



Benares School Fund Foundation

THE NETHERLANDS



In this newsletter you can read all about our projects in India. We are very proud of their results and the progress they have made. As you will be too, we hope.

On this first page we gladly reserve prominent space for two special fundraising activities that took place in 2016. Both yielded an uncommonly good financial result.

SUCCESSFUL CONCERTS

Jessica Morwood, one of the founders of the Jeevan School, is a professional jazz singer. Last summer, she visited the Netherlands while on a fundraising tour across Europe. BSF organised four benefit concerts with her.

We were able to provide Jess with great musicians from our own circle of friends: BJ Baartmans, singer-songwriter, and the Kailash ensemble: Marien van Staalén on cello, Lenneke van Staalén on Indian violin, and Heiko Dijker on tabla.



Half of the revenues from ticket sales was earmarked for the Jeevan School, the other half went into the funds of our foundation. Besides these revenues, we received some large donations at these events and on top of that we welcomed five new, permanent sponsors. <

NIENKE DE GRAAF'S LIBRARY BY BICYCLE

Our new board member Nienke de Graaf, together with her Hungarian partner Bálint, rode her bicycle from the Netherlands all the way to Varanasi, to raise funds for a library for Ashray.

On 30 December 2016, upon arriving in Nagwa, they were greeted enthusiastically with flowers and music. They really hadn't expected such a warm welcome. Ashray has embraced Nienke as one of their own: riding a bicycle over 6,000 miles, just to help fund their library! They could hardly believe it.

The long bicycle trip, which took almost a year, has been a wonderful experience for both Nienke and Bálint. They enjoyed all the different landscapes they travelled through, the various cultures they visited and the kindness and hospitality of the people they met. They rarely had to sleep in their tent at all!

All the time, we were able to share their experiences via their beautifully written blog at thetravelingtales.wordpress.com.



We are very much in awe of the achievement of these two young people and intensely grateful for what they have attained for Ashray and our foundation. <

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VATSALYA'S UDAYAN SCHOOL

Basic project info 01-01-2017

- > Up to and incl. grade 8 + secondary education + vocational training
- > 130 students, 8 teachers
- > Budget € 40,000, incl. lunch | Contribution BSF € 6,650
- > www.vatsalya.org

At **Udayan**, a 25-acre campus, NGO Vatsalya takes care of twenty girls and thirty boys. This campus is a green oasis at some twenty miles from the city of Jaipur, in the heart of desert state Rajasthan.

Vatsalya is run by husband-and-wife Jaimala and Hitesh Gupta. They combine sound financial management and excellent external relations with unbridled energy and motivation.



The **school** on the campus is not only open to the children of Udayan, but also to poor children from neighbouring villages. The selection criterion is simple: in Rajasthan, people who live below the poverty line are issued with a *green card* by the government, which enables them to buy food at reduced prices. The children of the holders of such cards have access to the school.

The school currently has 133 students, some 50 from Udayan and over 80 from the villages. The school building's capacity is bigger and Jaimala would like to have 200 students, but transporting children to and from the villages presents a problem. Vatsalya owns one bus and one jeep, which both do two rounds of twelve miles, every morning and every afternoon. More rounds would take too much time and running an extra bus or jeep is expensive; already the monthly costs of transport are € 500 euros.

Education here is Indian-style, including singing the national anthem in an almost military ceremony at the start of each day. We have frequently heard the children sing this anthem since 1996 and we still have no clue as to its melody...

The whole-class teaching system is mostly traditional, as it is almost everywhere in India. Except with the under-fives, there is little interaction between teachers and students. There were text books and copybooks, but hardly any additional educational tools.



What is modern though, is the activity programme for the four lower classes every afternoon. The children do sports, do craft work, make drawings, practice small plays, all this under the supervision of a teacher. The higher classes do this programme twice a week.

Quite special and appealing to us is the *concept of learning in the field*. Entire classes go outside to gain knowledge and experience in either nature or society. Recently, students had visited an accounting firm, another group visited the museum and the entire school went on a hiking tour. This programme is costly, also because of transportation, and runs the risk of being abandoned when the money runs out.

Like all the schools we support, Vatsalya also tries to have parents contribute a little to the cost of care and schooling, if at all possible; and like elsewhere, this is a problem here too. Parents will rather keep their children, especially their daughters, at home than pay a small contribution. On many poor Indians' wish list a mobile phone and motorcycle rank higher than education for their daughters. Vatsalya is now trying to make parents pay in-kind by doing work at Udayan a few days a month. Farmers plough, women plant seeds, bricklayers repair a building. This approach seems to work.

Jaimala will gradually give up her management position. Her son Kartikey and daughter-in-law Saloni are ready to take over her responsibilities. They are both young, well-educated, driven and enthusiastic. We fully expect them to do well and wish them every success. <

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Our chairman interviewed husband-and-wife Jaimala and Hitesh Gupta, founders of Vatsalya. The interview took place in the early morning; Hitesh was wearing a large woolly hat against the cold.

Change

Hitesh: Vatsalya wants to have an impact on the life of street children. By acting very patiently on a day to day basis, we can make an irreversible change in the life of a child.

Jaimala: Vatsalya is a Sanskrit word, it means *unconditional love*. Motherly love.

Hitesh: We knew that we had to disconnect the street children from the pattern of their urban life. The idea was to have a big open space, away from the city, with a serene atmosphere. That is where the concept of Udayan came to be.

Jaimala: There was a strong desire in me to do something really unique, not the typical care of orphan children. I had this ambitious concept - not only just feeding the poor but transforming their lives - written on paper and I was looking for possible funding. It required big investments. In 2000 we found the Dutch Jaipur Foundation ready to support. By that time Conny was secretary of this foundation. So that is how I met her.

