



EDUCATION FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN IN INDIA

BENARES SCHOOLFUND FOUNDATION

BASIC INFORMATION OF THE PROJECTS, AS PER 01-01-2013

NEWSLETTER 2013



1 ASHA DEEP SCHOOL

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 205 students, 13 teachers
- > Budget €26,000, contribution BSF €3,000
- > www.asha-deep.com



2 UDAYAN SCHOOL (JAIPUR)

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 88 students, 6 teachers
- > Budget €16,500, contribution BSF €4,100
- > www.vatsalya.org



3 LITTLE STARS SCHOOL (SCHOOL + HOSTEL)

- > Up to and including grade 10
- > 850 students, 40 teachers
- > Budget €26,000 (incl. hostel €34,000), contribution BSF €18,000 of which €3,500 for the hostel
- > www.littlestarsschool.org

4 INDIVIDUAL SPONSOR PROGRAMME

- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 53 students, spread over multiple schools in the city
- > Budget €10,530, incl. medical care, coaching and food aid for the most destitute
- > Contribution BSF 100%



5 EDUCATION ASHRAY (PRIMARY SCHOOL, SEWING CLASS & EVENING CLASSES)

- > Primary school up to and including grade 5
- > 75 students, 5 teachers + 1 music teacher
- > Sewing class: 12 girls/young women, 1 teacher
- > Night school (up to grade 12): 117 students, 4 teachers
- > Budget €13,500 - contribution BSF 100%
- > www.ashray.org



6 JEEVAN SCHOOL (SCHOOL + HOSTEL)

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 120 students, 8 teachers
- > Budget €33,000 - contribution BSF €10,050
- > www.basichumanneeds.org



THE TENTH NEWSLETTER

This is the tenth newsletter from our foundation - an anniversary that calls for a modest celebration. Thanks to you, BSF is financially sound, which enables us to maintain our support. However, the fact that our support has not become less urgent gives us pause for thought. India's booming economy bypasses its poorest people and while cars and motorcycles dominate the streets, the slums continue to grow at the fringes of the cities.

Nevertheless, the results of your involvement are obvious: a growing number of underprivileged children now move on to secondary education and become self-assured young adults. It is this development, as well as the sheer joy the schools bring to these students, that stimulates us to continue the work that you enable us to do with full force.

In this newsletter you will find an account by our secretary Conny van Staalen of the yearly visit to Varanasi by some of our board members. That this entails being confronted with deep personal suffering is sometimes inevitable, and some projects need an extra boost. On the whole, however, we are most positive about the projects: wonderful people are setting up great educational projects that benefit many children. We therefore celebrate the fact that our foundation has been able to contribute to those efforts for more than ten years now, thanks to your support.

ASHA DEEP SCHOOL

1

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 205 students, 13 teachers
- > Budget 26,000, contribution **BSF 3,000**
- > www.asha-deep.com

I wondered how my fellow board members would react. After all, they saw the school for the first time. Their impression was very positive, confirming my own favourable impression of last year.

During our first visit we met with Siddharth, the acting principal. He is a kind, gentle, intelligent and inspiring man. It being a holiday the school was very quiet, so we could speak without being disturbed. Siddharth is very soft-spoken.



The school has 205 students, 80% of whom are dalit (not belonging to a caste) and 20% are from higher castes. The school does not want to become any bigger. The ratio of girls to boys is 45-55 and the maximum number of students per class is 25.

EVENTS ORGANISED IN 2012 ON BEHALF OF BSF

It has been a great year for us, as our foundation was chosen as a charity by various organisations and institutions.

- The Lions Club Halderberge organised a quiz that yielded €3,300 for BSF.
- Primary school De Triangel in Gouda raised more than €1,300 for the Jeevan School (project no. 6) by organising various activities during Lent.



[read more on next page >](#)



Boardmember Theo van Pinxteren in Asha Deep's playground.

Starting in grade 6, more English lessons are given. The idea is to have a gradual transition, up to and including grade 8, from education in Hindi to education in English, to make the connection with secondary education easier.

Indian law says that education is free, but NGOs are allowed to charge school fees as long as they offer free education to 20% of their students. Asha Deep charges Rs.20 per month for kindergarten and the first grade; Rs.30 for grades 2 through 8, and only Rs.15 if the children attend every day.

The school provides textbooks for free. For school uniforms, the parents pay Rs.100 (€1.50) and the school Rs.300. Students in grades 2 through 8 who also attend afternoon classes and the homework class get a free hot meal.

