's stolen children A film by True Vision [www.truevisiontv.com](http://www.truevisiontv.com)
- The same company made a film focussing on the plight of Bulgarian children aired on television a few months ago (available from Truevision).
- It is estimated that 4,000 women and children are trafficked **into** the UK each year, the majority coming from Eastern Europe, West Africa & South East Asia. [www.ukhtc.org](http://www.ukhtc.org)

## News on Casa Lar Novo Rumo

2007 was both a wonderful yet testing time for the work. On one hand the children are well placed and cared for with individual dignity and respect, clearly happy and delighted to be there. You can view a clip of the children playing at:

<http://br.youtube.com/watch?v=TZLMdUe7xI0>

But to meet the standards that both Casa Lar and local judiciary expect requires ongoing investment, something that local government continually fails to deliver. Through the generous donations of a UK business plus individual donors SFAC have managed to help them maintain an excellent child care provision under difficult circumstances. Our plans to purchase a property in Brazil for which we have part funding have not yet materialised but it is something we wish to deliver in 2008. If you would like to support this work please contact us at: [info@sfac.org.uk](mailto:info@sfac.org.uk)

## Something to consider...

*Though my father and mother abandon me The Lord will hold me close.*  
**Psalm 27:10 New Living Translation.**

*How might God do that, could it be through using His family – The Church? That would certainly pose some definite challenges*  
**'Selah'** (pause for a moment)

*"It is not how much we do but how much love we put into our doing. It is not how much we give; it is how much love we put into the giving"*

**Mother Teresa**

## SFAC News

- In 2007 SFAC made 10 trips abroad delivering training in Uganda, Colombia, Croatia, Brazil, Tajikistan, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Cambodia & Iraq - Kurdish community in the North. We continue to be amazed at the desire and belief amongst local people that foster care can work in their communities. Every where we go we see local people who are passionate about the plight of orphaned and abandoned children and wish to see them placed in families.



- This photo is of 2 foster carers in Armenia, on left is a single carer looking after a boy, on the right a married woman fostering his sister.
- In Phnom Penh, Cambodia 3 organisations have already commenced fostering schemes. One is trying to place HIV+ children into families. Chab Dai is a coalition of Christian organisations working towards ending the exploitation and trafficking of children. Mick will be returning in May 08 to work with some of their partners. [www.chabdai.org](http://www.chabdai.org)

- Some comments from evaluation of SFAC training:  
"It was very important to know about a child's links from early childhood. Sometimes we didn't see or didn't want to see them. Often we ignored their past.

"It was helpful to hear the many difficult things for children that are 'normal'. We need to hear that again and again".

- In January SFAC returned to Northern Croatia to project Nadomak Sunca where we continued development work in specialist foster care training.
- If you become aware of people, places or groups that could promote the work of SFAC please take the opportunity to pass their details onto us.

Our thanks to everyone who participates in helping SFAC develop its work. Our vision has a long term goal - to see thousands of lonely children placed into loving families.

## SFAC Information

**Registered charity no:** 1095091

31 Gotts Park Avenue, Armley, Leeds LS12 2RW

**Account name:** Substitute Families

for Abandoned Children

**Bank:** HSBC **Sort code:** 40-27-10 **Account number:** 81246216

On line donations can be made at:

[www.sfac.org.uk](http://www.sfac.org.uk). As a registered charity we benefit from Gift Aid on donations from UK taxpayers.

Please contact [info@sfac.org.uk](mailto:info@sfac.org.uk) for further information or inform us of changes to your details.