



A Day in the Life

Excerpts from CEO Joan Roose's diary in the field

Recently we went to a village where we're starting another literacy programme and had to climb a really big – did I say very big? – hill. I started strong but knew that my fitness level was appalling and that I would struggle; the climb was so evidently long, high and narrow. At the first stop (at my request), I huffed and puffed and looked up and saw that I had hardly begun yet I was struggling. I took a deep breath and started climbing again. Not long after I was looking for a bit of shade to stop and rest again, struggling to breathe normally.

The young men with me do a lot more walking than I do; some cycle as their means of transport so their leg muscles are strong. I seemed to be the only one 'in trouble'.

Another two stops and I was sure I could not go on for a while if at all, but it was afternoon and we still had to reach the top and go down the other side of the hill, visit the village and return before sunset. I didn't know how far it was down the other side so I said to the men with me 'You go on ahead. Take the movie camera and if I don't get there make sure you take lots of shots.' Reluctantly they went on, stopping every so often to call back and ask after my health.

We had walked from the white building in the centre of the photo (*above right*). I sat on the side of this hill looking at the beautiful valley with a village below me and praised God for His wonderful creation, for the beauty I was beholding, for all the birds I could hear singing and twittering, for the shade and the rock for me to sit on, for His great love for us all. Quite soon I realised that I was no longer hot or tired, that I had plenty of energy and so started to walk, thanking God for all that He does for me.

The men had stopped at the top of the hill and saw me walking up, so they waited for me and down the other side we went, into a beautiful bowl, the crater of a long extinct volcano – well tilled fields, beautiful crops, goats grazing in some areas, banana plantations near the stream, large vegetable gardens surrounding the village. Paradise!

Our Literacy Teachers have only been there a couple of weeks, but the village people are very happy they are there. These teachers, young women from a village about 12 km from this one, speak a different dialect, so they have had to learn the local dialect to begin teaching.



There is no school – the closest one is in the village at the bottom of the hill we climbed (5 km away) and who would blame the children and parents for not sending the kids there with that hill to climb every day – not me! In fact we had to cross three streams that cannot be crossed in the wet season (usually 12 weeks a year).

68 children aged between 4 and 12 attend the class. The adults and young married women (from 13–17 years old) have asked for slates and chalk so that they can learn to read and write as well. We have, of course, provided these materials for them.

What a wonderful hour or so we spent there, teaching the kids simple action songs. The kids love them, as do the mums and especially the grandmothers. We were treated to local cucumber (the size of a small watermelon), delicious and refreshing after the climb.

One mother came to us with her daughter, Santimoni, aged nine (*right*). The father is deceased and the mother is very needy so we took Santimoni into our home.



Back at the nearest town we had lunch at 6.30 pm with friends.

They came to us with a widow,

Laxmi. She has a son who is studying and living in a government hostel not far from our base in Mastiput. Laxmi had been working at a children's hostel for some years and was now looking for work. Could we use her at Rejoice? Yes, we needed one more woman to add to our kitchen/carer team so she has now joined us.

Yet Another Day at Rejoice

Excerpts from CEO Joan Roose's diary in the field

The Rejoice children here are doing so well – 72 at last count. Several have just been in drawing competitions and placed. Others are very keenly involved with the local potter who is now coming to us on



Saturday afternoons and teaching some of the children pottery skills. They are learning how to build from clay

and having a go on the pottery wheel. The children are very excited about seeing some of their work in the coming months.

A few of the boys are becoming quite proficient on the conga drums. I'm looking for other instruments the girls and boys could play... memories of my daughter's recorder practise gives me the shudders when I consider it many times magnified!

The older boys have just moved into the third dormitory. This was our guest room until the multipurpose hall, kitchen and storeroom, office and four guest rooms were finished.

Let me say here and now I am enjoying my new room! The ensuite bathroom with hot water and a toilet that flushes is a luxury!

Until we build the second storey and move the girls up there, the



older girls have the first room with the little boys and girls sharing the second room. I had discussions today with the builder regarding commencing work on the next work and we hope to begin pillar

and column work in the next month or so. It is crucial that we get the roof slab completed before the wet season as all work stops for 12 weeks of rain unless you have a roof. This time, because the foundations are already done with the lower floor roof as our floor, we will do the pillars, then the slab, then the brick walls and finishing work. All the outside walls will be rendered either before or after the wet season and all inside work can continue through the wet.



Once finished, we will be able to care for another 90 children and run classes for them all at Rejoice (except the ones at High School, 8th, 9th and 10th grades). Indian schools are not like Australian schools; primary schools have composite classes while secondary schools have one room per year, a common room, staff room, sometimes a science lab and sometimes a library. We can provide all these facilities and be a centre of excellence in the district with teachers who actually care about children and care about teaching – something quite rare here.

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