On our second visit the school was in full swing, with everything functioning as it should. During playtime there is plenty of space in the large downstairs hall or in the playground for the children to run about.

The school uses a different theme each week and this theme then occurs in all of the subjects. The programme definitely does not employ the traditional Indian system of questions and answers. The focus is on helping students form their own opinions, gain insight into the subject material and on creativity and applying themselves. Asha Deep is no ordinary school. Siddharth does not like uniforms and he is not one for rigid discipline, both of which show. Nowhere else did we see such free and open students as at Asha Deep.

Every three months there are tests on which students can score 100 points. Of these, 30 points are for attitude in class, quality of homework, etc.

Because of the somewhat unorthodox teaching methods, after grade 6 the curriculum complies more with the Indian standard, to better prepare students for the final exam, which has to meet fixed standards.



After grade 8, the highest grade, students go on to the quite prestigious Hindu International School. Asha Deep tries to find additional sponsors for them, as their education would otherwise put too much pressure on the budget.

I had brought one of the BBC's Earth Flight films, which unfortunately had a Dutch voice-over, so I prepared an English translation. The video was screened one night in Asha Deep's playground, on a sheet that had been stretched between two trees. The full moon shone down on the Ganges River. It was the most beautiful cinema I have ever seen. Almost a hundred children watched this wonderful nature film breathlessly while I read the English text, speaking into an occasionally faltering microphone. I promised Siddharth to send him the full four-part documentary in the original English-spoken version. <

We decided to support the Asha Deep school with €4,000 a year for three years, starting with the school year 2013-2014. The school will also receive a separate single contribution of €1,000 to buy an extra computer and some books for the library.





2

UDAYAN SCHOOL

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 88 students, 6 teachers
- > Budget 16,500, contribution **BSF 4,100**
- > www.vatsalya.org



In 2003, the Vatsalya NGO built a children's village in the desert near Jaipur. Currently, 48 abandoned, often abused and traumatised street children are cared for in the village. The children are living there as brothers and sisters, with staff members as their 'parents'.

This communal life in a caring 'family' is aimed at restoring their self-confidence as well as their trust in the world outside the walls of their protective village. That is the task Vatsalya has set itself.

The Udayan children's village's own new school is now in its second year. Last year, only resident children attended the school, but this year an additional 40 students came from neighbouring villages and from the slums of Jaipur. Next year the school should accommodate between 150 and 200 students.

All the children, the newcomers as well, are eager to learn, and diligent. Last year the av-

erage score was 65.67% and the teachers were relatively satisfied with that. Still, the school management feels there is room for development and improvement.

The new students mix very well with the resident children. And although they are less advanced in their education, they take the same classes, be it that the teachers often give them individual attention. For now, this seems to work.



Belgian volunteer Hugo is quite positive about the influx of new children. Personally he feels it is a giant step forward. 'This is another piece of a dream come true', he writes. The education in Udayan focuses on making the children aware of virtues such as perseverance, helpfulness, compassion, honesty and respect. Teaching them skills and vocational training make up another pillar. According to Vatsalya, this approach prepares the children better for the world out-

side the village than exclusively teaching them knowledge would. Knowledge alone will not help these children in finding jobs and competition is fierce.

Until the age of 14 the children only receive regular education. After that, for two to four hours a day, the emphasis lies on developing skills that may help them to support themselves. Until now, most children who left Udayan over the past few years have succeeded in doing so.

Resident children who obtain a score of more than 75% in the highest grade continue their education in the city. All children leave Udayan at the age of 18.

There is much focus on yoga, music and dance and every day there is an hour of sports, to which the vast grounds lend themselves admirably. Starting in grade 6, children are taught to use computers. Nature and sustainability are also important subjects in the curriculum.

The organisation has an international volunteer programme. Each year many young people, each in their own way, contribute to the multicultural development and happiness of the children of Udayan. Plans are being made to involve the volunteers in educational activities as well, be it in special programmes.

Vatsalya's aim is to create a model institute where children can receive a comprehensive education to help them have a dignified and independent life. <

Starting with the next school year, the Udayan school will receive €5,000 a year for three years from our foundation.

EVENTS ORGANISED IN 2012 ON BEHALF OF BSF

- The Round Table Roosendaal organised a boat race (result: €4,000).
- For the second consecutive year, the graduation students of the Goes Lyceum baked doughnut balls for our foundation (result: €1,400).

For more information and photographs, please visit: www.benaresschool.nl and click on News.

We wish to thank all of these organisations for their splendid effort and enthusiasm.



