



# BENARES SCHOOL FUND FOUNDATION

## THE PAUL TENSEN AWARD 2013: APPRECIATION FOR OUR WORK

On 5 May 2013, our chairman was presented with the Paul Tensen Award 2013. The ceremony took place in Wageningen, following the National Freedom Debate, an annual event organized on the occasion of the Remembrance Capitulation 1945 Wageningen.

The award, a cheque for €15,000 and the sculpture 'A Drop in the Ocean', is an annual award that the Paul Tensen Foundation gives to a small volunteer organization that helps handicapped children or children that are otherwise disadvantaged.

The foundation was established in 1981 by Wim Tensen, in memory of his son Paul, who died at a young age. He also wished to draw attention to the indispensable efforts of volunteers.

Wim Tensen was a prominent member of the Dutch resistance during World War II.

His widow was present at the award ceremony (in the photograph she is on the far right,



with our board members Marien, Theo, Karin and Conny beside her).

We feel very honoured by this award, which expresses much appreciation for our work. It stimulates us to continue our efforts with even more energy, enthusiasm and love.

The money went to extra facilities at the Udayan School and to the last stage of the new building of the Little Stars School. It also enabled three students of the Asha Deep School to receive four years of secondary education. All thanks to the Paul Tensen Award.

Some of the money was reserved for unforeseen expenses in 2014. <

## BASIC INFORMATION OF THE PROJECTS, AS PER 01-01-2014

### 1. Little Stars School

- > Up to and including grade 10
- > 850 students, 43 teachers
- > Budget €36,000
- > Contribution BSF €19,000

### 2. Education Ashray

- > Primary school up to and incl. grade 5
- > 75 students, 5 teachers
- > Sewing, evening, dance and tabla classes
- > Budget €13,500 > Contribution BSF 100%

### 3. Asha Deep School

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 230 students, 17 teachers
- > Budget €26,000
- > Contribution BSF €4,000

### 4. Individual Sponsor Programme

- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 54 students, spread over multiple schools in the city
- > Budget €11,550, incl. supervision, medical care and food aid for the most destitute
- > Contribution BSF 100%

### 5. Jeevan School

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 120 students, 9 teachers
- > Budget €33,000 > Contr. BSF €10,050

### 6. Udayan School

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 107 students, 6 teachers
- > Budget €25,000 > Contr. BSF €5,000

## NEWSLETTER 2014

### TO OUR SPONSORS, SUPPORTERS AND ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN OUR WORK

Last November, during the annual visit to our projects, our three regular representatives Marien, Conny and Theo were accompanied for the first time by board members Alet and Jantine. They added an objective, knowledgeable and fresh look at the projects.

As always, all board members paid for their own journey.

The five of us had a meeting with Surendra and Manish, our assistants in the individual sponsor programme, and we also met with the board of Ashray.

We were all present at the gathering with parents and students of the individual programme, we met with Kati, Sheelu, Dan and Jessica of the Jeevan School, had lunch at the Little Stars School and had interesting discussions with Siddharth of the Asha Deep School.

After visiting Varanasi, Jantine went to Jaipur to visit Vatsalya's Udayan School and to meet the inspired leaders of that NGO, Jaimala and Hitesh Gupta.

The report by secretary Conny in this newsletter represents our shared impressions, which are most favourable on almost all points.

Alet's contribution 'The Children of Varanasi' provides insight into the specific problems of the sort of children in our schools: poor, underprivileged and often from multi-problem families.

We were very pleased to receive the Paul Tensen Award, as an objective evaluation and positive recognition of our foundation.

The fact that all of you continuously support our work is an essential contribution to its quality.





# LITTLE STARS SCHOOL

- > Up to and including grade 10
- > 850 students, 43 teachers
- > Budget €36,000 (no school meals)
- > Contribution **BSF €19,000**
- > [www.littlestarsschool.org](http://www.littlestarsschool.org)

This year, we saw less of director Asha than in other years because of our very full schedule. She was disappointed that we could only stay 'for such a short while'. Still, we managed to see and discuss everything.

The new building looks absolutely wonderful! It had been painted, the windows had glass in

them, the floors were tiled. The leftover Rotary money was used to build a large smart classroom. The Varanasi Rotary had cameras installed in both buildings (supervision? security? Or are they just status symbols?) which meant there was no money left to buy equipment for the smart classroom. Thanks to a gift from two young Italian volunteers this has now been solved.

Asha had taken out a wall, thereby creating a wonderful stage towards the playground. A few days before we left, Marien performed there with his Kailash Ensemble to an enthusiastic, if not very quiet, audience of over 500 students. Our other schools had also been invited and had come.



The plants we had bought last year had prospered and looked very fine.

