

SPOTLIGHT



www.handinhand.at

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Balashram School

Academic Innovation



EMERGENCY AID

Flood in Orissa
2 Million people affected

BALASHRAM

Where there was once no hope,
smiles now reign

YOUR DONATION COUNTS!

Fundraising for Hand in Hand in Europe

Various events took place for our projects in India, which were attended by donors, friends and people who were interested in the charitable activities



France

The Paris Group organised a music programme with an Indian dinner.

For the benefit of Balashram School in Arua, dedicated members played music, three young Parisians performed Indian Odissi dance and a famous actress recited in a humorous way a traditional Jewish narrative. A particularly successful performance which generated much applause came from a family with two boys who performed their own Chansons. There was also a dinner and nice get-together with the guests.



Netherlands

Many activities have taken place:

In Rotterdam – During the 20th foundation day of the Yoga school of Frans Helwig a well-attended fundraising programme was organised which included a performance of Indian dance.

In Sterksel – Fundraising programmes with music and auctions of paintings by the Balashram children are organised several times a year.

In Ridderkerk – The „Women for Peace“ handed over a cheque for 2.500 Euro to Hand in Hand.



Germany

An Auction in Hübingen raised 2.300 Euro from five paintings.

Br. Dhirananda, secretary of Prajnana Mission visited Europe. His moving talk about the manifold activities in the “Balashram Residential School” reached the heart of the audience. During a Yoga Programme in Hübingen/Germany a spontaneous auction “Paintings from Balashram children” took place and raised 2.300 Euro for the Residential School.



Switzerland

Hand in Hand Switzerland reports:

The Woman’s Lodge „Lucerna“ part of „Odd Fellows“ has generously donated Sfr 2.000 . During their celebration of 20 years of existence, Rolf Aeppli introduced our project and received with thanks this noble donation, in the form of a huge cheque. In the meeting afterwards interesting and informative conversation took place.



Uschi Schmidtke - she supports the **Hand in Hand** Board as Executive-Secretary since September



Dear Friends!

In this latest edition of Spotlight, you will find special articles related to the newest developments regarding the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School.

Since July, the Balashram has welcomed a new Principal, Shri Pramod Prasad Singh, a retired principal with over 35 years experience within India's public school system. Very relevant academic changes are being implemented in the overall evaluation of students, and in the process of getting official affiliation to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) syllabus. This includes exposure to English and Hindi as well as the local language, Oriya.

The Balashram Team, together with the Prajnana Mission, are preparing vocational training courses for the Balashram students. You will also find that there is much activity in the new dental clinic at Hariharananda Charitable Health Centre (HCHC) in Arua.

As the children grow, and the school expands, so does our commitment. I would like to invite each of you to come and visit the Balashram and our Health Centers, encourage you to give us your continued support, and thank you for your interest and generosity. The future holds much promise and we all have a role to play.

On behalf of Hand in Hand,

Peter van Breukelen (President)



CONTENT

2 Hand in Hand Global

Fundraising for Hand in Hand in Europe

4 News from Balashram

Academic Innovation
Where there was once no hope, smiles now reign

6 Our Health Projects

Flood calamity in Orissa
Two Dental Chairs for Arua

NEWS

Changes to the Board

On the 4th of Sept., 2011 Uschi Schmidtke was elected as Executive Secretary of Hand in Hand, after our beloved Heiko Mueller resigned because of vocational reasons. The Board gave their full support to Uschi Schmidtke.

Heiko Mueller was available for us with all his heart and strength. Peter van Breukelen wrote to Heiko "...on behalf of all the Members of Hand in Hand, I take advantage of this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful work you did as Executive Secretary of Hand in Hand for the last five years..."
In the name of the Prajnana Mission,



Selfless work for Hand in Hand

P. Prajnanananda wrote "...I wish to send you my special gratitude for your dedication... Serving others is beautiful work..."