At Udayan, our campus, we give the children a life of discipline, of a clear vision and good health. We put them in the right direction, give them a good value system. They understand the meaning of honesty, of being true, of hard working.

Education

Hitesh: We give them a proper education, but not only an academical one: from the age of 14 to 18 we focus on daily livelihood, on skill development. Those who have the potential to do academics will continue their study. The others are very gently pushed into the livelihood program: learn baking, cooking, farming, *blockprinting*, other soft skills.

95% of the children from the streets or the slums have lost their initial school years, necessary to build a strong foundation for an academic career.

We make sure that the child learns to read, write, count, so that he's not illiterate, he will even pass class tenth. But that's not good enough for a career in medicin or engineering. Therefore we have to be very strong in our livelihood program.

It has to be very systematic, but also very friendly. So when a child is fourteen, there is a careful screening. And when we offer him the livelihood program, his studies continue because we want him to pass the tenth class. That is very important. But the focus becomes livelihood.

Jaimala: The child selects a particular vocational training that for the first year is more like a play for them: sometimes they go, sometimes they don't go.

And then we say: now you have to be regular and start seriously. Within two years they develop a level of expertise - very basic, not expert. At



seventeen we place them out of Udayan, to deal with the world outside. Udayan it is very protective, supportive and appreciating. But the outside world will not appreciate everything they do.

So one year we put them in an agency that also pays some stipend, and at that time they open their bank account. Then we start training them in how to use their money. At eighteen they have a 10th degree, they have a job.

The outside world

Hitesh: We do not want to seclude our children from the rest of the world. Therefore we approached the very poor village community nearby, with children from a traumatic background. We persuaded those families to send their kids to our school - our education was free. We want to give an education not from books alone and not limited to a

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THE TEACHERS

The team of teachers impressed us favourably. After school hours we held a meeting with them, which yielded some interesting insights:

- The level of the Udayan children is significantly higher than that of the village children. The sole reason for this is attendance, which stands at 100% for the campus children, unless they are ill. The village children are absent more often: religious festivals, weddings, mothers ill, et cetera.
- School attendance is also a subject of discussion within the School Managing Committee. There are many committees at Vatsalya, but we kind of like that: throughout the organisation there is responsibility and accountability. This particular committee is made up of parents, teachers and one student. The parents chair the meetings. This committee is becoming more and more successful in involving parents with the school.
- The work agreement with the teachers stipulates that they spent two extra hours every day at school. In these hours they can prepare their lessons, but mainly they communicate with each other about the progress made by various classes and individual children. The teachers are all subject teachers and they switch classes every 40 minutes, but all classes do have their own class teacher.
- The first thing teachers do when new children arrive is build trust. The new Udayan children are often traumatised, and the village children come from a culture in which trust in grown-ups, in other children and oneself is not a given. It is fascinating to see how meeting the Udayan population at school helps the village children to build that trust. Udayan thus exports its own ideals.

When at the end of our meeting we asked the teachers why they liked working at Vatsalya's Udayan School, their answer surprised us: they said that this school contributed to their own development as teachers and as human beings. The teachers learn from the school and from the students.



Headmaster Hemraj

>> continuation 'Unconditional love'

class room. For decades the Indian education unfortunately has been very bookish: just follow the books, pass the exam, and that's it. We do more, we go outside and we concentrate on social behaviour. And now people in the village notice: this child is going to Vatsalya and he's behaving differently with others. He's wishing them well, he's respecting the adults, he's clean and hygienic, he's punctual ...

Participation

Jaimala: A major principle at Udayan is child participation. We learned from the western society how the children are given a say in everything that happens with them - which is not typical in the Indian system. Our children are smart and they are living here, they know Udayan much better than anybody who is hired from outside. So we started a group called *Jagriti*, 'awareness'. The group was required to watch the quality of life at Udayan: the quality of the food, of the education, the language used by both children and teachers, and so on.

Hitesh: We also watch out for the language people are using, including children, including teachers. For example: our children deserve respect, so they should be called 'āp', not 'tum'. *Jagriti* keeps an eye on these things.

This initiative was very successful, so we developed another students committee, Unayan, 'rising'. Since a year they're responsible for the campus budgets. They are doing wonderful.

Future

Jaimala: We want to make this campus qualitatively so good that people come here and spread the word of this successful model.

And we want to make Udayan completely environment friendly. That's important for ecological reasons. But it's also good to bring our costs down, the need for outer funding will be less.

Hitesh: Another thing is: improve our livelihood skill activities even more. So we need some very good quality staff that can take this program to a different level.

We focus on women anyway. Our students come from mothers who are totally helpless. So bringing women into this program will be a preventive action: if you improve their livelihood, there will finally be less destitute children.

Jaimala: Regarding the future, I'm taking the back seat already. I'll be more focused on fund raising. And I'll do something totally different: I want to go abroad and volunteer. I'm just ready to do anything, I can do physical work, you know: cleaning, washing, helping children. <