And still Malti ma'am, though retired, is in charge, now assisted by teacher Pushpa. Every

time I dropped by with some people and asked permission to show them around, Malti ma'am would say: 'It's also your building. It's our building.'

Work on the top floor had started. Our affiliated Benares Building Fund received a large donation from one of our sponsors to realize this. When we left, the pillars and the outside walls were standing. The official building permit was granted in December.



Pierre Satijn with board members Alet, Jantine and Marien

Volunteer worker Pierre Satijn went full steam ahead. He wanted to have completed as much of the work as possible when his six-months visa expired. To really finish this floor another €20,000 are needed, but it can already be used in its present rough state and be finished later.

The students of grades 11 and 12 are currently going to school elsewhere. Next July, the new floor will become the home of these higher grades. To pass their final exams the students will have to go to the licensed Glorious Academy.



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Much has happened in the old building as well. One of Asha's biggest wishes was to have a guest room with a bathroom. This has now been realized, together with an additional guest toilet outside. Someone has been hired to do maintenance. And the school also reserves money for maintenance. A wise decision!

The number of students has not increased any further, as agreed upon last year. Although inclined to admit any child that knocked on her door, Asha now realizes that the school cannot financially support unlimited growth. The teachers follow monthly training by Pierre (a former teacher of Dutch) and other volunteers with expertise.



On the day before we left, we met with the sponsored LSS students and their parents. One of the musicians of the Kailash Ensemble, Sanne, joined us and was impressed. Quite a few family and health problems were discussed. These will be looked into properly.

Beforehand, Asha and me had already agreed that it was in fact undesirable to link our support of LSS to this particular group of students, but during the meeting she didn't mention it to the parents.

Afterwards I asked her why. She then confessed that she found it convenient to use us as a 'secret weapon'. If children were absent too often or when parents failed to come to parents' evenings, she told them that she would report them to Conny ma'am. Children are much less absent now and more parents attend meetings. That was fine with me. If we can be helpful in this way, so much the better. <

## WORST FLOODING GANGES SINCE 1923



**During the previous monsoon, the river Ganges burst its banks, leading to the worst flooding in ninety years.**

All our schools were affected. The road leading to Asha Deep, along the Ganges, was swept away, as was a sizeable section of the school's playground. The ground floor of the building, where normally the children have their lunch sitting on the floor, was flooded.



In spite of their own financial worries the school's management decided to buy a water filter and a mosquito net for all the children's families (a hundred families in all) in order to prevent disease. The school also sponsored a week-long medical camp for the entire community. Doctors volunteered their services and all drugs were free. 130 people were treated.

The ground floor at Jeevan's hostel was also flooded. Kati just about managed to flee to the safe higher grounds of the village of Sarnath on the other side of town, together with the little ones and the girls. They were given a warm welcome by friends from another NGO. Sheelu stayed behind with the older boys, to protect the hostel against looters and to help their neighbours. Sheelu had a boat, so he could bring people to safety and haul clean drinking water.

The Ashray clinic was also inundated, even though it was built two steps above street level. The school is on the first floor, but it, just like all of the other schools, had to be closed. Not only because of the danger of short-circuiting, but also because the school simply could not be reached anymore. Two families in the Nagwa

area whose houses were on the verge of collapse were taken by social worker Sangram to his safe home village outside Varanasi. Those who had to stay behind were helped as much as possible. The main problem was drinking water. It had to be hauled in tankers and bottles.

In the low co-operative gardens of Ashray the water was metres high and the surrounding wall fell down in many places.

The new building of the Little Stars School, and even its basement, was not really flooded, even though the water seeped in from the wall sockets. In the old building, however, the water stood a metre high. The water tank, electrical installation, doors and plants were damaged. The youngest girls in the hostel were taken to a safe place, the older ones stayed behind and received food through outside help. Despite the inconvenience, the girls also seemed to enjoy the water, as is evident from the photo.

In the immediate surroundings the misery was sometimes quite extensive. Asha opened up her school temporarily for families whose houses had collapsed.



Cleaning up the roads and buildings was a lot of work. In December, the walls and floors were still wet. Repairs and painting had to wait until everything was really dry. Meanwhile most of the damage has been repaired. <



# ASHRAY SCHOOL

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- > Primary school up to and incl. grade 5
- > 75 students, 5 teachers
- > Sewing class: 12 girls/young women, 1 teacher
- > Evening classes (up to grade 12 and incl. computer classes)  
63 students, 4 teachers
- > Dance and tabla classes: 32 students, 1 teacher
- > Budget €13,500 (incl. a simple lunch)
- > Contribution **BSF 100%**
- > [www.ashray.org](http://www.ashray.org)

Despite organizational problems, which took up quite a lot of our time, it must be said that the school is functioning well. Now that they have no superior on their back, the teachers appear to be more free and more relaxed than in previous years. Since the vice-principal has left, they feel more responsible for the school, which has boosted their self-confidence.

