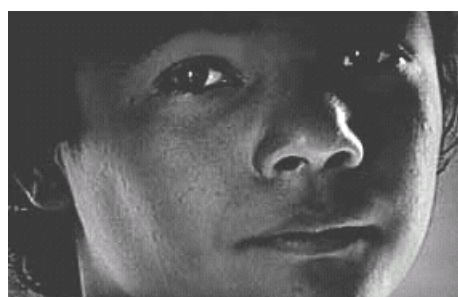


# Students Supporting Street Kids

Newsletter

January 2006



***Welcome to the Students Supporting Street Kids January 2006 Newsletter. In this edition:***

- Find out what is happening in our branches, including the latest additions
- Learn how the money we raise is being spent to help children living on the street
- Get involved!



Registered Charity  
Number: 1070646

## **SSSK in 2006 – a reflection**

When I set up Students Supporting Street Kids in 1997, with the smiles of Calcuttan street children still fresh in my mind, I never really thought about how long it would last, or what it would evolve into. My friend Ben Phillips and I just felt, like so many people have when confronted with the horror of lost and abused childhood, that we had to “do something.” And SSSK is what we did.

We knew there would be many like us, who had either worked with street children or knew about them one way or another, and would be moved to “do something” too. Of course, what we are doing is very small compared to what is needed. We all know that. But it is our gift, our response to immense tragedy, and our statement that we will not tolerate the world as it is. We will change it.

Every year for the past eight years British students have raised thousands of pounds and sent the money to organisations that are moved by their hearts but use their heads to decide how best to use limited funds to improve the lives and chances of the thousands of very deprived kids with whom they have the privilege to work. And at the same time they have sought to raise the consciousness of our society to the problems faced by children in other countries, in the hope that others will also be moved to do something, whatever that something may be.

I have worked with deprived children in Guatemala, Colombia and India, as well as at home in London. Anywhere you work with children who lack love, opportunity and, often, basic food and shelter, it is depressing. But I often ended the day with a feeling of hope, because children and young people so often laugh at their troubles, and because increasingly the world is waking up to the scandal of street children, and people are mobilising to make a difference.

SSSK is small part of a worldwide movement for change. We have fun, we do our bit. Thank you for your contribution to making our world one we can be proud of.

**Jonathan Glennie**  
***Founder***  
***Students Supporting Street Kids***

# SSSK Christmas Meeting

At the 2004 Christmas meeting Katherine Nightingale drew on her experience both as a street worker and an expert on Latin America, and explained how the work SSSK does fits into the wider picture of development and poverty reduction in Latin America.

At the recent 2005 Christmas meeting, Kev McCullough, veteran of dozens of campaigns and currently Global Campaigner at Christian Aid, emphasised the need to spread the message as well as raise funds. Looking back at the mass Make Poverty History campaign, he inspired everyone to win hearts and minds as well as wallets to the cause of global justice.

## BRANCH NEWS

SSSK is run by students in a number of universities around the country, and increasingly schools are setting up 'branches'. Here are some of the things some of the branches got up to last year. If you are interested in joining any of these branches, do contact the appropriate person. Or if you want to set up your own, please contact Charlie Bretherton at [sssk@sssk.org.uk](mailto:sssk@sssk.org.uk). Or go to [www.sssk.org.uk](http://www.sssk.org.uk). Or ring 07989 743 889.

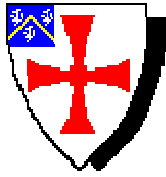


### ***Bristol***

The main event in the first term at Bristol was a club night called "Conscience". It was a massive success and a complete sell out. It was held on a boat at the water front with three floors, on the top and bottom decks live bands and DJs played throughout the night, while on the middle deck SSSK and some other charities involved set up stalls with information, images and flyers. "Conscience 2" is already planned. It was a great opportunity to raise awareness and will be a regular source of revenue.

In 2006 the famous *RendezVous* blind dating night is planned for the week before Valentine's Day, cashing in on all the lonely hearts out there! Last year is raised £2400 in one night! Also on the agenda for is a joint awareness-raising presentation with People and Planet, the nationwide student campaign network, at which guest speakers will talk about street children. Also in 2006 a student (Susannah Brownlees) is returning from volunteering with Cenit, an Ecuadorian charity SSSK supports – so she will add passion to an already passionate crowd.

