



Benares School Fund Foundation

THE NETHERLANDS



Conny and Marien van Staalen, secretary and treasurer of the Benares School Fund Foundation, visited our projects in Varanasi from January 15 to February 8, 2024. In this newsletter, they report on their visit.

Who could have thought it would be so cold in India that schools were closed for the first two weeks? It resulted in a totally different welcome photo at Jeevan School: everyone thickly wrapped up, most of them wearing warm winter hats.

Halfway through our stay, our granddaughter Elin (21) came to see us; she wanted to know what her grandma and grandpa had been up to in Varanasi and Jaipur all her life. We showed her everything. She enjoyed herself, and we loved her company. She watched a fine performance at Jeevan. All the girls wanted a selfie with her. On Republic Day, she raised the flag on the roof of Ashray. She stayed at Little Stars School hostel for two nights and she played marbles with the children of Nagwa.



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It was only on Monday 30 January, just after Elin's departure, that the sun broke through the fog and schools reopened. We still had ten days left. That meant there was work to do. We visited our projects, talked to everyone and were often surprised by the positive developments and special conversations. We got to know our new project in Sarnath better and made arrangements for its continuation. <

From the board

- Kati and Jess, formerly teachers at Jeevan School, started a new project, Damini. Our board decided to support the school meals for pre-school kids with a one-off € 1,500.
- Muheem's request for three additional teachers was honoured with € 1,500 per year.
- We sent € 400 to Connie Rao (Asha Deep School) for beanbags and library books.
- Sheelu (Jeevan) received € 1,000 for three new computers after poor exam results in computer subjects - the students had only received theory lessons.
- Jeevan School was keen to reintroduce school lunch. We decided to make school meals a small project. We made a request to a foundation and to the four friends who returned to Varanasi after 25 years. Altogether, this brought in € 6,000. The school could now move forward.
- The board prepared a standardized evaluation form.
- New project conditions were set. An FCRA is one of the conditions.
- On May 18th we had dinner with Connie Rao who was in the Netherlands to see her newborn grandchild in Amsterdam.
- On 3 June, our youngest board member, Nienke de Graaf, married Bálint Horváth in the Hungarian city of Zebegény on the Danube. Conny and Marien van Staalen were there as guests.



DALIT PROJECT SARNATH

- > 49 girls, grade 9-12 plus vocational training
- > contribution BSF 100%
- > project coordinator: sr. Tarcilla

From 2021, the Benares School Fund Foundation (BSF) paid for the nursing training of Shivangi. She is a girl who has been supported within an educational project in Sarnath. The project was set up by the Dutch foundation, Focus on Education.

The board members of Focus on Education were getting older, wanted to wind down their activities and were looking for another foundation to house the project. BSF was happy to comply with their request to take over. On 1 January 2024, Focus on Education ended its activities. A few weeks earlier, the foundation had transferred its remaining funds to us. We feel honoured to continue the project, which we had visited twice before.

Since 2010, every year about ten motivated girls from the poorest dalit communities in the villages around Sarnath have been selected to attend grades 9 and 10 from a hostel in Sarnath. Focus on Education paid all expenses. During those two years, these twenty girls will be helped to overcome the disadvantages they face as dalits, both in school and at home.



Left, Sister Tarcilla at St. Mary's School of Nursing

They learn how to study and do homework. They get extra classes and guidance at the hostel. They eat healthy food and learn to live hygienically. They acquire all kinds of skills that will help them progress, not only in their school career but also in their future lives.

After two years in the hostel, the girls are far enough along to attend grades 11 and 12 from their homes, if they are willing and able.

On the first day of our visit to this new project, the Ram Mandir Temple in Ayodhya was inaugurated. This temple was built on the site of a medieval mosque that was demolished by Hindu fanatics in 1992, resulting in riots across the country.

The opening of the new temple was used by the government for a huge demonstration of the superiority of Hinduism and the power of the ruling BJP party, the party of Indian Prime Minister Modi.

In Sarnath, project coordinator, Sister Tarcilla, was already waiting for us at the gate of the hostel. The entrance this time was a bit more hectic than on our previous visit in 2022, as the BJP revelry with a huge techno thump was clearly audible here as well. Unperturbed by this, sixteen girls gave us a very warm welcome by not only singing but also dancing beautifully.





As in 2022, we were served a delicious Dutch meal, with a soup, chicken and green beans.

