

SPOTLIGHT

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Projekt „Chrysalis“ accompanies school leavers in their lives



Hand in Hand so we go

'Hand in Hand', an international, humanitarian organization, which is particularly active in the North East of India. Following a terrible natural catastrophe in 1999 in the State of Odisha, we established this independent non-profit organization in the year 2000 in Vienna.



The aim is to provide aid and a home to the children, as well as to the poorest, needy and underprivileged people. We have a close partner in Odisha, Prajnana Mission, with whom we successfully implement our humanitarian projects.

At present, 480 underprivileged children, many of them orphans, are receiving at the fee-free Balashram Residential School, future-oriented, adequate education and training.

Three Health Centres in Odisha and West Bengal offer free medical care to the underprivileged. About 110.000 people receive free treatment at our Health Camps in isolated villages.

Our support includes quick and efficient aid after natural disasters, such as the cyclone in 2012. Your donations are financing

'Hand in Hand'. Thanks to very low administration costs, we are able to send 90% of all donations directly where they are deployed. Our organization has been awarded, since 2003, the Austrian Donation Certificate, which guarantees the security of donations by means of tough quality standards, transparency and continuous controls.

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends,

Our organization 'Hand in Hand', is a reliable partner which works hard for the disadvantaged and the people in need, particularly in the North Eastern part of India. Despite being sometimes unable to give help more than "the size of a drop" due to challenges we are facing at present worldwide, that drop is significant and falls exactly where it can fructify and where it can promote positive changes. All of us, but especially the underprivileged and destitute, are in need of sympathy, empathy and solidarity - possibly "an ocean full" of it. Understanding and feelings among people are the basis of communal life. However, a tangible drop of help can give people the chance of a better life. Our Hariharananda Balashram Residential School is a good example: until today a total of 480 children have been admitted. Alongside compulsory school subjects, the children are also given creative and practical opportunities to develop their personalities. You can read more in this Spotlight edition along with a presentation on the beautiful "Chrysalis Project" whose aim is to guide and support our school leavers in their choices of further higher studies or vocational training.

You will read about the "green ideas" which help our children to gain the necessary knowledge for the creation of a healthy future, and also look at our Health Centres' operations to get an idea about how tangible and effective our activities are.

We can do this thanks to your donations, for which I am profoundly grateful to you. Your support enables many people to have a better and more dignified life.

Please continue being our partner, remain actively and tangibly involved and contribute with help "the size of a drop".... or even more!

Yours truly

Peter von Breukelen
President of 'Hand in Hand'



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Green ideas... ...for a healthy future

To look after and care for 480 children and their tutors, is a logistic challenge for those in charge of the Residential School in the small village of Arua, located in the Indian State Orissa at about 80 km from Cuttack. It is an undertaking for the future to show how important it is to value clean and healthy grounds, water, plants and an overall environmentally-friendly life. It is a fact that, in India, the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers in agriculture has caused huge problems for the environment-friendly, the crops, and also financially. Therefore, at Balashram, the emphasis and efforts are on promoting awareness that agriculture can be successful and cost-effective even when using natural, organic means.

Thanks to your generous donations, this can be achieved step by step: the children witness from an early age how vegetables and flowers grow on the four-hectare grounds, thanks to their attentive care. Pupils are taught how to

make natural fertilizers from cow dung mixed with lemon, and they also learn how to make natural soap by using neem leaves, cow dung, sodium hydroxide and clay.

The Brahmin cattle, called Zebu, play an important role in both nutrition and renewable energy production. There is in fact a plan to build a biogas plant on the Balashram grounds and, therefore, the number of cows should increase from the present 110 to 200 cows in total.



The large, main canteen kitchen would then be provided with methane, thus stopping the usage of large amounts of firewood for cooking. This would not only be environmentally sustainable but it would also reduce overall costs significantly – besides contributing in reducing the increasing deforestation in India.

Balanced vegetarian and fresh food

Mindfulness and appreciation of body and soul start at Balashram with the children who often come from tribal areas where nutrition consists mainly of leaves, seeds and insects. Many families do not have enough to eat and children are often undernourished.

Parents are happy when they know that their children at Balashram receive three daily meals, which are fresh, healthy and vegetarian. Your donations make sure that none of the children is forgotten.



A collective start to the day

Healthy nourishment is one thing but also the care of body and spirit are equally important. Each morning the children meet with their teachers in the Balashram school yard in order to start together, the new day. They chant, pray and practice communion and togetherness.

