

# SPOTLIGHT

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## 10th anniversary of the Balashram Residential School



**HEALTH PROJECTS**  
HCHC Jagatpur/Cuttack  
Hope for many!

**BALASHRAM**  
The sun rises...

YOUR DONATION COUNTS!





## Fund-raising ideas

**There are many occasions for fund-raising campaigns. I would like to tell you about a successful event at the Yoga Centre in Sterksel. Nada Steinmann**

How can we be of help? Five dedicated women, respectively from Holland, Germany, France and Turkey pondered on this question and came up with the following idea: "We are going to collect used- but still in good condition - clothes, shoes, material, jewellery and other items.

We are then going to sell the items and donate the proceeds to the Balashram Residential School."



The **20th anniversary celebrations at the Yoga Centre in Sterksel** offered the perfect opportunity to organise an **Indian style-bazaar**. The preparations took 4 months. All the clothing donated by friends and acquaintances, was lovingly washed, ironed and sorted. "It was a lovely time. We enjoyed very much the preparatory work", tells the **initiator of the campaign, Hanneke Drost, the Secretary of 'HAND IN HAND Netherlands.'**

Hanneke has, over the years, always been tirelessly looking for new ways to collect donations for HAND IN HAND. She is known as the **jam-fairy**, who prepares delicious jam to be sold in order to support HAND IN HAND. She was equally active and full of energy during the 20th anniversary celebrations, on 6th August 2013, in Sterksel.



Together with **Caroline, Leyla, Heidi und Stien** they erected a big white tent in the beautiful gardens of the Sterksel Centre. Besides the clothing, also beautiful pictures, nicely decorated wooden boxes as well as jewellery, stones and crystals from the Himalayas and much more were on offer for sale.

The five women provided a loving atmosphere and entertained the visitors with Indian tea and cookies. The weather was nice and the atmosphere was relaxed and joyful. Many people came by and bought something or made a donation for the Balashram children. **3000 Euros** were collected. On top of that, a fun auction took place during which beautiful artwork was auctioned.

The auction collected **2500 Euros** and **1000 Euros** in entrance fees which was also donated. In total **6500 Euros** was raised for the Balashram Residential School. Some musicians from India closed the celebrations beautifully.

The many creative ideas have contributed in making the 20th anniversary of the Yoga Centre in Sterksel a beautiful celebration.

People from different countries came together and took the opportunity to get closer and create new relationships, to exchange views and ideas while donating 6500 Euros for a good cause.

*The Balashram children say: Thank You!*





Dear Friends,

this Spotlight edition is dedicated primarily to the 10 year establishment of the Balashram Residential School.

The School celebrated on 29th July 2013 its 10th anniversary. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the children, all the people who are looking after them and those that run the school – as well as all who have contributed in giving these children a home. My deepest gratitude goes out to all of you who have given help and support. With your donations the school was constructed and made what it is now. We are also relying on your support for the future – and on your great ideas – in order to continue to sustain the growth of the children.

In the name of HAND IN HAND

Peter van Breukelen (President)

## Ideas for HAND IN HAND fundraising – sweet like mango

Brain storming is easy but working things out is hard. Nevertheless one has to start with ideas. So the **"Mango Meeting"** was initiated, during a Yoga seminar in April 2013, to find new ways of fundraising for HAND IN HAND. It took place in Tattendorf with an inspiring amount of sunshine, dialogue and ... mango juice!

While working as a team in different groups, new inspirations and drafts surfaced, which were then presented to the rest of the groups. **Many beautiful and sweet ideas to collect donations sprouted from the meetings**, like private projects and charity concerts, races and public donation boxes. The establishment



of new relationships with companies and institutions for fundraising purposes as well as projects involving video and computer were mentioned during the brain storming.

During the follow-up meeting on the next day, different people committed themselves to pursuing the

various projects. This was an important achievement. It was really encouraging to witness the enthusiasm and willingness to support HAND IN HAND.

Many thanks go to all participants for sharing their ideas, for showing their potential **and for helping to support and promote the fundraising projects** for such a worthy cause. During this inspiring meeting we all experienced the joy which arises when people work together with the aim of helping others.



