

## *A Good Day at the Office*

**The coffee is on, there's tea as well!  
Do drop in - we'd love to see you.**

The first volunteers turn up around 9am. They turn on the computers and read the faxes and emails and fetch the post from the GPO.

On Mondays, Frances does office admin while Anita works on Juvenile Justice and Ann helps with posters. In the afternoon, Akiko works on images with Photoshop. On Tuesdays, Beth does the Accounts, Kit puts the financial records on MYOB and Paola disappears into the library to put away the new reports and press cuttings for reference.

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, Sharon works on the Child Labour desk. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Rebeccah works on publicity. Also on Thursdays, Della does word processing and office administration and Emma develops a children's rights kit and fliers.

Others drop in for shorter periods: Alena works on Female Genital Mutilation and Kim is cataloguing the filing system and improving the Office Manual.

### **One of last year's volunteers says goodbye**

*"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work at DCI. I have not only gained some of the office skills I wanted, but have realised that it is more important to do things you believe in as you do. In an ideological world, I wouldn't need money to survive and could work for DCI - although in an ideological world, children would be free from the abuse they suffer at adults' hands."*

Altogether there are about 20 volunteers working at the DCI National Office at the moment. Some have been with us for more than 12 months. Others have recently come to us via the ACT Volunteer Centre. They ask for real and worthwhile work to develop skills, gain experience, and do something constructive for children.

We have a two student placements at present too - Sue, a final year Community Health Education student at the University of Canberra, and Beth who is in the final year of Accounting at Canberra Institute of Technology.

Thank goodness we have several apple computers, all networked and linked to a laser printer!

**Helen Bayes**

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## **MUKTI MEANS TOTAL LIBERATION**

The Mukti Ashram near New Delhi has released over 20,00 missing children from bonded labour. The children are reunited where possible with their families, educated about the laws to protect children and those over 13 are trained in vocational skills and helped to start their own businesses. Under 13s learn to read and write, to meditate and have plenty of time to reclaim their childhood through play.

Ms Suman of the Mukti Ashram gave a vivid account of her work at a "Lunch at

DCI" on 10 March. Some of the children have become powerful influences for change in their own village community. They make adults aware of the "middle men" who buy children, and sit on village councils advising them on how to protect the children from exploitation.

Not a single child, said Ms Suman, has said that they were paid while they were working. Instead their employees imposed mounting debts on them for food and other "costs". Not

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*Subscriptions are also available to DCI publications:*

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***DCI grows with the help  
of members and supporters!***

## Mukti means ....

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only did they never get paid, but they could not escape without the help of an advocacy organisation such as the Ashram.

The Mukti Ashram soon realised that no matter how many children they rescued, more would be found and bought to replace them. They began working with the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, organising a 2000k march in 1993, from Bihar to Delhi to protest against child labour. In 1994, a 5000k march from South India to Delhi was held. By mobilising teachers, school students, unions, the movement grew. Political parties were pressured to put children into their manifestos. Lawyers and religious leaders organised Forums against child labour and pro-childhood candidates started campaigning in elections.

In India, Ms Suman added, 1% of the total budget is spent on education, but most of it goes on higher education. Recently the Indian Government has made a commitment to provide free and compulsory education for every child up to the age of 14. Pressure from outside is needed to keep the Government to its promise.

"It really works," she said. "We must stop blasting childhood."

**Helen Bayes**