Tarcilla's English is fine. We briefly went through the history of the project and the normal daily schedule of the hostel girls.

The hostel girls cycle to school for a day of lessons from 7am to 1pm. At the hostel, they have extra classes in the afternoon from 2.30pm. They are taught biology, chemistry, physics, geography and 'social sciences'. Tarcilla teaches English and Hindi. In their villages, the girls speak Bhojpuri, the regional dialect, but they are not allowed to use it in the hostel, even among themselves, where they have to speak correct Hindi.

The selection for the new school year is done by Tarcilla herself. Under the new adoption laws, both the parents and the girls sign a declaration that they agree to study at the hostel.

It was exceptionally cold here in January; everyone complained about it. We ate inside, where, without heating, it was even colder than outside. For us, chilled as we were, it was lovely to walk, in the weak sunshine, to see the girls after the meal.



The girls, almost all wearing winter hats, sat neatly at their desks set up outside under a canopy. There, each girl has her own desk, with all her books and notebooks in the lectern in front of her. We managed to strike up a nice conversation with some of the girls. One of them, Asmitha, showed us around. She is a smart young lady, she wants to be a doctor.

The girls cook for themselves, do their own laundry and do household chores together in the hostel. There is a large vegetable garden; everything radiates peace and space, which must be lovely for them.



Marijke den Ridder visits a dalit village (2018)

President Alet Meurs attended Focus on Education's farewell reception with board member Jacques Baartmans. Here, she raises a glass with Marijke and Jacques den Ridder, former president and treasurer of FoE.



After two years, the girls leave the hostel. Still under Tarcilla's guidance, they attend grades 11 and 12, after which they may take short vocational training or a bachelor's degree at university. BSF has taken on the funding for the project from Focus on Education.

The whole schooling process turns these poor dalit girls into independent and confident young women, equipped for the future. Shivangi is an excellent example of this. She just graduated as a nurse and already has a job in Bihar. She's pictured here with her grandmother. <





NGO MUHEEM

- > pre-school kindergarten classes, 150 children
- > contribution BSF: 50% of total budget of €9,000
- > director: Swati Singh
- > www.muheem.org

BSF supports one of Muheem's initiatives, the Pathshala schools. Pathshala schools provide very basic education to the poorest of the poor and prepare children for government school.

If the government school discriminates against these children or if education is substandard, director Swati Singh takes this on, preferably accompanied by village elders and politicians. She is a militant woman!

Together with Swati and her husband Ramji, who founded the NGO Muheem four years ago, we had already visited some of these schools in 2022.



The word 'Pathshala' simply means 'school', but the concept stands for more than just education. Muheem gets a foothold in poor communities through this basic education but, at the same time, develops programmes that result in 'leadership' from within the community itself. That leadership can be deployed to support the legitimate aspirations and interests of the community. Swati emphatically focuses on women's leadership.

Four years of Pathshala schools and leadership programmes have yielded many results: 60% of the girls who attended the Pathshala schools have gone to government school. Now you may say: why not 90%? Therein lies the very essence of this work. The casteless dalits of the Musahar community (the 'mouse



eaters' or 'rat catchers') are utterly deprived socially and economically. According to the latest 2011 census - the most reliable source of information - 3% of the men and 1% of the women could read and write. Thus, they are nearly all illiterate.

The government also denies this group basic human rights. This is also reflected in where their communities are located: where the paved road turns into a dirt track and becomes impassable to traffic, that is where they live.

In some ways, after last year, the first Pathshala school we visited felt familiar: a group of little ones on the floor, writing on a black-board with chalk. Mothers with even smaller children on their laps watch everything passively, crouched around a fire. In the distance, you can see a few men.

There is a good, powerful teacher, a young lady! Remarkably, Swati manages to attract amazing young women to her organisation. She started five years ago, with our support of 1,000 euros. Now she has seventeen (!) employees, all young women under 30.

After Pathshala, we visited the beautiful new school in *the middle of nowhere*, built by Swati's father. This school will be an eight-classroom school for the richer people in the area, who currently still send their children to Varanasi, some 30 km away. So it will be a school where parents pay for everything themselves. Coaching is also part of the earning model. The income enables Swati to take care of her Musahar children free of charge after grade 5, the years when education in government schools is no longer free.

Finally, we went to a brand new Pathshala on the grounds of a brick factory. In India, the workers of a brick factory live on the



factory premises, in - of course - huts made of stacked bricks. Here, the village consists of 35 families, with all of the men and some of the women working at the factory. These too are Musahars.