A VOLUNTEER AT LSS

Marie van den Bemd resided and worked at LSS for three months.



It wasn't easy at first, but she persevered. She gradually became more and more involved and by the time she left the school again, it was with pain in her heart. She lived among the girls at the hostel, played with them, cooked, sang and danced with them, and, when needed, bought new things for them. She mobilised her friends in the Netherlands and they raised enough money to pay the tuition fees for two schoolchildren for their remaining years in school. Marie kept a nice blog: > marievandenbemd.waarbenjij.nu

SPONSORS IN VARANASI

Last year six of our sponsors visited Varanasi. Some as a stop on a longer journey, while others came especially to see our projects.

Dear old friends of ours travelled on to Varanasi after attending a conference and were most heartily received at Little Stars School by director Asha and volunteer Pierre. They were impressed by Asha's efforts and ambition - managing a large school with far too little space and a limited budget while delivering high quality education - and by Pierre's perseverance in building the annex. Pierre spoke enthusiastically about the progress being made, but also mentioned the lack of funds to complete the work.



Pierre Satijn

Our friends then donated a hefty sum, fully confident that it was a good investment. They wrote to us saying they had enjoyed their first visit to India and that especially their visit to LSS had added an extra dimension that they will always remember.

> [read more on page 9](#)



LITTLE STARS SCHOOL

- > Up to and including grade 10
- > 850 students, 40 teachers
- > Budget €26.000 (incl. hostel 34.000), contribution BSF 18,000 of which 3,500 for the hostel
- > www.littlestarsschool.org

It is always a great pleasure to meet with principal Asha Pandey. Formal meetings are rare, as everything is discussed at her hospitable dining table during one of her famous luncheons.

Over the past year much has been realised at LSS, notably the Rotary project and the new building.



New building

The new building is absolutely wonderful! Very fresh, with much light. By situating the classrooms next to each other at a gallery, classes don't interfere with each other, which makes for a very quiet atmosphere.

Although not everything is completely finished yet, the building already houses grades 6 through 10 (secondary school) and grades 3 through 5 (the last years of pri-

mary school). The basement is one uninterrupted, multifunctional room. The fourth floor has not yet been constructed. The plan is to house the classrooms for grades 11 and 12 there in the future. Not all of the rooms are completely finished yet, but they are already in use, even as the paint is being applied and doors and windows await their glass panes.

In all the hallways and open spaces potted plants abound! Together with Asha and Malti Ma'am (head of the new building and Asha's help and stay) I even bought a few more. The live-in caretaker and his family look after the plants and the building.



Ashray's sewing class now has its own room, one of the prettiest and lightest one, and is free of charge. Quite a nice gesture by Asha. Volunteer Pierre Satijn has accomplished quite something with this building. LSS has become a very attractive school, offering a unique educational programme, from kindergarten up to grade 10, for the Nagwa slum. Asha is immensely grateful to Pierre. The old building will be further renovated as soon as Pierre returns, as without him the extra work is too much for Asha.

The school now has 850 students and 40 teachers. There are still some double classes and many classes are too full. Asha does realise that she must put a cap on the in-



creasing number of students and focus on the improvement of the quality of education itself. This means smaller classes (and therefore more teachers) and better paid teachers.

I attended a refresher course for the teachers. Actually, it involved demonstrations: brief trial lessons by some twelve teachers. A small group of students served to demonstrate teaching methods.



This gathering was wonderfully interactive. Everyone could comment (including me), while Asha now and then offered well-founded advice to change or improve things. Quite effective indeed! This type of training will definitely improve the quality of teaching.

Having monthly exams, instead of the usual half-yearly ones, has been a good decision, contributing to the quality of school.

At LSS students pay a one-time admission fee of RS.1500 (€ 22) and RS.300 a year in examination fees and RS.95 a year for a sweater. Half of the textbooks are free. Parents pay RS.500 (€7.50) per year in tuition fees.

On the last day of our visit we had our annual meeting with parents and sponsored stu-



The new library

ROTARYPROJECT

One week before we left, the physics and chemistry classroom and the library, both situated in the new building, were officially opened by Rotary Sunrise Varanasi and us. The computer room in the old building - part of the same project - had been officially opened earlier in the year.

The library is now in the building's wonderful half-open basement. The space had been freshly painted and festively decorated for the occasion. There are carpets on the floor for the children to sit on while they read. Asha feels these should be replaced by mattresses so that the children can also read while half lying down. It truly is a room to relax.

