

Shining Stars

SHINING STARS



Centers for Youth Development

"... and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like stars forever." Daniel 12:3

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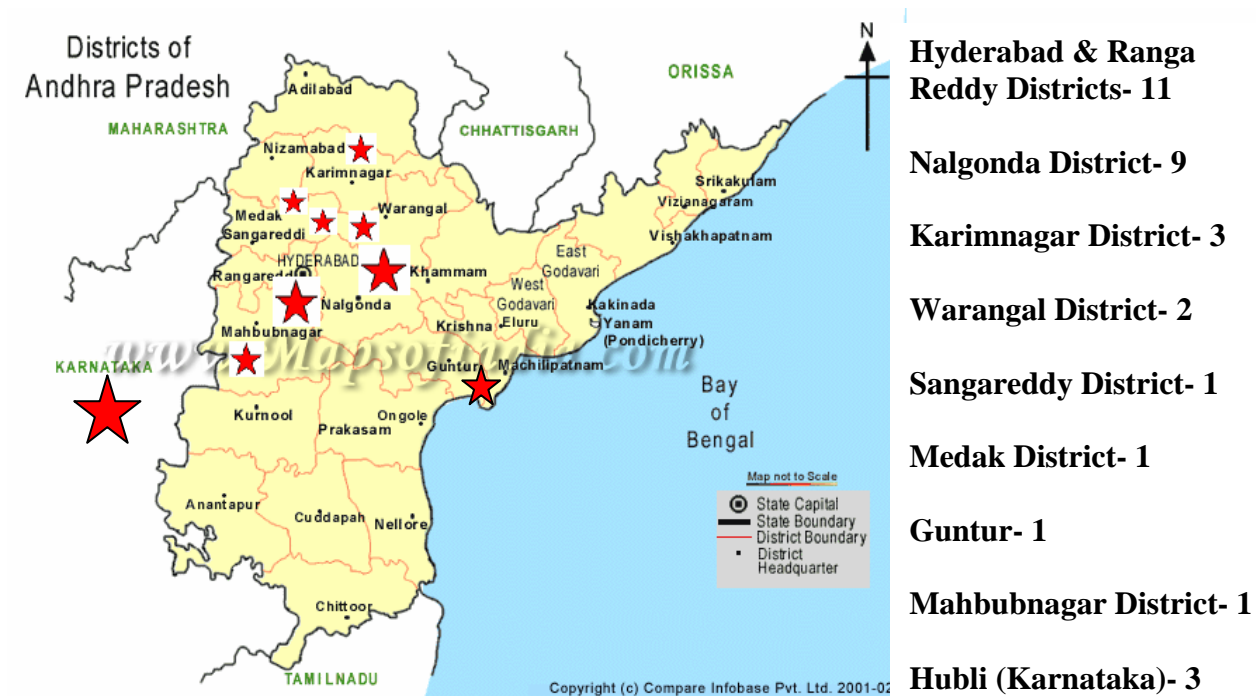
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The Beginnings

Peter Wiig caught the Vision of investing in children from his Director, Dan Pryor, while he worked for Campus Crusade's Here's Life Inner City in Los Angeles. Dan's vision of S.A.Y. Yes Center's for Youth Development was a response to the burden he had to reach the poor youth of the inner cities of America. Later, Mercy (Peter's wife) also caught the same vision for children.

In March 1996 Peter and Mercy moved back to India and began having a few children over to their home, after school, to help them with their homework and share the love of Christ. This small ministry has grown into the Shining Stars movement and today, by God's grace, we have 32 centres, in partnership with various churches, which are serving almost 900 children on a daily basis in the state of A.P.

The Present Centres



The Vision of Shining Stars:

“Raising Godly leaders by discipling children for the long-term and implementing holistic, developmental programs run in partnership with like-minded churches”.

We strive to do this by partnering with churches in order to offer after school tutoring programmes for children, which involves:

- a. Operating, through our partners, **daily, after school tutoring centres** for children from first class through high school.
- b. Offering **training and accountability** to our partners.
- c. **Producing some materials** that will be helpful in running their centres effectively.
- d. Offering some **financial assistance**, when possible, to churches that have a burden to develop children.
- e. Developing the children holistically:
 - i. **Spiritually**- by teaching weekly Bible lessons and discipling the older children in the Christian faith.
 - ii. **Emotionally**- by being available to the children whenever they are in need of counseling etc.
 - iii. **Physically**- by offering healthy snacks, physical activities, other field trips and outings.
 - iv. **Socially**- by providing a homey, friendly atmosphere and other activities for the children to mingle with each other.
 - v. **Intellectually**- by offering tutoring, training in areas such as drama, computers, music etc.

These programmes are implemented by concerned staff who gives as much individual attention to the children as possible. Apart from this, we provide other activities and opportunities such as games, field trips, singing, teaching in various developmental areas, in order to see that the children have the wherewithal to grow up with an equal chance of a good future as any other young person. Part of this is to help provide financial aid for their education, where possible. Most of the children that we are serving are from lower to lower middle income families.

The Biblical Basis

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” *Deuteronomy 6:5-7*

Why Children?

"It is better to build children than to repair broken adults.

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (Prov' 22:6)

Brother Johan du Preeze, one of the speakers at the Global Consultation on World Evangelism (GCOWE) in Pretoria, South Africa and an advocate for children stated:

“Children from the ages of 4-14 form one of the world’s largest forgotten people groups-

- about one third of the world’s population.
- the most receptive to the Gospel
- between 60% and 85% of the children in this age group who are presented with the Gospel turn to Christ

‘Children are important to God; they are mentioned 1957 times in the Bible.’