We had an open hearted discussion with the teachers. The way in which they work and collaborate has made a favourable impression.



For many months, the four of them have substituted teacher Seema, who was on sick leave. Since January, Seema has resumed her duties for a few hours every day.



*Theo and Sushil checking the administration*

The teachers determine for themselves what they need, for instance new books or other school materials, and then make a request with the treasurer of the Ashray board. These requests are usually granted, although this can sometimes take a while.

We mentioned refresher courses and internal critical discussions as tools for improving their own performance. At the moment, this is an aspect that receives little attention, as the four of them have been too busy just to keep things going. This has been an issue over the past years as well, so we should definitely keep monitoring this.

We distributed winter clothing and handed out school reports, computer certificates and sewing machines, all in an official setting. It's something they love doing in India and they are very good at it. The presentation of the sewing certificates was even reported by the local press.

Sadhana is in charge of the school. She and teacher Avinash are accomplished computer users. Sadhana showed us how everything was documented neatly: attendance records, school reports, photos of all kinds of activities. Later, she handed me a disc containing all this information to take home with us.

There were also parents at the presentation of the school reports. They were asked to come forward together with their child and write their signature or give their thumbprint. This is a very good way of involving the parents and make them feel co-responsible. Just as at LSS, my name was frequently invoked in a mildly threatening tone. That's fine with me, if it helps!

During our stay, new keyboards arrived for the computers. Whiteboards were purchased at a later date.

The evening-time computer classes are for students of secondary education, not for the Ashray students. The course lasts six months, after which the students receive a certificate and the next batch of students comes in to learn the basics of using computers. We met with the new computer teacher, who seems to be a very nice and easy-going person.

In the future, we would like to see the computers being used in the daytime as well, by the primary school children. This way, more children may benefit from them.

The coaching classes are still doing very well. In turn, Sadhana, Avinash and Guruji coach 49 students for three hours in various subjects. Many children profit from this way of coaching and the extra lessons. 19 of our 54 individually sponsored students also take part.



There was a nice exhibition of objects that were made of waste material (plastic spoons and cups, pencil grindings) during the year. Quite inventive.



Finally, there was a great performance of dance, tabla, magic acts and short dramatic plays.

The roof of the Ashray building had been beautifully decorated and there were real stage curtains that could be opened and closed with a pulley. Manager Sangram had arranged a PA system, so our speeches also literally resounded in the neighbourhood. The entire building was decked in glittering lights. You can leave that to Sangram!



The communication with Ashray is cumbersome. This is largely due to the current organizational problems. The director is on sick leave and will not be returning; the deputy director has left; no one is really in charge; and the board does not take an active attitude. All this is worrisome. Our own board continues to sharply monitor the situation. Fortunately, the school itself does not suffer and quietly continues to function. <

The sponsors who have financed Ashray's complete educational package for five years will now stop their sponsorship. The Benares School Fund Foundation is very grateful to this family for their support over the years.

The BSF will support Ashray this year and next year with €8,500 euros annually.



## PEER'S TREE IN THE ASHRAY GARDEN



In January 1991, 27-year-old Peter (or Peer) van Duijnhoven was on his way to Francis Baartmans in Varanasi to do volunteer work there for a while. He never made it there. He died in a hospital in

Calcutta from an aggressive form of malaria.

When Francis Baartmans heard the terribly sad news from Peer's parents, he advised them to visit his own parents. Long ago, they too had had a similar sad experience: their little girl, Francis' sister, was killed in an accident at a very young age.

And so they went and met each other. This led to a special friendship through which they were able to support and console each other. The two families now have a tight bond and the Van Duijnhoven family, understandably, are very supportive of Francis' work in Varanasi.

In 2005, both sisters of Peer made the emotional journey to Calcutta. They visited the hospital where Peer had died and then went on to meet Francis in Varanasi. In December 2009, after much hesitation, Peer's mother also visited Varanasi, accompanied by her youngest daughter, Karin. It was an emotional but certainly very valuable journey. On one of the last days of their visit, they planted a small sprig to commemorate Peer, right in the centre of Ashray's large vegetable garden. On top of the little wall that surrounds the tree they wrote a few words in the still wet cement, together with Francis. The sprig has now grown into a sizeable tree.

This *flamboyant* is lovingly cared for by garden supervisor Manish and his mother. Thanks to its strong trunk the tree was not damaged by the heavy floods of last summer. Only the little wall needs to be repaired. The word 'Peer' is still quite visible.