Bristol contact: [mw3075@bris.ac.uk](mailto:mw3075@bris.ac.uk)



## ***Durham***

The SSSK branch in Durham continues to do brilliant things, raising over £4000 in 2004/5. This included £2000 from a series of concerts promoted by DUSSSK under the generic title 'Beat Surrender' last year (advertised on a number of North England music websites). Like other SSSK branches they organize a *RendezVous* event. They are planning, together with another society, to do workshops in schools around Durham using art to teach children about street kids.

Activities planned for the coming year include organising and promoting some 'social' sports teams, promoting a number of music events, and becoming the 'university link' charity of the local shopping centre (thus indirectly helping to improve local city/university relations).

Durham contact: [du.ssk@durham.ac.uk](mailto:du.ssk@durham.ac.uk)



## ***Edinburgh***

In a remarkable symbol of the vagueries of student fundraising, the Edinburgh branch raised £2000 in one night with its trademark *RendezVous*, the wildly successful blind-dating night, and then went on to raise a further £70 from a cake sale. All offerings are welcome! The branch was involved in the Edinburgh Fashion Show in February 2005 where they sold jewellery and accessories. Meanwhile president Charlotte Gibson did a bungee jump! They are now keen to focus their attentions to awareness raising.

Edinburgh contact: [sssk\\_edinburgh@hotmail.com](mailto:sssk_edinburgh@hotmail.com)



## ***Oxford and Oxford Brookes***

The new branch received an impressive amount of interest at the Fresher's Fair, and fundraising has been successful and diverse. The branch has done pub collections, organised a hugely successful jazz band gig and a play, as well as an informative article in the student paper. Future plans include a salsa night, a human rights film night, and a focus on leafleting and awareness raising. A cheque just received from Jesus College chapel

demonstrates the importance of getting those letters into churches and chapels!

Oxford contact: [thomas.viita@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:thomas.viita@balliol.ox.ac.uk)



## ***Cambridge***

Cambridge has had a great boost with Vicky taking things up recently. Cambridge Rag has recently agreed to put bulletins about SSSK in its publications. At the end of January 2006 a champagne breakfast is planned (!) and on the menu is grapefruit, porridge, passionfruit sorbet, a full cooked breakfast, pastries and coffee. And champagne.

Cambridge contact: Victoria Newton at [vfn20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:vfn20@cam.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.ssskcam.org.uk](http://www.ssskcam.org.uk)

## ***School branches***

Although originally a university focused charity, SSSK believes that for future growth and sustainability, we must stimulate interest and action at a school level. Since St Paul's School set up a branch a few years ago other schools have joined too. Most recently Harris Technology College donated £180 from a pro-evolution soccer tournament. They are also designing a new logo for SSSK which will be ready by the end of the year. Dulwich College and St Paul's Girls' School have also given donations recently.

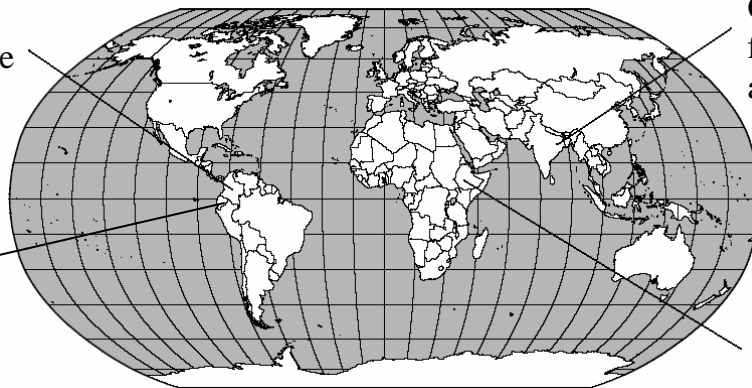
At St Paul's the second 'Bikeathon' took place in 2005 in Richmond Park. The challenge was to cycle around the park for all the daylight hours, from dawn to dusk. Although everyone returned home rather sweaty and sore, all the participants agreed the satisfaction of helping a good cause was worth the temporary pain. The proceeds of the St Paul's Christian Union carol-singing were also donated to SSSK. A few pounds were raised, as well as some sweets, ten euro cents, 100 yen and a bottle of sparkling wine! SSSK has also been voted the official school charity winning a third of the votes cast.