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NEWS FROM BALASHRAM



1 Sumitra the happy gardener 2 Boys from the higher classes showing their home-grown organic vegetables to the Principal 3-6 Project work in a small group

Academic Innovation

Balashram project continues to grow and mature
by Irma Botero

As the Balashram project continues to grow and mature, every effort is being made to reach new academic heights. The last months have seen some noteworthy changes in the Balashram to help both students and teachers create a better working environment, and increase the quality and reach of the educational opportunities offered at the Balashram Residential School.

Many of these ideas were directly related to the coming of a new Principal, Mr. P. P. Singh.

The school now follows the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The great advantage of this system is that it opens up opportunities all over India for future employment and further education for the Balashram children. Additionally, it offers them a linguistic advantage.

Goodbye to the stress of exams

Another very big step taken this year was the implementation of the Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), a requirement for the Balashram to become affiliated to the Board of Secondary Education. Previously, students were evaluated only through final written examinations, three times a year. It has been observed that some children do not perform their best under these conditions, but may alternatively, present a worthy project mid-semester, or give oral presentations that would better reflect their progress on any given academic subject. The CCE is now being implemented throughout the academic year, and many of the Balashram students are rising to the challenge. This system relieves students of the stress caused by final examinations and allows them to express themselves in more creative ways. Continuous Comprehensive Eva-

luation (CCE) directly applies to all aspects of a student's development. Regular and more frequent assessments are made, relying on tests, quizzes and special projects.

Teachers must also implement on-going analyses of learning gaps between students in the same class and within the same age group. Constant self-evaluation work must be undertaken, to shine a critical lens on the teaching and pastoral care for every single student.

Realising Goals

Another change that was recently implemented was to divide the number of students in each class into two separate groups. Instead of having forty students per class, groups are divided into smaller groups of twenty children. The aim is to give the slow learners more direct attention. The larger aim, however, is to raise the general academic level. This measure will also provide a more challenging atmosphere for those students that are gifted in a particular subject.

Another teaching staff reform is the introduction of performance appraisals of teachers. The purpose is to build upon their strengths. It is a goal of the Balashram that English fluency be vastly improved.

An additional change that has already brought in the desired results was to switch from traditional school desks and benches to floor desks. The simple fact of sitting cross-legged has reduced fidgeting, and has helped impose self-discipline. It is also hoped that it will improve concentration. This idea was a directive from the former principal, Mr. Suresh Nayak.

A new era for the Balashram Residential School has emerged, and it is vital that every member of the Balashram community – staff and students alike – rise to meet the challenge. <



Where there was once no hope, ...

Interview with two children from Balashram School

by Peter van Breukelen

During a visit to the Balashram school last year, I had the opportunity to interview two children to find out about their history and family background.

Chandon Choudhry Jen0 is a 9 year old boy from class standard 4 who has been at Balashram School since he was 5. He has one older sister. Both used to live with their parents in a hut, in poverty. The father had little or no work and was addicted to alcohol, while the mother and children begged for food to survive. Chandon was chosen to join Balashram School to free him from this miserable situation. After two years the father committed suicide by taking poison.

While narrating his story, Chandon was in tears. It was a very emotional interview for both of us.

Chandon's mother is still begging just to stay alive, and in the beginning when Chandon visited his family he also helped them and begged. Now the school provides him with some money so that when he goes home they have food to eat. I asked the headmaster if they could not do more to help, but he replied that it was impossible as the families of the Balashram children were all poverty-stricken.