One pupil reads the daily news to the other children and often one child will recite a poem. Each day a new saying or maxim is chosen by a pupil and written on a board inside the school: it should be profound, motivational and thought-provoking. The Balashram children practice regular yogic exercises in order to promote a balanced frame of mind, harmony and calmness, thus improving their concentration capacity which in turn facilitates their inner composure.



Preparation for the working and professional life

During their time at school, very often one can see where the different and unique talents displayed by the children, could lead them in their future professional and working life. Balashram also facilitates the training of their numerous skills which could be useful at a later stage in both their personal and professional lives. For example, similar to home economics courses, the girls at Balashram learn the art of cooking. It is also useful to be able to repair a bicycle: the 14-16 year old boys are highly motivated during these handicraft classes. Another traditional Indian craft reserved for men, is the art of hair cutting and shaving, where the school mates pose as models.



Both boys and girls can attend an elementary class to become a tailor or tailoress.

Classes for learning computer text processing are highly



Creativity and art

Joyful music and dance play an important role. It starts with classical singing lessons where the children learn the scale with the accompaniment of a harmonium, in order to move on to the traditional ragas which form the basics of classical Indian music. Many of the children have mastered the art of singing to such a degree that they have been, repeatedly, invited to appear on radio shows, enabling them to earn some pocket money. Boys also learn to play the tabla, an Indian drum.



It is a pleasure for the ears and eyes when the children perform, often at national dance competitions, in their colourful costumes. Children can express their creativity during art classes when they are asked to draw, paint or create sculptures.

Their talents for acting are expressed in spiritual and moral plays taken from the Indian scriptures.





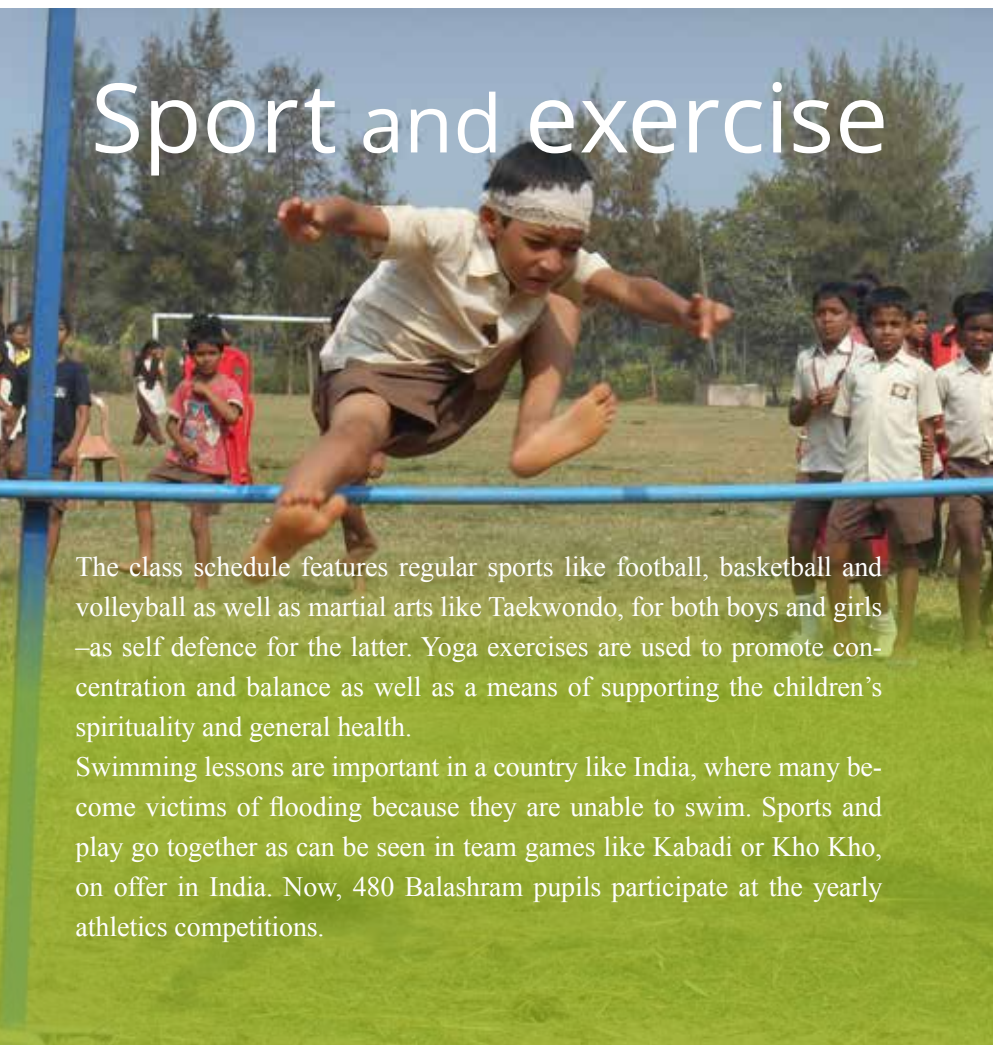
Talents create self-confident personalities

valued by the students. Finally, the children can also learn how to create, from cow dung, products like fertilizers, soaps and disinfectants.