“And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.” Mark 10:16.

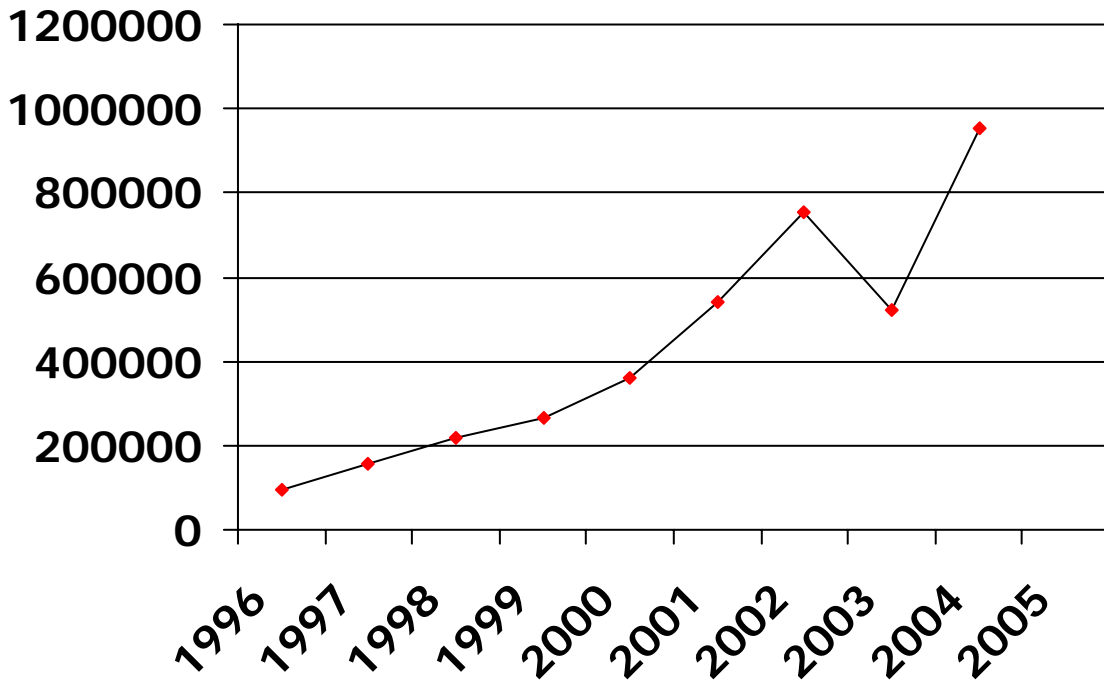
About 40% of India’s population are 18 years of age and younger. About 60-85% of children between the ages of 4-14 who are presented with the Gospel turn to Christ.

Children, potentially, have their whole lives ahead of them. It's a strategic and wise investment. However, it takes a long-term commitment and needs to be well planned of high quality in nature. They grasp so much at a young age. Their minds are like sponges. They are highly impressionable. They memorize well. They enjoy being around others their own age. They have a need to feel loved and have a sense of identity. They have many questions and we have an opportunity to answer them if we are willing to give our time and efforts, as their godly leaders.

They have questions pertaining to the Bible and life in general, such as peer pressure, bribery, marriage, religious customs, family etc.

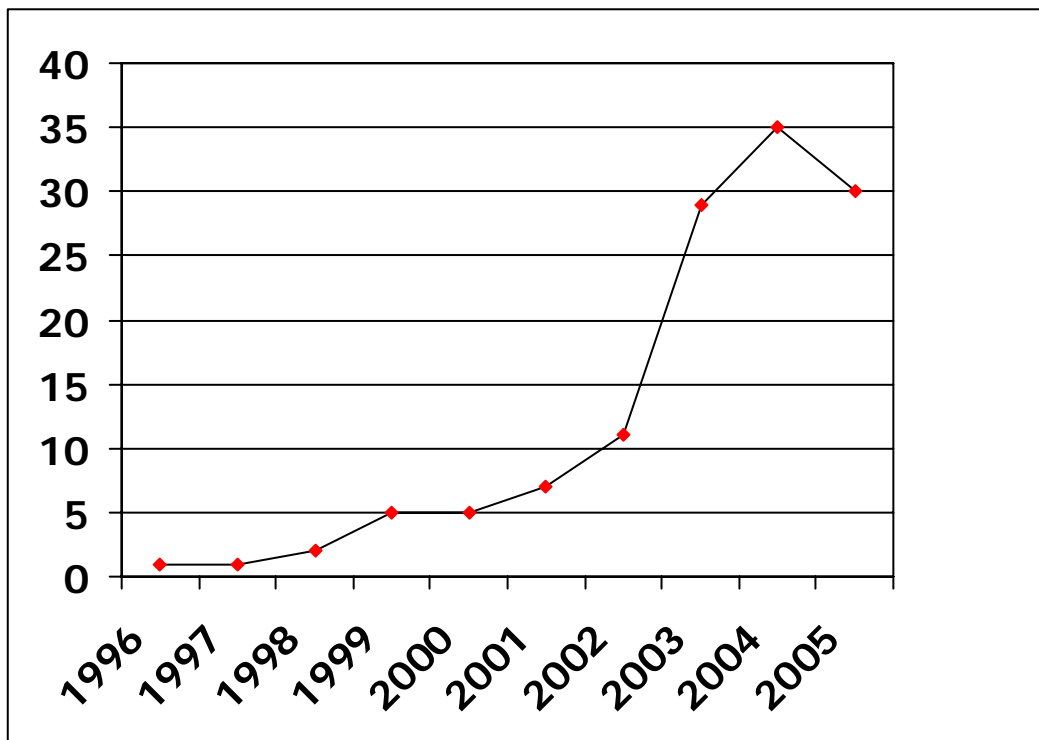
We believe that India (the world for that matter) needs to raise up a new generation of godly leaders, those who care more about others than themselves, those who have a solid foundation and values on which to stand. Children are strategic candidates for such training because they will be the future leaders of the world. But the quality of leaders they will be tomorrow is determined by the quality of mentoring that we give them today. Do you want to be a part of molding the future journalists, politicians, engineers, doctors, rickshaw drivers, daily laborers, pastors, entertainers, authors, athletes etc. into Godly leaders? If the will not who will?

