

St. Joseph's Development Trust



Running orphanages is both rewarding and a
challenging

The pros and cons of running orphanages in the present
context

A) Introduction:

Ever since 1990, SJDT is running orphanages for girls' children, boys and handicapped children. As of now, SJDT is running three girls' orphanages, two boys' orphanages and one residential home and school for handicapped children and a vocational training centre for differently able. In total, we are taking care of 450 girls plus 50 boys and 60 differently-able persons. In addition, we are also

supporting the education of 600 children, mostly girls from the very poor family background. Out of our long experience over more than 35 years, I would like to share with you both pros and cons of running these orphanages.

B) Purpose:

I am writing this article so as to explain to you our esteemed donors and valuable sponsors regarding the management of these orphanages. Especially in today orphanage management has become a very challenging task, especially managing the girls' orphanage is all the more challenging. Lot of orphanages were closed down during the last few years.

C) The reward of running the orphanages (Pros)

i) Through the orphanage, we will be able to reach out to the most disadvantaged and neglected children, for example, almost 90 percent of our orphanage children are from scheduled tribal caste and scheduled Dalit caste and other backward castes. For our Pudhu Punal and Pudhu Vasantham orphanages, most of our children come from tribal settlement of western ghats where the conditions are very severe, including climate, livelihood and access to schools and social security. This is where we are taking care of the children in our orphanage who will not get a chance to study at all, if they remain at their own tribal settlement.

ii) When we take children into our orphanages, we are able to educate them so as to make a living and stand on their own legs and also improve their families who are now living under the below poverty-line.

iii) Since we educate the first generation learners, once they realize the value of education, they will change the whole future generation so that the society of these children will be transformed.

iv) As I have mentioned we are educating children of tribal, Dalit and backward castes, groups who experience oppression and exploitation and through our education, we will build self-esteem so as to break the bondage and come out of their traditional oppression.

v) Economically, all our children are from the very poor and below poverty line families. Most of the families struggle for survival and work as daily coolies with a scarce salary. This is true with our Pudhu Irudhayam orphanage where we get children of agriculture daily coolies who depend on monsoon season for their work availability and for their livelihood. So if a child gets education she will bring economic progress and livelihood to the whole family.

vi) when we receive the children into our orphanage, they will have a very low self-esteem, very low motivation to study and come up in life. We succeed in spite of difficulties to empower them with good quality education as well as building personalities so as to get high self-esteem and motivation to study and shine in their lives.

vii) Physically also when the children come to us they will be very feeble, malnourished and many of them have been affected with scabies and other skin diseases. So by providing them with good nutrition and proper health care, the children will become physically fit. Many children come to us with a lot of habits of stealing, lying, running away, fighting, quarreling and at time with drug habit. So when we correct them, they become a very responsible citizen.

viii) When we take children into our orphanage, we solve many problems for the poor parents. First of all, they feel that they are free to go to their daily coolie work to earn their living. Secondly, in remote tribal villages, there is not school accessible to them. So most of the times, the children are left at home and parents go to work. This brings lot of insecurities specially to the girl

children. This is all the more riskier for the tribal children as they live in the very remote hilly areas.

I have narrated few of the many good things that we can achieve in running an orphanage. At the same time, there are several challenges that we encounter when we are running an orphanage, especially for girls.

D)Challenges in running orphanages (cons)

i) Rigid norms from the government

Recently the government has come out with many rules and regulations for running an orphanage. To run an orphanage, the government is requiring a very large number of building, security arrangement and safety provision. Fortunately, with donors' support, we built good infrastructure in all our orphanages.

ii) On the other hand, our running cost has escalated multi-fold due to the new regulation. **For example, for 50 orphan children, we have to have 17 different staff which means providing salary to all of them which is very big budget.**

iii) Certification form the government

We are required to get the approval certification from **eight different departments. And these certifications are annually renewable.** Just imagine the bureaucracy connected with this certificate renewal.

iv) With regard to the school, we have selected to send our children to one of the best schools in the area **which means we have to pay heavy fees and provide other tuition expenses. And this, of course, financially is the very big challenge.**

v) As I have narrated earlier, the children who come to us are from tribal and schedule caste backgrounds. They find it very difficult to cope with the present school system of memory-based education and a strict discipline. Lot of time, children due to pressure, run away to their families and we need to make repeated efforts to bring back the child to our educational system.

vi) As I have mentioned also our children come to us with a lot of diseases and sicknesses. Our government advises not keep the children more than three days when they are sick. We are advised to integrate the children to their respective families so as to avoid any casualties in our orphanages which will lead to lot of social unrest and destruction of properties.

vii) We also face a very tough challenge of children dropping out because of agents of industrialists provided short time benefits to the children such as mobile, TV watching, free food and cash in hands. Many a times, the parents are very attracted by these agents of industrialists and arrange the children to go to work. **Many a times, the parents just wait for the legal employment age and then send them to work.**

viii) The educational system is very focused on memory gym that the parents want their children only to study the school curriculum. Many times, the children's parents don't want us to involve in any other activities such as sports, games, hobbies, skills-development programmes etc.

Conclusion:

As I conclude this paper, I have not covered in an elaborate way all the pros and cons of running an orphanage. I try to indicate only a few of the myriads of pros and cons. **The purpose is to inform the donors and sponsors who are supporting our children of the rewards and challenges of running an**

orphanage. The children come to us with a lot of difficulties and poor environment. When we deal with them, we need to be very patient and forbearing so as to achieve results. I kindly request all our donors and sponsors to understand our work with orphanages.

Fraternally Yours,
Dr. I. Sebastian,
Executive Director, SJDT