We walked into the compound and encountered the familiar image of small children and infants, on a large mat on the ground.

A word about how Swati locates her schools. She looks for a Musahar village or community, like this one. Then she goes there and asks what the people need. Only when the majority says 'education' does she start a Pathshala school. The two questions are: *what do you think* and *what do you need* - in a nutshell: first a simple analysis, then a simple plan. Nothing is forced on the communities, and that's very important for success.

We walked around the grounds to look at the huts. These are small, dark dens inside, lean-to shelters, made of stacked stones on the outside. They are made available at no cost. We saw a mother of 18 (according to Swati) with three children, the eldest of whom was at least four, sitting in the weak sunshine.



Swati Singh has interesting views: 'Alcohol is not the problem, the problem is the mindset.' She talks about what it does to a community when there are no examples of their own people doing things differently and better. And if no one stands up to remind people of their rights, nothing happens and nothing changes, the mindset remains the same.

Muheem wants to do everything 'from the grassroots': even the staff members are selected from the villages. In the communities, women's groups are organised and their leadership is assigned to different people each time. These women receive training, provided by the non-profit organisation, *Teach for India*, that enables them to develop true leadership skills. See teachforindia.org

Swati's network is impressive: she has connections with Teach for India, with United Nations organisations, including the UN Feminists Network; she has a *fellowship programme* with the Peace for India foundation. She holds lectures for all these clubs, incorporating her Pathshala experiences. This is also a source of income for her.

Muheem seeks funding from India, not abroad. Our support is welcome, but she focuses mainly on Indian sources. Swati also knows about the Corporal Social Responsibility Programme, the two-percent scheme for rich corporations. This is completely in line with what our foundation likes to see. <



ASHRAY SCHOOL

- > up to grade 8
- > 95 students
- > contribution BSF: 42% of educational budget €25,000
- > manager: Rakesh Saraogi
- > www.ashray.org

The school presented itself exemplarily this year, like never before: active teachers, a beautiful drama, created by the children themselves and neat rows of students in the classes.

All with a book in front of them and wearing the warm, orange Ashray winter jumper. They were served a nice hot lunch. The school put its best foot forward. However, everything did happen in the old, quite dilapidated building in Nagwa. Classrooms are being constructed at the new school near Garwha Ghat Road. That site is full of building materials; it is not yet safe for the children there.



Last summer, director Rakesh Saraogi organised a huge teacher training session with eighty teachers from across the state of Uttar Pradesh participating. He was clearly proud of it.

Unfortunately, essential parts of the former school curriculum have quietly disappeared. The tabla and kathak (classical Indian dance) classes taught by maestro Mataprasad Mishra now only occasionally take place. Students no longer go to the Ravidash park on Saturdays. And evening homework classes have been scrapped. The team of teachers has remained unchanged for many years; despite their low salaries, they are very dedicated. We asked them if they had any wishes. And there was the familiar request for a school picnic. We left € 300 as a contribution to the costs. <





JEEVAN SCHOOL

- > up to grade 8
- > 200 students
- > contribution BSF: 43% of the budget of € 30,000
- > manager: Sheelu Kujur
- > www.jeevansiksha.org

It always feels familiar, the walk from the busy Samneghat Road to Jeevan. Right, left, right, left and right, through quiet streets - and suddenly you are in front of the iron gate behind which, among the greenery, lies the school. Children play there before, between and after classes; during the classes, there is the peace and quiet of concentrated work.

Once again, we were pleasantly surprised by what we found. At Jeevan, the teaching material is offered in a way that appeals to the children, by enthusiastic, passionate young teachers who radiate warmth. Despite the low salary, manager Sheelu Kujur has no problems finding teachers; more teachers have applied than are needed. They can gain experience in Jeevan's positive learning environment for future, better-paying jobs.

In the Jeevan kindergarten, near the slum, a few hundred metres from the Jeevan School, a group of 35 toddlers are engaged in songs, games and very basic teaching. They get a banana. Even when there are not enough, and they only get half, they look very happy. There are three teachers. In one corner is a litter of six small street dogs, lovely toys! This basic and relaxed education is excellent preparation for the real thing, later on.

Financial situation

Jeevan has about two hundred students. The school's population consists solely of underprivileged children, who have no way of developing new perspectives on their own. Still the school's poor financial base is a major problem and this has immediate consequences. The hostel was closed, school

meals stopped and salaries halved. No meals at school makes Jeevan less attractive for the parents to send their children.