This joint project by Dutch Rotary Roosendaal Donkenland and Rotary Sunrise Varanasi,



under the auspices of Rotary International, is now nearing completion, with still a few thousand euros to spend. The opening was concluded with a modest reception and some fine speeches, in which all those involved praised each other's efforts.

dents. Due to a power failure, our gathering was attractively lit by candles. There was quite a turnout!

We were presented with a practical overview of information of each of the children (which Alan, one of the volunteers, spent weeks preparing). Thanks to this information we could single out a number of families that now received more sponsoring than intend-

ed. It is our policy, basically, not to sponsor all children of one family but to give multiple families a chance.

LSS's financial accounting is transparent and complete, providing a clear insight into the state of affairs. A list of sponsors had been drawn up and an audit certificate was provided for the latest fiscal year. <

THE INDIVIDUAL SPONSOR PROGRAMME

4



- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 53 students, spread over multiple schools in the city
- > Budget €10,530, incl. medical care, coaching and food aid for the most destitute
- > Contribution BSF 100%

At our request, our local co-operators Surendra Srivastava and Manish Bhatia have again checked the income of the families of our individually sponsored students last year.

This check is always done when new students arrive, but over the years the parents' income may change, and it usually becomes higher. This was indeed the case >





The parents meeting in LSS's new building.

with a number of students: six students are no longer eligible for the programme and seven other students are now only partly sponsored.

We also took a critical look at the selection criteria, adjusting the poverty line and taking family size into account. We now have variable sponsoring: 100%, or school fees only.

The criterion 'capable of following education in English' proved unworkable, as it excluded too many pitiful children. The criterion now is 'highly motivated'.

We haven't spoken with Surendra and Manish as extensively as in other years, as they were very busy. However, everything was discussed, the financial accounts were in order, we have met with parents and students and made four house visits. All in all, the programme is running smoothly.

We have decided to remove the daal programme from Ashray, delegating it to Surendra and Manish per January 2013. This makes more sense, as it concerns the students from our individual programme. The families of 19 students receive a ration of daal (lentils), an Indian bulk food rich in protein.

In the meeting with parents and students - for the first time in the beautiful new building of the Little Stars School - a number of medical problems were discussed. Also, arrangements were made for some students about the level of sponsoring (full or in part), daal rations, more extra lessons, change of school, etc. Turnout was good, with 43 of the 53 students attending. During subsequent house visits we met with two more.

The house visits revealed much poverty and misery. Especially widows are having a hard



time. In some instances we decided on the spot to include an extra child from such a family in our programme.

Surendra and Manish are well-informed about each family's. Based on their request we sometimes provide extra support to suffering families throughout the year. They are an indispensable link between our foundation in the Netherlands and the sponsor programme in Varanasi.

The individual sponsor programme is relatively expensive and takes a lot of manpower. Still, we would like to maintain the programme, as it enables BSF to deliver made-to-measure support and respond to acute emergencies. <

ASHRAY SCHOOL

5

- > Education Ashray (Primary school, sewing class & evening classes)
- > Primary school up to and incl. grade 5
- > 75 students, 5 teachers + 1 music teacher
- > Sewing class: 12 girls/young women, 1 teacher
- > Night school (up to grade 12): 117 students, 4 teachers
- > Budget 13,500 - contribution BSF 100%
- > www.ashray.org

The school is functioning well, the teacher's team is solid and the children love to come to school. We saw them in the morning, we saw grades 4 and 5 again in the afternoon for the extra afternoon classes and in the evening we saw the older students at home work guidance and extra lessons. The stu-



dents were always hard at work, obviously enjoying the learning experience.

Guruj, the elderly math teacher who gives extra lessons at night, looks like he is in the prime of his life again, teaching as dedicat-

ed as ever. The new deputy director, Shiva, has split the evening classes into three, giving each group one hour. The groups are smaller now, and more efficient.

To our dissatisfaction there has been no computer teacher in the evenings for >



over a year, while we did donate five new computers. The children miss those lessons. After our visit to the evening classes, a couple of girls came downstairs and begged us to resume the computer lessons. A new computer teacher wasn't appointed until January 2013.



Ashray's teachers on their way to school.

We would like to see the computers being used in the daytime as well, in the primary school. The new deputy director, who is also in charge of the school, seems in no hurry to do so. Nor does he make haste in holding monthly teachers meetings.

We have thoroughly discussed the importance of these meetings with him. Teachers should regularly discuss the curriculum, adjust it where necessary, discuss problems among each other, learn from each other, acquaint themselves with new methods, explore new material.

