



BENARES SCHOOLFUND FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER 2011

OUR PROJECTS

1. 50 individual students



The Benares Schoolfund Foundation pays the tuition fees of approximately 50 individual pupils at a number of different schools. These children are selected according to fixed criteria.

Two staff members of the Ashray Social Centre, Surendra Srivastava and Manish Bhatia, take care of all the necessary activities and coach the children.

2. Education at the Ashray Social Centre



- > www.ashray.org
- > Director: Shachi Prakash

The Benares Schoolfund Foundation pays the full costs of the educational programme: the Ashray primary school (for 80 pupils: books, school uniforms, school meals and teachers' salaries), sewing classes and basic education for young women, dance and music lessons and evening classes (tutoring, homework assistance and computer courses).

3. Little Stars School (LSS)



- > www.littlestarsschool.org
- > Director: Asha Pandey

We support the school (560 pupils, primary and secondary education) by paying the tuition fees of a number of pupils, the salaries of teachers, education and care for some orphan girls and by financing additional educational material.

4. Jeevan School



- > www.basichumanneeds.net
- > Manager: Sheelu Khujur
- > School headmaster: Kati Richter

Since December 2008 our foundation has increasingly contributed to the tuition fees of street children in the care of Basic Human Needs.

The school provides primary education to over 100 children.

BSF IS DOING GREAT!

The number of school sponsors supporting the Benares Schoolfund Foundation has been very stable for several years now. They all sponsor the tuition fees for approximately 50 individual students by donating €275 per year.

We also receive incidental donations, smaller ones from private individuals but also large sums from foundations and funds. With these gifts we support two schools.

Since two years we have a sponsor who has pledged five years of support for our third school, the Ashray school.

Recently, a new big sponsor has joined us with extra support for our schools for many years to come, ensuring a stable foundation for their future.

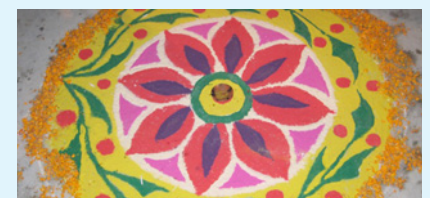
In addition, we have received large one-time contributions from two Rotary clubs (more on that in this newsletter), so it is with feelings of satisfaction and gratitude that we present our report over last year.

YOUR SUPPORT

> As a **school sponsor**: for €23/month you can provide education for one child. With that amount you also contribute to the schools' educational materials, salaries and yearly teacher training.

> As a **(permanent) donor**: all donations, whether one-off or a fixed amount per year, will benefit the children and their education.

> *More about how to support on the last page*



BSF AND THE ROTARY

Roosendaal Donkenland

On 6 March 2009 our chairman Marien, together with students, performed in the historic chapel of the Franciscan Sisters for the Rotary Roosendaal Donkenland. Many people came and a lot of money was donated. For 18 months, the Rotary has done its utmost to have its donation doubled by the International Rotary and in December 2010 they finally succeeded. This means that some €25,000 is now available!

It had already been decided how the money would be spent: on the interior of the new Little Stars School building, which needs a computer room, a science room and a library.

Rotary International will transfer the money directly to a local Rotary branch in Varanasi that will implement the project.

Therefore this sum is not reflected in our financial statements, but we will report on the project's progress next year.



Op Seyst

On 5 November 2010, shortly before we left for Varanasi, the Autunno Ensemble, conducted by Marien, gave a benefit concert for the Rotary club Op Seyst, in the beautiful church of the Community of the Moravian Brethren in Slot Zeist.

The ensemble (including our secretary Conny on the cello) has been giving a benefit concert there every year for the last fifteen years. This year, the BSF was the beneficiary. Almost €14,000 was raised for the purchase of musical instruments, library books and textbooks, as well as school furniture.



THANKS VERY MUCH, EVERYONE!



OUR INDIVIDUALLY SPONSORED PUPILS

Most of the children are doing well. They all like going to school. As we do each year, we met with all the pupils and their parents.

We are quite satisfied with the work of our staff members. Manish Bhatia frequently visits the schools, knows all the pupils and produces orderly reports. Surendra Srivastava meticulously takes care of all the financial matters. The needs of some of the children's families are well recognised and those families get extra support and attention through the Ashray Social Centre.



Accompanied by Manish and Surendra we visited two schools and also made a number of house calls.