For many years now, Peer's family have been substantial contributors to the Ashray School, which, together with the Ashray clinic and the gardens, constitutes Francis' life's work. Friends and acquaintances of the family have also contributed generously. But their involvement didn't stop there. After her visit to Varanasi, Karin said 'yes' when we invited her to become a board member with our foundation. With her sincere and warm involvement and her honest and wise opinions she has since then been a highly valued board member. Being a graphic designer, she also provides the professional layout of this newsletter. <







## ASHA DEEP SCHOOL

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 230 students, 17 teachers (of whom 3 part-time)
- > Budget €26,000 (incl. school meal)
- > Contribution BSF €4,000
- > [www.asha-deep.com](http://www.asha-deep.com)

We met with Siddharth three times. Once it was just Theo and myself in the tiny office, the second time we were joined by Alet and Jantine, and the third time five lady friends of Alet's who were over from Singapore for a weekend were also present. All three times Siddharth's wise ideas and deep insight into the children in his care didn't fail to impress me.



Boardmembers BSF and Siddharth [r.]

Not only does Siddharth run a school, he also continues to coach students who have meanwhile left and gives them extra lessons. He organizes discussion groups for bigger boys and, separately, for bigger girls, about drugs, alcohol and sexuality. Together with volunteers he has devised an attractive evening programme for these youngsters. In his own words, Siddharth is investing in the future of the next generation.

He also involves the parents and invites them to attend parents' evenings, which attract a growing number of parents who begin to appreciate the importance of education.

And school should be fun, he clearly believes. Hence the evening programme.

Siddharth mentioned there had been a few dropouts, who went for the easy money and started working in catering for Rs.200 a day (which equals €2.50!). This was following the extensive flooding of last summer, which took out the road along the Ganges river leading from Nagwa to the school, forcing the children to make a big detour. Since then, the little ones are being picked up by two rickshaws. The older ones did show up again after a while. Together with another school, Siddharth is now considering to repair the road themselves.

As I mentioned last year, Siddharth is unconventional: no strict discipline, hardly any school uniforms. The latter are only compulsory after grade 6 (in view of lining up with secondary education after grade 8). At that time, more classes are taught in English.



100% of all Asha Deep students go on to grade 9. Every year again, the school seeks and finds separate sponsors for them. We also pay for three students, €750 a year for four years. To do this we use some of the money from the Paul Tensen Award.

The teachers make their own curriculum and teaching material. Every Saturday, there is intervention and training.

The lower grades receive computer lessons from their own teacher, the higher grades

from the computer teacher. There are now five computers available. The library also looks good and has been extended. Last year, we gave €1000 extra for computers and books. We discussed vocational training with Siddharth. He told us that a number of students were taking a course in photography two or three times a week, with the Dutch company Fairmail. Information is available at [www.fairmail.info](http://www.fairmail.info). It is a quite wonderful initiative.



The idea is that the children make postcards from their own photographs and Fairmail tries to sell these. The more talented the children are, the more postcards are sold. The children make some money which goes into their own bank account and in this way they can save for either their studies or for better housing for their families.

Asha Deep's financial situation is still precarious. Siddharth even had to consider to discontinue the school meals. Fortunately, this eventually was not necessary. He is, however, looking for another, cheaper school building.

Every month, the school struggles to make ends meet and we feel we should contribute more. Alet's friends from Singapore are now very familiar with Siddharth and the school and at their own request Alet and I have applied to them for financial support.

Siddharth would love to secure the school meals and also hire a teacher for art and handicrafts.

This year, the school's principal, Connie Rao, will return from the US for good and Siddharth is very much looking forward to that, as the work is at times becoming a little too much for him. <

Starting this year, the Benares School Fund Foundation will give the Asha Deep School €2000 extra per year, half of which is to be spent on school meals.

The women from Singapore who visited the school will raise funds for art education: three part-time teachers, one for art and handicrafts, one for music, and one for dance.

Finally, the school will receive a non-recurring contribution of €500 for its activities programme.



# THE INDIVIDUAL SPONSOR PROGRAMME

- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 54 students  
(spread over multiple schools in the city)
- > Budget €11,550 (incl. supervision, medical care, and food aid for the most destitute)
- > Contribution **BSF 100%**

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We are very pleased with how this programme is going. Surendra and Manish really perform their task faultlessly.



Manish and Surendra

We discussed what we arranged last year, looked at the finances, the list of students, the income of the parents, the selection criteria, the daal list and the medical expenses. We decided to adjust the income criteria and the daal distribution, we discussed new trends (there are many requests for extra coaching, which is quite understandable now that more students have reached higher grades) and we made new arrangements.