ASHRAY SCHOOL

Basic project info 01-01-2017

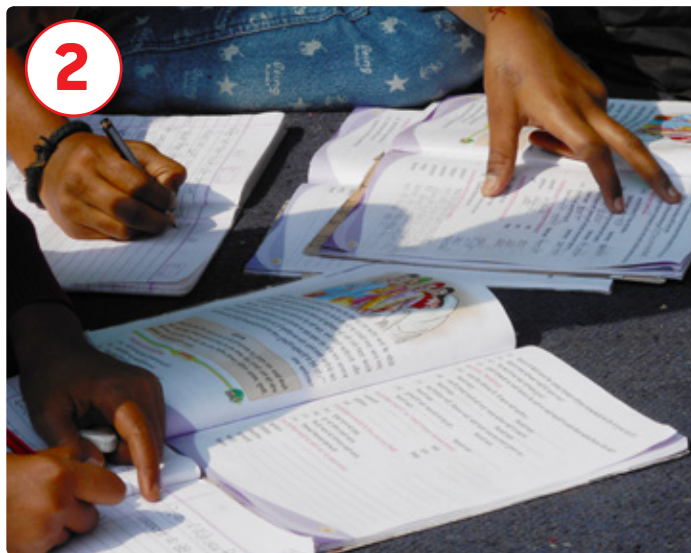
- > Primary school up to and including grade 5
- > 80 students, 7 teachers
- > Budget € 11,600, incl. a glass of milk | Contribution BSF € 7,500
- > www.ashray.org

At the Ashray School, as with all other schools, we surveyed the situation in a critical but positive manner and found that important steps had been made. The atmosphere has changed, the mood is less permissive, and a little less playful. But then, the school will certainly benefit from this more purposeful attitude.

There are now seven female teachers, two more than before. They all have the same low salary and they all share equal responsibility. There is no official head mistress.

Education in the small building is traditional. Here too, we only saw books and notebooks. The teacher for the very youngest surprised as by using small blocks to teach little ones numbers and forms.

Some economy measures have been implemented. The children now bring their own lunch and the school only provides a glass of warm



milk. The children are regularly given bars of soap. This leads to better hygiene, which in turn means lower medical costs.

The parents are increasingly being involved in education. The school not only asks a small contribution of 50 rupees a month (€ 0.70), but the mothers also prepare a lunch for the children. At the monthly parents' evening the parents are informed about the importance of a healthy lunch and of regular attendance.

A second Ashray School

Rakesh Saraogi, the treasurer of the Ashray Board and a successful businessman, bought a large house on the river Ganges last year. This year, he added three storeys to it, thus creating 15 classrooms. In April 2017, he will start a pre-school and a primary school there. This is certainly an asset to the neighbourhood, which has few good schools. It will be a commercial school: students pay tuition fees (400 Rupees a month, which equals € 5.50). Rakesh intends to reserve 10 per cent of the school's capacity for the really poor.

The school, managed by the Ashray Charitable Trust, should eventually turn a profit. A sizeable share of the profit will go to the Ashray school in Nagwa.



We are still amazed that someone would invest his own money in funding a school, even a commercial one, the profit of which will help secure the future of Ashray. What is even more amazing is that these plans were actually realised, before our very eyes. The new building was officially opened on February 1. On behalf of BSF our board member Nienke de Graaf donated a fine copper school bell.



The library

Nienke wasted no time and has been visiting other libraries and publishers of children's books, together with the teachers. In May, when she and Bálint will be returning home, the first stage of the new library must be completed. Later, a modern media library will be added.

Meeting

We had a concluding meeting with Rakesh Saraogi, combined with a lovely dinner at his house. Again, Rakesh surprised us: in his garden he has five cows, whose milk has medicinal qualities. From the dung he produces biogas for cooking. His air-conditioner, an ecologyfriendly model, evaporates water from woodchips. This voluble, driven businessman is a bundle of contradictions indeed!

We agree that communication and financial reporting will be improved. As long as Ashray does not break even, we wish to have a clear picture of how shortages are dealt with.

MUSIC TEACHER MATAPRASAD MISHRA

Our foundation places great value in art education, especially for children from poor backgrounds.



Mataprasad Mishra, Ashray's striking table and kathak teacher, says: "Music is very important. Every child has a feeling for art, some for painting, others for acting. My arts, music and dance, are very deep. The tabla verb *Dha* means: I worship God. *Dhin* means: up, I'm looking up. *Dha din, dhin da*. All children can learn that, but some have a special feeling for it.

I'm teaching the children very gently, I'm nicely speaking, all *shanti*, peaceful. Children make mistakes, but I don't mind. I explain: here you could have played a little nicer, more beautiful. Children shouldn't be afraid to make mistakes. And when they, after my explanation, can play or dance more beautiful, they are happy.

These children are poor, their parents are not educated, not used to study, to music, to tasks. A school like Ashray, where children are taught in a friendly way, is enormously important. Your foundation is helping; many thanks for that. And I'm helping - with my tabla and kathak lessons - by paying attention to art. I like to do this, I love children."

In future, the business model of the new school will secure the continuity of the old school.

Rakesh readily admitted that there had been no teacher trainings, but he felt that they wouldn't be very useful when so many changes were taking place. Still, this is and remains one of our conditions. <

NIENKE AND BÁLINT: LIBRARY BY BICYCLE, FOR THE ASHRAY SCHOOL

Read their blog and see more pictures on thetravellingtales.wordpress.com



ASHA DEEP SCHOOL

Basic project info 01-01-2017

- > Up to and including grade 8 + secondary education
- > 240 students, 18 teachers (3 part-time)
- > Budget school € 38,000, incl. school meal
Budget secondary education € 14,000
- > Contribution BSF € 10,520 incl. secondary education
- > www.asha-deep.com

Every year again, it is a joy to visit Asha Deep School. We are always greeted most warmly by the school director Connie Rao and her deputy director Siddharth Singh. We had some serious discussions, had lunch together, took walks, took pictures, and spoke with students. Overall, we were very favourably impressed by the school.

The building is large, nice facility, beautifully located on the high banks of the river Ganges. This also has a disadvantage: when the river flooded in 2013 and 2016, a couple of square metres of the playground and a whole line of trees were taken by the water.



The classrooms were painted this summer and look quite fresh. The average number of students per class is around twenty here, which is much less than at many other schools.

