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Letter from

Joan, Baroness Walmsley

I am so very pleased to be the first Patron of **the infant trust**.

When Lesley wrote to me and told me about the plight of such very small infants and children and her plans for the charity, I had no hesitation at all in agreeing to be a Patron.

I was aware of a few details of some of these terrible cases of abuse, like most people in the UK, but had no idea about the large numbers of them or the extent and savagery of many of the events.

..... from broken innocence to a healthy future

I can think of no more deserving cause than helping the most vulnerable children in our world. The very idea that they can be so dreadfully abused and abandoned is quite shocking.

I know that many of us find the particulars of these attacks too horrible to read, it can be very distressing, but unless we know about the reality of what is happening we won't feel motivated to act and support this extremely worthwhile work. Information is available, with regular updates, on our website and links pages. Please take time out to visit us at

www.infant-trust.org.uk and learn more about what we are aiming to do and why our work is so necessary.

The development of **the infant trust** over the last year has been nothing short of meteoric and I, personally, would like to recognise the huge level of support offered to Lesley from all the new supporters as well as her family and friends who have helped in getting this essential venture off the ground.

We have reached a crucial stage in our work and are very excited about the setting up of three major projects, with partners, in

South Africa. There seems to be a big difference in setting up sustained projects rather than giving on-off grants, although we will continue to do this wherever necessary. The big projects will grow, develop and be sustained over the next three years and we know they will make a significant difference to women, children and child-headed families.

Our links overseas are developing and strengthening all the time and we learn more and more as the months go by about where we can help and support people — with your help, this is just the beginning.

Thank you to everybody who supports our work.



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Some more facts

In South Africa there are many interdependent factors resulting in abuse of small children. The whole thing is, of course, extremely complex and there are definite links to the HIV/Aids epidemic, largely due to the decimation of parents and young adults; child abuse is also part of:

- Migration of workers into male-only enclaves;
- Huge numbers of vulnerable children – 40% in some places have lost their biological parents;
- A patriarchal society allied to high unemployment, poverty and the dependence of women on wage earners;
- Breakdown/lack of male role models in many townships;

Did you know?

In South Africa there are thought to be around half a million children under 16 years old being raped and abused in a single year; these numbers are rising and the rapists are getting younger.

Only about half of those abused are reported

Half of all children reported abused are under 7 years old.



This is not just a South African or even African / developing world problem... this is happening all over the world.

This is not a black issue – children from all ethnic groups are abused.

We had a most unexpected windfall - £1,000 from the staff committee at Allied Irish Bank

Thank you VERY much – we spent it all on medical equipment and food for rescued street children at Boikarabelo Children's Home. Absolutely essential.



I visited Johannesburg and the Gauteng Province again at the end of November 2005 to revisit services, check several facts and begin to put some project plans together with our partners..

I spoke with many people who are involved with services related to infant/child abuse, the mental health of children and young people, women and families decimated and bought down by the effects of AIDS ; I visited several services I had been to before and two that I had not been to – and what an amazingly worthwhile trip it turned out to be. Again my flights were donated, and we paid, personally, for the other costs.

I visited several squatter camps and informal settlements and am convinced that to help the infants and children we must also help the women to find a way out of the traps of poverty, limited education and the resultant dependence on men. We also can't ignore the impact that AIDS is having on millions of people and thousands upon thousands of families.

I met people who work tirelessly against immense odds to deliver often the smallest and most valued of services, for example helping a lady to get a bus pass so she could work in a place that also allows her to take her children; the alternative is no work and NO money or other work and leaving her children [2yrs and 3yrs] on the 'street' all day; I am constantly amazed and humbled by the dedication of these community workers.



Children with Lesley at Boikarabelo, 2005

I went to two new services both of which I propose we help in whatever way we can

1. Boikarabelo [previously Botshebela] Home.

This was started by Marion and Con, originally in their home in Johannesburg until their neighbours had enough. Now they are based on a huge 400 acre sprawling farm north of the city. They provide a home for street children who just appear from anywhere, virtually all of them with the most appalling histories, many affected by HIV/AIDS and most with permanent damage – either psychological or physical, often both. There is no money, they all live in squashed dormitories and have a rudimentary school outdoors; they regularly live with dying and death. They often can't afford the food to feed the children. Yet this is a place of joy and happiness. We have given them a grant of ZAR7,000 to buy essential medical and home equipment, and will give them more money throughout the year.

2. Epworth Children's Home

This is a statutory residence – that means that social workers and police place children in this home as a place of safety. This home has 70 very scarred and damaged children, mainly through severe abuse. The children range from 4yrs old to 18yrs and come for therapy prior to [hopefully] finding foster homes. Again it is a place of noise and bustle and laughter yet the individual stories are dreadful. We have also given them a grant of ZAR7,000 to buy essential equipment and are going to work out how we can support them through finding and supporting foster and home parents.

What a year!

We had lots of **small donations** from individuals everywhere, many of whom we don't know — we just **can't thank you enough.**

We have just received a **very large** single donation that will set up several linked projects in and around Johannesburg.

All these funds allow us to buy essential equipment or life enhancing therapy or provide start-up money for new services.

All in all we raised over a MASSIVE £100,000 in our first year.

WOW!

So where is your money going?

Grants already given

ZAR 7,000 (South African Rand) to both Boikarabelo and Epworth children's homes – more will be donated to them both later this year.



ZAR4,000 for essential therapy for 'Paul'. Although it is not our intention to fund specific children many orphaned children live at the Topsy Sanctuary. At Topsy we are helping them with training for their community outreach workers and nursery school and crèche workers in dealing with child abuse. 'Paul' is orphaned through AIDS and because of illness and abuse he has never learned to walk. His life is limited due to HIV/AIDs and he couldn't join the other children in having fun; we have given a single grant for very specialised therapy for him over this year so he can learn to walk, run and play.



Now comes the exciting part With your help we are setting up new work.

1. Together with the renowned Child Abuse Treatment and Training Centre [CATTs] in Johannesburg, and the local Sinakekelwe Thutuzela [a Zulu word for a crisis centre] at Katlehong [south of Johannesburg] we are developing and funding a programme to support and train between 20 and 40 volunteer workers who work in the crisis centre.

The crisis centre receives anyone who has been attacked/abused from a rural and township area of 2.5 million people. They see around 20 – 40 children a month under 7 years old, and the numbers are growing.

Why are we supporting and training the volunteers? Several reasons—

- The centre cannot afford paid staff and the centre cannot afford to train the volunteers.
 - The volunteers are the first people the children meet; the children can spend 8 – 18 hours with them.
 - The volunteers need skills to deal with distraught children during the first few critical hours as well as marshalling the statutory services and having special reporting and writing skills to help to ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice.
 - These volunteers are local women who can then take their skills and knowledge back to their communities and act as a further resource.
 - The training will give them a marketable skill and thereby help them into employment and out of the poverty / dependence trap.
2. We are planning to set up some safe havens for vulnerable children in Limpopo, working with Childline SA.
3. We are talking to a specialist centre for them to develop training packs for community workers either in health, social care, residential care, pre-school services or even for local 'witch doctors' know as Sangomas. We can pilot and develop specific packages and training programmes that will be used to help other community and outreach workers identify and react appropriately to help prevent child abuse.