Financial Growth



(The reason the 2003 figures dipped is because we registered that year and only included 8 months of our actuals).

Number of Centres and Growth



A Little about India

With a population of over 1,028,610,328 people, India is the largest democracy in the world, and catching up to China as the most populous country, with an annual population growth at about 1.8 % (as of 2003). The life expectancy has risen from 44 yrs in 1970 to 64 years in 2003.

India is also the world's youngest nation with more than 40 % of the population under 18 years of age, 54% less than 25 years, 64% less than 29 years and 70% less than 35 years. The future leaders are young people in a changing culture.

India is truly in need of the love of Jesus. Please pray with us for the faith to see children raised up to be the Godly leaders of this nation!

Andhra Pradesh (the state that we primarily work in) has about 76,210,007 people.

The literacy Rate of India is only 64.8 %.

(These statistics came from the India Census 2001 website: <http://www.censusindia.net/>).

Our board members are:

- Mr. P.K.D. Lee- President (Haggai Int'l)
- Mr. Jasper Dawson- Vice President (Architect)
- Mr. Emmanuel Madhukar- Treasurer (Engineer with AP Transco)
- Mr. Mitra- Executive Committee member (Haggai Int'l)
- Mr. Michael Fernandez- EC member (Lecturer)
- Mr. O. Sunderaj- EC Member (Business Man)
- Mrs. Mercy Wiig- Secretary Ex-Officio.

Testimonies

The following are incidents that have happened in and through the children of several of the Shining Stars youth development centres in India that work in cooperation with each other.

Radhika is a girl studying in the 6th class. She is from a Hindu family and has been attending the centre for about a year. Her mother heard about the Lord through various people as she worked in homes as a maid, the seed was planted. After attending the center for some time Radhika accepted the Lord as her personal Savior. After seeing her commitment and discipline her mother also made the same commitment. Both of them are attending church regularly and are very involved in faithfully serving the Lord. Her elder brother is also attending church. Another of her brothers met with an accident recently, Radhika is praying for his recovery. God is working in their lives, please pray for them.

Sri Latta, a ten year old girl's younger brother, Sreedhar, fell from a four storey building while flying a kite. She brought her burden to the Shining Stars centre where we prayed for Sreedhar, who was in a coma and stayed in that state for about two months. By the prayers of faith of Sri Latta, the children and staff (whose faith grew through this experience) Sreedhar recovered and is now in a fairly normal condition.

Sri Laxmi is in the 10th grade and has been attending Shining Stars for about five years. She is also from a Hindu family. Her elder sister, Bhavani, also used to attend Shining Stars through high school and has moved on to Junior College, she attends a weekly Bible study conducted by Shining Stars. Her younger sister, Goutami, also attends the center. All three of them accepted the Lord in the center at some point over the last five years and are growing in the Lord. Their Father is troubling the family with his somewhat irresponsible behavior. He is not supporting them financially for their studies or livelihood. Most of this responsibility has fallen on the mother. She works in a factory. Bhavani also has worked some to help make ends meet. The mother was initially against Christianity, however, after the frequent visits of some of the Shining Stars staff she did pray to receive Christ and is reading the Bible with her daughters. One amazing thing is that the kids all maintain a sincerely cheerful attitude and outlook on life. They attend the center daily. Please pray for their Father's change of behavior and their growth.

Ritu is a Nepalese girl living in Hyderabad. She is from a staunch Hindu home. She has three brothers. Her and two of her brothers attended Shining Stars for about two years. Ritu, asked Christ to come into her life and she really grew in the Lord and stood strong for Him. After some time she discontinued coming to the center and somewhat fell away from the Lord. Eventually there was a Pastor from Nepal who started a fellowship here in Hyderabad. This is a place where Ritu and her brothers really fit in. Eventually, through the visits of the pastor, the parents also came to know the Lord and we had the privilege of seeing four of the family members getting baptized.

Manju Latta, who came to know the Lord personally in Shining Stars, was carrying a steel rod for a building when it came in contact with an 11000 volt electric wire when she was about 10 years old. She was unconscious for several days and finally lost her right arm and left thumb. After extensive plastic surgery, many prayers and a will to hang on to Jesus she survived the ordeal. Through the incident her mother turned from worshipping idols to putting her faith in the true God. Now Manju Latta can write with her left hand (no thumb) and is a witness for Christ at her school.

Srikanth is studying in 2nd class and has been attending the center for about one year. Initially, his parents stopped him from coming to the center because they didn't want him to learn about Jesus. He started coming again, specifically to get tutored for his studies. His father is a taxi driver. At one point his mother was suffering with severe body pains and general weakness. Through her son she understood that her sickness could be healed through Jesus. She trusted Jesus and prayed about her situation. Miraculous healing took place in her life. She is now attending church regularly. She accepted the Lord as her personal Savior and is growing in Him.