Marieke, Sofie, Michiel and Jasper, who volunteered in Varanasi 25 years ago, have raised money for Jeevan. They returned to Varanasi with € 3,000 for meals. Thanks to this result and another earmarked donation of € 3,000, Sheelu will be able to provide a simple lunch for several years to come.



With salaries, things are more difficult. Foreign donors are ready to help Sheelu as soon as he has an FCRA, the official permission to receive foreign money. That may take some time because the school first has to be officially registered. It seems to be a stale-mate: without registration no FCRA, without FCRA no foreign sponsors, without foreign funds besides BSF no viable school. Still, there is a future perspective.

The path Sheelu has in mind is this: first get registered. There is a scheme for well-run schools. If a school is registered and runs well for three or four years, the government pays half the salaries. That would allow Jeevan to continue on a healthy basis. A sound foundation is a prerequisite for BSF to continue supporting the school.





We gave 1000 euros for three new computers

Sheelu's hiring policy with respect to new teachers is okay, but we don't know how long the old teachers will accept the halving of their salaries. Sheelu relies heavily on the willingness of his teachers to teach as semi-volunteers for little money. That is nice, but in our view not really healthy.

We did the zigzag walk three times. The first time, with our granddaughter Elin, we were welcomed in the cold by an enthusiastic group of students, who then treated us to a great show. The second time, in an empty school, we went over finances with Sheelu and computer teacher Ravi. And the third time, the school was finally open and we saw the classes in operation. As ever, the work was calm and concentrated, in small groups.

Sheelu is a special man. The school remains fantastic, but viability worries us.

Last year we wrote in our newsletter: 'With its quality education and dedication to the poorest of the poor, Jeevan deserves to overcome these problems.' We still think so.

We would like to support Sheelu with a limited amount of extra money for a few more years to give Jeevan a sound financial base and thus a future. <



Exam time



ASTHA SCHOOL

Like last time, we were welcomed in the lovely Indian way, with a tikka on our foreheads and a garland of orange marigolds.

The support we wanted to give this charming little school has grown into a three-year pledge of € 2,500. The school's total expenses (over € 9,000) are covered by local sponsors, mostly in kind. For instance, a businessman donated a double kindergarten swing and a slide. The founders, married couple Babulal Maurya and Soma Banerjee, contribute from their own salaries. Parents pay for the uniforms and books, as well as a small monthly fee.

There are two kindergarten classes and three primary school classes, altogether 83 pupils. Sewing classes are held on the roof, which some 20 young women from the area take advantage of. The five teachers are lovely and very young. Attrition is unfortunately high because of the low salary. Next year, grade four will start.



Locally, the school and the couple's work are highly appreciated. Soma has already received two rewards from service clubs for Astha Foundation's excellent work.

Like every school, Astha wants its own building. That was the first question for us. We had to say no immediately. BSF invests in education, not in buildings.

Because of the problems with transporting money (it has to be in cash!), we advised Babulal and Soma to connect with an NGO that has an FCRA, a formal permission to receive money from abroad. The little school does not seem very viable, there is no prospect of sponsors other than BSF, hence our reluctance to extend our support.

Next year, we will reconsider. <





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ASHA DEEP SCHOOL



- > up to grade 8
- > 114 students, 22 students continuing grade 10-12
- > contribution BSF: 14% of the total budget of € 80,000
- > director: Connie Rao
- > www.asha-deep.com

Already from afar, you can see the new Asha Deep School rising like a castle from the surrounding fields. It is a big, overwhelming brick building - which is very unusual here.

The back is semicircular; this results in semicircular classrooms on that side. The concrete table in the future physics and chemistry lab has the same shape.

The classrooms are arranged in three floors around an open inner space. The railing along the circular corridor is painted light blue. Some of the doors are the same colour; others are yellow and orange. The windows are made of blue and soft green plastic, the upper parts of transparent plastic. This looks very colourful both inside and outside.

The building makes a fresh and cheerful impression. It is totally different from all other schools we know. How the building with its open roof in the middle will hold up in the monsoon season remains to be seen.



Construction has caused director Connie Rao a lot of stress, and still the building is not completely finished. The ramp around the outside, for vice headmaster Siddharth Singh's wheelchair, only reaches the first floor. There is also a lot of finishing work to be done inside. The library is already being furnished. It has two levels with the bookcases downstairs. Connie has had a good number of beanbags made for the upstairs.