After school Shubham sells tea on the street

We decided to send only those children to English-medium schools who are really up to it. Most of the children go to Hindi-medium schools. The average score of our students was almost 60% last year, which is not high, but certainly sufficient. The best student had a score of 90%, which is remarkably high; the worst one scored 43%. We mustn't forget in all this that most children have illiterate parents. Next school year, for the first time, we will be offering the option of vocational training following grade 10. One student has already applied for this. The new policy is specifically aimed at students - mostly boys - who do not show a great interest in studying. I made a list of all these topics and new arrangements and sent it to Surendra and Manish. It now hangs over their desk, wrote Manish, as a constant reminder.



The annual get-together with parents and students was held on the roof of Manish's house. This time, no less than five of our board members were present. There was a great turnout. At one point, we split up to have individual conversations, with Jantine running from one group to the next to take photographs. Manish's parents sat in as supervisors, and his wife distributed vitamin pills and anti worm tablets. Both his daughters were serving tea and snacks and were sometimes asked to translate something. All in all, it was very well organized.



On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of our foundation we gave the children a nice pen with our foundation's name and website address.

The gathering made clear once again how well-informed both gentlemen are about their students' situations, both at home and at school.

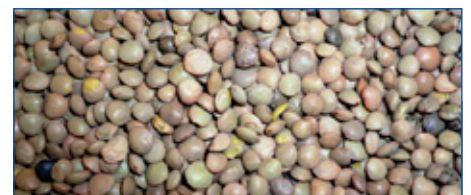
In the course of the year, Manish made a small file for each child, with such information as their age, the name of their parents, the name of the school, the income situation, the family composition. It is all quite professional, but then again, Manish is a computer teacher. We were quite impressed with the self-invented motto of Surendra and Manish: 'We believe in work, not words.'

Together with Francis Baartmans we walked through the Nagwa slum area and visited a number of families. We saw Khushboo, one of the students in our programme, who was standing on the little balcony of her house. She ran downstairs to embrace us, happy as she was to see us visiting her neighbourhood.

With Surendra, Alet and Jantine visited the Gopi Radha School, where most of our girls go to. Surendra and Manish frequently consult with me through email about admitting new students, family emergencies, medical problems and other issues. They always seek my advice first, before making their own decision. I always tell them that it is their decision. They know the situation and are so much better equipped to make the proper judgement.

Very soon after the administrative year end, Surendra sends me the financial report. In this he is unequalled by any of our other partners. Surendra never goes over the budget and even manages to save money.

Two years ago, when we made the programme independent of Ashray, we retained Surendra and Manish as employees. We simply couldn't do without them and we trusted them. Since then they have proven more than worthy of our trust. <



**DAAL** [lentils] is a healthy and protein rich food and an essential part of the daily diet. Its price has increased enormously over the past few years. Therefore, our foundation provides extra support to the poorest families. Through a voucher system they can now buy a responsible daily ration of daal.

**COACHING**, which consists of extra lessons outside the regular school hours, is a normal part of the Indian educational system and has nothing to do with lack of effort or intelligence with the students. During the last years of secondary school, coaching is crucial in passing the final exam.



# JEEVAN SCHOOL

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- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 120 students, 9 teachers
- > Budget €33,000 (incl. school meal)
- > Contribution BSF €10,050
- > [www.basichumanneeds.org](http://www.basichumanneeds.org)

It has been a rough year for Jeevan. The flooding and the threat of the school building being demolished on behalf of road construction demanded much of the staff's attention. However, both staff and the children were especially affected by the death of one of the hostel girls. The girl, Damini, was abducted and taken to her native village, where she was raped. She died a few months later from hepatitis.



There is already an emergency plan for when the school has to be evacuated: they would then relocate to the hostel. The landlord has already pledged to build three classrooms in the courtyard.

Fortunately, good things happened too. The holiday trip that all the hostel children and staff members made to the seaside was an unforgettable experience for all those involved. They had never before seen the ocean and had never swum in the sea!

Financially, Jeevan is doing well. For the first time they didn't have a budget deficit, which is quite an achievement.



Kati is pregnant and has gone to Germany for eight months, in February. Jessica is taking over some of her duties.

Kati is very pleased with how the teachers are developing. She no longer needs to guide them, as they take their own initiatives and ask her for additional information and materials when they need them. They are working on improvement and progress themselves. Kati hopes that in the future, when their English has improved, they will be able to find missing information themselves.



Manager Sheelu

A lot of the teaching material is made by Kati herself. For instance, by using the Internet, she has produced a teacher's guide for the art and handicraft classes. She has good insight into children and a keen sense for what appeals to them.

The school currently has 120 students and nine teachers. Sheelu and Kati themselves also teach in the higher grades. Kati teaches math, science, chemistry and biology and Sheelu teaches history, psychology and Indian culture. The highest grade is now grade 9, with two students. The school has an accreditation as a primary school, up to and including grade 8. After that, students follow the curriculum of the Indian Open School (NIOS). Starting in grade 1, the children learn how to use the computer.