Additional training could be improved as well. As it is, the team only goes on refresher courses during summer break. We have suggested to send one of the teachers to the free weekly courses given at the Jeevan School each Saturday. They can then pass on what they have learned to their colleagues.



We saw students greatly enjoying tabla and dance lessons. These lessons add much value and should be maintained, even when our support will be less after next year, when our arrangement ends with a major sponsor thanks to whom we can now fund the entire educational package at Ashray.

The school library is not making much progress due to lack of space. We have made some suggestions.

Toys and other educational play material were purchased for the toddlers. Playing

PROUD!

On 5 May 2013, the Benares School Fund Foundation will receive the Paul Tensen Award 2013. The Paul Tensen Foundation subsidises small-scale institutes for children who are physically, mentally or so-

cially disadvantaged. The foundation also gives out an annual award of €15,000. This year, our foundation was chosen out of many candidates. Naturally, we are very proud to receive this award.

and learning while playing is not taking for granted in India, but we feel it is important.



The school garden project has taken off and we went to take a look. Students from grade 5 were busy preparing the soil for plants and seeds. It was hard work but they seem to enjoy it. We treated them to some cookies and candy. The idea is that they work in the garden twice a month and follow lessons and engage in sports there. Teacher Avinash coaches the children and garden supervisor Manish Verma oversees their garden work.

This project is not a must and should serve a clear purpose. Avinash wasn't too keen on the idea, especially because the garden is relatively far from the school. Shiva will closely monitor the project to see if it contributes enough to education and whether the children are enjoying it.

As to absenteeism, a more rigid policy is in place now. One child was expelled, which sent a clear signal to the parents. Attendance has much improved since.

The sewing class was taking an exam. We were present and the examiner was pleased



with the overall level of the students. The class was established for girls and young women who have no education and it clearly fulfils a need. Ashray offers a broad package to the residents of Nagwa, the surrounding slum area.

A few days later we ceremoniously handed over the sewing machines, which for 50% are a gift from Ashray, while the women themselves pay the other half.

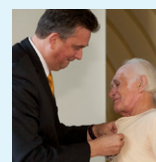
We have arranged with Shiva to be timely informed about the students of grade 5 (Ashray's highest grade), so we can perhaps include a few students (the poorest and most motivated ones) in our individual programme for further education.

Next school year, the agreement ends with the sponsor who pledged to support the entire education at Ashray for five years. As per April 2014 our contribution will be less. Hopefully the school board of Ashray will soon start their fundraising to cover the foreseen deficit in the budget. The rise in quality achieved over the past few years should be safeguarded. <



ROYAL HONOUR

On 10 November 2012, the day before we left for India, Ashray's founding father Frans Baartmans



received a royal honour. Member of parliament Emile Roemer presented him with the decoration at a festive India day. A fitting tribute to the man who has devoted himself to the poor in Nagwa for more than 30 years.

BSF heartily congratulates Frans.

See also our website www.benaresschool.nl



JEEVAN SCHOOL

6

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 120 students, 8 teachers
- > Budget 33,000 - contribution BSF 10,050
- > www.basichumanneeds.org

It is always a joy to be here! Again, progress was made. The school is flourishing. Here too, most meetings were informal but they provided a wonderful overall impression of what principal Kati and manager Sheelu have accomplished.



We took a few meals in the hostel, were present at two teacher trainings and visited a 'pretend' market where children bought vegetables, toiletry and toys with fake rupees, learning to handle money in a playful way. Together with computer teacher Ravi, I played the proprietor of the vegetables stand.

Kati runs a tight ship! It's unbelievable that she managed to get this gang of street ur-

chins in line, without disciplining them into total submission. They have turned into lively, open, polite and delightful children. Truly quite an achievement.

The computer room was freshly painted in different colours and the library was extended, thanks to the support of primary school De Triangel in Gouda, the Netherlands. We added two excellent encyclopaedias. Last year, De Triangel raised over €1300 for books and school meals.

The meals are excellent. They are important, so no expense is spared. Together with salaries the meals are the largest expenditure of the organisation (school plus hostel).

The school has eight teachers. They have visibly matured in their profession and are much more active and skilful now. Kati's weekly refresher courses are bearing fruit. We participated in one and saw how Kati in-

spired the teachers and kindled their enthusiasm!

Carpentry and woodworking is one of the vocational trainings that Jeevan offers year-round. We saw a few of the cabinets made by the students. They even get commissions from other schools to build them!