Not all the classrooms are in use yet. The top floor is for the higher classes, but the current students from grades 10 to 12 complete their education at the school they were placed at after grade 8. Changing schools in those years is neither common nor desirable. The new school has grade 9 for the first time this year and will continue to grow from here to grade 12.

At Asha Deep, a hot school lunch is cooked. We lined up with our plates for rice with dāl. Delightful.

The uncertainty about when official registration will be obtained is a concern. The school has registration up to grade 6 and is registered as a coaching school for grades 9 to 12. It is waiting for the permission for grades 6 to 9. The slow progress has a lot to do with the classrooms being too small; the school is not quite up to standards. Connie remains optimistic.





More and more children from the area are registering; ten students joined during our visit. The total is now 100. For next year, Connie hopes to grow to 200 students.

Financially, Asha Deep School is stable. Nevertheless, additional funds remain very welcome. This year, two Dutch secondary schools, Maurick College from Vught and Merlet College from Cuijk, visited ADS. Together with girls' sorority Llorien in Amsterdam, they raised over € 8,000. The sorority earmarked its contribution for the upper grades. These call for more highly qualified, more expensive teachers, and for extra attention to girls, so they don't leave school early.



Maurick students and Connie Rao

The residents of the neighbouring village are very proud of the beautiful building. We walked through the village with handicrafts teacher, Shiva. He has been working at Asha Deep for a month now. He showed us his very simple rented room. Shiva comes from Bangalore, where he was a graphic designer. The transition seems very big, but he enjoys the school and village life. He is a very civilized and gentle man.

Connie Rao is definitely going to make this school a great success too. <



FAREWELL

Our board member, **Theo van Pinxteren**, has made the difficult and emotional decision to step down. We deeply regret this, but understand this step that he has taken. Theo will be 87 next summer. Long board meetings and trips to India are not an option anymore.

We met Theo around the turn of the century in Varanasi, where he helped Frans Baartmans at his Shanti Ashram. He was a tall, handsome young man in his early sixties.

Theo's knowledge of development work was vast - he had lived in Pakistan with his family for years and had worked in the slums there. It would have been impossible not to invite such a man to join our board.

For many years Theo travelled to Varanasi for the foundation, the last time with his partner, Toine. He played with the children, was the guest of honour at all sorts of festivities and visibly enjoyed the friendship of so many people. He was loved and respected - not just because of his imposing stature.

Theo was a very easy-going and sociable companion on our trips. We all enjoyed eating together, having a drink and discussing the events, that invariably ended the day. Benares School Fund Foundation owes Theo a debt of gratitude for his years of contribution, his knowledge and his drive. Fortunately, we may continue to call on him as an advisor. We hope to benefit from that for a long time to come.





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LITTLE STARS SCHOOL

- > up to class 12
- > 900 students
- > contribution BSF: 34% of the budget of € 70,000
- > director: Asha Pandey
- > www.littlestarsschool.org

Little Stars School has two faces: on the one hand, there are quiet and disciplined classes full of diligent and focused students; on the other, it is a school, bustling with life.

We had to endure an extreme form of the latter at the farewell party for the final exam candidates. At a noise level of 94 decibels - with danger of temporary hearing loss, according to the Apple Watch of a volunteer - all the candidates were called to the stage one by one. They made their entrance between all other students, like movie stars on the red carpet: the girls in dazzling saris and high heels, the boys neatly dressed in suits, with their hair trimmed, hip and gelled. It truly was an experience, although Marien sighed: '1 year for temporary hearing loss.'

New opportunities for ambitious students at LSS

Since last school year, headmaster Asha Pandey has been selecting two graduates from grade 12 for a course in paramedics. That course lasts two years and is a training to become an



Pierre with 'best student' Shephali

assistant nurse. Four girls are taking that course, two in the second year and two in the first. Most want to become nurses or doctors, but given the very high cost of those courses, the paramedic course is a good alternative.

The second change is the possibility of doing grades 9 through 12 at CBSE level: full English-language education with the highest final examination level. Five girls and three boys have applied for grade 9 this year, while two girls and eight boys are in grade 10. They are all ambitious and bright students. Asha even had to appoint more highly qualified teachers for this programme.