This year, we did some 'missionary' work related to education for (older) girls. Quite a few parents feel that their daughters have had enough education when they are 14 years old, or don't send them to school at all. By threatening to exclude their sons from our programme we have managed to persuade many of these parents! Luckily there are many parents who are determined that their daughters should complete the 12th grade.

Last year it was agreed to ask the parents for a contribution of Rs.300 per family per year to make them share the

responsibility for their children's education. Most parents have obliged and we are now considering a suitable destination of these funds, totalling €250 a year. We have decided to restructure the dahl programme for these pupils and their families as per 1 April 2011.



Manish and Surendra with some pupils

The programme is rather expensive and has limited funds. Because of increasing food prices the programme can hardly remain effective if we continue to include all the families.

The budget will therefore be made available to the Ashray Social Centre for specific food support to the poorest families. Through its social network Ashray knows exactly which families are most in need of support.



LITTLE STARS SCHOOL



Things are going well here. We were given an orderly overview of results and absenteeism of all 40 pupils for whom we pay the tuition fees.

We have met with many of the pupils and their parents again this year. We always discuss the results thoroughly with them and we are quite strict when children are absent too often. Parents are encouraged to take responsibility in this.

The school is still working hard on the curriculum, looking for the best textbooks, and training teachers. In short, they are working on improving the quality of the education. Classrooms often consist of interlocking rooms. There is a constant buzz of hundreds of children's voices but we have found that Indian children are quite capable of studying amidst all this bustle and noise. Incidentally, during the half-yearly exams the school was remarkably quiet; quieter than we ever experienced before.



Marien and Pierre Satijn on the building site

Construction of the new school building is getting off to a good start. In three months' time the basement and ground floor should be ready and some of the groups can then be moved over. Then the old building can be renovated and new floors can be added to the new building as funds come in.



Asha Pandey

When completed, and after expanding the curriculum to the 12th grade, the school will grow from 500 to 650 pupils. As more space becomes available, the groups in the now very full classrooms can be made smaller.

As soon as the Rotary funds from America will be transferred to the local Rotary in Varanasi and the new building will be nearer completion, the computer room, science room and library will be fitted out with the necessary equipment and furniture.

We are being kept well-informed of everything going on at the Little Stars School through their well-designed monthly newsletters.

From the beginning of the new school year our foundation will increase its support of the Little Stars School. We will pay the tuition fees of an extra 30 pupils, as well as extra training and a raise in salary for the teachers.

OUR ALUMNI

The Benares Schoolfund Foundation was founded eight years ago. Of the 23 pupils that we started out with, five have since completed the 12th grade.

Pankaj, the eldest, has since taken a computer course and is now building websites in Delhi, with some success.

The other four are studying at university and we interviewed three of them.

They are three self-possessed, intelligent young individuals who have left illiteracy and poverty behind for good and are now looking toward a bright future. They are also kind-hearted and socially involved youngsters who are aware of their own backgrounds and wish to help other children with little or no chances as well, at some time in their future. They are very glad with the chances that they have been given and we can be very proud of these young people!

> More about them later in this newsletter.

VOLUNTEER WORK

Volunteers from the Netherlands are very much in demand in Varanasi. They represent a fresh element, something new that the children are not likely to forget. Marjon and Anne helped out at the Ashray School, Sylvia at the Little Stars School.

Little Stars School

Sylvia taught English to the smallest children. She was sent out by the Dutch foundation 'English for Kids', an organisation that promotes the English language throughout the world as a means of improving children's futures.



Using all kinds of materials such as building blocks, puzzles, books - often purchased locally -

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>>>>> Sylvia played with the little ones while teaching them the English alphabet and the English words for colours, numbers, animals and vegetables. This is called 'learning while playing', a method that is barely known in India. She also sang songs with the children, accompanying the words with gestures. Another one of her tasks was to train and coach the teachers by observing their classes and giving advice. As Sylvia emphasises, her method is complementary and not a substitute for standard education. There is now a cupboard full of toys in the hall of the LSS and Sylvia hopes that the materials will be used frequently.



Ashray

Anne and Marjon came to Ashray via Youth and Mission, within the context of their studies in Social Work and Services. For their minor 'International Sustainable Development Co-operation' they organised a photography project for the higher grades of the Ashray School. The children were given cameras and instructions on how to operate them, but were otherwise free in their choice of subject. Each child would make three or four photographs of things they felt were important to them. They chose their parents, grandmothers, goats, sisters, the neighbour's cow, among many other things. Afterwards, Anne and Marjon asked them to write down how they made their choice.