New school desks

A young Dutch sponsor, still a student himself, has donated money to buy new school desks. They come in very handy indeed! The children sit on the floor and work at the low tables. No more back pains and they still sit in a way that is natural to them. The students painted the tables red themselves and they have been placed in the small classrooms with mathematical precision.



The classes

In the morning, we attended the regular classes and in the afternoon the art classes. It is impossible for us to form an opinion of the quality of the classes, as they are given in Hindi. Nevertheless, the overall impression is very good. Students are working in a concentrated and quiet atmosphere.



Conny, secretary BSF, with director Connie

We got the impression that Connie Rao, who is a mild-mannered and balanced woman, is not a stickler for strict discipline. Conny and Marien attended one of her classes, in class seven. The students wanted to know everything about them and Connie didn't seem to mind that the subjects under discussion were sometimes all over the place. But it was certainly a cosy gathering! In any case, the youngsters of Nagwa are now also familiar with the legend of Hans Brinkers (he of the finger in the dike)...

Connie Rao doesn't penalise absence, but instead rewards those children who come to school most often. This is a principally different approach and it seems to be working.

Art classes

The lessons in drawing and handicrafts were excellent. The children made complicated Christmas stars and were evidently enjoying this. Connie told us how difficult it was to find and keep a good music teacher. At the moment, she didn't have one. Two volunteers from Princeton, both committed and active girls, were temporarily filling the gap.

The dance classes in the larger room on the ground floor are a big success. Under the supervision of a young teacher the children



practice their steps to *Bollywood songs*, evidently exact imitations of the movies, but who cares. The students enjoy it enormously and learn how to move well and effortlessly.

Grade 9 through 12

After class 8, Connie Rao sends her students on to other schools, which are usually more expensive schools teaching in English. For these children she tries to find sponsors and she's doing quite well so far. Thanks to some generous sponsors, BSF is currently supporting six of them.



President Marien meeting some graduates

Connie provides school reports for these follow-up students. As we did last year, we spoke with some of them, about their school, their hobbies and their dreams of the future. We could sense that they were struggling sometimes. 'These kids have a lot on their mind at home', says Connie. They are always welcome at Asha Deep and Connie helps them whenever she can.

Princeton

For many years now, Varanasi runs a volunteer programme from Princeton University. Students who know that they have secured a place at Princeton take a gap year after secondary school and spend six months of it in Varanasi. They are placed in various schools, including LSS and Asha Deep. Malka, who is active at Asha Deep, answered some of our questions (see side box).

One of her tasks is ordering and systematising the library. We had donated some funds for extra books earlier and it was wonderful to see how a real library is gradually taking shape. The library is not only used during school hours, but also after-school. Then the children sit in the corridor, reading until the school closes.

After-school programme

Connie has prepared a detailed scheme for an after-school programme that according to her, and to us as well, may prove to be very important for the students. It contains coaching, personality development and 'life lessons'. It is a concept aimed at compensating for the negative impulses for youngsters emanating from Indian society. BSF intends to support this programme.



Rotary Club Amsterdam Zuidas donated new computers

Financial situation

Asha Deep School's financial situation has been stable for three years now, thanks to us. We realise how crucial it is for the schools that we pledge our support for two years and extend that period every year. This gives them a basis they can count on and makes it easier for them to find additional financing.

We are very pleased with the regular and agreeable contact with the school. Asha Deep is a great school, managed by two very driven people with great intuition for the needs of their target group. <

VOLUNTEER MALKA HIMELHOCH

"I find India a really magical place. Of course there are cows sleeping in the middle of the street, and there are lots of trash everywhere, but when I wake up in the morning and I see the sun rising over the Ganga Ji and sadus praying on the ghats, it fills me with joy. And people have been unbelievable kind to me, I'm smiling all the time because so many people smile at me first.



Asha Deep is a wonderful, welcoming place. A lot of my students come from homes where their feelings don't matter. At Asha Deep they do matter. Nobody is telling the kids they have to go to school. It's a place they want to come to.

It's definitely hard to be confronted with poverty. Every day I see a lot of my kids in Nagwa. They pull me into their houses and it's really hard to realize what their home is: one room, very dark, the whole family lives there. But the hospitality is unbelievable. I come from an unimaginable privileged situation. I knew that theoretically, but here I realized: I have so much and these people have so little and they're sharing with me. And I just felt unbelievably honored.

Nagwa is not a very verbal place, it's very fysical. If you love someone you hug him and if you're angry you'll hit him. At Asha Deep, next to math and science and English, the students learn to interact with people from higher society without problems. So you can hold your own in society.

I want to express how welcome at the school I've been. In the first minute I walked in little girls were handing me flowers and the boys wanted to help me with my cycle. Connie-ma'am is an unbelievable force, kind and carrying, she has totally taken me under her wing. But she's also a real role model for the girls. She commands so much respect among the children.

Asha Deep has turned Benares, from a city where I happened to be living in, into a home. I feel at home here, I see my kids in the street and say hello. At a wedding they were there and I danced with them. This place is wonderful, and I'm so honored to be a part of it."

LITTLE STARS SCHOOL

Basic project info 01-01-2017

- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 900 students, 41 teachers
- > Budget € 60,000, no meals | Contribution BSF € 22,000
- > www.littlestarsschool.org



At every visit we are struck with the quality of the new building. The Benares Building Society has worked miracles here in just a few years, supported in no small measure by the energy of 'building Father' Pierre Satijn. The facility is spacious, light and cool. Many of the classrooms have tiles, which makes for a pleasant effect. The entire layout with the open stairwell and broad corridors works very well. On the roof of the new third floor are 20 solar panels.

In the old building, which houses the hostel and the younger students, renovation is in full swing.