Both new initiatives are being paid for from the money the school received from the Dutch Luzac College in thanks and appreciation for the cooperation of both schools.

Pierre back again

To Asha's great relief, volunteer Pierre Satijn was finally back, after almost four years. A lot of maintenance work was waiting for him. Pierre went straight to work; he renovated the hostel girls' dormitories - they turned out beautifully - and had computers repaired or replaced. Solar panel batteries were replaced and repairs were made here and there.



Pierre lives in the school, which suits him well. We brought cheese and sausage for him; but what he misses most in India is a tasty Dutch meatball.



Even the kindergarten participates in the annual *science exhibition*. On the picture, Anirudh tells director Asha Pandey about his subject, the senses. <



A very cold lunch with five Italian clowns teaching 'life lessons'



Individually sponsored students

- > up to class 12
- > 27 students at Little Stars School
- > contribution BSF: € 7,425

Benares School Fund Foundation supports a group of about 75 of the poorest students at Little Stars School. For them, everything is free: uniform, books and school fees. 27 of these students are individually sponsored by donors to our foundation. We see all 75 children every year; what a treat that is. The children are happy to see us, and we are delighted to see them. There are few problems in the classroom, all the more so in the families. We often decide on the spot to include more children from a family because of extreme poverty.

EXTREME POVERTY

Jitendra comes from one such poor family; starting in the next school year, we will also take in his two younger brothers. They had come with Jitendra, already in their new uniforms. At the urgent request of the school management, we visited Jitendra's 'home'. Pandey sir, Asha's indispensable assistant, took us there and acted as interpreter.



Jitendra with his parents and little brother

Right next to one of the busiest streets in Lanka, the family lives under a piece of plastic. The air pollution and traffic noise are indescribable. Inside is the choking smoke of a little fire. There are a bed and a chair. A goat scurries around on the left. Only the two small brothers are there; we find their parents and Jitendra a little way away, near a handcart on which Jitendra's father sells eggs and some snacks. His mother sits next to him; she lost both her legs in a train accident. Greater poverty than this we have not seen so far.



Jitendra's 'house'

When Jitendra sees Pandey sir, he comes running happily. He is an open, fun-loving boy who enjoys going to school, now in grade 2.

Later, we discussed with Asha Pandey what we could do. She is considering giving the three boys their lunch at school.



VATSALYA SCHOOL

- > up to class 10, 72 students
- > contribution BSF: 14% of the budget of € 55,000
- > manager: Kartikey Gupta
- > www.vatsalya.org

Unfortunately, our full schedule in Varanasi did not allow us to visit the Vatsalya School in Jaipur this time.

Our granddaughter went there on her visit to the city. A warm welcome awaited her and she spent a very enjoyable day. Because we receive a lot of information and photos throughout the year, we can still provide a good picture of the state of affairs.



After our previous visit in October 2022, during which we were somewhat disappointed by the small number of students, Jaimala and Hitesh Gupta had several discussions with their son Kartikey, the new director, about the future: how could the school remain attractive in a region where more and more schools were being founded?

Jaimala: *"We have discussed, brainstormed, explored, asked people around us; and we realise that we need to move on now from giving basics to giving quality and variety.... The community needs to move on from survival mode to progressive mode."*

Jaimala did not attribute the small number of pupils in 2022-2023 solely to the growing number of schools in the area. *"The main reason was: we have stopped being 100% free. It is not needed. People can afford to pay some nominal percentage of the total fee, but years of getting it all free has spoiled them. We are struggling with it but the change will come if we persist."*

It was clear: Vatsalya needed to focus on the special things it had to offer. Then, the interested and also richer students would come naturally. Income from paying parents would greatly help the education of poor students from the surrounding villages. Their education is becoming unaffordable, due to declining funds.



With its wonderful science centre, library, astronomy education, sports and all kinds of vocational training, Vatsalya now presents its education as a total package, of which the school is a part.

The school had 72 students this year, 18 enrolled in the sports programme, 24 in the science and astronomy courses, 16 in vocational training and 12 in solar engineering. Schools from the surrounding area also benefit from Vatsalya's facilities.

Thanks to a generous donor, the expensive food programme has been reinstated. This also increases the attractiveness of the school.

