

RAISING AWARENESS

The India School Project
By Sandra Gojkovic



In India, girls are married off early, parents are not aware of the importance of education, school standards are low and children are forced to work to help their parents in earning a living.

The India School Project is a non-denominational and politically neutral charitable association headquartered in Switzerland. It invests in the education and well being of disadvantaged children and their mothers in rural, underdeveloped villages on an island in India. As it is self-funded and reliant on donations, the association members work on a voluntary basis.

We met with Sandra Gojkovic, founder and president of the association, who explained to us her views on the cause of urban poverty and her approach to tackle it at the root:

I learned that the circle of poverty has its roots in the rural areas, far away from the well-known slums of the big cities. Low living conditions in rural villages cause people to hope for a better life elsewhere and so they migrate to large cities where few succeed in finding a better life for themselves. Most emigrants end up in miserable slums and are forced to continue their lives begging. Our support, therefore, had to be based in the rural areas, so that help can be offered where it is most needed, while simultaneously easing the burden on the overcrowded urban slums.

At present 150 children, divided into five classes, are being educated at our primary school. The curriculum is based on a holistic approach, which stimulates the cognitive, social and emotional growth of the students. Apart from the main subjects of maths, English and Bengali, extra-curricular subjects, such as dance, singing, sports and yoga are taught. Furthermore all students are served a daily warm meal. This has a positive effect on their performance and serves as motivation for regular class attendance. Last year our school obtained recognition and was listed in the official school directory by the state government.“

EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Given the fact that the drop-out rate at public schools in India is amongst the highest in the world, we have decided to partner with two of the public schools in the project area, which are in a very bad state. This is how our second project came into being. We provide daily tuition and breakfast to an additional 150 primary and secondary school students for which we have received special status by the local government as all final year students passed the state exams.

POULTRY FARM SOCIAL BUSINESS

In 2013, I moved to Bangladesh for 3 months to study Social Business under The Nobel Peace Prize Winner Prof. Muhammad Yunus. This led to another venture: A poultry farm social business, which generates income and provides employment to villagers. So far, we have created 20 jobs, which contributes to the improvement of the economic situation of the entire project area.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

As we believe in a holistic approach, we are about to set up a tailoring training center/ Social Business to provide training as well as employment to women. They are the nurturers of the family and spend their profits on the whole family. Their income therefore leads to more literate children and less child labour as they are not dependent on additional income.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US

Thanks to the combined effort of a team of 20 employees in India, as well as a board of 7 members in Switzerland and the UK, TISP became a functioning reality. Simultaneously, without the support of private donors, foundations and volunteers in Switzerland and abroad, we could not have executed our work. Therefore any kind of help is highly appreciated. If you wish to make a contribution, kindly visit our web-site:

www.theindiaschoolproject.org
or directly contact Sandra Gojkovic:
sandra@theindiaschoolproject.org

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Sandra Gojkovic, founder of
The India School Project