## HOW IS THE MONEY WE RAISE USED?

**SSSK gives regular donations of £2-3,000 to four charities spanning three continents. It also gives one-off grants to other organisations in times of need.**

### **Colombia:**

Let the Children Live



### **Ecuador:**

CENIT

### **India:**

OFFER - Organisation for Friends, Energies and Resources

### **Ethiopia:**

Forum For Street Children

Money donated in the UK can buy something between three and eight times the amount of goods and services that it would buy in the UK when spent in poorer countries. When one of the SSSK trustees was traveling in South India a little while ago, he visited a brilliant school for about 130 blind pupils in Tamil Nadu. The youngsters were aged from 8 to 18, and enjoyed singing and music enormously. Watching and hearing the school band being conducted by sound (!! ) by a clarinet player was a revelation.

The following Christmas he sent a £200 cheque to the school, partly to say 'thank you' for the hospitality and welcome he had received. He was gobsmacked to discover that the money had bought a complete new set of clothes for every pupil, and had paid for the food for the children for a week.

### **Let the Children Live!**

Let the Children Live! works mainly in Medellín in the north of Colombia. In Colombia street children are sometimes called the 'echables' – the disposable ones. Driven from their homes through poverty or abuse, these boys and girls struggle to survive on the streets of one of the world's most violent cities. Most find relief from hunger, loneliness and fear in drugs like marijuana, glue and crack.

Let the Children Live! offers street children education, therapy and job training, as well as simply somewhere to eat and sleep. It has also developed prevention strategies, which it implements in high-risk *barrios*.

*The work includes starting work with* community leaders and families in the very poor barrio of La Isla. The idea is to try to prevent more children from La Isla from ending up on the streets. In November 2003 the community of the La Isla decided that they wanted to express their appreciation of all the support that *Let The Children Live* had given them over the years, so they arranged a fiesta in the charity's honour.



Children in one of the houses run by Let the Children Live

The children (about 300 of whom are helped by Let the Children Live) and their families produced banners and placards

expressing gratitude to *Let The Children Live* and processed through the streets of the barrio to the local primary school. Several hundred people assembled in the school playground and there were several lengthy and enthusiastic speeches.

Afterwards Father Peter Walters, who heads the charity, commented, "It was good to see the affection and esteem that the children and families in La Isla have for the charity - and, of course, for our supporters of *Let The Children Live* in Britain, Ireland and elsewhere who make our work possible."

### **Forum For Street Children - Ethiopia**

Forum On Street Children – Ethiopia (FSCE) works in five cities and was established in 1989 in response to the increase in the number of orphaned and abandoned children in Addis Ababa after the droughts and famines of the mid-eighties.. It lobbies for the proper implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). FSCE has pioneered safe houses for girls who would otherwise be forced to work as child prostitutes.

Along with its focus on street children, FSCE works with victims of sexual abuse, children in trouble with the law and child workers. It works with families and communities to achieve a sustainable improvement in the lives of vulnerable children.



One of the most distressing areas of work is child prostitution. FSCE operates a drop-in centre for girls who have been, or could be involved in, prostitution. It also caters for street children who lack a safe place to sleep. Often the



street children are awake all night because they are afraid that they will be raped or sexually assaulted, says Emebet Mulugete, a social worker. Child prostitution is on the increase in Ethiopia partly because of a new awareness of the high number of people who have contracted HIV in the country. The perception is that child prostitutes will not yet have the virus and are safe. Over the last three years 22 girls have graduated into stable jobs and lifestyles in the city. These success stories give the girls at the centre hope.

Charlie Bretherton and Matthew Kent visited Ethiopia in September 2003 and worked alongside the FSCE.

### **OFFER (Organisation for Friends, Energies and Resources)**

The Organisation for Friends Energies & Resources (OFFER) operates residential programmes for children already on the street and community-based programmes for children at risk. It is based in Calcutta, India.

It concentrates on providing educational opportunities and health care to children who would otherwise have none. Two residential care units have been established recently, one with a night shelter and sickbay and the other for severely disabled children with learning difficulties.

The project that SSSK is currently supporting is for the 'platform children' at Dum Dum station. Dum Dum is a rail junction in the northern part of the city, and it is where many children first arrive. They may have come because of



Having fun at Dum Dum

family breakdown and domestic violence, possibly, even, because their parents have died - or they may have come because of the starvation conditions in their village. Bihar is one of India's poorest states, and is just a few hours train ride away. People also arrive at the station from Bangladesh.