The children produced many nice photographs. One of the aims of the project was to stimulate their creativity, make them experience success and boost their self-confidence. Anne and Marjon also wanted to show the teachers that there are other, more interactive ways of teaching available.



THE ASHRAY SCHOOL

Much has been changed for the good at the school: the layout of the building, the educational content and the teaching staff.

A few months ago the sewing class moved into a new classroom outside the Ashray Centre. With all the sewing machines gone from the building a significant amount of much-needed space has become available to the school.



Since the teachers received extra training last summer new educational methods are being implemented: more elements of play for the youngest children, and some nice English textbooks, among other improvements.

Starting this year there are classes three times a week in kathak dance and tabla. Together with the tabla teacher Conny has bought three new tablas. It is wonderful to see how much the children enjoy these classes.

On Saturday one of the women teachers teaches yoga, the 4th and 5th grades have extra English classes, and there are handicrafts or sports activities. The children sport at the new Nagwa ghat and once a month the entire school visits the park. Soon there will be chess lessons on Saturday.

The whole day through the building is buzzing with educational activities! In the afternoon grades 4 and 5 take extra classes to ease the transition to the next phase of their education. Between 5 and 8 there are evening classes: homework assistance, tutoring and computer courses. Many pupils, including our individually sponsored ones, make use of these facilities.

All children at the Ashray School are given a nutritious snack lunch. According to the doctor who holds surgery hours twice a week in the clinic, the health of the people in Nagwa is markedly improving. The school meal for the children is definitely a contributing factor in this. During summer holidays, when the school is officially closed except for an alternative programme, it appears that many pupils still come, especially for the meal!



Ashray is obviously on the right path and there is a good atmosphere at the school.



At our request we met with the entire staff at Ashray, including the people working in the clinic and in social services. We told them about our foundation and our work in the Netherlands and showed them footage of the latest benefit concert. Then we spoke with individual staff members about the school, the clinic, the social work and the cooperative garden. It was an enjoyable and instructive meeting that was concluded with tea, sweets and samosas.



THE JEEVAN SCHOOL



The small school is becoming a real school. A few months ago Jeevan moved into four interlocking rooms across from the old school.

With help from the bigger children the rooms were painted in bright colours and all five grades now have a classroom there. The pre-schoolers are under the lean-to of the



old school. Manager Sheelu intends to build a library on the roof of the new building. A lot of effort is being put into the curriculum, into monitoring the children, training the teachers and providing meals.

The school's headmaster is Kati Richter, from Germany. She has provided wonderful teaching material, mainly German Montessori methods.

Kati is quite ambitious and each Saturday she organises trainings for her own teachers and those from other schools in an effort to introduce a different way of teaching and learning. This is no easy task in India. She frequently writes long and engaging e-mails to Conny about the children, her work, her worries and joys.

She is a very involved and committed woman with a keen insight into the type of children, street children, who come to Jeevan. She and Sheelu make an ideal team.

The hostel (35 children) has also moved into new premises, with a large playground



Kati Richter



Jess, Sheelu, Marien and Conny

We met with Jess Morwood, initiator and board member of Basic Human Needs (BHN).

As our foundation contributes quite substantially to the Jeevan School we had drawn up a contract, just like we have with the other schools. It could be signed on the spot.

The contract lists a number of conditions, including a sound financial basis for the entire project (including the hostel) and more active fund raising by BHN.

in front, which is quite an improvement. Jeevan is greatly in need of professional psychological assistance for traumatised children and, thanks to our new sponsor, our foundation can now provide the funds to do this.

"I MADE HER DREAM COME TRUE"

Three students look back on their school days

by Marien van Staalén

Rain! For the first time in twelve years a November shower pelts down on the roof terrace of the Temple on Ganges Hotel. Gausia and Nandita quickly seek cover under the awning. Avinash calls to cancel the appointment, as he is too far away and would become soaking wet if he came over now. We meet with him later and his statements have been worked into this report.

Nandita, Gausia and Avinash belong to the

earliest generation of pupils from Deva Public School. In 1996, when Conny and I both were teachers there, they were six, seven and eight years old, respectively. We reminisce: "Uma has married. I don't know what Joanna does", says Nandita. Gausia says: "I had to cry when my mother took me to kindergarten." Nandita: "I was always very happy when I had a window seat on the school bus." The bus was driven by Avinash's father who was called 'Driver-ji' (Mister



Avinash's father: 'Driver-ji'

Driver] by everyone. Driver-ji was also the handyman at Deva, the cook at field trips and the man who took excellent and loving

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>>>> care of all the plants around the building. When Avinash later continued his studies at the posh Little Flower School he was too embarrassed to admit to his father's modest occupation and referred to him as 'a businessman'.



