

Little Flower, Association for the Advancement of Women and Children in India

Report of the Executive Committee for 2024

I welcome you to our association's general meeting.

This year, we must vote on the annual financial statement and the budget for the new year. As every two years, the board must also be re-elected. At this point, I would like to mention that the three of us have now been in office for 20 years, and Sonja and Barbara even longer. Successors are not yet in sight, but we should think about how to proceed in the future.

First, however, I would like to thank everyone who has so generously supported us financially so that our wonderful projects in India can continue. There are always a few large donations and many small ones. Well over half of these come from outside the Sangha. In total, there were 380 individual donations averaging EUR 275.00.

It has been another year of many worries and hardships. The world seems to have gone off the rails. At the same time, selfishness is on the rise. More and more countries, but also people, are thinking of themselves first. In a situation of need, such as that of the people in Ukraine, this may be necessary. We are not there yet

Thanks also to everyone who is doing their work in India.

Finances

Last year, we again received slightly more donations than in the previous year. The total amount was approximately €98,900 in 2024. This is an increase of 15.6% after a decrease of 12% in the previous year. This year, we expect a similar amount to 2024. Transfers to India in 2024 amounted to €102,110, which is on par with previous years. The association's costs were again very low, amounting to EUR 516, which corresponds to 0.52% of the donations received.

Report from India

In February, Sonja and I visited our projects in India. I have published a travel report in the forum and enclosed it with the donation receipts for the last few months.

As every year, we started with a visit to Amala in Paramakudi. There, we always have a programme that fills both days completely. This leaves little time for the necessary discussions. PEARL's activities continue to focus on the work in Leelavathinagar and the library. Children from the programme also attend the kindergarten at the PEARL centre (Playschool), but the majority are middle-class children from the wider neighbourhood whose parents pay for them to attend. What is special about this is that children from different castes or without caste are taught together and spend the day together. This would have been unthinkable in the past.

Over the years, PEARL has built up a fund for the microcredit programme, from which short-term loans are granted for construction projects or for setting up a business. We met with some of them and brought back pictures of them today.

In addition to the village of bird and snake catchers, Leelavathinagar, outside the city, PEARL takes special care of a small group of bird catchers who still live in tents in the riverbed near the PEARL centre. We have received a photo documentation from PEARL, which we have put on display. Unfortunately, their carer, Phuspa, has fallen seriously ill and had to be replaced.

We were able to experience the Little Flower projects in Perumalmalai, especially the Montessori School, intensively due to its proximity to the Kanzeon Zendo. We were able to sit in on classes for several hours and observe the calm and concentrated work. The school (preschool) is the centre of activity here. As always, there are tutoring groups in the afternoon, as at PEARL.

As it has done for many years, the Little Flower Trust supports a large number of needy and sick people, as well as students. The salaries of the teachers at the Montessori School are paid by the Indian branch of a German company.

Flyer

A new edition of our flyer has been available since the beginning of the year. It hasn't changed much, but the information is now up to date again. We have brought some with us, and you are welcome to take a few. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sonja's sister-in-law, who once again did the graphics.

Sponsorships (Barbara)

This year, a total of ten children were removed from our sponsorship programme. This happened for various reasons, some of which were very pleasing:

- Four children successfully completed their education and are now standing on their own two feet. We are very happy about this important step towards independence.
- Two girls got married and therefore left the programme.
- Four other children had to be removed from the programme for various other reasons, including family reasons.

Of the sponsors whose children have left the programme, four immediately decided to take on a new sponsorship – a strong sign of their commitment and support, for which we are very grateful. In addition, three other children were able to find new sponsors.

Currently, 95 children are supported by the programme.

There is also a waiting list of other children in need for whom we are urgently seeking sponsors. We would be delighted if these children could also soon have the opportunity to be sponsored and benefit from the support.

Thanks to the loyalty and generosity of our sponsors, the programme remains an important foundation for the children's future prospects.

Greeting cards report (Sonja)

In the last financial year, a total of 1,368 card orders were received in India. That is 568 fewer than in the previous year.

There is a reason for this. You may have noticed that I have very few greeting cards for sale here in St. Ottilien this year.

There are new export regulations in India, which have caused some difficulties. In order to continue sending parcels, the sender must be in possession of a so-called Import-Export Certificate (IEC). Obtaining this certificate seems to be difficult. Presumably, it is only possible for business people. So we have now tried to send the cards to Europe by post via private individuals and not via PEARL. James had agreed to this for the time being. Initially, this was possible. However, it has now become very difficult for private individuals to send items from India abroad, and according to James and Chitra, it is no longer possible due to a number of restrictions.

As a result, a large number of cards are now stored in the Montessori school office. For the time being, there is only one option, which is to take the cards to Europe in person.

We at the Little Flower Team will take a number of cards with us when we visit in February. Chitra will also let me know if visitors to the Kanzeon Zendo or the Montessori school agree to take cards to Europe in their suitcases. I also keep asking at the Bodhi Zendo whether there are any visitors from Europe there. Unfortunately, however, there are usually few or no visitors from Europe in Perumalmalai during the summer months.

According to Chitra, there is still the option of sending the cards to Germany via a private parcel delivery company. However, this also involves a number of problems. I would like to clarify this during our visit in February.

So it would be great if any of you travelling to Perumalmalai or Paramakudi could take some greeting cards with you on your return journey.

It remains to be seen whether we can continue the greeting card project. I would find it very unfortunate if this were not the case and it failed simply because of the shipping arrangements. I have received plenty of requests for greeting cards and the cards continue to be greatly appreciated.

Budget 2026 (proposal)

Bank charges	50.00 EUR
Postage	300.00 EUR
Office supplies	50.00 EUR
IT	50.00 EUR

	450.00 EUR