Rajyalakshmi, from the Babanagar centre, who is studying in 2nd class, has a father who was daily drinking liquor, and beating her mother. Everyday she was facing this problem. She would come crying and share this in the centre. We prayed and some days later he changed. He took an auto, became an auto taxi driver, stopped drinking. He uses his money for family needs and they are happy. Now he is coming to church.

Pastor Srinivasa Rao, who leads one of our centre's, with his wife, in Tukaram Gate, reported an encouraging incident. Some people from Nalanda colleges came to conduct some quizzes in a local school, where some of his students were attending. Upon showing their prowess, his students were asked what tuition centre they were attending. They told them, and later these people came to visit Srinivasa Rao. They inquired of his students and said that if they score very well in their 10th class exams they will have an opportunity to receive some significant scholarships. I'm sure that has given them some incentive to work extra hard!

Rekha, who is studying in 5th class, attends the Quthbulapur centre. Her father, Malesh, was in great difficulty due to his urine being blocked and his stomach swollen. The doctors said that he would need an operation that would cost a lot of money, which the family could not afford. However, because he was in so much pain they went to the hospital and he was preparing himself for the operation, in fact he was the next in line. At the very same time, Rekha and the children at the centre were praying for him with tears. Just before his time came to have the operation he was able to urinate and relieve his pain. The doctors, amazed, found that the problem was no longer there. The family immediately came to Timothy and Mercy, the leaders of the church/centre and told the story. A better relationship is developing between them and the church.

In Kesharajpalli, one of the Nalgonda centres, an 8 year old girl was bitten by a centipede during the study time. She developed some swelling, burning and irritation on various parts of her body. Normally, there should be some medical attention for this. However, they were about 5 kms from the nearest hospital so that was not convenient. She was crying, so the children gathered around her and prayed. Within minutes the burning sensation stopped and within an hour the swelling went down. We thank God for reminding us and the children of God's power to answer prayer (even children's).

Madhavi, who attended the Bairamulaguda centre, stopped coming to the centre due to family problems. Last year ('04) she completed 10th class. While writing her exams she prayed for knowledge and passed. After this she visited the centre and gave testimony to God's work in her life. She then asked for advice from her teacher as to what she should do next in life. Hepsibe suggested that she go to junior college (Intermediate). As she needed certain official papers from the govt. office, she thought that she wouldn't be able to get them in time to apply for college (the task seemed insurmountable for her) but her teacher told her that nothing is impossible with God. "Let's pray and proceed", she said- so she went and applied for the papers at the govt. office. One of the officials came and asked what she needed, she said, "certificates", he took her application and asked her to come after two days. She did that and got the papers quite easily. Consequently, she also got a seat in the college- she gave testimony and praised God for all of these things and wants to live for God!

Prasad, studying in 9th class at the Quthbulapur centre, gave this testimony. I have been coming to the center for 3 years. Before I started coming to the club studies were very difficult for me, but now I am getting 3rd rank. Knowing Christ is very important to me. I received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. When my family was struggling with loans, I prayed for deliverance. Jesus listened to my prayer and our debts are now cleared. Now I am growing in discipleship. I've been learning moral and Bible stories in the centre. I am now teaching in the Foxsagar centre. I am really proud of how I am serving.

Jabez, one of our leaders at a fairly poor church near Dilsukhnagar, was planning to cut short a VBS programme from 5 to 3 days because of a shortage of money. Premdas, our staff, who was in charge from our side, urged Jabez to continue the programme. "Why should the children's enrichment be cut short, let's ask the Lord to provide enough for us to complete the programme." So they prayed and continued. The Lord went on to provide in surprising and unexpected ways. Some church members gave snacks for the remaining 2 days. They took up an offering from the children (which Jabez thought would not bear much fruit) in which Rs. 350.00 was collected. Finally, those who had traveled back and forth in a large auto (taxi), which is where a bulk of the expense was going to, decided to take up an offering from within their group, they collected Rs. 400.00. Jabez was blessed and astounded by God's faithfulness . . . and the children really had a wonderful time.

Suguna, from our Bairamalguda centre, has been attending the centre for almost 10 years. She finished her high school studies and is working at a job. She is from a Hindu background, but knows the Lord and was baptized recently. Her parents quite strongly wanted her to marry a Hindu boy, but she told her teacher, Hepsiba, that she didn't want to and wanted to continue following Christ. The children at her centre have been praying for her. Recently Suguna's Mother came to Hepsiba, her teacher, and said that she could look for a Christian boy for Suguna. Praise God for the power of prayer. Please pray for her future!

Shirisha, 3rd class, prayed for her grandfather who got joint pains and swelling. He met many doctors but there was not much benefit. One day the small girl went to her grandfather, and said, "I learned one thing in our children's club; Jesus can heal us from every disease, now I will pray for your joint pains, and Jesus will heal you". She prayed for him, the next day, to his surprise, he was healed and happily he went and told everyone, "I am healed by Shirisha's God. Her God is great!"

The State of Children in India from UNICEF

Early years



© UNICEF India

Good start pace up the capacity to learn and grow.

One of UNICEF's leading priorities across the world is to ensure that every child has the best possible start to life - a safe birth, sound new-born care and good nutrition.

But these priorities face some of the toughest challenges in India where despite major improvements in the last 30 years in the health system, lives continue to be lost to early childhood illnesses, poor or inadequate newborn care and childbirth-related causes. 63 infants per every 1,000 of those born alive die before the age of one.