Reeta-miss

For the girls Deva was heaven. "We greatly admired Reeta-miss. She was like a movie star." We were happily surprised to learn this after all these years, because at the time we were slightly worried whether Reeta, the school's headmaster, with her make-up and beautiful clothes was quite the right person for these underprivileged children ...

Avinash was living in Deva's hostel. "I loved sleeping together with so many children in one room. We played a lot of ballgames and there was plenty of room to play around the building." Deva was an English Medium school and education was in English. During classes and inside the hostel only English was allowed, on penalty of having to write lines. "It was very hard for us", say the youngsters, "but it was a quick way to learn English."

Aided by our foundation, these three students were able to complete their secondary education and now all three of them are doing commercial studies at university. The Benares Schoolfund Foundation supports children until the 12th grade, but not beyond. We do however try to find individual sponsors outside of the foundation to support especially talented students and for these three this has worked.



Avinash, in the past and at present



Gausia (up) and Nandita, in the past and at present

Gausia: "I liked school life better than life at the university. I wish I could remain a child for always. For now, study and career come first, but later I want to get married as well and have one child." Nandita smiles: "No, you will want to have twelve children: a full cricket team plus coach!" "And your lucky number is fifteen!", Gausia retorts. Nandita's mother has recently died and her father lives in Delhi. Where does she herself live now? "In an girls dorm, but I am looking for something else. All my roommates can think about is boys and going out; their study comes second. I do not find this stimulating. I need some quiet so I can work hard."

And work hard is what they do, all three of them. Gausia: "For me, as a Muslima, the day begins with morning prayer at 5:15. I try to stick to the prayer rules, even though I don't always succeed."

Avinash combines studying with teaching at the Ashray School. "It is hard, but also very rewarding. At Ashray I gain experience that will be useful to me later on and with what I earn I can support my parents finan-

cially. Thanks to my job my brother Akshay will now go to college as well. I also help my young nephew Shubham with his homework."

Time for a look at the future. "When I look at how I was able to finish school, one thing is certain for me", says Gausia. "Later, when I have a good position, I want to help other children in the same way. I want to support my social class." Nandita is even clearer: "After I finish my studies I will go and work for Ashray. Education is so important for poor people!"

Three talented youngsters who made the most of the chances they were given and are now studying at a level that was unattainable for their parents. Doesn't that lead to estrangement? Avinash: "My illiterate mother and father are very proud of me, and I have great respect for them. They raised me and now I can help them solve problems they can't handle. Later, however, I do want to live on my own." Gausia: "My parents can see that I am happier than they were, which in turn makes them happy again. There is no estrangement." Nandita, softly: "For years I have studied at home, with barely sufficient light. My mother had tears in her eyes when she looked at me. I was making her dream come true ..."

It is quiet on the roof terrace. The rain has gone, the sun is setting. High up in the sky dozens of kites can be seen: it is kite season. Majestically, the River Ganges flows along the city.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2010

INCOME

School sponsors	19.930
Funds and foundations	8.400
Donation for education Ashray	10.000
Donations (incidental)	7.065
From reserve funds	5.390
Interest	1.775

Total income **52.560**

EXPENSES

Little Stars School	10.000
Extra donation	1.000

Individually sponsored pupils

a. tuition	7.130
b. administration and coaching	850
c. health care	400
d. dahl programme	3.500

Education Ashray	10.000
School meals Ashray school	3.500
6 months' rent extra room	375
Tablas and chess games	180

Extra donation for medicines	1.000
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Jeevan School	3.000
Emergency support (50% donation, 50% advance)	2.500
Rent new classrooms (to Sept. 2011 + renovation)	1.800

Other donations

Divya Jyoti for handicapped children (once-only)	500
Small school Assi Ghat (once-only)	500
Education Udayan, Jaipur	500

Rest

To reserve funds	2.000
Administration costs (newsletter, postage, bank costs, Chamber of Commerce)	890

Total expenses **51.125**



BUDGET 2011

INCOME

School sponsors	19.500
New sponsor	12.500
For education Ashray	10.000
Rotary Op Seyst	14.500
Donations (incidental)	7.065
From reserve funds	3.715
Interest	1.150