The lessons impress us favourably: regular class education. Here too, the atmosphere is quiet and students have a good work attitude.

STUDENT KUSHBOO YADAV

Kushboo Yadav is 16 years old and she is in class 11. She is almost un-Indian in her openness. She expresses herself easily and is not afraid to speak her mind, even in public. Her main hobby is dancing, at which she excels.



"I learned dancing at Ashray, my former school. The lessons of Mataprasad-ji I found wonderful. At Little Stars School I have less time to dance. We have difficult subjects: chemistry, math. They're asking much attention. I try to keep my dancing skills in shape. The teachers at LSS are like friends, especially the class teachers. They help us with everything, also apart from the school work. I have many friends, boys and girls. But in class I'm quiet and concentrated, because I find the subjects interesting. My favorite subjects are math and science. I will do a technical study, later, I hope to become a civil engineer. I think it's important that Conny-ma'am comes to the school every year and supports us. I will never disappoint her." Kushboo will make it, all right. She is diligent and smart. She is now at the highest level (division I) and on her last school report she had an examination score of 82.5%.



The people of India love official ceremonies, with the important people sitting behind a table and the children sitting on the ground. We award prizes to children who came first, second or third in their class: the good students. When we finished, one grandfather, in a loud voice, wanted to know why his granddaughter didn't receive an award. The girl turned out to have come eighth in her group, which is not bad at all. It was a remarkable incident. Although the grandfather hadn't really grasped the procedure, his very presence demonstrated his commitment. We spoke some words of encouragement to his granddaughter: if she worked hard, she would eventually win a prize too.

The teachers are taking over more and more responsibilities from director Asha Pandey. They organise meetings, such as this awards ceremony, which run smoothly. Asha appreciates this and the spreading of responsibilities makes the organisation stronger.

Since last year, examination fees were introduced: €15 per child per year, with a maximum of € 30 euros per family. Asha has long resisted the fees, but it is becoming common practice by now.

In the long run, the school hopes to raise € 6,000 to € 7,000 a year from it.

We are very much in favour of parental contributions. Parents should start to feel more responsible for their children's education. Naturally, exceptions are made for the poorest among them. The school has chosen some 75 students who are eligible for sponsoring.

Discipline is important at LSS. It must be, with some 900 students. Less attention is given to playful learning, a more modern didactical concept. We can hint at it, but not influence this directly. We judge the results of the education, not how those results are arrived at. Last year, all students from class 10 and 12 passed their examinations, and that says a lot.



The average score was 65 per cent. The highest percentage was 77.6. The addition of the classes 11 and 12 has made LSS a complete school, which is unique both in the neighbourhood and for our target group. The school is determined to maintain these groups, even though they are expensive because they require highly qualified teachers.



Director Asha celebrating Christmas with her hostel girls

The LSS office is functioning optimally, thanks to the input every year of a future student of Princeton University. This year it's Jack. He is a clever boy and shows initiative. An excellent help for Asha.

Last year, LSS did not have a financial deficit thanks to a number of new sponsors. Teachers' salaries could even be raised by 15 per cent, which had been a long cherished wish. It is important, as it makes it easier to hire and keep better teachers. BSF also supports the hostel at LSS. As in previous years, we were

invited to dinner there and again we got nothing but positive impressions. Girls who have sometimes suffered unspeakable things are lovingly cared for here. They receive good education, excellent care and, most importantly, warmth and love.

The overall picture at Little Stars School is very positive: a large, well-functioning school with 12 classes and 900 students, an excellent director, and a very good hostel for 25 children. <

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMME

Basic project info 01-01-2017

- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 46 students
- > Budget € 11,540
- > Contribution BSF 100%

In our newsletter of last year, we wrote that the individual programme had become too labour-intensive and too expensive. We also announced we would take measures.

Measures

We have not accepted any new students. We asked our employees Surendra Srivastava and Manish Bhatia to screen the families financially, as we had the impression that some of them were doing much better now. This proved to be the case. We raised the income threshold because of the increased costs of living, but three families still didn't meet the new standards. We therefore had to exclude three children from the programme. They still go to school of course, but now their parents pay for them.

Other families had seen some income improvement, but still needed support, and for some nothing had changed. Based on the results of the screenings Surendra and Manish have adapted the level of sponsoring by creating three categories: school fees only, school fees and books, and full sponsoring. This is an honest measure. In addition, parents who receive full sponsoring pay a contribution of Rs 100 (€ 1.50) a month. We are very pleased that they are indeed



Manish Bhatia with some students

doing so. Not because it means a lot of money (only € 600 a year), but because it makes parents understand that, in the end, their children's education is their responsibility.

Finally, we have reduced the food programme. We were told that this does not have a negative impact on the children. The medical fund for vitamins and deworming medicine, and for emergencies, remains in place. These measures have had the desired effect: the costs of the programme are now manageable.

However, without additional measures, these costs would rise again: the school fees of the schools in question will be raised by 20% each year.

How to proceed

The board has decided to restructure the programme. Of course all students will complete their education as planned. Eventually, the last student of the present group will graduate in 2023.

Sponsoring of individual students will still be an option in the future. New students, in particular those in the highest and therefore most expensive classes (9-12) will be selected by our own schools. They know best which students are most in need of full sponsoring. The schools will coach the students and report to the foundation about their yearly progress and well-being.

All this means that the system remains in place: careful selection, intensive coaching and one-on-one sponsoring with information about the sponsored child on a yearly basis.

At the moment, we have six individual sponsors paying for eight children at Little Stars School.



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>> continuation Individual programme

Asha Deep School has its own follow-up programme after class 8, in which we support seven students already. Jeevan School and the Vatsalya School in Jaipur send their students to other schools for the final years of secondary education. Some of these students could also be individually supported.