After grade 6, an increasing number of subjects are taught in English. In the future, students may go on to vocational training or university after grade 10 or 12.

5% of all donations, plus the revenues from Jeevan's carpenter's classes, go into a special fund, called 'higher education'. This fund is slowly accumulating.

The students have a weekly schedule for 'free study'. After concluding a segment, they take a test and when the teachers are satisfied, they sign off on that subject. The students are diligent, also during the hours of free study, and the teachers are dedicated and competent. There is a real study atmosphere.

We had dinner with Sheelu, Dan and Jess, and later with Kati and her husband Sven. It is good to occasionally meet and discuss things in a very relaxed setting. <

## NEW PLANS

For some time, Kati and Sheelu had been harbouring the wish to build their own hostel and school on their own piece of land, independent of the whims of a landlord.

This piece of land, of 5.500 m<sup>2</sup>, is now a reality. It is located at the other end of town, just outside of Sarnath. The funds came from an Irish organization and with it a friendly Indian NGO bought the land and then gave it to Jeevan. In the future a hostel and a school will be built there. Jeevan will then also have facilities to accommodate parents, sick people and the elderly. Within this framework, the present school will continue to function as a city school for primary education, aimed at the original target group: the street children of the ghats.

Jeevan's founders Jessica and Dan, and Sheelu and Kati, are very idealistic, driven and enthusiastic people. We, being somewhat more sober and business-like, asked them about the financial consequences and a business plan. We also asked them about their plans in terms of staffing and organization. They will work on it.



# UDAYAN SCHOOL

- > Up to and including grade 8
- > 107 students, 6 teachers
- > Budget €25,000 (incl. a simple lunch)
- > Contribution BSF €5,000
- > [www.vatsalya.org](http://www.vatsalya.org)

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Udayan is the name of the children's village that was built outside of Jaipur by the Vatsalya NGO. Our foundation supports the school that is part of the complex.



**Twelve Udayan children from the very beginning concluded their education in 2013 and have now left Udayan. Its founders Jaimala and Hitesh Gupta have every reason to be proud. Twelve streetchildren have developed into independent and self-confident young individuals and are well-equipped for life outside Udayan.**

With the departure of these twelve there are now only thirty-six children living on campus. This has partly to do with the new government involvement in the placing of children in institutions. The Vatsalya NGO may no longer select the children independently. Each year, four children are admitted, on average. That is not a lot, since the village has enough accommodation for a larger number.

This year, our board member Jantine visited Udayan. It was her first visit. She found a small-scale school that was well-organized and well-managed. The school (up to and including grade 8) is growing since it takes in children from the surrounding villages. These children are picked up by the school bus. This year, there are 107 children in the school. It means that Vatsalya is making a substantial contribution to the educational infrastructure in the area.

The children are in class from 8.30 - 1.30 and from 2.30 to 4.00, a substantial schedule. Three times a week there is an hour of sports. Starting in grade 3, they learn about behaviour and manners ('moral science') and starting in grade 6, computer classes are part of the curriculum. In the past year, thanks to the Paul Tensen Award, we were able to finance computers, a TV, a printer, a water cooler, fans and sports materials.

The school still only has six classrooms, but this year they expect a gift allowing them to build a few more. Because of lack of space the school does not yet have a library and science classes take place in



*Twelve self-confident teens. Founders Jaimala and Hitesh Gupta, top left, have every reason to be proud.*

the staff room, which is at the same time office, computer lab and class 8.

The quality of education is improving, although finding and keeping qualified teachers remains difficult. The salaries are higher than in Varanasi, which hopefully makes working in this remote area more attractive.

For secondary education, following grade 8, the children who live at Udayan and have a score of over 75% go to a good private school in Jaipur. We are talking about a handful of students here for whom Vatsalya pays the tuition. In that school, the students may continue after grade 10 when they again score at least 75%. Children in grade 8 or 10 with a score below 75%, by far the majority of them, can take NIOS (Open School) education at Udayan.

In the school year 2012-2013, 7 out of 77 students at the Udayan School scored over 75%. Two of the 23 former students are now at university, with a scholarship.

Following grade 8, all students take two to four hours a day of some type of vocational training. This means that all students are capable of providing for themselves when they leave Udayan at the age of 18.

In the future, Jaimala would like to extend the educational programme up to and including grade 12. She would also like to take in more children from outside in a hostel.

Much of this depends on money. Udayan's financial report showed no deficits. Upon enquiry it appeared that this was achieved by severe cutbacks in the facilities. A realistic budget would require €120,000, of which €80,000 is for the village and €40,000 for the school. However, there is a shortage of €40,000, of which the school would need €15,000. Choices had to be made.