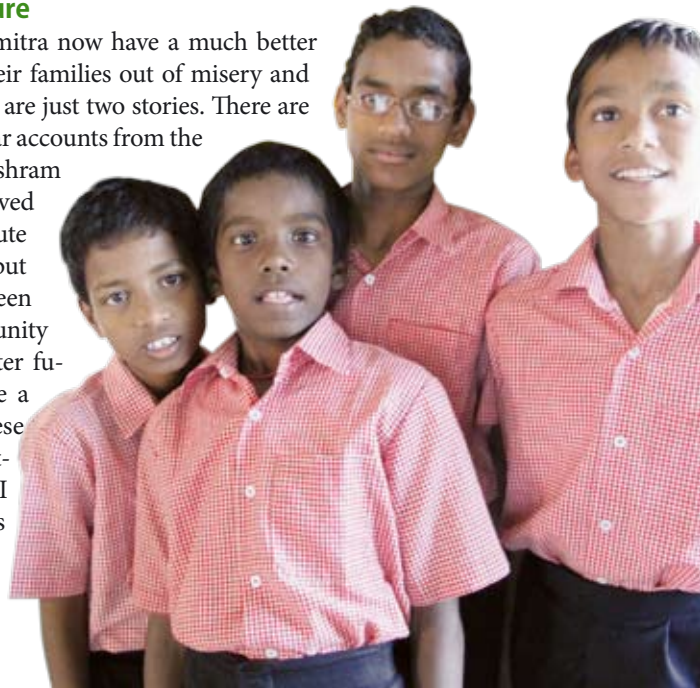
Sumitra Mandal is a girl of 11, from class standard 5 and has been in the Balashram School since she was 6 years old. She has two brothers, and two sisters who are married and living in poverty. Sumitra does not remember her father as he died when she was just two. This family, together with other families, live in tents moving from

one place to another, like nomads, to try and find a way to earn a little money to keep them alive. The mother and two sons collect dead wood which they sell for a few rupees, and this buys them some food. Sumitra visits her family for a few days each year, but does not feel at home there anymore as she now lives a life that offers her a more promising outlook.

Faith in the future

Chandon and Sumitra now have a much better chance to help their families out of misery and poverty. But these are just two stories. There are another 318 similar accounts from the children in Balashram all of whom once lived in grim and destitute circumstances, but each one has been given the opportunity for a much brighter future. Let us all be a part in helping these children find a better world. When I see the joyful faces of the Balashram children then I know it is a good thing to do. <

Chandon and his friends



... smiles now reign

Today Amit can play carefree with his friends

A Report of Hand in Hand USA

At age three, Amit was found alone. His young parents, itinerant laborers, were both working far from home. His clothing was torn. His knees were scraped. Desperately hungry, he was eating insects. That was three years ago. Today, Amit is like a different child, thanks to the Hariharananda Balashram. His eyes sparkle as he speaks about his studies and friends. He's learning English, loves to sing, and has just completed a beautiful new drawing that he wants to share with whomever comes his way.

Amit, like most children at the Balashram, is the first

person in his family to receive any kind of education. And because of this, he is the first who can truly dream of a future free from the bonds of poverty. Free from the specter of hunger.

The Hariharananda Balashram is home and school for over 320 boys and girls such as Amit. Some are orphans. Others come from desperate backgrounds. All are grateful, because now all the boys and girls can dream of beautiful futures. And when they dream such dreams, how can they not smile the most beautiful of smiles? <

HEALTHPROJECTS



Flood calamity in Orissa

“Hand in Hand” could help quickly by transferring 10.000 Euro from our calamity fund. This fund is part of our annual budget, and is refilled by your donations
by Brahmachari Dhirananda

Orissa has 482 kilometers of coastline which make it vulnerable to cyclones, floods and storm surges. This year unabated rains in the neighbouring states of Chaatisgarh and Jharkahand resulted in the inflow of large volumes of waters into the state of Orissa, which was already reeling under the pressure of heavy rains. This serious flood situation affected two million people.

Nineteen districts in Orissa have been affected by floods with Kendrapara by far the worst hit. Nine blocks in this district borne the brunt of the flood water. People there faced hard times because of this terrible situation. The discharge of water from the Hirakud and Rengali reservoirs coupled with high tides resulted in waters not being drained to the sea, making the situation worse.

All helping together

Volunteers of Prajnana Mission worked tirelessly from 16-20 September 2011 in providing relief to the victims in the Kendrapara district. During the first two days the students of Balashram, under the guidance of their Physical Education Teacher (he is also a Scout Master), Mr. Gopinath Das, actively participated in the relief work. The boy students of Standards IV, V and VI worked dili-

gently to pack food into packets to be distributed to each family. On the first day of relief operations, five students of Standard VI along with the staff of Balashram participated in transporting, unloading and distributing relief materials in the villages of Pattamundai, which had been surrounded on all sides by water for 14 days. Relief items were transported by the ashram tractor for some distance and then carried by boat to the victims.