All this means that we can manage costs better and give extra support to our own schools.



The students all have their picture taken for the sponsors. To make things easier we had hired a young photographer this time, who had learned his trade at the organization FairMail. This organisation gives poor youngsters a camera and teaches them how to take photographs.

Meanwhile, the students in this programme are doing very well. They are growing up and are not all accompanied by their mother or father any more at our yearly meeting. Thanks to all these measures they begin to realise how lucky they are that their education is paid for. Some show their appreciation by bringing us beautiful, self-made wishing cards.

Thanks to a foundation for vocational training in the Netherlands, three of the boys who have completed class 10 now study at a technical school to become electricians. We hope to be able to offer this opportunity in the future as well.

ACCOUNTANT SURENDRA SRIVASTAVA

Surendra Srivastava and Manish Bhatia been working for our individual programme for ten years now. Their motto is: 'We believe in work, not words.'



Surendra manages the financial side of things, and he does so very meticulously, saving all the receipts in neatly ordered folders. When asked about his motivation to work for our programme, he says: "It is my way of doing something for my society. By doing this job I help those people who are unable to support their own children from their low income.

I believe in education: it is a primary need, the first step to progress of the country. That's why BSF appeals to me so much. And we see the results. The first students are all doing very well."

We are most grateful to Surendra and Manish for their help with doing the income check, determining the parent contribution and concluding the food programme. It was rather an unthankful task, but their efforts ensure that the individual sponsors' support has maximum effect.

On our last night in Varanasi, we traditionally are invited to dinner at Surendra's. His entire family joins us in the festivities and his wife prepares marvellous fish dishes.

Manish organises the meetings with parents and students at his home, on the roof. Afterwards we also dine with him. It illustrates how good our relationship is. <

JEEVAN SCHOOL

Basic project info 01-01-2017

- > Up to and including grade 10 + secondary education
- > 120 students, 11 teachers
- > Budget € 37,500, incl. school meal | Contribution BSF € 9,050
- > www.basichumanneeds.org

With children from the Samne Ghat slum, Kati is building a model Western school. Whether this is the ideal setup for Indian street urchins remains to be seen, but it most certainly is a fascinating adventure.

We attended the 'old time favourites' of Jeevan, such as the Math Market (a market with stalls and Monopoly money that functions as a math class) and the Mass Feeding (Jeevan prepares food for hundreds of poor people from the neighbourhood), but we also visited the school during regular school hours. As always, we are struck by the love, commitment, craftsmanship and incredible energy that Kati and her team put into their work.

The new building

Jeevan's landlord has constructed a new school building, next to the hostel. The Kindergarten has remained in the same field, under the straw roof, a couple of hundred metres away.



Finances

Things are going well for Jeevan, financially. Jess' European tour (with some wonderful concerts in the Netherlands) and Dan's fundraising in Taiwan have generated a lot of money. Also, the Chinese taekwondo champion Lamou has settled in Benares with her family. She supports the school and intends to develop structural support from her homeland. This is a major development.



Continuity

In spite of this sound financial foundation, the plans to start a school branch in Sarnath have been put on hold for now. We think this is good news, since the Sarnath initiative carries a hefty price ticket and considerable risks. The investment does help though as a backup for the current school: a part of the very large grounds was sold at a considerable profit. In this sense, Sarnath safeguards continuity.

Quality

Jeevan pays very decent salaries and pays teachers also when they are ill or on maternity leave, which is quite exceptional for private schools in India. Nevertheless, there is turnover of staff. The main reason for this is the lure of government jobs, which pay better and guarantee a lifelong income, including a pension. Kati has trouble finding new teachers that meet her high standards. Still, the new teachers impress us favourably. Radha, for example, is a great asset: she teaches mathematics and English and in addition makes beautiful drawings and watercolours. That's why she also gives drawing lessons. Radha resides in the hostel six days a week. On Mondays she is free and visits her family.



English

At the Math Market we notice that many students don't really speak English very well. Kati thinks this is because of the poor English of the teachers. Personally, we have our doubts about how useful it is to teach these children in English, especially since they don't even speak Hindi but a local dialect when entering the school. But Kati insists: apparently bad English is better than no English.

LKG, UKG

Besides Jess, there are three more teachers working at the Kindergarten. The small school has some 30 children and seems to us to be the perfect preparation to 'real' education: merry and goal-oriented. Jess is a wonder woman, not only when she teaches music but also as a regular teacher. She has the children's undivided attention and does magic with the teaching material. In a single hour she taught the children about squares, rectangles and circles, about the difference between large and small, about the comparative and superlative degree and the



The well-organised library has a merry look

difference between fifty and fifteen - and all this in a literally playful manner. Such talents she has!

'Special needs'

Jeevan School has one large entry class of 24 children, of which 10 have 'special needs', according to teacher Dan. We estimate that about half of the 33 children in the hostel has specific problems. This is a challenge - as it is euphemistically called. One might also say: an almost impossible task.

An additional problem is the ongoing and considerable influence of the families on the hostel children. One boy who had completed class 11 at the very expensive Sunbeam Academy suddenly went away, back to his village, without taking the final year. Such a waste!

> continued on next page

FOUNDER AND TEACHER DAN SHIP

"The main inspiration for Jeevan School was the need of the people, the children here. Jeevan School has grown organically, based on the needs of the community. Projects which are based on what's needed, not on plans, are much more effective."