The consequences of cutting back expenditure by almost 40% are evident: more teachers for the growing school were unaf-

fordable; groups have been combined; the children do less sports; the school meal has become less varied and there was no school outing this year.

The school's biggest expenditure are the salaries for the teachers, which are an ongoing item. The Benares School Fund Foundation would like to contribute more on a structural basis.

Vatsalya, the NGO under which Udayan resides, is very active and initiates plans to improve the financial situation. A few years ago they founded Anoothi, a commercial enterprise. Anoothi sells products that are made by groups of Indian women in villages. These women are trained by Vatsalya and earn an income with their work for Anoothi. This has considerably improved their living conditions. More than 200 women are now benefiting from this.

Because of government regulations, Anoothi can only donate 10% of its profits, in this case to Udayan. As Anoothi grows, this 10% will mean a growing support for Udayan.

Over the next few years, Vatsalya intends to invest a lot of energy in expanding Anoothi. And, with help of its local network and many foreign friends, in acquiring more funds also. <



*Boardmember Jantine visited Udayan*

**Starting this school year, Vatsalya-Udayan will receive €1000 extra each year to improve the school meals and an additional €1200 to buy books for the library and other urgently needed materials.**



# THE CHILDREN OF VARANASI

By:  
board member **Alet Meurs**, *child psychologist*



There are children everywhere. In the morning, they help out in their parents' store. Or they can be seen in the streets in small groups, their hair neatly combed, carrying small backpacks and wearing their school uniforms: blue, red or grey skirts, shorts, white shirts and a shawl or a scarf. Others sit on wooden beds in front of humble huts, wearing faded shirts. There are children running around at the banks of the river Ganges, flying their home-made kites or just sitting on door-steps or hanging around tea stalls.

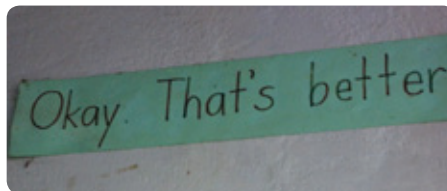
By now, a substantial number of children go to school. In the Nagwa area this is now much more a matter of course than it was ten years ago, and this also applies to girls. The children and their families regard education as a means of social advancement. Some of the young people are highly motivated and would prefer to visit an English-medium school. They wish to finish grade 12 and are even contemplating going to university. Other children give up after grade 8, or even sooner, either because they become demotivated or because family circumstances force them to start earning money.

One morning, we visit Asha Deep School. No school uniforms here, but everyday clothes. Nowadays this means shirts and trousers, skirts and blouses. Only the teachers are wearing the traditional saris or Punjabi dresses. The school building is rather bare and old, but



Nagwa girls

its walls are covered in uplifting slogans such as 'Okay, that's better', 'You are doing great' or 'Be happy'. Like most teenagers, the older boys are hanging out in the playground down by the Ganges. Some of them appear to me to be much older than the upper limit the school has set, grade 8.



Many of these youngsters, almost all of whose parents are illiterate, didn't go to school when they were younger and even then were absent for longer periods, out of necessity.

The risk of dropping out of school is relatively high among teenagers, for whom it is very tempting to make money fast. The families have hardly any money, as incomes are very low. Many fathers are rickshaw drivers or operate small stalls, while the mothers do simple, badly paid household work. Often, problems within the family are the reason for pupils to miss school. For instance, we met a 14-year-old boy, the oldest in the family of four children, whose father had recently died. It was a big loss for the family, as the father was the breadwinner. The boy hadn't been to school for months because he had to help out at home and make some money. We see him hanging about at the teashop in the daytime.

Jeevan School's population of students is different. The students' families come from vil-

lages in a very poor area at half a day's travel from Varanasi. These tribal communities are regarded as the lowest of the lowest in India.

The families migrate to the city to become beggars. They live in humble tents made from sticks and cloth and sometimes they have only a piece of plastic. They have little food and the children get hardly any attention. Many of the grown-ups are addicted to alcohol.

Jeevan School is part of Basic Human Needs, an NGO that was founded with these children in mind, to provide them with basic physical and emotional care.

