



BUILDING OUR HOME

A Permanent Family Village for Homeless and Orphaned Children in Kerala, Southern India.



**Legal Aid &
Educational
Society
for
Women**



A project of the Legal Aid and Educational Society for Women

www.ourhomecharity.org

building@ourhomecharity.org



Founding Our Home

Our Home was established in 2002 by Chacko K. Mathew, the current president of the Legal Aid and Educational Society for Women (LAES). It provides a permanent family environment for 40 homeless and orphaned children in the fertile highlands of Kerala's Wayanad province, and is a registered Indian Charitable Trust.

We have a boys' and a girls' home for children who have lost their parents, or grown up on the streets without the safety and comfort of a supportive family. Some of our children have families that, because of difficult or dangerous circumstances, cannot provide for them.

Our Home is dedicated to the children's optimal development and success in life. We are committed to providing a safe and optimistic upbringing for our children, to raise them as influential citizens, who can speak first-hand of care, love and peace, and whose aspirations are limited only by their imagination.

Our Home also runs **Good Shepherd School**, which provides primary education for 375 local children, many from poor families.

Our Home's mission is to establish a sustainable and innovative children's village that recreates a family environment, and brings independent family units together to form an economically productive community committed to family, education and social responsibility.



LAES was founded in 1985 by political leader Padma Renga to provide legal support to oppressed women throughout Andhra Pradesh. LAES operated for 20 years with a large legal team, but with the death of Padma's husband and her own deteriorating health, she handed over the organisational structure to Chacko, recognising that Our Home supports the rights of women. Many of the children's mothers are vulnerable because they are unmarried or prostitutes, from a minority group, HIV positive, economically "unproductive", blind or widowed.



Planning Our Home

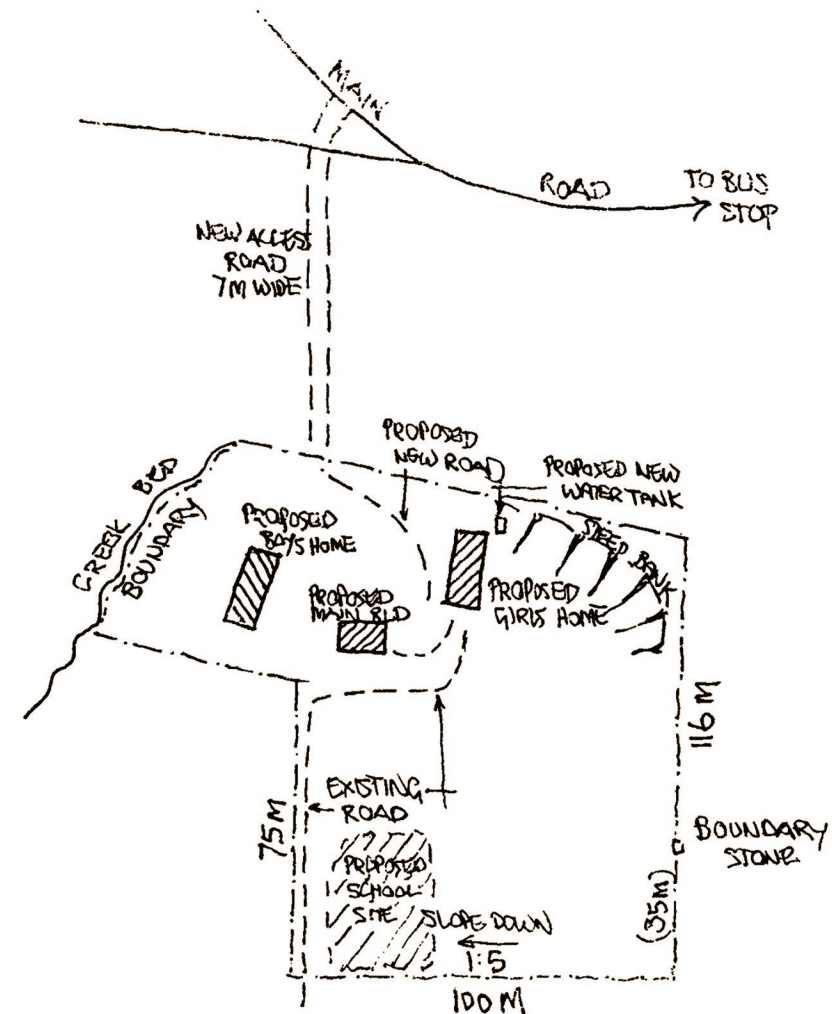
In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, Chacko seized the opportunity of low land prices in Wayanad to embark on his vision of creating a thriving and joy-filled children's village. Finally, a permanent home can be built for our children who are currently housed in two separate rental properties inconveniently distanced from each other, and too far from the Good Shepherd School.

