

CAN ONE PERSON REALLY CHANGE THE WORLD?

Yes they can. Whether by donating time or money to charity, or by starting an **international campaign**, everyone can **make a difference**. We meet two members who are doing just that

Words **Gillian Rowe** and **Amy Williams**
Photographs **Gilton Fernando** and **Paul Mitchell**



World class

Sylvia Holder

Nearly 20 years ago, Sylvia bumped into a young boy on the beach of Kovalam, in southern India. They started up a conversation that would change her life and that of many other children

“A lot of the young boys try and sell you their wares along the beaches in India, but Venkat was a bit different. He was 12 at the time and very charming and quite smart. He said, ‘Why don’t you come and see my village?’ which I was delighted to do. At the end of the day he asked if he could have £10 as a sort of payment for his school fees for the next year, because his family were unable to pay.

“I was happy to part with the money, and then I said I would pay for any costs towards his education from then on – and if he got to university, I would pay for that too. I didn’t think he could possibly go to university, coming from such an underprivileged background, but he did and graduated from Madras

University, which thrilled me to bits. We kept in touch, but tragically he died three years ago in a car accident. He was only 27. I just thought, ‘What a terrible waste of a young and promising life.’ He had grasped the opportunity, had got a good job and helped his family financially, even buying them a house.

“I thought something good has got to come out of this. I started up a charity six months after his death to help other young children find education. Venkat’s local school was very underfunded, with no furniture whatsoever. Now we have two new school buildings and have bought land for a high school. We are trying to improve the facilities and the standards of education, and now teach English and computer studies.