The Dum Dum project has grown considerably over the years. It has outreach workers who make contact with the street/platform children. They are encouraged to come to a nearby hall for a regular meal, and for some non-formal education. It is a place where they can meet in safety, and where regular health checks are available.

A fairly recent development has been the opening of a night shelter in Apanghar (a residential unit run by OFFER), and the institution of a 'night warden' protection service for the children who sleep on the platforms. This is provided by some of the oldest children and organised by OFFER. Since the children are very vulnerable to all kinds of abuse, particularly at night, this is of considerable value. Trustee Gordon Couch visited Kolkata recently and went up on one of the platforms with a couple of the OFFER workers – "I was



practically 'mobbed' by 20-25 grubby kids who all wanted so shake hands and say 'hello' - and then wanted to do it all again!"

## **CENIT**

CENIT works in a very poor area on the outskirts of Quito, Ecuador. Its focus is on children (particularly girls) who have to work to support their families. As far as possible, they try to intervene early, as there are acute risks for toddlers and very young children when the mother has to work, often leaving the child with slightly older siblings.



The outreach programme encourages children to come to a drop-in Centre. The next stages focus on educating children and helping them develop the practical skills required to get a job. Finally, alumni of the programme are helped into work or sometimes even set up their own businesses.

## **Websites**

Let the Children Live!: [www.letthechildrenlive.org](http://www.letthechildrenlive.org)

FSCE: [www.telecom.net.et/~fsce](http://www.telecom.net.et/~fsce)

OFFER: [www.offer-india.org](http://www.offer-india.org)

CENIT: [www.cenitecuador.org](http://www.cenitecuador.org)

## **If you want to know more about street children...**

In April 2005 there was a special issue of the **New Internationalist** magazine [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org) with some excellent articles on street kids in different countries. Under the search heading (on the home page) you can find back issues. No 377 is entitled **Street Children**, and all of the articles in it are available on-line. Highly recommended.

## MESSAGES FROM OUR PARTNERS

“We once again thank all our supporters at Students Supporting Street Kids. OFFER acknowledges all the support extended to us and thus in turn pledge a commitment that we will try our best to deliver the best of service for street children in Calcutta. No organisation can single-handedly overturn the social system that marginalizes poor children, but with your help we can be a catalyst for change. We express our deep gratitude.”

***Kallol Ghosh, Secretary, OFFER, India***



“Thank you very much for your generous and regular donations over the years, and for the work you have done in raising the profile of street children and the role that non-governmental organisations can fulfil in working with them. As well as helping street children, we are now able to provide medical, social and educational assistance to other children and families in dire poverty, thus relieving the extreme deprivation that would drive children out on to the streets in desperation. Our work would not be possible without the support of groups like yours. Please convey our thanks to all those students who have given up their time to help.”

***Father Peter Walters, Director, Let the Children Live, Colombia***

## YOU CAN GET INVOLVED....

The children and young people that SSSK is trying to help have none of the privileges that we take for granted every day. Some will sleep on railway platforms and on pavements. Most will work on the streets. Many will face violence and abuse. Some will feel forced into thieving and into prostitution. Some will become addicted to drugs.

While they have the potential to achieve great things with their lives, they do not have the opportunity. Supporting SSSK means helping to give some of these kids this opportunity. There are several ways of getting involved, and they start with understanding the problems and raising awareness.

If you care about these issues, you can help to raise money. You can get involved in a huge number of ways: bar collections, organising events, getting money from the funds of university rag, JCR committees, college chapels etc. You can 'be' the organiser, secretary, treasurer or whatever. An SSSK branch is entirely dependent on the time offered and the skills of the people involved. The money raised all goes to the organisations we support, and from time to time, people go out and see how they work, and what is being done, just as Charlie and Matthew did in Ethiopia this last summer.



# Don't take pity.

Helping street kids through SSSK is a small way of saying that you recognise some of the social inequalities in the world - and that something needs to be done to redress them. How you do this and contribute is up to you, but a SSSK branch needs several reliable enthusiasts who will both 'make things happen', and ensure that there's a follow-on group of students to do it all in the following year. It's a lot of fun, it's rewarding, and it's worth it.

Visit [www.sssk.org.uk](http://www.sssk.org.uk), email [sssk@sssk.org.uk](mailto:sssk@sssk.org.uk) or ring 07989 743 889

**Take action!!!**