Chacko bought 3.5 acres of fertile land in his home state in December 2009 for a modest price of Rs1.4 million (A\$35,000) which was funded by the sale of a small parcel of land owned by Our Home Charitable Trust, and sponsors in India, Australia, the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States.

In April 2010, the Australian project team travelled to Kerala to commence design and construction of the village, before the monsoonal rains hit in June. The design and construction was lead by Chris Hollonds, a professional builder and surveyor from Sydney who in recent years has been supervising community housing projects in Timor Leste.

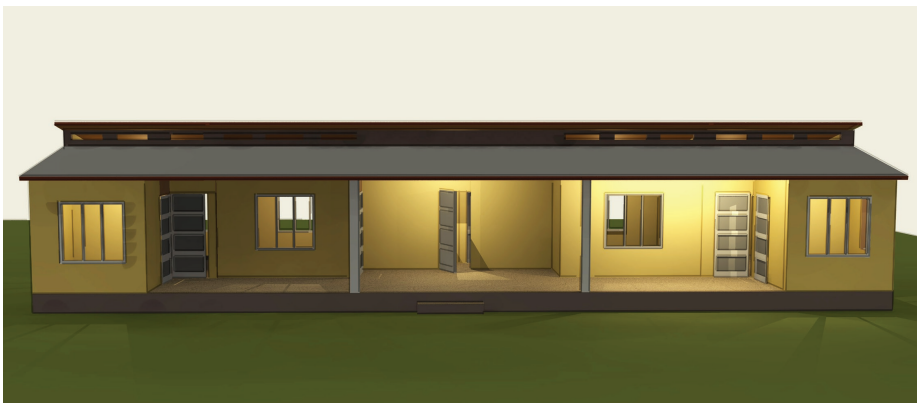
In consultation with Chacko, the Our Home children and Avi, their dedicated house mother of seven years, Chris designed three cost-effective buildings suitable for the undulating land, local climate, and respectful of Chacko's vision of a village comprised of independent family units.

Chris' site design also needed to satisfy orphanage building regulations, provide improved road access as well as water and electricity. His final design accommodates future plans for the remainder of the land: vegetable gardens, fish farms (the boys' idea), and in Phase 2, the future campus of the Good Shepherd School and volunteer accommodation.





Planning Our Home



Chris designed two semi-detached dormitories, a boys' home and girls' home, with wide verandahs bookended by carers' rooms.

The two separate wings of each building will house a family unit of children, supervised by a carer serving as both role model and nurturer. The verandah will provide room for play and an essential dry area during the torrential monsoon rains.





Planning Our Home

A double-story communal building will be the centre of domestic life in the village.

This building will have a large kitchen with wood and gas stoves, a large walk-in pantry and room to prepare food. Outside there will be a sink for large pots, basins on the verandah for washing hands, and a large dining area that can fit 100 people for celebrations and assemblies. The second story will be a versatile multi-purpose area, with a pitched tin roof and no walls, in keeping with local architecture. There is also potential for an office and volunteer accommodation.





Constructing Our Home

Chacko and Chris quickly assembled a carefully vetted team of local tradesmen. A separate building bank account was opened and a new account book set up by Chris' partner Pam. Solomon Pradan, a member of Our Home India, is in charge of record keeping and finances, with training and assistance from Pam.

The quality of local craftsmanship and building materials was evident to Chris from existing building sites. While the downturn has affected the flow of funds from family working in the Gulf states, Wayanad is experiencing a building boom and a concomitant squeeze on skilled labour. The price of sand is high in Wayanad. A strike at local quarries threatened to delay construction. The day the bulldozer came to level the sites, everyone followed its activities the whole day, sitting in the shade amongst the lemongrass eating fruit until rain stopped work.

From the beginning, the project team has needed to be flexible. A derelict mud-brick building stood on the best site for the girls' building.