Another remarkable feature is the mediation course taught by Kati last year. Twelve children received the training of 15 hours, in which they not only learned how mediation works but also how to listen effectively, how to recognise the causes of conflicts and how to manage them. They now help other children when there are problems. The first group is so enthusiastic about what they learned that the course is now taught to all children, starting in grade 3.

One of the beggar women at Assi Ghat told us that Jessica - one of its founders - had >





The 'pretend' market as a hidden math activity. The white building at the left is the hostel.

arrived three days earlier than expected. The beggar women live near the Jeevan School and their children go to school there, which is how they know us.

Jessica is one of those persons who envelops you in warmth and gaiety, as if someone puts a warm blanket around you: a lovely person. This time she had brought her husband Dan and their (Indian) son Shivam. Dan and Jessica founded the NGO Basic Human Needs and started Jeevan as a day care centre for street children. They feel that the school as it is today has strayed far from the original goal: caring for homeless children, as the children from the slums no longer fit in the current well-organised school. However, they are full of praise for the work the school does, for the hostel, and for Kati herself.



At an official meeting, sitting cross-legged with our documents before us on the floor, we talked about the school board, the FCRA, finances and the future.

Jessica and Dan are planning to return to Varanasi and pick up their initial activities again: working with and for the people in the

slums. They would like to set up a special class as a stepping stone towards the Jeevan School. They want to expand the vocational trainings, organise education for illiterate adults and dropouts, set up a health centre for women in the slum and organise study advice and counselling.

In addition, they would like to start small businesses themselves, for instance producing leather bags, while at the same time offering children an opportunity to learn a profession.



These all seem good plans that do not hinder Jeevan, but rather could be welcome additions.

Both Kati and Sheelu were positive about Jessica and Dan's plans.

When asked about the best thing of 2012, Kati at first only said 'Ravi' (the computer teacher who also took charge of financial matters). After some insisting followed by 'the behaviour of the children' and 'how the teachers perceive their work'. <

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SPONSORS IN VARANASI

One of our school sponsors spent an entire afternoon speaking with our co-operator Surrendra about the individual sponsor programme and visited a few schools - no doubt on the buddy seat of his motorcycle! She said it had been a wonderful experience and she was full of praise for the way the programme was running.

Our biggest sponsor took his 16-year-old daughter especially to visit the Varanasi projects that he so generously supports. For him, it was his second visit.

At Jeevan he was - again - struck by the enormous enthusiasm of Kati and Sheelu and by the progress of both school and hostel. At Ashray he emphasised the importance of good and independent financial auditing. He was lyrical about Little Stars School: 'Everything is so well organised there, financially as well. The new building is magnificent. Arriving at Asha's feels like coming home', he writes. Upon his return to the Netherlands he intimated that he wanted to do something extra for LSS, to enable them to complete the new building, so that the school could be expanded with grades 11 and 12.

He wrote to us: 'We are happy to be and continue to be a sponsor of BSF.'

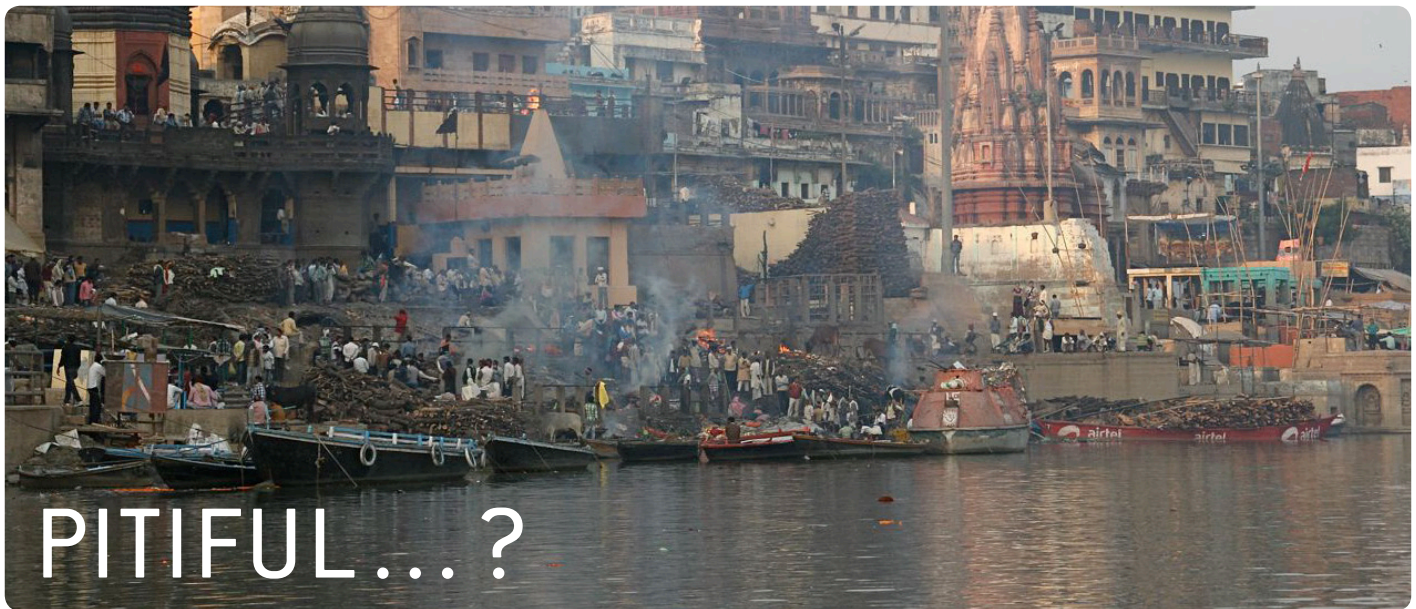
Peter, a teacher at the Goes Lyceum, a school that has already organised many events to help the Jeevan School, returned to Varanasi after 30 years. Back then, meeting Frans Baartmans had made an indelible impression on him. (Frans initiated the individual sponsor programme and inspired us to build our Benares Schoolfund Foundation.)