Our Balashram children appreciate the fact that they are given the opportunity to learn and that their individual skills and abilities are stimulated and facilitated.

Because not every child is meant to pursue an academic career, we make sure that each child can develop and grow according to his/her own individual abilities and potential, in order to be well prepared for adult life.

Sport and exercise



The class schedule features regular sports like football, basketball and volleyball as well as martial arts like Taekwondo, for both boys and girls –as self defence for the latter. Yoga exercises are used to promote concentration and balance as well as a means of supporting the children’s spirituality and general health.

Swimming lessons are important in a country like India, where many become victims of flooding because they are unable to swim. Sports and play go together as can be seen in team games like Kabadi or Kho Kho, on offer in India. Now, 480 Balashram pupils participate at the yearly athletics competitions.





Project “Chrysalis” accompanies school leavers in their lives

Even after school, the youngsters of Balashram School shall be escorted and accompanied. Enabling Project “Chrysalis” to help graduates requires your donations.

The first children have now finished their compulsory school education and completed class X, in March 2016. New perspectives have opened up for thirty-nine boys and girls, originally coming from poor backgrounds and partly orphans without a family to support them – that is why the “Chrysalis Project” is so important: our local partner organization, Prajnana Mission, wants to offer new graduates, who leave Balashram to pursue higher education, the best possible support. That is only possible thanks to the generous help coming from the donators.

“Chrysalis” stems from the Greek word “chryso”, meaning “gold”, and refers to the golden pupa which will transform into a butterfly. In the same way, the youngsters shall be escorted on their “flight” into life. “Chrysalis” does not leave these young people on their own. Let us not leave them alone, either.



Bismruti’s father was a daily wage labourer in the village of Adala in the district of Cuttack. He used to work on other people’s farms. Death met him in a stampede of bullocks. Shocked by this incidence, his wife lost her mind. A teacher from a nearby town rescued this child from the miserable tentacles of an uncertain life and brought her to school. She can be described as hard-working and loving. Her professional wish is to become a teacher for Odia language.



Bismruti



Meghanad

Meghanad is from the small remote hamlet called Mermahul in Kalahandi, one of the most backward districts of Odisha. He comes from a poor family, his father was a heart patient. They have no proper house and landed property even on this present day. He was selected by the students survey team and taken to Balashram. Meghanad is a very talented artist and dancer and would like to be a professional artist and teacher for arts. His character can be described as simple, honest and loving with a good leadership quality.



The young boys under 12 years old were a little harder to reach, because they live in their own hostel. But we found a way and read and talked about themes such as courage and perseverance.

It was delightful to discover that our students are very curious about their counterparts in Texas, Mozambique or Iceland. Ideas and values that are shared helped the Balashram children realize that all over the world boys and girls face the same issues and challenges, and that in the end we are really not so different.

Through books and short films, we were able to have a lively dialogue, stressing new English vocabulary, concepts and ideas. The little booklets with themes such as creativity or cooperation became part of their belongings, each containing a clear message inside, enabling each young reader to grow, to develop...and to expand.

I witnessed how our children have become truly privileged. Their condition is far superior than their peer's in the surrounding villages. And yet, it is my hope that as they graduate and move away, they will keep humbleness and gratitude in their heart, and help others less fortunate, in turn.

Then the Balashram will not only be a place of growth, but become a continuous unstoppable force to promote growth and goodness wherever a Balashram student settles in the future. Only in this way can the circle fully close.



A Place of Growth

Irma Botero

Irma Botero, a long time Member of the Hand in Hand Board, spent three weeks last December at the Balashram.

Day to day the Balashram is growing, and these changes are evident in the students, the community and even the building sites.

The little faces of the youngest children glow in concentration as they absorb new English words and their first numbers. From a time when they knew no discipline, they already follow a tidy routine and this secure structure gives their daily habits meaning and joy.

Children of all ages, walk around with their friends, always of the same gender, with whom they hold hands, sharing confidences and giggles.