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## „Thanks to Balashram, the children have a better life and that makes me happy“



**SPOTLIGHT:** *This year we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Balashram Residential School. As President of the Aid Organisation HAND IN HAND, which has been supporting the school financially, you have been going along with this project from the beginning. What do you remember when thinking back?*

**Peter van Breukelen:** At the start of this project, 40 small children were accepted into the school. The grounds, which Paramahansa Prajnanananda had received from his family as a gift and on which a school was supposed to be built, was small and manageable. However, now, 10 years later, all has grown considerably. Some new buildings were built, which can now accommodate many more children. At the Balashram School we have pupils who are 4 to 15 years old. It is wonderful to see how these children who, before coming here, did not have

any chances to a fulfilled life, are now growing whilst being lovingly looked after and are enjoying a good schooling at the Residential School. Thanks to the efforts of many teachers and carers, these children receive a sound education. I was able to witness how the children were growing and becoming happier over the years.

From some of the children I found out that before coming to Balashram, they had lived in poverty, sometimes living like nomads, were forced to beg and had no roof over their heads. When I look at the children now, I see them happy and loving and they lead a totally different life. This makes me very happy. We have to thank the energetic and active support of Paramahansa Prajnanananda, as well as the many people who have contributed to the success of this project. Of course, HAND IN HAND plays an important role as well, because without its support all this would not have been possible.

## Going to **SCHOOL** is a privilege

**Claudia Cremers is part of the HAND IN HAND Organisation Netherlands and, in her report, she emphasizes how important it is to give aid as it benefits both the needy as well as the donators.**

Today's youth is tomorrow's society. At Balashram School they have well understood this concept. So, every-time I visit this beautiful school with internship till the age of 18, I see how much all are hard working to realize their ideals. Both teachers and students seem to be fully aware that **this school presents a golden opportunity** to realize their dreams.



**SPOTLIGHT:** *Is the school applying a specific pedagogical and educational concept and idea? Where does the emphasis lie?*

**Peter van Breukelen:** The highlight is given to a traditional and sound school education for the children. On top of that, they receive training in music, dance and art. A lot of emphasis is put on the development of body and spirit. To foster this, the children also practice yoga, sports and ethics. It is important for us that the children are stimulated on different levels in order to promote a wholistic and integrated development. That way the children gain valuable experience in different areas. They are physically strong and mentally well developed. Since the age of 4, these children were given the chance to grow up in a well-regulated environment in which they could experience orderliness and love. This has helped them to become self-confident young people.

**SPOTLIGHT:** *Two years ago some changes were made to the teaching concept, primarily in reference to slow learning children. The new measures were intended to support these children on an individual basis. How has it been put into practice?*

**Peter van Breukelen:** Separate classes are created according to the learning capabilities of the children. For all, it is also important to find out which skills and abilities each child has. Some children are suitable for an academic career and they will go to College in Cuttack after their 12 years long schooling at Balashram. Balashram will financially support these children through College. Other children are supported and facilitated in areas where their strengths lie. Some choose technical professions, some learn a handicraft, while others may be preparing for professions in which they could use their computer skills.



**SPOTLIGHT:** *Ten years have elapsed since the start of the project. What changes have occurred during this time?*

**Peter van Breukelen:** Initially we had 40 children, now we have 400. Each year when the selection of new children occurs, we ensure that half of them are girls and the other half boys. Since the number of children has grown, also the number of teachers had to be increased in order to cover for the ten school classes. The number of school classes was increased in order to have, not 40, as it was initially, but only 20 pupils in each class. Children who are quick learners are put into the same class in order to allow those who are slower, to receive additional care. For this reason we now have 20 teachers at Balashram. We also have one carer per class who sleeps together with the children in the dormitory and who takes on the role of the father/mother. Additionally, we also need staff to work in the kitchen, in the garden and in the cows' stables. In the neighbouring village Arua live many poor people, who are very grateful to have the opportunity to work at Balashram. This has contributed to the development of the village whilst offering the inhabitants a better life.

**SPOTLIGHT:** *In the role of President of HAND IN HAND you are jointly responsible for the financial support of Balashram. Until now the project has been financed by donations. What are the plans for the future in this respect?*

**Peter van Breukelen:** Up to now we have always been able to cover the growing costs. This year (2013) a budget of 300.000 Euros has been calculated to cover all costs and expenses. I'm the President of HAND IN HAND but the same organisation is also present in the USA and in Australia. We are aware of what a big task it is to collect all the necessary money. How quickly planned projects can be put into practice depends on the available funds. Until today we have always been able to find the required money and we will carry on doing so. The children are very important to us and we will continue supporting them. I'm optimistic that also in the future, many people will contribute in helping destitute people.