Total income **68.430**

EXPENSES

Little Stars School	
a. 70 students	8.400
b. salaries 5 teachers	3.500
c. hostel (5 girls)	3.600
d. quality improvement teachers	2.500
e. copy machine (once-only)	2.500

Individually sponsored pupils

a. tuition	7.130
b. administration and coaching	850
c. health care	400

Education Ashray	10.000
School meals Ashray school	3.000
Rent extra room	750
Extra donation (once-only)	2.500
Contribution to the deputy director's salary	1.500
Food programme for the poorest families	3.500

Jeevan School

School programme (minus advance)	7.000
Psychotherapy	800
Extra donation (once-only)	2.500

Rest

To reserve funds	6.500
Administration costs (newsletter, postage, bank costs, Chamber of Commerce)	750
Unforeseen	750

Total expenses **68.430**

The foundation has built up a buffer of 27,500 euros in the past to guarantee, in case we lose any sponsors, the continuity of education for the children at all times.

Additionally the foundation has reserve funds of more than 19,000 euros at the moment.

Charity organisations are advised to maintain a buffer that is one-and-a-half times their year's turnover.

The contribution of Rotary Roosendaal Donkenland, which thanks to Rotary International's matching grant was increased to the amount of 25,000 euros, has not been included in this overview.



WHAT IS INDIA DOING FOR ITS POOR?

India does have a government programme for the poor and for the members of the lowest caste.

A red card entitles the poor to flour, sugar, rice and dahl.

A green card is good for cooking fuel.

State run schools offer free education, books and uniforms until 6th grade, and then, until they finish the 12th grade, pupils pay lower fees and receive a bicycle when they live further than 3 kilometres from the school. Girls who finish the 12th grade receive a bonus of Rs. 20,000 (over €300).

Universities give discounts on tuition fees to the poorest students and have a lenient admission policy for them.

Why then are foundations like ours still necessary?

Mainly because the quality of the education in state run schools still leaves much to be desired: there is often only one teacher available for 100 children. There is also a lack of the most basic educational material.

The poorest people are often illiterate members of the lowest caste. Obtaining a red or green card, a bicycle or a bonus is virtually impossible for them, unless they get help. The Ashray Social Centre - which includes our Ashray School - plays a crucial role in solving these matters. However, empowering people takes time, a lot of time.

The Benares Schoolfund Foundation is convinced that good education is essential in rising above poverty and desperation and that is why we will continue our work until state run education in India offers adequate quality, and private schools can be afforded by the poor as well.

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION!

In April 2010 we received excited e-mails from Varanasi: India's parliament had passed a law giving every child from the age of six the right to education. This is a significant development, although it remains to be seen whether this law will make much difference in practice. Hopefully it means that in the long run schools such as ours will get government funding and that the poorest of the poor will also receive high-quality education regulated by the state.

The law does mean that people can now demand education, which is a great improvement. However, we are still a long way from good education.



OUR SINCERE THANKS GO TO ALL OUR SPONSORS AND DONORS WHO HELPED CONTRIBUTE THIS PAST YEAR.

THEIR FUTURE DEPENDS ON YOUR HELP

HOW CAN YOU HELP OUR FOUNDATION?

As a school sponsor: for €23/month (or €275/year) you can provide education, books, a uniform, homework aid and tutoring for one child.

And, if needed, medical care and food support for the family.

With that amount you also contribute to the schools' educational materials, salaries and yearly teacher training.

As a (permanent) donor: all donations, whether one-off or a fixed amount per year, will benefit the children and their education.

Your donations are tax-deductible

Benares Schoolfund Foundation has been classified by the Inland Revenue as an Institution Aiming for General Welfare (Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling).

In case of donation by notarial deed, the costs are at the foundation's expense. Through the courtesy of Notariaat Leijser of Rotterdam, these costs are reduced to the minimum. The secretariat can provide the necessary papers (license for donation).

Board

Marien van Staaen, *president*
Conny van Staaen-van Leeuwen, *secretary/treasurer*
Jacques Baartmans
Joep Baartmans-van den Boogaart
Jantine Unger
Alet Meurs
Theo van Pinxteren
Karin van Duijnhoven



Clockwise: Theo, Karin, Alet, Jantine, Jacques, Marien, Conny, Joep

Benares Schoolfund Foundation

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