

## **Home for abandoned children opened at Hope Village**

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**CHILDREN abandoned in this country for one reason or another, will now have a place to call home. The Hope Children's Home was formally opened on Sunday at Hope Village, East Coast Demerara.**

**The project was initiated by the Finlayson family who are associated with the Enmore Church of Christ.**

**Mrs Samantha Finlayson, who also represents the United States-based Church of Christ, worked as a missionary in Guyana for over eight years.**

**She said the project was started in March 1998 and cost about US\$50,000.**

**"Most of the money was donated by the Church of Christ. But contributions from any government or non-governmental organization would be welcome. That could go a far way in helping to sustain the project," Finlayson explained.**

**She said the project is intended not only to house those children that are abandoned or neglected, but also to help reunite those that were dislocated from their siblings and are now orphans too.**

**The Hope Children's Home will be working closely with the Guyana Red Cross Society and the Ministry of Human Services to bring new hope to street children.**

**The facility can accommodate 24 children, and is furnished with the basic necessities to make them comfortable. These include a full-sized kitchen and four sets of toilets and bathrooms.**

**There are also plans to install computers in the building so that the children can become computer literate, Mrs Finlayson said.**

**"We hope to see them through university once they are mentally inclined," she pledged.**

**The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of the Guyana Red Cross Society and the Community Based Rehabilitation group (CBR).**

**Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Mrs Indra Chandarpal, addressed the gathering, while former President, Mrs Janet Jagan, helped to officiate at the opening ceremony.**

**Chandarpal, in her presentation, commended the efforts of the Finlayson family.**

**She emphasized that the setting up of the Hope Children's Home is an example of people working together to heal some of the social ills children in our society are faced with.**

**Chandarpal also pointed out that since Guyana became a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, the way has been paved to improve conditions for children.**

**She recalled that when the PPP/C Government took office in 1992, the Commission on the Rights of the Child was established and chaired by the then First Lady, Mrs Janet Jagan.**

**Chandarpal explained that addressing concerns on issues affecting children cannot be done in an ad hoc manner. She said the necessary mechanisms and support systems must be in place before the policies could be implemented.**

**"The establishment of the National Commission provided the mechanism whereby we were able to address all the issues affecting children," the Minister said.**

**Some of the issues she highlighted were education, health, water, housing, sanitation and the reduction in infant and maternal mortality.**

**Chandarpal said that the national focus had to be re-organized to allocate more money to address the issues in the areas in which children's lives can be affected most.**

**She pointed out that homelessness and over-crowded homes can create all sorts of problems for society.**

**Government, she said, has already made significant strides in the area of housing.**

**Minister Chandarpal stated that the provision of housing, improved sanitation and the reduction in infant and maternal mortality are indicative of the success Government was able to achieve.**

**Her Ministry has been providing subventions for homes for the elderly and children, she said.**

**Although there has been a very dynamic collaboration between her Ministry and organisations like the Community Based Rehabilitation group, Mrs Chandarpal said there is still room for improvement in addressing the concerns of children.**

**"I have certainly said that we need to do much more and in this year we will be doing more," she promised.**

**The Minister disclosed that in March this year the Ministry will be opening a children's home that will be the first of its kind.**

**"No longer must our children wander and sleep in the streets," Minister Chandarpal said.**