The odds against a child surviving just being born are high: 63 infants per every 1,000 of those born alive die before the age of one. The reason for this high rate of infant mortality is closely tied up with the equally high rate of maternal deaths: few women have access to skilled birth attendants, fewer still to quality, emergency obstetric care.

For those infants who do survive, the prevalence of early childhood illnesses poses a serious threat to their growth and development. More than two million children are known to die every year from preventable infections including measles and tetanus. In addition is the problem of malnutrition, which severely affects a child's capacity to learn and grow. One in every three of the world's malnourished children lives here and about 50 per cent of all childhood deaths in India are attributable to malnutrition.

Although one of the major causes for malnutrition is inadequate food intake, it is influenced by other factors too. The availability of health services and access to them, the availability of care for the child and the pregnant women, the quality of that care, whether acceptable hygiene practices are followed or not are important contributing factors.

Due to their lower social status, girls are far more at risk of malnutrition than boys their age. Partly as a result of this cultural bias, up to one third of all adult women in India are underweight. Inadequate care of these women already underdeveloped, especially during pregnancy, leads them in turn to deliver underweight babies who are vulnerable to further malnutrition and disease. In addition is the widespread prevalence of anaemia amongst children under three and of Vitamin A and iodine deficiencies.

UNICEF supports the national reproductive and child health programme in its aim to reduce maternal, neonatal and child mortality. In partnership with the government, it aims to improve overall immunisation coverage, raise awareness of the indispensable role played by routine immunisation in protecting a community's health, improve the quality of emergency obstetric care and promote an integrated management of early childhood illnesses.

UNICEF also supports the government in its strategies to reduce and prevent malnutrition. It assists the government in expanding and enhancing its integrated child development services programme by helping improve the training of childcare workers and developing community-based, early childcare interventions that address issues surrounding inadequate nutrition and mineral and vitamin deficiencies.

[Exclusive Breast Feeding – for survival and healthy development of infants](#)

Realising the importance of exclusive breast feeding as a strategy which can make a dent in the IMR, the Government of Gujarat has organised, with UNICEF support, a state level workshop to launch a state-wide campaign to promote 'exclusive breast feeding'

Primary school years



© UNICEF India
Child at school.

Among one of the leading priorities for the UNICEF worldwide is its commitment to ensure that every girl and every boy completes a quality, primary-school education.

The number of children attending school has gone up many-fold since the time of India's Independence – increasing from around 19.2 million in 1950-51 to 113.8 million in 2000-01.

But several problems persist.

The environment in which India's children live, learn and grow frustrates their attempts to have equal access to education.

Among the many contributing factors is the quality of the physical space that children inhabit.

Of India's 700,000 rural schools, only one in six have toilets deterring children especially girls from going to school, and if enrolled, in remaining there.

In addition are cultural factors: continuing discrimination against the girl child plays a crucial role in creating resistance around sending girls to school.

The persistence of class and caste differences and the prevalence of child labour further complicate this scenario, obstructing both girls and boys from having equal opportunities to education.



© UNICEF India
Girls ready for class.

Even though the rate of school attendance is better than ever before with more and more children between the ages of 6 and 14 enrolling at schools, the education system is inadequately developed - wracked by a shortage of resources, schools, classrooms and teachers.

Often, due to the resulting, poor quality of teaching, many children drop out before completing five years of primary school and many of those who stay on, learn little.

The government of India is constitutionally committed to ensuring the right of every child to basic education.

Government efforts have been intensified in recent years following the launch of various programmes including the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1992, the Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) initiative and more recently the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (or the National Programme for Universal Elementary Education).

UNICEF is an active partner in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan supporting its objective to ensure all children complete five years of school and have access to good quality education.

UNICEF strategy is woven around three inter-linked themes: access, quality and equity in basic education.

It supports initiatives that help provide equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged communities including the urban poor and working children.

It implements a 'quality package' across 14 states that aims at improving the quality of curricula and classroom environment.

And, it supports alternative learning strategies including bridging courses for adolescent girls, who are out of school.

Adolescence



© UNICEF India

Girl in her class room.

UNICEF is committed to protecting every child from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination.

But given prevailing social, economic and cultural inequities in India, a large number of children, especially girls are forced to work in inhospitable, unsafe and exploitative conditions. Some of these children are members of families living in remote areas with few, if any, livelihood options. Others are part of units that are on the move – caught up in unrelenting cycles of migration in search of work.

[Adolescent girls](#), most from disadvantaged communities and families, are trafficked for the purposes of early, forced marriages, for domestic labour (unpaid or poorly paid) and for commercial sex work. Yet other children live in single parent households where survival is at times a formidable struggle.

Such children are often pushed into low-paid labour or commercial sex work either to escape abusive conditions at home or because poor or unemployed parents send them out in the hope of getting some extra money. Adolescent girls, most from disadvantaged communities and families, are trafficked for the purposes of early, forced marriages,

for domestic labour (unpaid or poorly paid) and for commercial sex work. Roughly 27% of the country's population is considered migrant and up to 77% of this proportion are women and children.

A large proportion of this migration occurs amongst families and communities that are socially and economically marginalised, adding to their already existing sense of vulnerability. Migrant populations more often than not suffer from greater risks of exploitation and tend to accept work on unfair terms.

Their children tend to suffer severe disruption to their education and often lose almost all access to basic services. Indian legislation offers protection to children in difficult circumstances but it is often hard to ensure its enforcement. In partnership with the government, UNICEF plays a key role in promoting an approach that focuses more on prevention rather than only relief and rehabilitation of children in need of special protection. One of its primary strategies consists of using education as a tool to tackle issues surrounding child labour.