For us in the West it is so normal to go to school that we even do not think about it, and sometimes even children are reluctant to go to school. But there are still places in the world where going to school is a great privilege. And going to a good school is even more rare when you do not come from the „right“ family or by chance you were not born in the „right“ environment. More than good, Balashram is even a rare school in Orissa where we still find children of poor families. It is rare, because children do not only learn to read and write, they also **follow many other classes like culture and computer science**, which normally are not accessible to the poor.

They are offered friendship, love and a sincere and safe environment to cultivate themselves into fully grown and bloomed adults, more than ready to serve the society that initially could not serve them.

Thanks to the financial help, mainly from the West, we can help these children to regain their worthiness and to be happy. Thanks to your help we can really save many precious young lives. Helping others is noble and it enriches our own lives as well.

In many scriptures it is said that **what you spend from a noble heart, you will get it back manifold**. And it is in giving that we receive. Your donation will be much valued and will result visibly in the smile of many happy faces. Thank you very much!





An open book with a sun shining above it is painted on one of the external walls of the Hariharananda Balashram Residential School. That is the logo of the Residential School which, on the 29th July 2013, commemorated its 10th anniversary with a joyful celebration and a colourful cultural programme.

Report by Nada Steinmann

## The sun rises above the open book

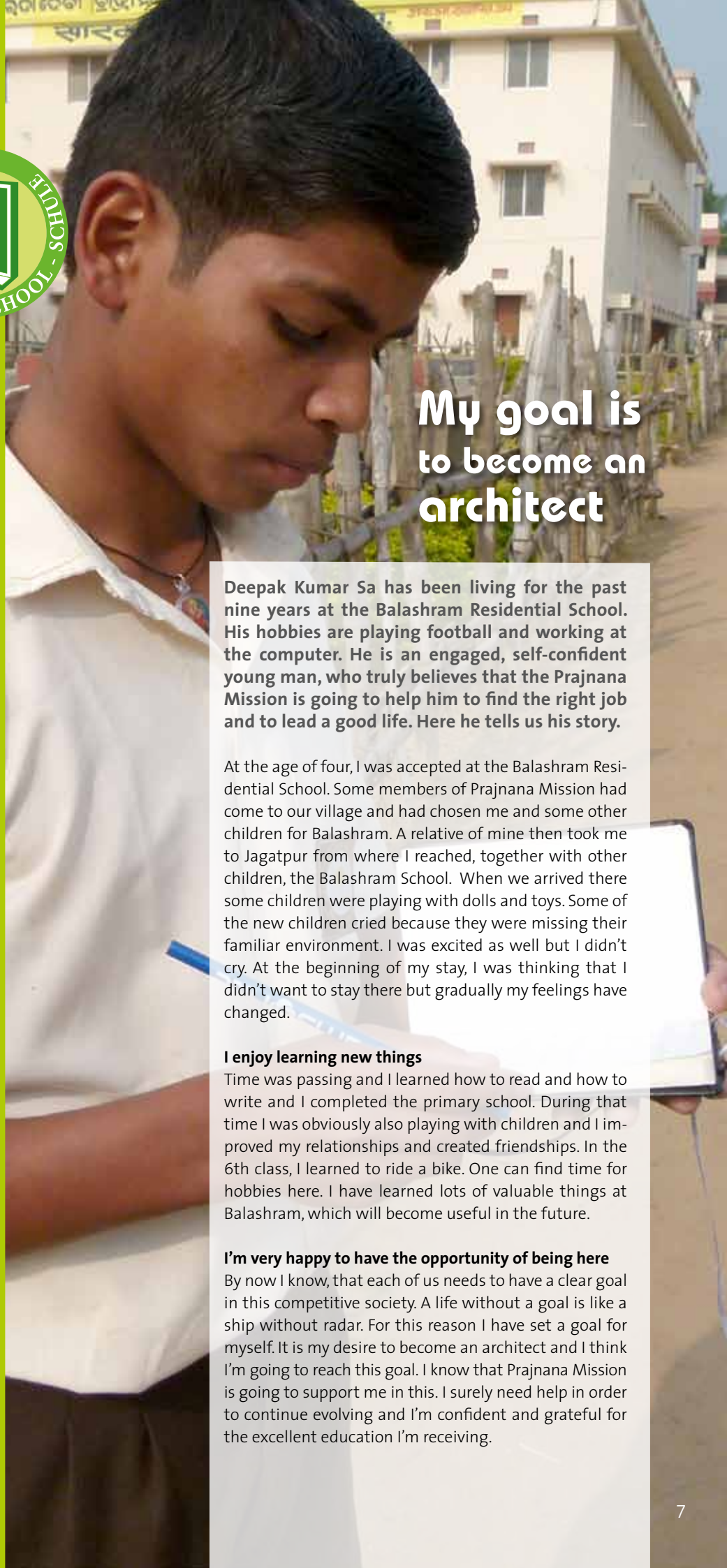
For the 400 children of the Balashram School, who evolve into beautiful flowers in the Balashram garden, the school has in fact made the sun rise in their lives. Each and every child is grateful for having the chance to discover their own potential and to evolve into a worthy person. The children do not only receive expertise knowledge but are also given ethical and moral values in order for them to be able to act responsibly in all areas of their lives. An example of this is the variegated cultural programme that the self-confident and happy children had put together for the celebrations of the school's foundation day on the 29th July. More than 1.000 visitors joined the pupils, teachers and school staff to celebrate this special day. On stage the children demonstrated their manifold talents. They exhibited themselves in theatre plays, skits, as well as in many dance performances and in singing and recitations. The children offered a beautiful programme for the 10th anniversary celebrations. Public tutors and representatives from outside the school praised the Balashram project for being a light and hope for a healthy and happy society. On the occasion of the anniversary celebrations, the new Maths and Science Laboratory as well as the Art Gallery were officially inaugurated.