The attached photos show, more than words, what Vatsalya has to offer. <

DIVYA JYOTI

Centre for the disabled

After heavy rain, we visited Divya Jyoti. We found only social worker Sheela there with staff member Pawan. A little later, two (out of fifteen) clients trickled in. They got to work folding and painting. The students make beautiful storage bags for sale. Handicraft making is not only a source of income for Divya Jyoti, but also, and especially, a training for the disabled. Besides targeted physical exercise, they do a lot of singing and music-making. The work with this group remains indispensable. Sheela (62) is as driven and dedicated as ever.

BSF has been diverting money for Divya Jyoti from another Dutch organisation for years.



FINANCIAL REPORT 2023

> in euro's

IN

Regular contributors/school sponsors	39,597,86
Other donations	18,808,95
Contributions funds/foundations	38,500,00
For Dalitproject Sarnath***	97,210,00

	194,116,81
Added to the earmarked reserve 1	- 3,000,00
Added to the earmarked reserve 2 ***	- 97,210,00

TOTAL INCOME 93,906,81

OUT

Little Stars School	28,000,00
General donation	24,000,00
For paramedical course two students	2,000,00
For renovation	2,000,00

Asha Deep School	15,650,00
General donation	9,500,00
For transport students/teachers	250,00
From library fund	400,00
For registration school	2,000,00
Donation Merlet College	1,000,00
Donation sorority Llorien	2,500,00

Vatsalya School	7,500,00
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Ashray School	23,000,00
General donation	10,500,00
For construction three extra classrooms	12,500,00

Jeevan School	16,850,00
General donation	15,100,00
For computers	1,000,00
For school meals	750,00

NGO Muheem	6,750,00
General donation	4,500,00
Advance 2024-2025	2,250,00

Divya Jyoti (earmarked donation)	5,500,00
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Astha School Madhopur	4,000,00
General donation	2,500,00
Advance 2024-2025	1,500,00

Manish Maurya (for 2 students Nagwa)	1,000,00
General donation	500,00
Cash (advance 2024-2025 and 2025-2026)	500,00

Sadhana (start education project)	1,800,00
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Basic Human Needs (for school meals)	1,500,00
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Expenses foundation	2,174,67
Bank costs	409,86
Negative interest	116,68
Newsletter incl. porto	670,57
Website & management	977,56

Taken from the earmarked reserve	- 7,610,00

TOTAL OUT 106,114,67

Result financial year 2023 -12,207,86

This amount has been taken from the general reserves.

Explanation of result

€12,500 was transferred to Ashray School for the construction of three additional classrooms. This was promised but not budgeted for 2023.



Overhead costs 2023: 1,9%

BUDGET 2024

> in euro's

IN

Regular contributors/school sponsors	31,595,00
Other donations	17,250,00
Contributions funds/foundations	33,000,00
From the earmarked reserve 1	10,000,00
From the earmarked reserve 2 (Dalitproject Sarnath***)	15,000,00

TOTAL INCOME 106,845,00

OUT

Little Stars School	30,000,00
General donation	12,000,00
Supporting poorest students (of whom 27 were individually sponsored)	9,500,00
For paramedical course two students	2,000,00
For extra costs CBSE (earmarked donation)	1,500,00
For renovation (earmarked donation)	3,000,00
For batteries solar panels (earmarked donation)	2,000,00

Asha Deep School	9,500,00
General donation	7,500,00
For further education	2,000,00

Vatsalya School	7,500,00
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Ashray School	10,800,00
General donation	10,500,00
For picknick	300,00

Jeevan School	17,250,00
General donation	13,000,00
For further education	2,000,00
For school meals (earmarked donation)	2,250,00

Ngo Muheem	5,250,00
General donation	4,500,00
For laptop and printer	750,00

Dalitproject Sarnath	15,000,00
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Overige uitgaven	11,545,00
From library fund	500,00
Divya Jyoti (earmarked donation)	5,500,00
Asiha School Madhopur	2,500,00
Project Sadhana (earmarked donation)	545,00
Expenses foundation	2,500,00

TOTAL OUT 106,845,00

Balance per 31-12-2023

Current account:14,622,92. Saving account1: 152,808,12. 50,000 of which is fixed reserve and 71,618,99 is earmarked reserve.

Remaining balance: 31,189,13

Saving account2 (Sarnathproject): 97,210,00

*** Explanation Dalit project Sarnath

As of January 1, 2024, Benares School Fund Foundation (BSF) took over an education project in Sarnath from Focus on Education Foundation (FoE), which ceased to exist.

In December 2023, residual funds were transferred from FoE to BSF to continue the Sarnath project. The project is an education project for Dalit girls.