© UNICEF India

Students in a class.

In areas where child labour is particularly intensive, UNICEF helps to set up alternative learning centres in order to help make parents and communities see value in sending their children to school rather than to work.

It also works closely with the government in its National Child Labour Project that is currently being implemented across 13 states where child labour is endemic. Although trafficking is prevalent, issues related to it have not yet received sufficient policy attention.

For children who have been commercially sexually exploited or whose parents are engaged in commercial sex work, options for protection and development are scarce.

But UNICEF has been part of a critical breakthrough achieved in recent years that has helped to shift the general discourse surrounding trafficking - away from an almost exclusive focus on rescue – closer to prevention.

The 'Iodine Salt Run' in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, on Global Iodine Deficiency Disorders Day



© UNICEF/India/Verma/2005

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister
Dr. Y.S.R.Reddy flagging off the
run in the presence of UNICEF
representative for Andhra
Pradesh Mr Michel Saint-Lot

By Vikas Verma

Hyderabad, 21 October 2005

In the early hours of the morning today, about 2000 children from various schools of Hyderabad, the capital city of the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, enthusiastically trooped into the heart of the city wearing blue caps and white T-shirts. Proudly carrying their school flags they had gathered there to run the 2 kilometer stretch to create awareness amongst general public on the use of iodized salt.

Fifty per cent of the children born every year in India (13 million out of a total of 26 million) are unprotected against Iodine Deficiency Disorders such as brain damage, deaf mutism, dwarfism and severely depleted levels of productivity.

The run was organized by Prasar Bharati (All India Radio and Doordarshan) with UNICEF support to mark the Global Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) Day. The event turned out to be more gainful than planned.

Fifty per cent of the children born every year in India (13 million out of a total of 26 million) are unprotected against Iodine Deficiency Disorders such as brain damage, deaf mutism, dwarfism and severely depleted levels of productivity. Andhra Pradesh's (population - 76.2 million) salt requirement for consumption is about half a million metric tonnes per year. But only 37% of the families are able to consume iodized salt.

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy flagged off the run. While addressing the children, he pointed out that deficiency of iodine in the food leads to low intelligence and every household should use only iodized salt in their food. He said that the government is making all efforts to make iodized salt available in most fair price shops in the state.

Prior to the address by the Chief Minister, UNICEF Representative for the States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka - Mr. Michel Saint-Lot, addressed the children. He explained the prevalence of iodine deficiency disorders and the negative consequences of iodine deficiency focusing on intelligence and mental development. Children cheered him loudly when he appealed to them to demand from the Chief Minister as well as their parents "their right to have iodized salt and they should get it".



© UNICEF/India/Verma/2005

Children running after the flag – off

The ban imposed on non - iodized salt by the government is being challenged in the court, hence the possibility of stopping its availability in the market is low. UNICEF is advocating the following to solve the issue at the local level: creating a demand from the public; orienting the salt producers and traders on the benefits of iodized salt; ensuring the availability of iodized salt at affordable prices.

Andhra Pradesh's (population - 76.2 million) salt requirement for consumption is about half a million metric tonnes per year. But only 37% of the families are able to consume iodized salt.

Public distribution system, which supplies food grains to families below poverty line at affordable and subsidized prices through fair price shops, is an effective medium to reach the families with iodized salt. The state government is making efforts to do the same. Today's statement by the Chief Minister may give it a further push.

Three days prior to the event, messages were broadcast on All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (National Television) highlighting the importance of iodized salt. The teachers accompanying the children were trained a day before on the issues surrounding iodine deficiency so that they could impart the information to the children and explain the significance of the run.

The local media was also present in large numbers to cover the event which is expected to further create statewide awareness on IDD. AIR and Doordarshan will be covering IDD and the event for one week in their prime time news and other programmes.

The school children of Hyderabad have shown the way for the general public to stay healthy, by running for the IDD Day.

Combating Fluorosis – Andhra Pradesh

Excess fluoride in drinking water sources in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh has made the area's marginalised, rural population vulnerable to fluorosis.

UNICEF has introduced domestic de-fluoridation filter units, which can be used in homes to remove excess fluoride from drinking water.

Developed in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, this easy-to-use device, where water poured into the upper chamber is collected and filtered into the lower one, reduces the fluoride content to acceptable levels.

Colourful furniture brings cheer to tsunami affected schools in Andhra Pradesh



© UNICEF/India/Pietrasik/2005
Venkatramanama enjoying her new classroom furniture

By Vikas Verma

Nellore, India.

4 October was a special day for 8 year old Venketramanama. Arriving at the school half an hour before time, she was asked by the headmaster Mr. A.V.R Girdhar "What's so special about today, Venketramanama?" Barely able to contain her smile, she said. "Sir, I want to be the first to sit on our new chairs". Similar excitement was felt in all the 1003 schools in Nellore and Prakasham Districts of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh in India, where UNICEF, with the support of the Japanese Government, has supplied colourful new furniture for the school children. Venketramanama's school was among the first to get the furniture and the entire village community helped assemble it.

UNICEF has developed a package of quality interventions that will help schools reach the quality standards of a 'Child Friendly School'.

Situated just 500 metres away from sea, this school in Pallipalam village of Nellore district was submerged in water on the fateful day of the tsunami last December. Venketramanama's fisherman family lost their livelihood and shelter together with their boats and nets.