Unfortunately, Frans was away at the time of his visit now.

Together with his wife, Peter went looking for the Jeevan School, eventually ending up at the hostel. 'We were very much in luck, as today half of the children here celebrate their birthday. They are dressed to impress, they dance, receive a birthday gift and share a festive meal. We dine outdoors, sitting in a circle. It will be one of the finest meals I will ever have', he wrote to us when he was back home. And also: 'After eleven days in Varanasi I am fully aware again of why I have my graduation students organise a doughnut ball event each year.'

What struck him at Jeevan was the joy and zest for life that sparkled in the children's eyes. 'An unforgettable image.'





PITIFUL...?

Sex sells, as anyone in marketing can tell you. But what sells when it comes to development cooperation? How do pitiful stories work? Do readers or viewers become emotional and reach for their cheque books? Or do they give up after the umpteenth sad 'document human'?

The burning ghat Manikarnika

Each year that we visit Varanasi the picture is a mixed one. Fortunately, the happy, energetic scenes in the schools and in the hostels, during the lessons as well as before and after, dominate - it is, after all, working for and with children. But we are also often confronted with bottomless personal misery, which never fails to leave a deep impression.

Tuberculosis is on the rise again in *the basti*, the oldest part of Nagwa, with its narrow, winding streets where the density of the population is extremely high. In one family both the father and the younger son died within two weeks of each other. We donated some of our private money to help pay for the cremation, cynically joking to each other that we couldn't stay too long if we wished to avoid bankruptcy. The basti is home to Bengali families who settled here forty years ago. Everybody knows each other and fixed beliefs and customs are hard to overcome. The sick will not go to any hospital where family members have died. Preventive blood tests are regarded as unnecessary and even harmful. TB patients do not finish their course of treatment once they start feeling better. That may work three times, but after that they have become resistant to the antibiotic and they will die. And, last but not least, they insist on cremating their dead at Manikarnika, the most holy 'burning ghat' near the river Ganges, instead of bringing them to the much cheaper electric crematorium. Manikarnika charges 150 euros, a sum that burdens the surviving relatives with a stiff debt for years - unless a Westerner happens to stroll by.

A spectacular ride in a rickshaw - neither we nor the driver have a clue as to where we are, but Manish Bhatia's motorcycle keeps popping up to show us the way - takes us through the busiest part of the inner city, beyond Godaulia. We go there to visit a new pupil in the programme, Payal. It sounds like a boy's name, but she is in fact a very beautiful girl. After going in and out of corridors and up and down steps we find Payal in the back of the third floor of a sort of tenement house, where she shares one room with her mother, her older sister and her little brother. Her still quite young mother does sewing for people in the neighbourhood. This family seems reasonably balanced - they have a small income, a rent-free room with in-laws and no one is ill. But appearances are deceptive: there is no money for healthy food or for education for the children. Last year, Payal's father died and his brother has said that the foursome can stay for another three months, but after that they have to move out.