Once a Western guest becomes more of a fixture, questions begin to flow and a relationship is established.

As a woman, and this being India, it was easier to bond with the girls. In the evenings I would rush to the girl's dormitory to tell stories. I shared life experiences from the heart, which once all women are likely to face, no matter their age, race or nationality.

Memories from Balighai Health Care Centre

Nadia Pawelczyk



Reaching the Health Care Centre in Balighai, India, I found it was bigger and busier than I had previously imagined. There were many parents with their children waiting to be seen by the doctor. I was especially interested in the Centre, as I come from a family of doctors and from the very beginning of my trip to India, it became clear to me that life there is very different.

In May 2001, Prajnana Mission and Hand in Hand formed this centre, and both organizations still manage it to this day. The Health Care Centre comprises a large waiting room, two examination rooms, a small apothecary and a 4-bed ward for emergency cases. It is open five days a week from 8am-12pm. One doctor and one pharmacist are

employed on a regular basis while all other doctors and helpers work on a voluntary basis, with no pay.

It was a Monday after breakfast that I decided to pay the centre a visit. Only 15 minutes after the clinic opened, it was full with patients. From the very first minute I was impressed by how well the centre is organized and how efficient the system is. The patients first need to register and describe their symptoms, then they have to wait to be seen by the doctor, and after the appointment, they get all the necessary medication from the pharmacists who work in the same building. All staff members are incredibly kind and willing to answer every question the patients have. I was especially touched by how a little girl with her father

Balashram children say...

Hello! We are the students of Class 9 and we are very thankful to you all for your kindness to help us develop for a better future. We are very happy to be here. Balashram provides us with all facilities needed for our all-round development. The motto of Balashram is "make your dream a reality" which is our opportunity here. We are all very thankful to be here and we are thankful to all the donators, Spotlight-readers and members of Hand in Hand in Europe!

Please accept my heartiest thanks for everything you have done for us. I know, Balashram is only a means of your service to us. Before, we were most deprived and neglected. Our life took turn here and the concern of our well-wishers for us opened our existence to a new way of hope and aspiration. We get everything here, food, clothing, study materials, medicine, love and affection. We are guided here to make our dream a reality. We are trying hard to reach our goal.



Tilottama Mallik,
class 9 , 16 years

was treated. It was clear that she hadn't been feeling her best for a few days. She had a high fever and a very heavy cough. Her father was a single parent as her mother had passed away. The father was very grateful for this place. He told me that the doctor working for the centre had a very good reputation and knew how to help his patients.



This experience made me appreciate my life so much more. My mother always took such good care of me, making sure that I had everything I needed, and my father, being a doctor, ensured that I had access to the best treatment possible. Furthermore it showed me how important it is to help others, and what a great job both Hand in Hand and Prajnana Misson are doing in order to help other less privileged people.

They allowed me to stay in the room with them while the doctor was examining her. It was her first time to have a proper medical examination and she was a little scared, not knowing what to expect, but she was very brave and let the doctor do what he had to. It turned out that she had a serious air passage infection and needed very strong medication, but this never prevented the girl from smiling. When her father went to collect all the medication from the pharmacist, I stayed with the girl in one of the rooms. The girl didn't speak English, but this didn't hinder our communication. She played with my hair band and told me that she really liked it, so I gave it to her as a gift. She was so happy with it and decided to give me her hair clip in return, which I still have today.



I am a 12-year old girl studying at Hariharananda Balashram. From my childhood up to now the Balashram has helped us a lot for a bright life in future and I hope I will also be supported in my future's aim to be a doctor.



Pujarani Bebera,
class 6 , 12 years

play different games, learn yoga and taekwondo, dance, music, table, art and craft. I am satisfied with all the options we have here.

I like the Balashram rather than my own house because our house is deprived of many things, such as food, clothes etc. But here I am free. Here I learn different subjects like English, Maths, Science and we



Sandeep Dash,
class 6 , 11 years

Hello! I thank the readers of Spotlight in Europe who help us in building our future. You are like our parents who give us love, affection and care. In our Balashram we get so many facilities. So many people are taking care of us in our study hours and each and every moment of our life. Our Balashram is just like a great Banyan tree that has given us shelter until we strengthen our wings of ability and fly away to merge in the mainstream of society.



Laxmipriya Bastia,
class 9 , 16 years


This is what it looks like when Balashram children read the Spotlight magazine:



One drop can make a difference



www.facebook.com/hariharanandabalashram

Please donate directly through our webpage www.handinhand.at via 

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

More details can be found at www.handinhand.at (sponsor a child) or secretary@handinhand.at

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