All in all it was a beautiful and jolly celebration which was closed by a communal dinner, late in the evening of the 29th July. This day will remain in the memory of many boys and girls of the school.

The 10th anniversary has again confirmed that above the book, which was opened at Balashram, a lot of light and sun has come into the lives of many people. In view of this, we can say that the dream of the founder Paramahansa Prajnanananda and of his teacher Paramahansa Hariharananda has become reality here at Balashram in Arua.







## My goal is to become an architect

Deepak Kumar Sa has been living for the past nine years at the Balashram Residential School. His hobbies are playing football and working at the computer. He is an engaged, self-confident young man, who truly believes that the Prajnana Mission is going to help him to find the right job and to lead a good life. Here he tells us his story.

At the age of four, I was accepted at the Balashram Residential School. Some members of Prajnana Mission had come to our village and had chosen me and some other children for Balashram. A relative of mine then took me to Jagatpur from where I reached, together with other children, the Balashram School. When we arrived there some children were playing with dolls and toys. Some of the new children cried because they were missing their familiar environment. I was excited as well but I didn't cry. At the beginning of my stay, I was thinking that I didn't want to stay there but gradually my feelings have changed.

### I enjoy learning new things

Time was passing and I learned how to read and how to write and I completed the primary school. During that time I was obviously also playing with children and I improved my relationships and created friendships. In the 6th class, I learned to ride a bike. One can find time for hobbies here. I have learned lots of valuable things at Balashram, which will become useful in the future.

### I'm very happy to have the opportunity of being here

By now I know, that each of us needs to have a clear goal in this competitive society. A life without a goal is like a ship without radar. For this reason I have set a goal for myself. It is my desire to become an architect and I think I'm going to reach this goal. I know that Prajnana Mission is going to support me in this. I surely need help in order to continue evolving and I'm confident and grateful for the excellent education I'm receiving.



## Sponsorship for a whole class

Sabine and Rolf Aeppli report on their work for HAND IN HAND in Switzerland.

"To help other people" and "to do something good" has always been important for us. That's why we founded, in June 2006, the Association of 'HAND IN HAND', with the aim to collect donations for the Balashram children in India. Some time later we took on the sponsorship for a whole class. Six times we have already been able to transfer the necessary money to India for the **40 girls and boys**. We are very happy to be able to transfer every single Swiss Franc directly, without any deductions. This is because we work on a voluntary basis and all possible expenses are paid for from a separate account. It is a great joy for us to know that all the children have the chance to grow up in a good familial environment, which gives them support and promotes them in all areas like schooling as well as spiritual and physical growth. Thanks to the continuous **financial support from many donors** in Switzerland, we will be able to help the 40 boys and girls also in the future. We are hoping to support more children very soon.