Just as the whole community has slowly come to terms with the new reality, UNICEF has committed to 'build back better' the necessary infrastructure during the recovery phase. Seizing the opportunity to raise the quality of education for children in tsunami affected areas, UNICEF has developed a package of quality interventions that will help schools reach the quality standards of a 'Child Friendly School'. This is aimed at strengthening the school and classroom as well as empowering educational administrators and communities to manage the educational process.



© UNICEF/India/Pietrasik/2005
Before the arrival of new furniture, the children of Palipalam government school took lessons sitting on the floor of the classroom

A child friendly school will include Quality learning environment having toilet and water facilities along with children's play and recreational activities; Quality content having gender-sensitive curricula and materials for literacy, numeric, knowledge and attitudes, and skills for life; Quality teaching and learning processes through child-centred, life-skills based approaches and Quality teacher support programmes which are need-based, interactive and based on 'hands

on experience'. Providing child friendly furniture to schools is an integral part of helping create such child friendly schools.

The idea of supplying furniture to schools where sitting and studying on the floor is the norm did sound ambitious earlier. The process of designing the furniture was challenging to say the least. "The furniture available in the market was as per the European children's norm which made it uncomfortable for the Indian children. We redesigned the same keeping in mind the physical build of an average Indian child."- says Mr. Michel Saint- Lot- UNICEF Representative for the states of AP and Karnataka. Detailed research on all parameters helped design the furniture which is colourful, comfortable, long lasting, easy to maintain and safe for children. Providing child friendly furniture to schools is an integral part of helping create such child friendly schools.

According to Mr. A.V.R.Girdhar - "The beautiful furniture in school represents hope and new beginning for the whole community. Thanks to UNICEF this has given us new vigour to work for our betterment."

Child Labour Elimination - Karnataka

In 1994, about 10,000 children were estimated to be working in Magadi's silk twisting units; by 2003, this figure was reduced to 1,000.

This was a result of the collaboration between the community groups and the Department of Labour-GOKN, UNICEF and the four community based NGO's under the Magadi Makkala Dhawani project (Voices of Children in Magadi).

The project focused on raising awareness, strengthening families against indebtedness, forming community-based groups and educating families and employers on the pitfalls of child labour. Four bridge education centers were set up to facilitate the transition of children from work to education.

After six months, the children were admitted into mainstream schools or, if over 14 years old, given vocational training. In 2000, the Government declared work in the silk industry as hazardous, giving an additional fillip to this initiative.

The picture in India



© UNICEF India

Girl in a class room.

Despite a major improvement in literacy rates during the 1990s, the number of children who are not in school remains high. Gender disparities in education persist: far more girls than boys fail to complete primary school.

The literacy rate jumped from 52 per cent in 1991 to 65 per cent in 2001. The absolute number of non-literates dropped for the first time and gross enrolment in Government-run primary schools increased from over 19 million in the 1950s to 114 million by 2001.

190 million females in India are non-literate But 20 per cent of children aged 6 to14 are still not in school and millions of women remain non-literate despite the spurt in female literacy in the 1990s.

Several problems persist: issues of 'social' distance – arising out of caste, class and gender differences – deny children equal opportunities. Child labour in some parts of the country and resistance to sending girls to school remain real concerns.



© UNICEF India
Child at school.

School attendance is improving: more children than ever between the ages of 6 and 14 are attending school across the country. The education system faces a shortage of resources, schools, classrooms and teachers.

There are also concerns relating to teacher training, the quality of the curriculum, assessment of learning achievements and the efficacy of school management. Given the scarcity of quality schools, many children drop out before completing five years of primary education; many of those who stay on learn little.

Girls belonging to marginalised social and economic groups are more likely to drop out of school at an early age.

With one upper primary school for every three primary schools, there are simply not enough upper primary centres even for those children who complete primary school. For girls, especially, access to upper primary centres becomes doubly hard.

[Out-of-school girls receive schooling support in Yayatmal district of Maharashtra](#)

Too busy working to go to school



© UNICEF
India/2003/Vitale
Children like this girl
attend an alternative
learning center in the
village of Karjada, near
Varanasi

Until a year ago, eight-year-old Laxmina was too busy working to even think of going to school. She earned about 30 Rupees (less than a dollar) a day in return for delivering milk to nearby villages more prosperous than her own.

But all that has changed now.

Laxmina has been attending an alternative learning centre (ALC) along with 40 other children in her home district of Mirzapur located in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh. It is one amongst many such centres set up four years ago with UNICEF support to help educate children who have never been to school.

Over 20 per cent of India's 17.5 million working children are from Uttar Pradesh most of whom work at odd jobs, in factories and in the carpet industry for meagre wages. But their labour plays a key role in supplementing their families' meagre income. One of the main reasons for the high prevalence of child labour in these areas is the burden of debt, which forces families to send their children to work. Low literacy rates further compound the problem.

Education essential to eliminating child labour

UNICEF addresses the issue of child labour through a combination of approaches including a focus on changing prevalent mindsets, forming self-help groups, improving the quality of mainstream education, providing transitional schools to return children to learning levels appropriate to their age.

But education is seen to play a crucial role in eliminating child labour. UNICEF's approach therefore focuses on motivating communities to send girls and boys (who have never been to or who have dropped out of school) to alternative learning centres.

The centres have been set up mostly in areas that do not have a school within a 1.5 kilometre radius and each caters to around 40 students. The aim is to help children complete primary education " which normally takes five years - within three years. At the end of this period, the children are integrated into formal school.