Manish Verma, the young garden supervisor, takes us to visit Sareeta, a woman with a deformed back. In her little teashop she sold eight *chai* today for a total of 24 rupees, approximately 40 eurocents. Together with her son Prakash she lives in a small, dark room that costs Rs.700 a month. Her husband has left without a word. Prakash is in grade 6 and is enlisted in our individual programme. Manish sees some light at the end of the tunnel: when Prakash will have finished his education, he will earn a decent income and be able to provide for his mother. We feel

that the tunnel is still depressingly long and dark, so we leave some money from our calamity fund to help them through the next few weeks.

Being poor in India doesn't necessarily mean that one is unhappy. The sun always shines and extended families offer some security. The deities Shiva and Krishna occasionally help out and there is always a neighbour that is even worse off than you are, which also helps. But if something happens - illness, an accident, an absconding husband - then the precarious balance is disturbed, good and proper. The social safety net is minimal at best - the people around you are dirt poor. Anyone who is at the mercy of the gods in this harsh society is having a hard time of it.



But you do not support us because we present you with these pitiful cases and that is not what we ask of you. There are bottomless pits galore, all over the world. Still, our foundation is often confronted with basic misery. We are driven by the belief that, at the end of the day, only widespread education can solve this. If we succeed in communicating this realisation to you and you support us for that reason, then this sad account will not have missed its goal. <



FINANCIAL REPORT 2012

(all figures in euros)

IN

Contributions school sponsors & regular contributors	18,400
Contribution major sponsor	12,500
Contribution for Ashray school	10,000
Other donations	25,575

(some big private donations + a.o. Lionsclub Halderberge, McKinsey, Round Table Roosendaal and the Goese Lyceum)

Out of earmarked funds	10,355
Interest	1,670

Total in 78,500

OUT

Little Stars School	18,000
Extra donation by Rotary Zeist (for new building and library)	2,500

Individual Sponsor Programme

a. school costs	6,730
b. administration and coaching	1,200
c. medical care	450
d. daal distribution	200
e. higher education 4 former students	2,050

Education at Ashray	9,000
School meals	2,000
Daal programme for the poorest families	450
Contribution to salary deputy director	1,500
Extra donation by Rotary Zeist (for computers and toys)	2,100

Jeevan School	10,050
Extra donation by primary school De Triangel in Gouda (for school meals and library)	1,385

Udayan School (Jaipur)	4,100
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Asha Deep School	3,000
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Other donations and costs

Divya Jyoti (day care of disabled people)	950
To Benares Building Fund (for new building LSS)	4,000
To earmarked funds	970
Unexpected expenses in Varanasi	290
Foundation expenditure (newsletter, notary fees, bank, etc.)	870

Total out 71,795



BUDGET 2013

IN

Contributions school sponsors & regular contributors	20,725
Contribution major sponsor	12,500
Contribution for Ashray school	10,000
Other donations	15,185

Out of earmarked funds	8,740
Interest	1,500

Total in 68,650

OUT

Little Stars School	18,000
Extra for students class 11 and 12	1,000

Individual Sponsor Programme

a. school costs	7,500
b. administration and coaching	1,500
c. medical care	500
d. daal programme for the poorest families	850
e. higher education 3 former students	1,150

Education at Ashray	10,000
School meals	2,000
Contribution to salary deputy director	1,500

Jeevan School	10,050
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Udayan School (Jaipur)	5,000
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Asha Deep School	4,000
Extra for computer(s) / library	1,000

Other donations and costs

Donation Divya Jyoti	1,000
To earmarked funds	2,400
Foundation expenditure	1,200

Total out 68,650

The Benares Schoolfund Foundation has built up a reserve fund of €27,500 to guarantee the continuation of the children's education at all times, even if major sponsors would withdraw their support. The money is in a fixed deposit account. In light of our growing expenditure we are aiming to enlarge this reserve fund to the sum of €35,000 as soon as possible.

Organisations in development work are advised to maintain a reserve fund of one and a half times their annual turnover.

The foundation also currently has earmarked reserves of €21,166 and a balance of €28,500. The Indian financial year is from April to April. In the first week of April we remit the first 50% of the project costs, in the first week of September the second part.





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). Donations are tax-deductible beyond a certain threshold. Donations by notarial deed have no threshold and are fully deductible. In case of donation by notarial deed, the costs are at the foundation's expense. The secretariat can provide the necessary papers (license for donation).

New sponsors are kindly requested to give their address to our secretariat, so we can enter them in our records.

Board

president: Marien van Staaen
secretary/treasurer:
Conny van Staaen-van Leeuwen
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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