Earmarked reserve

In 2023 3,000 euros (1) and 97,210 (2) has been added and 7.610 have been taken. On balance 92,600 have been added to the earmarked reserve.

Explanation earmarked reserve

There are sponsors and donors who transfer a larger amount at one time for a particular purpose, but which is intended to be spent over several years. We put that money in our earmarked reserve and deduct a portion from it each year. That way it can't be used for anything but the agreed upon purpose.

For the Sarnath project we received € 97,210.00 from the Focus on Education Foundation, of which the project can continue for about six to seven years. That money is held separately in a second company savings account, and we have linked a second earmarked reserve to it. This keeps the money flows separated and clear.

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. If you like, you will receive a photo and progress report of the sponsored student every year. You will find more options for regular support on our website www.benaresschool.nl/donations.

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 / ANBI). 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. The secretariat can provide the necessary papers (license for donation).

New sponsors are kindly requested to give their address to our secretariat (secretary@benaresschool.nl), so we can enter them in our records.

Stichting Benares Schoolfonds

Lenaertsstraat 6, 4724 AM Wouw
T +31 (0)165 301422
secretary@benaresschool.nl

Kamer van Koophandel: 20110334

RSIN-nummer: 811977936

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

📍 [benaresschoolfund](https://www.benaresschool.nl) • www.benaresschool.nl

Benares School Fund is an ANBI foundation



EXPENSES BSF SPREAD OVER THE PROJECTS

Fixed expenses: 86,2%

Asha Deep School: 13,8%

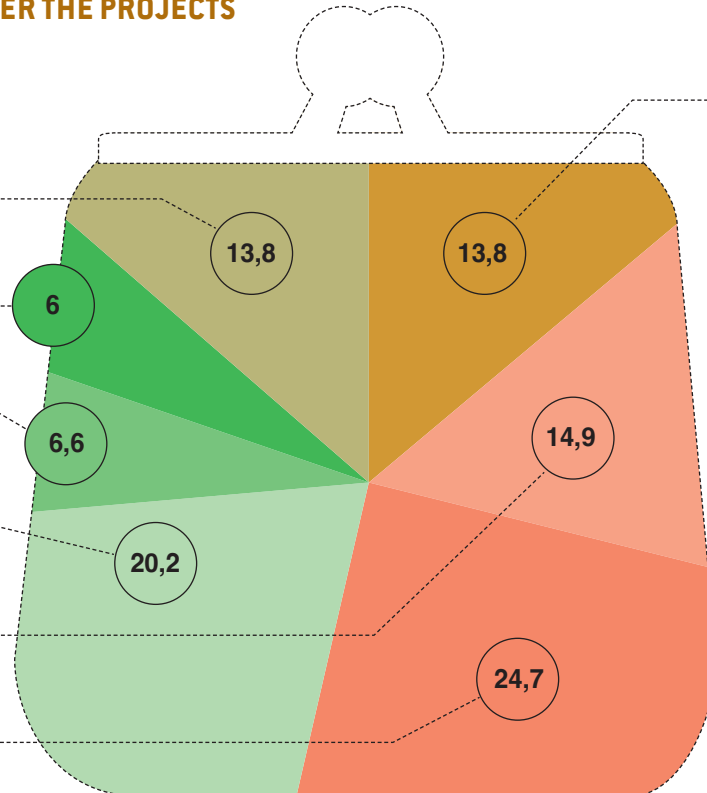
NGO Muheem: 6%

Vatsalya School: 6,6%

Ashray School: 20,2%

Jeevan School: 14,9%

Little Stars School: 24,7%



Other expenses: 13,8%

Divya Jyoti: 4,8%

Astha Foundation: 3,5%

Manish: 0,8%

Sadhana: 1,5%

BHN: 1,3%

Expenses foundation: 1,9% (overhead)

FOR YEARS BSF HAS BEEN ABLE TO COUNT ON A LOYAL GROUP OF REGULAR DONORS, SOME 80 IN TOTAL. THEY FORM THE BASIS OF THE FOUNDATION'S STABILITY.

WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO THEM FOR THAT



Board: Jantine Unger, Alet Meurs (chairman), Maurien Wetselaar, Conny van Staaen-van Leeuwen (secretary), Karin van Duijnhoven, Theo van Pinxteren, Nienke de Graaf, Jacques Baartmans en Marien van Staaen (treasurer)