Most of the parents are drug addicts or alcoholics. There's violence, there's sexual abuse in the children's home situation, so a lot of our kids are already damaged by that experience. It affects them emotionally, it affects their behavior and it also affects their ability to study. Children who are exposed to violence, who don't have a stable home life, often have problems with memory and concentration. Because of that we've build our teaching structure in a way to accommodate those types of students. Instead of expecting them to fit in the standard school program, we've adopted the program to fit with the students.

The work is very satisfying, I never feel like I don't want to go to school, I enjoy every minute of the class when I'm in teaching. Most of the people our kids know don't have an education. So the children really understand that Jeevan is the chance for them to change their lives. And they do their best because of that. Both the students and the teachers are doing it from their hearts. When we started we named our project *Basic Human Needs*. And this idea has two sides.

The side which we see here every day is: we believe every human has the right to be provided with the basics. Before we spend our money on luxuries, we should be thinking about making sure everyone has what they need. Food, education, love, shelter are the basic things.

On the other side, in rich countries everybody already has everything. And they're working so hard to get more, more, more. I think that they're making a mistake. They're not becoming happier or making their lives better. They're just getting caught in the trap of wanting more and more and more.

So I think Jess and I are really lucky that we ended up here. Our experience shows us every day that focussing on what's really important is much more satisfying than focussing on just more, more, more."



>> continuation Jeevan School

The future

Jeevan's motto is: *first grow better, then bigger* (the latter part would have to happen in Sarnath). We couldn't agree more. Kati's ambitious educational system now needs consolidation rather than growth. It is nothing short of a miracle what Kati, Jess, Dan and manager Sheelu accomplish here. Little, underfed children, often with serious behavioural problems, are lovingly cared for, are given all manners of positive attention, are encouraged, and attend a school where they learn by playing with modern educational tools. The quality and fun are almost tangible. The Indian teachers such as Radha who are open to these ideas, develop rapidly; volunteers who are active in the school stay long, contribute much and are having the time of their lives. It is truly a privilege to support the school. <

DIVYA JYOTI

This organisation for the mentally and physically handicapped was supported by us for a number of years already with a small sum. They do very special work, which deserves our support.



If you look at the expenditure of our foundation you will notice that this small sum has now risen considerably. There is a reason for this: the Shanty Foundation in Bergen op Zoom has ended its activities and donated their remaining funds to us, on the condition that we take over their commitments to Divya Jyoti. We were only too happy to do so and have even successfully applied for additional subsidies. <



follow us on www.facebook.com/benaresschoolfund

FINANCIAL CHAOS IN INDIA

The Indian government has embarked on a brilliant but also absurd adventure. In a country where 85% of all financial transactions are done in cash (and 100% of the smaller, everyday payments) the economy will grind to a standstill if you declare the two largest denominations no longer valid.



Only hours before we landed on Delhi airport, the Indian government had taken all banknotes of 500 and 1000 rupees out of circulation. The intention was clear: the government wanted to crack down on the black money circuit and, by forcing everyone to open a bank account, diminish the circulation of cash money. It resulted in confusion and chaos. People could exchange their old banknotes by depositing the money in their own bank account, but not everyone has a bank account or is inclined to review how much money he has. Next, it turned out to be almost impossible to withdraw new money because the government had not provided enough of it. There



The students of Little Stars School made fitting drawings about the situation.

were large denominations of 2,000 rupees, but which rickshaw driver or greengrocer will accept those or even have change for them? There were long queues at the banks and cash machines, day in, day out. Tourists cancelled their trip or went home earlier than planned. Exchanging foreign currencies was difficult: we either received the old denominations or the exchange rate was too low. There were stories circulating about rich Indians who would rather throw their money in the river Ganges, or burn it, than depositing it in an account openly. <



OUR SINCERE THANKS GO TO ALL OUR SPONSORS AND DONORS WHO HELPED CONTRIBUTE THIS PAST YEAR.
THEIR FUTURE DEPENDS ON YOUR HELP!



BASIC PROJECT INFO 01-01-2017

1. Vatsalya's Udayan School

- > Up to and incl. grade 8 + secondary education + vocational training
- > 130 students, 8 teachers
- > Budget € 40,000, incl. lunch | Contribution BSF € 6,650
- > www.vatsalya.org

2. Ashray School

- > Primary school up to and including grade 5
- > 80 students, 7 teachers
- > Budget € 11,600, incl. a glass of milk | Contribution BSF € 7,500
- > www.ashray.org

3. Asha Deep School

- > Up to and including grade 8 + secondary education
- > 240 students, 18 teachers (3 part-time)
- > Budget school € 38,000, incl. school meal
- > Budget secondary education € 14,000
- > Contribution BSF € 10,520 incl. secondary education
- > www.asha-deep.com

4. Little Stars School

- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 900 students, 41 teachers
- > Budget € 60,000, no meals | Contribution BSF € 22,000
- > www.littlestarsschool.org

5. Individual programme

- > Up to and including grade 12
- > 46 students
- > Budget € 11,540 | Contribution BSF 100%

6. Jeevan School

- > Up to and including grade 10 + secondary education
- > 120 students, 11 teachers
- > Budget € 37,500, incl. school meal | Contribution BSF € 9,050
- > www.basichumanneeds.org



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. Those who like it, will receive a photo and report of their student yearly.

As a (permanent) donor

All donations, whether one-off or a fixed amount per year, will benefit the children and their education; it will be spent on extra educational materials, salaries and yearly teacher training.

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 a written agreement with our foundation have no threshold and are fully deductible. See www.belastingdienst.nl under **Periodieke giften vanaf 2014**.

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.