Uncontrollable cases of need

Over one thousand families received dry food packets consisting of flattened rice, sugar and biscuits. Since all grazing areas were submerged, the next day the same team carried 2.8 tons of cow feed to the same villages and distributed it to 562 cows that had been exposed to rains and hunger for a long period. Furthermore Prajnana Mission carried out many camps in the districts of Kendrapara, Puri and Cuttack where food for humans and cattle feed was distributed. Students from Balashram not only participated in community work, but also left the secure school environs to be in the flood-affected areas. Such contributions prepare the students to face harsh realities of life in the future. <



1



2



3



4

1 - 2 Traditional purification ceremony
3 Microscope for the Health Centres 4 New Dental Chair

Two Dental Chairs for Arua

With the “Gold Tooth Action” campaign dental surgeons from Salzburg are helping their colleagues in Orissa. Two microscopes were donated from the University of Salzburg for the Health Centres.

by Dr. Peter Walker

Following the initiative - “Donate a Gold Tooth” - by the surgery of Dr. Martin Jirsa and Peter Walker, both from Salzburg, Austria, old gold teeth were collected and put to a good purpose. Patients donated their gold teeth that were no longer needed and deposited them in a box at the surgery. Sufficient money was raised to purchase two dental chairs for the new clinic at the Village Health project.

Free Health Care for All

With these words the inauguration ceremony for the new dental chairs began in a traditional way with Arati (purification fire ceremony) flowers, fruits and the breaking of a coconut.

The small ambulance in the village of Arua on the Balashram property, is not only serving the children, but also the socially-underprivileged rural population.

On the very day of inauguration 110 patients were checked and 75 were selected for dental treatment.

This ambulance is managed by the Prajnana Mission, Hariharananda Charitable Health Centers (HCHC). It is a blessing for the rural community who cannot find dental care in the surrounding area and care in the big-

ger cities is difficult to reach, taking time and money.

Used microscopes

Two used ReichertBionar microscopes were kindly donated by Dr.Thomas Url from the University of Salzburg for use in the Health Centres of the Hariharananda Charitable Health Centres (HCHC) in Balighai and Cuttack. They have been in action since November when they arrived. <

HEALTH CAMPS AFTER LOWERING OF WATER LEVEL



To prevent the feared outbreak of severe disease in the coming weeks, the number of Health Camps will be increased. As the drinking water in the affected regions is contaminated, it is necessary to distribute large quantities of water purification tablets, antibiotics and anti-diarrhoea medicine. Additional doctors have to be engaged to manage the huge influx of patients.

We kindly ask you to continue your immense support in the challenging weeks and months ahead.

Children's Painting Competition

A district competition of essay writing and drawing was organised by "Samvad", a popular daily published in the State of Orissa. In the drawing competition out of a total of 191 participants, students from Hariharananda Balashram won four prizes. In the Sub-Junior category, S. Adishree Mohanty bagged the first prize while in the Junior category Shrimant Buddhia, Santosh Kumar Khatua and Sharan Jena won the first, second and third prizes, respectively.



Srimant Buddhia, a 12 years old boy, shows on his picture a terrible flood in a Christian Village in India. People, awaiting help, are sitting with their few belongings on the roof of their hut. One boy takes care of a tired and weak calf to stop it from falling into the water below

! Make a New Year's present to you and to the children:

This drawing is to be auctioned and will be mailed to the highest bidder. All bids should be sent in to our treasurer Annemarie: treasurer@handinhand.at by the end of the day 31st December 2011

One Drop can make the Difference

Please make that difference with just **1 Euro a day** for the Balashram children! Give the children, from the poorest of circumstances, a new chance for their life; for a good education and a nourishing and warm, new home. The Balashram Residential School with their 320 students, has developed into a higher Government school status. (Medium School) and to a well-structured residential home.

With a **Class-Sponsorship of "35 Euro per month"**, you can give the children both financial support and a secure future.

More details can be found at www.handinhand.at (sponsor a child) or mpzerr@t-online.de



Thank you!

Since 2003 HAND IN HAND carries the Austrian Donation Certificate, which approves the lawful, legitimate and appropriate use of donations.

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