It soon became clear that, due to time and cost considerations, renovating the existing building to provide temporary accommodation was preferable in the short-term. The temporary girls' home was inaugurated in June 2010.

A new road was planned that would connect our land to a bus stop on the main road. But the land for the new road was unaccommodating: a massive ditch that would require 30 truckloads of infill and a huge amount of work to build. Chris was nervous that this road work could potentially blowout the budget. In July 2010, Chacko purchased an adjoining strip of flat land, perfect for the access road for a price less than Chris' budget for the initial road plan.

The footings for the communal building were laid before the rains came in June. **Once the heavy rains cease and the new road is bulldozed, the electricity will be connected and the girls can move to their new home.**





Funding Our Home

COSTS

Infrastructure

Earthworks
Water Supply
Electricity
Septic
Road Access
Well

Rs39,000.00	A\$928.57
Rs36,000.00	A\$857.14
Rs44,000.00	A\$1,047.62
Rs50,000.00	A\$1,190.48
Rs360,000.00	A\$8,571.43
Rs45,000.00	A\$1,071.43

Girls' Building Renovation

Rs441,000.00	A\$10,500.00
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Communal Building

Rs945,000.00	A\$22,500.00
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Boys' Building

Rs945,000.00	A\$22,500.00
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TOTAL

Rs2,905,000.00	A\$69,166.67
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FUNDS RECEIVED

Rs788,000.00	A\$18,761.90
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BALANCE

Rs2,117,000.00	A\$50,404.76
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	completed
	in progress
	to do

Rate: A\$1 = Rs42

The total budget for **Building Our Home Phase 1** is almost Rs3 million (A\$70,000). Nearly A\$20,000 has been raised, with A\$50,000 outstanding. The project team is confident that the project can be delivered as planned and on budget, but we require the assistance of generous benefactors.

We need 10 people or groups to donate A\$5000 each. A modest sum to make an enormous difference to 40 children's lives.

The **LAES** has official approval under the *Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 1976* (FCRA status), enabling it to legitimately receive funds from foreign donors. Donations can be transferred directly into the LAES Building Our Home bank account in India.

The **LAES** is seeking a partnership with an Australian organisation with deductible gift recipient status that is willing to auspice the **Building Our Home Project**. The Australian Project Team is available to provide further details on the project.



Building Our Home Team

Our Home India

Chacko K Mathew

Founder and Director
President of LAES

Vikali Maru

General Secretary
House Mother
Principal of Good Shepherd School

Solomon Pradan

Accounts

Justin Paul

Administration

Pastor Binoy PC

Our Home Board

Yohannan

Boys' Home Manager

Project Team Australia

Neal Williams

B.Sc, Ph.D
Australian Project Coordinator

Catherine Palmer

B.A
Australian Project Coordinator

Chris Hollonds

BA, Cert.Teach, Cert. IV Const.
Cert.Surv, Build.Lic.NSW
Planning and Building Consultant

Pam Drury

B.Com, Dip.Ed, Cert.IV TAA
Accounting Consultant



Thanks to:

Henrik Nordstrom: Photography
Stephen Duke: AutoCAD
Pamela North: Layout and Design



Our Home for Kala



Meet one of **Our Family** members:

Kala is one of the older children at Our Home. She is now 17 and has been with us for four years. Kala's mother had a relationship with a Nepalese man in Delhi and had two children. Being unmarried, Kala's mother faces rejection by the wider community and even her family. When the man abandoned her, Kala's mother returned to her native Kerala and, unable to protect or provide for her daughters, asked Our Home to care for Kala. Kala's older sister was married at the age of 16.

Kala has thrived at Our Home with the love and support of Chacko and Avi, and helps run the girls' home. She has completed her schooling and is commencing a three year nursing Diploma in Bangalore, with Rs260,000 (A\$6200) in tuition fees provided by an Australian sponsor.

Chacko says, "Kala is a good girl and very much caring and loving the kids. I am very glad she is going for nursing, but we will all miss her...it is a fact that she has to go one day."

Kala is just one of the children in Our Home. **There are 39 more!**

Our Home Needs Your Help. Let's do what we can!

Chacko K. Mathew

* Kala's story is told with her permission



Contacting Our Home

Please Contact us for further information and to support the Building Our Home Project.



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Donate Today

LAES Account Details:

Andra Bank , Hymayatnager Branch

IFSC code: **ANDB0000201**

Account Number: **020101100016254**