

Seeds on the Wind

NEWS FROM BETHANIA KIDS • SPRING 2021

Bethania Kids Moves Forward

The sounds of children's laughter and running footsteps, women in their colorful saris sitting at their sewing machines, and staff welcoming the children back to their care centers after the year-long COVID-19 lockdown — at some locations these activities are now routine again, while at others they are still anxiously anticipated. Decisions regarding the reopening of schools, institutions, and activities are made by the Indian states, so each of our ministries is opening again as permitted by their respective state governments. All 40 boys have joyfully returned to Angel Home in Rajahmundry after proof of a negative COVID test and permission from their families. Over the past months when Solomon Mungamari called to check on the boys' welfare, most of them complained of being hungry and expressed their desire to return to Angel Home. We are so happy to welcome them back!

In the state of Tamil Nadu, where Shalom, Grace, and Dayavu Homes are located, only the older children have been permitted to return. To date, six girls have returned to Shalom Home and 15 boys have returned to Dayavu Home. It is hoped that all the children will be able to return in the coming weeks. Each of our homes is equipped with masks and hand sanitizers, and all surfaces are cleaned daily with a disinfectant. Until the staff and children are vaccinated, Bethania Kids is practicing several natural remedies for the prevention of COVID that are customary in India, among them drinking hot (warm) water, often with a pinch of turmeric powder (a disinfectant), ginger, and garlic. Hot drinking water is also made available at our homes.

Our After-School programs are now open in both Kodaikanal and Odisha but again, only for older children. Schools are only open for 9th grade and up, so those children come to our After-School programs at the close of the school day. It is anticipated that our Day Care programs for younger children will be permitted to open in late February or in March.

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Bethania Kids

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As our ministries reopen and our children return, there are areas that will require particular attention from the staff. The supervision and structure provided under Bethania Kids care is lacking in most households and will need to be relearned by the children. Physical and nutritional health will also be restored for many of the children whose families could not afford adequate food for their families. Perhaps the most long-lasting challenge will be in their academic studies. Many of the children did not have access to the national educational programs offered through National TV and radio programs. Only a few schools provided academic support through mobile phones and WhatsApp to their students, so many children were left on their own. The reality of living in their family homes and not in a more structured environment often made it impossible for the children to concentrate on academic studies. In Odisha the staff went to the nearby villages where our children live and continued teaching the children there to ensure they maintained their academic levels.

It was a wonderful day in December when the Annapoorani Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) at Dayavu Home opened its doors again. The women are so happy to be back after this program had to close shortly after it was established in February 2020. The WEP programs in Kodaikanal restarted in early February.

Below: The women of the Annapoorani Women's Empowerment Program at Dayavu Home (Feb. 2020)

God has truly blessed our Bethania Kids family in India as NO child, family member, staff member, trustee or administrative staff has contracted COVID-19. It is nothing short of a miracle, but the constant education conducted by our staff for families and communities as well as the distribution of masks and sanitizers surely served as God's helping hands.

Bethania Kids will face additional operational challenges in the coming months. The Indian government has proposed numerous changes and restrictions to how Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) receiving foreign funds can operate in India. Perhaps the one that will most affect our ministry is a recent decision by NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) that residence homes such as ours can only accept orphaned and semi-orphaned children. Under this new policy, states will be responsible for caring for children of destitute families with two living parents by empowering parents economically. Otherwise, the children will be sent to state-run homes but not to homes operated with foreign funds. Because of the COVID shutdown, many of these proposals have not been finalized or put into practice yet. If this new policy is enacted, it would affect many of the children in our four homes who have two parents but the families are destitute or dysfunctional.

As has been true since the beginning of Bethania Kids, we step out in our faith that God will provide a pathway forward where we can continue to care for children in need, no matter their circumstances.



Fatima's Story

Your contributions to Bethania Kids not only support children in our homes and care centers but also help women learn marketable skills through vocational training. When a woman becomes the primary bread-winner for her family because her husband is no longer able to do so, she has the responsibility of both earning money and making many financial decisions for her family's welfare.

One such woman is 38-year-old Fatima, who obtained a high-school education despite her mother's inability to provide for her as a teenager. Once married, she was blessed with two beautiful girls; however, her husband suffered a spinal injury, which limited his ability to do heavy work and earn a sufficient income to take care of their children and her mother-in-law.

Thanks to Mabel's Women's Empowerment Program, Fatima learned tailoring and now sews blouses for saris that are purchased by members of the community. In addition to providing a means to support her family, the program also strengthened Fatima's self-confidence and relieved much of her emotional stress. This was due in part to the companionship of the other women in the group and the prayer support she received from the group's leader.

Fatima thanks God for all her blessings and is growing in her Christian faith. Now her family makes prayer a priority before every activity and decision. Her favorite Bible text is Psalm 23.

Fatima wishes to thank Bethania Kids, its staff, and donors for their commitment and says, "You are a blessing for many women like me. We are upholding you all in our prayers."



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Praising God!

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Bethania Kids is a Christian mission bringing wholeness and hope to poor, abandoned and disabled children in India, equipping them to share God's love.

We channel 100% of every penny donated into direct ministry for children.

Bethania Kids is an IRS registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit and benevolent organization.

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Call to Action

One of the most helpful and appreciated ways for you to support Bethania Kids is to ‘Sponsor a Child.’ You can sign up to give an amount yearly, monthly, or on a schedule that fits your budget. The Bethania Kids website (bethaniakids.org) makes it easy to sign up once and then sit back as your monthly contribution is drawn automatically from your bank account or credit card. Smaller gifts may be easier to give than a large sum once per year; yet over time, they really add up! We greatly appreciate our recurring givers as they allow us to anticipate donations and plan our budget accordingly.

Because of support from our Board of Directors and Board of Advisors that allows us to “Multiply the Ministry,” we are able to pledge that 100% of your donation goes directly towards the ministry for children and families in India. **You can sponsor a child in one of our care centers for \$35/month (\$420/year) or in one of our four homes for \$50/month (\$600/year).** This is a community-based program, meaning that you support a Bethania Kids community rather than an individual child, and you are part of a team of supporters. Your generous gifts are vital and valuable to the welfare of all the Bethania Kids children every day.

Families, churches, and other groups can support the cost of an entire Bethania Kids project. Refer to the project description under the “What We Do” tab on the website for the cost of supporting a project for a month or for a year. You can find information on our homes, care centers, special schools and women’s programs. If you would be interested in sponsoring a program, please reach out to our Director of Development, Wendy Oesterling, at wendy@bethaniakids.org.

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