Rabobank IBAN: NL97 RABO 0194 3913 53 | BIC: RABONL2U

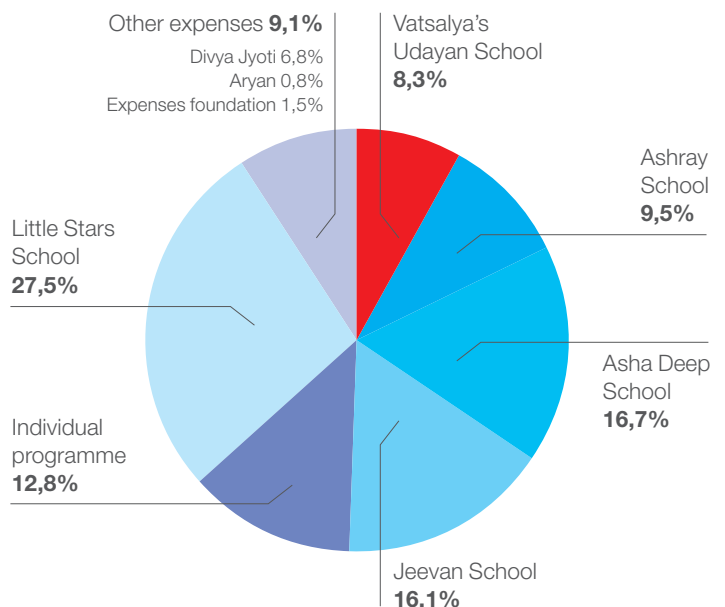
SOME FIGURES

Contribution BSF as percentage of the project budget

Vatsalya's Udayan School

Vatsalya's Udayan School	16,6%
Ashray School	64,7%
Asha Deep School	20,2%
Jeevan School	24,1%
Individual programme	100%
Little Stars School	36,7%

Expenses BSF spread over the projects





FINANCIAL REPORT 2016

> all figures in euros

IN

Contributions school sponsors / regular contributors	23,816,39
Other donations	21,410,69
Contributions funds/foundations	29,500,00
For Travelling Tales (sponsoring cycle tour boardmember Nienke)	5,718,95
Revenues benefit concerts	13,126,32
Interest	381,79

93,954,14

Added to the earmarked reserve (for library Ashray)	- 5,718,95
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TOTAL INCOME 88,235,19

OUT

Little Stars School	17,000,00
+ earmarked donation for grade 11 and 12	5,000,00
Individual programme	10,240,00
Asha Deep School	10,520,00
+ earmarked donations	2,850,00
Ashray School	7,500,00
Vatsalya's Udayan School	6,650,00
Jeevan School	9,050,00
+ 50% revenues benefit concerts with Jess	3,800,00
Other donations and costs	
Coaching school Aryan	633,00
Divya Jyoti (earmarked donation)	5,400,00
Expenses foundation	1,192,59

79,835,59

Taken from the earmarked reserve	- 15,510,00
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TOTAL OUT 64,325,59

Result financial year 2016 23,909,60

This amount will be added to the general reserves

Balance per 31-12-2016

Current account:	20,487,89
Saving account:	99,139,24
35,000,00 of which is fixed reserve* and 43,813,95 is earmarked reserve	
Remaining balance:	40,813,18

Earmarked reserve

In 2016 added to the earmarked reserve	5,642,95
In 2016 been taken	15,510,00
On balance 9,867,05 have been added	

OVERHEAD 2016: 1,5%

BUDGET 2017

> all figures in euros

IN

Contributions school sponsors / regular contributors	20,000,00
Other donations	16,030,00
Contributions funds/foundations	25,000,00
From earmarked reserve	15,705,00
Interest	250,00

TOTAL INCOME 76,985,00

OUT

Little Stars School	17,000,00
+ earmarked donation for grade 11 and 12	5,000,00
Individual programme	9,450,00
Asha Deep School	9,585,00
+ extra donation for after-school program	2,000,00
Ashray School	7,500,00
+ earmarked donation for library	2,000,00
Vatsalya's Udayan School	7,500,00
Jeevan School	9,050,00
Other donations and costs	
Divya Jyoti (earmarked donation)	6,400,00
Expenses foundation	1,500,00

TOTAL OUT 76,985,00

ARE WE STILL LOOKING FOR NEW SPONSORS?

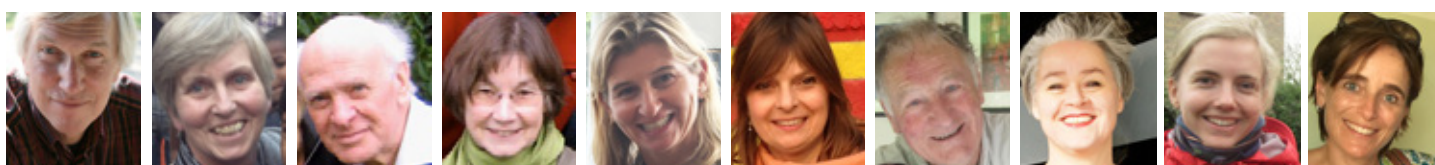
In view of our healthy looking finances you may wonder whether Benares School Fund actually needs new sponsors. Although we have the luxury of having a few big sponsors and a lot of smaller ones, with many of them we know beforehand when their support will end. And then there will be shortages, if we don't take action.

So, we try to prevent these shortages and therefore we will always need new sponsors.



* Information about our fixed reserve

In order to guarantee the continuity of our work, our foundation has long been striving to have a higher fixed reserve. Our main aim is to improve quality. That is why we pledge financial support to our projects for more than one year. A sudden decrease in donations and yearly fluctuating revenues would make this risky and that's why we need a substantial fixed reserve. At the moment, it is not big enough. Thanks to a positive result this year, we were able to increase the reserve to € 50,000 but it should really be as high as one year's turnover. So, there is still some way to go.



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, Karin van Duijnhoven, Nienke de Graaf and Maurien Wetselaar.