It is all about focused attention, clear communication, daily structure and healthy food. All these children are malnourished and most of them show a lag in development, also in language. In order to help the children in their learning development at a young age, Kindergarten groups are organized for the very little ones. Here they can learn basic skills such as sitting in a circle, stand in line and learn words by playing games and singing songs. >



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# FINANCIAL REPORT 2013

## IN

Contributions school sponsors / regular contributors	20,485
Contributions funds/foundations	18,500
Contribution for Ashray school	10,000
School meals Ashray 2014/2015	1,870
Other donations	10,280
Paul Tensen Award	15,000
From earmarked reserve	8,740
Interest	1,670

**Total in** **86,545**

## OUT

Little Stars School	18,000
Extra funding for grades 11 and 12	1,000
Extra funding for new building (through the Benares Building Fund)	5,000

### Individual sponsor programme

a. school costs	6,620
b. administration and coaching	1,500
2 laptops for employees	850
c. medical care	500
d. food support (daal)	900
e. extra coaching	500
f. higher education 3 ex-students	1,200

Education Ashray	10,000
School meals	2,000
Contribution to salary vice-principal	435

Jeevan School	10,050
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Udayan School (Jaipur)	5,000
Extra contribution for school interior	3,000

Asha Deep School	4,000
Contribution secondary education 3 students	750
Extra contribution for computers and library books	1,000

### Other donations and costs

Divya Jyoti (day care for disabled people)	1,000
Teacher Seema (support for medical costs: earmarked gift)	1,000
Coaching school Aryan (earmarked gift)	200
To reserve	10,040
Expenses foundation (newsletter, notary fees, bank, CoC)	1,350
National Pen (110 pens with imprint)	108

**Total out** **86,003**

# BUDGET 2014

## IN

Contributions school sponsors / regular contributors	20,750
Contributions funds/foundations	21,700
-	-
-	-
Other gifts	13,020
-	-
From earmarked reserve	11,545
Interest	1,530

**Total in** **68,545**

## OUT

Little Stars School	18,000
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### Individual sponsor programme

a. school costs	7,500
b. administration and coaching	1,500
c. medical care	500
d. food support (daal)	1,000
e. extra coaching	1,500
f. higher education 2 ex-students	875

Education Ashray	8,500
School meals (earmarked gift)	1,870

Jeevan School	10,050
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Udayan School (Jaipur)	5,000
School meals	1,000
Extra contribution for library	1,200

Asha Deep School	5,000
Contribution secondary education 3 students	750
School meals	1,000
Extra contribution for activities programme	500

### Other donations and costs

Divya Jyoti (day care for disabled people)	1,000
Coaching school Aryan (earmarked gift)	300
Expenses foundation	1,500

**Total out** **68,545**

**OVERHEAD COSTS IN 2013: 1,7%**

The foundation has a reserve of €27,500 to guarantee the continuation of the education for the children at all times – even in the event of losing sponsors. This reserve is in a fixed deposit account.

Development organizations are advised to maintain a reserve of 1½ times the annual turnover.

Currently the foundation also has an earmarked reserve of € 25,000 and a balance of € 23,000. In 2014, € 11,545 will be taken from the earmarked reserve.



Many of the children have an unhealthy, neglected appearance. Some have irregular features, possibly as a result of alcohol abuse during pregnancy. What strikes me is how primitive and aggressive the children sometimes behave. Within the group it can also be a matter of power: which boy is in charge? Who has authority?

Learning in a school environment must be a heavy task for many of these children. The individual coaching at Jeevan is therefore very suitable. The children learn to pay attention better and to spend more time on a task. They learn to try out things using various materials (the school has much wonderful Montessori material), to build something for instance, or to make something out of cloth or paper. This in itself is a new experience to them. There is not much progression in learning, but perhaps that is hardly to be expected with children growing up in such difficult circumstances.

In all the schools we visit, people work hard to keep the children 'on board'. How can they make sure that the children keep going to

school and complete as many grades as possible? It is quite a challenge! What strikes me is how well the principals and teachers know the students and their families and how familiar they are with each of their individual stories, even at large schools such as Little Stars School, with over 800 students. There is more focus now on the emotional development of teenagers, from an awareness that this age group shows specific behavioural problems: aggression, learning difficulties or undesirable behaviour towards girls.

In group gatherings, the schools are cautiously trying to discuss sensitive issues such as the dangers and consequences of alcohol and drugs abuse, but also matters of identity. 'Who are you? What is important to you? What are your goals?' And, quite daring in India, burgeoning sexuality. The teachers have to feel their way in this: what is ready to be discussed and what is not?

Transgressive sexual behaviour is seen as a major problem in Indian society. No one is under the illusion that this can really be solved, but tentative attempts are made to make people aware of the issue. Even though some children drop out over the



Alet and Francis Baartmans during Alet's visit to Varanasi last year

course of the school years, most children stay and work hard to advance themselves. We are given the opportunity to meet all the children who are in our individual programme, together with their parents. We hear many individual stories and witness the children's motivation and their great efforts. They aim for good grades and are proud when they get them. Their faces radiate discipline and purpose when we speak with them about all this. But most of all I see hope in their faces. The hope of being someone. <

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.



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

### Board

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