We take the opportunity to heartily thank all the donors, members and all people involved in this project. Without them, this project would have never been possible.



## To learn with joy – why did we in Europe almost forget how to do it?

Louisa Martin reports on her social work experience at Balashram

I visited Balashram for the first time in 2011, together with my family. Already then, I was very touched by the openness and sociableness of the children. These memories awoke in me the desire to travel again to India and to re-visit the children. Two years later in my school in Germany, I was given the opportunity to complete a social work experience. With the active support of the **HAND IN HAND Organisation in Vienna**, I was given the chance to a very eventful and exciting trip.

**Upon my arrival at the Balashram School, I received a very loving welcome.** The children were looking at me expectantly with shiny eyes and were smiling showing their bright white teeth. During the following days, I visited the school classes and realised what a tight teaching schedule they had. Despite that, the children love the school and always enjoy learning something new. In my opinion, this fact distinguishes them from the European children. I was also impressed by their vivacity and healthy self-confidence, which again, nowadays is difficult to find in children in Europe. **The pupils are always motivated and grateful for the wonderful opportunities they are given at Balashram.** The children are attended by loving carers, whom they address as 'Mama' or 'Papa'. The children called me 'sister' and that gave me the feeling of 'belonging'. I spent lots of my time with the children and taught them how to create knotted wristbands. I was positively surprised about their manual skills and the rapidity with which they learn a new technique.

At Balashram I felt extremely lovingly looked after. The children would often ask me whether I was feeling well and at ease. I took the simple but delicious meals together with them whilst sitting on empty rice sacks. We were eating using our hands and the children were surprised when they saw me using my left hand. Until then I didn't know that in India it was considered impure to eat with the left hand.

**Balashram is a wonderful project**, which offers the children a promising future. I'm happy about the frugality of the children. However, it makes me think: Why can't the children in Europe value the fact that they have the opportunity to go to school as much as the children in India do?





Annie Said, from France, visited the Balashram School for the first time in 2007. That was the year of the 100th Birthday celebrations of Paramahansa Hariharananda, the visionary, philanthropist, philosopher and name giver to the Balashram School project he initiated after spending all his life helping poor children. In this report she describes her impressions of her first trip there.

## A nectar drop in the ocean of suffering



School principal Shri P.P. Singh in a conversation with Annie Said

**Paramahansa Prajnanananda, the founder of the Hariharananda Balashram School**, was accompanying us on our trip. During a ceremony he inaugurated the school library. Many visitors were present – mainly from the West – who were keen to meet the children and to learn more about this project.

The school is situated in a village made of clay huts and straw roofs surrounded by rice fields. I was very surprised about how simple the school is furnished. In the dormitories there are two rows of wooden beds, each one with a folded blanket and a mosquito net, nothing else. When we looked at the toilets and bathrooms I observed the young children who had just arrived, and was wondering whether they knew how to wash themselves or if somebody had to teach them.

After crossing a room full of toys, brought by the Westerners, we arrived at the library where we sat down together with the children, on small wooden benches. There Paramahansa Prajnanananda told us the history and development of Balashram and informed us about future projects. **The contented and happily laughing children touched us deeply.** I personally feel deep sadness when I think of the suffering and cruelty these children had to experience before coming here. During our travel across India, I have seen many terrible sights, like young hungry children kneeling in dirty train coaches, trying to scrape the dirt from the floor in order to get some food or money from the travellers. I became aware that this school project might only be a small nectar drop in the ocean of suffering in this world but, at the same time, it represents **hope for millions of people**, who every day are crying, out of desperation.



## CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT TO A GOOD LIFE

**“Rarely have I seen so many children living harmoniously and happily together with their teachers and educators, whom they respect, like at the Balashram Residential School”, said Caroline Robaglia, when talking with Nada Steinmann.**

“To help others – is this the way to become happier ourselves?” This thought motivated Caroline and her friends to create, in 2008, the Non-Profit Organisation HAND IN HAND in France. “This has given a new meaning to my life”, says Caroline and emphasizes that her love for India had always been deep-rooted in her heart. Through the practice of yoga, Caroline’s life developed positively. Out of gratitude to her teacher and to India, she wanted to do something to help the people there and, especially, help the children.

### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CULTURES

Her first visit to India was a shock, “there are people who live in the streets without possessions of any kind. Despite that, they emanate a ‘joy of life’ that can be hardly found in the West”. At that time Caroline was working for an American company and, through her many visits to the USA, she became aware of the enormous differences between these two countries and cultures. In one country people had so many material goods but, despite that, were unhappy; in the other country there was great poverty, however, the hearts of the people were open. This important experience made a great impression on Caroline.

“Each and every adult should make an effort to ensure that all children in this world are treated properly, receive enough food and are given a roof over their heads”, says Caroline. She is convinced that today’s children will contribute to a better world in the future but, as long as they are young, they need the adults’ help.



### MAKING A MARK FOR EDUCATION

In this line of thought, she emphasizes the importance of the Balashram School, where children are treated with respect. In her profession as a psychotherapist, she treats teenagers as well and she noticed that many children have substantial problems in the Western schools and that there are flaws in the way they are educated and taught nowadays. This is the reason why she considers the way children are taken care of at the Balashram School as forward-looking. In her opinion, children are receiving there the best education one could wish for all the children in the world.

Caroline had visited the Balashram School shortly after its opening and it makes her happy to see the little children of back then, becoming self-confident, happy and dynamic teenagers. The education they receive opens up a totally new outlook on life and the chances of them finding good employment are much higher, thus preventing them, and their children after that, to ever experience the sad life in a slum.

The activities of HAND IN HAND in France may only represent small drops. However, they can cause huge waves in the ocean. The most important thing is:

**“To start somewhere to serve people and thus gaining a richer life ourselves.”**



## I’m helping out of gratitude

**Dirk Denzer from Germany has initiated some projects in favour and in support of HAND IN HAND, and here he explains why.**

The implicitness with which we face the material well-being in the Western world, makes us often, unfortunately, forget that on this planet, education, health care and nourishment are not taken for granted everywhere. **I want to get involved with HAND IN HAND** because my life is blessed with love, happiness and prosperity and I feel the need to pass it on as much as possible. At HAND IN HAND all donations are “in good hands”. I know that help arrives directly where it is urgently needed and the lives of many people, especially those of many children, are strongly improved.







## The Cuttack Health Centre

### HOPE FOR MANY

In February 2013, Michael Rieser together with his wife Gerti, visited the Cuttack Health Centre and their report conveys lively images about the events.



"It is early in the morning. The queue in front of the small **doctor's surgery** is growing with people waiting. A mother with 3 children looks at me and the confidence that here she will receive help, is reflected in her eyes.

A few metres away the **Mobile Dental Unit vehicle** is parked.

The dentist proudly shows us all the equipment and explains that it can be sterilised. That is very rare in India. I'm happy to know that the mobile ambulance is helping many people with dental problems and pain. Many of us know the feeling of relief after the dentist has freed us from unbearable tooth ache. My joy about the medical help that HAND IN HAND is able to provide, thanks to the donations, is immense. At the same time, it makes me sad to know that dental prosthesis are too expensive and many people cannot afford them.

#### Free medical care

We visit the big construction site for the **new Health Centre**, which is only a few minutes by car from here. It should be completed at the beginning of 2014. This means that waiting patients will not have to queue in the rain anymore because the new rooms will be able to accommodate all. Several doctors will be able to work simultaneously in several treatment rooms. There are also inpatient facilities for emergency cases. The property is large and there is enough space to eventually build, in the near future, a small hospital.

We leave this place behind us and feel deep gratitude for the urgently needed medical help that is given here. Most of the people here do not have – as opposed to Europe – health insurance and cannot afford medical care."







During the **10th anniversary celebrations**, the Balashram children have demonstrated how the transfer of knowledge does not any longer concentrate exclusively on traditional subjects. Subjects like **nature conservation and sustainability** are already an important part of education. Through exciting games, experiments and more, the children of Balashram learn what they can do for the protection of the environment. During the celebration we could also admire an exhibition of **wonderful pictures and art made by the children**.

## 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. 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](http://www.handinhand.at) (sponsor a child) or [secretary@handinhand.at](mailto:secretary@handinhand.at)

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