Assessments occur throughout this period. An examination is organised at the end of each class semester that lasts for six months while the final examination for class V is conducted by the district education officer. All those who pass the exams are awarded a certificate which is key to getting admission in other schools recognised by the government.

The initiative funded by IKEA (with about 500,000 dollars) through UNICEF's German National Committee has covered around 650 villages in two (Need to check if its two or three) districts of Uttar Pradesh. Around 200 Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs) are currently functional. These help in reaching out to more than 7,000 children of whom 55 per cent are girls.

Education has helped these children not only read and write but also provided them with a sense confidence and empowerment. Eight-year-old Laxmina who had until recently thought that the only work her community would ever do was weave carpets, now talks of wanting to be a doctor for her village " a clear sign of change.

Social transformation

Organising women into self-help groups has also set off its own process of social transformation. It has helped wrench them out of a debt-poverty cycle since they no longer need to take loans at high interest rates.

Over 14,000 women from these 650 villages have saved more than 10 million Rupees. More than 50 per cent of this money is now circulating as loans in these villages. In one village, a woman succeeded in rescuing her son, who was taken away to work as bonded labour in exchange for her inability to pay back a small loan, with the help of these collective savings.

More children are now going to school instead of going to work, and women have learnt through their association with selfhelp groups crucial lessons that is helping them be far more self-reliant and informed than before.

(Our information was taken from www.unicef.org).

Kid Humour

Proverb Punches

A first grade teacher collected well known proverbs. She gave each child in her class the first half of a proverb and asked them to come up with the remainder of the proverb.

Their insights may surprise you:

- Better to be safe than...Punch a 5th grader
- Strike while the ... Bug is close
- Never underestimate the power of ... Termites
- You can lead a horse to water but... how?
- Don't bite the hand that ... looks dirty
- No news is ... Impossible
- A miss is as good as a ... Mr.
- You can't teach an old dog new ... math
- If you lie down with dogs, you'll ...stink in the morning
- Love all, trust ...me
- The pen is mightier than the ...pigs
- An idle mind is ... the best way to relax
- Where there's smoke there's ... pollution
- Happy the bride who ... gets all the presents
- A penny saved is ... not much
- Don't put off till tomorrow what ... you put on to go to bed
- Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and ... you have to blow your nose
- None are so blind as ... Stevie Wonder
- Children should be seen and not ... spanked or grounded
- If at first you don't succeed ... get new batteries
- You get out of something what you ... see pictured on the box
- When the blind leadeth the blind ... get out of the way

Children and Church

A little boy was attending his first wedding.

After the service, his cousin asked him, "How many women can a man marry?"

"Sixteen," the boy responded. His cousin was amazed that he had an answer so quickly.

"How do you know that?"

"Easy," the little boy said.

"All you have to do is add it up, like the Bishop said:

4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer, 4 poorer."

After a church service on Sunday morning, a young boy suddenly announced to his mother, "Mom, I've decided to become a minister when I grow up."

"That's okay with us, but what made you decide that?"

"Well," said the little boy, "I have to go to church on Sunday anyway, and I figure it will be more fun to stand up and yell, than to sit and listen."

A 6-year-old was overheard reciting the Lord's Prayer at a church service: "And forgive us our trash passes, as we forgive those who passed trash against us"

A boy was watching his father, a pastor, write a sermon.

"How do you know what to say?" he asked.

"Why, God tells me."

"Oh, then why do you keep crossing things out?"

A little girl became restless as the preacher's sermon dragged on and on.

Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?"

After the christening of his baby brother in church, little Johnny sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong.

Finally, the boy replied, "That priest said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I want to stay with you guys!"

The Sunday School Teacher asks, "Now, Johnny, tell me frankly do you say prayers before eating?"

"No sir," little Johnny replies, "I don't have to. My Mom is a good cook."

A college drama group presented a play in which one character would stand on a trap door and announce, "I descend into hell!"

A stagehand below would then pull a rope, the trapdoor would spring, and the actor would drop from view.

The play was well received. When the actor playing the part became ill, another actor who was quite overweight took his place. When the new actor announced, "I descend into hell!" the stagehand pulled the rope, and the actor began his plunge, but became hopelessly stuck. No amount of tugging on the rope could make him descend.

One student in the balcony jumped up and yelled: "Hallelujah! Hell is full!"

Pastor Dave Charlton tells us, "After a worship service at First Baptist Church in Newcastle, Kentucky, a mother with a fidgety seven-year old boy told me how she finally got her son to sit still and be quiet. About halfway through the sermon, she leaned over and whispered, 'If you don't be quiet, Pastor Charlton is going to lose his place and will have to start his sermon all over again!' It worked."

This is the best one. A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again. Finally she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused, "grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"

7 reasons not to mess with a child

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales.

The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah".

The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?"

The little girl replied, "Then you ask him".

A Kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work.

As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds.

After explaining the commandment to "honor" thy Father and thy Mother, she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat one little boy: (the oldest of a family) answered, "Thou shall not kill."

One day a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her brunette head.

She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "Why are some of your hairs white, Mom?"

Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white."

The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, "Momma, how come ALL of grandma's hairs are white?"

The children had all been photographed, and the teacher was trying to persuade them each to buy a copy of the group picture.

"Just think how nice it will be to look at it when you are all grown up and say, 'There's Jennifer, she's a lawyer,' or 'That's Michael, He's a doctor.'

A small voice at the back of the room rang out, "And there's the teacher, 'She's dead.' "

A teacher was giving a lesson on the circulation of the blood. Trying to make the matter clearer, she said, "Now, class, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I would turn red in the face.."

"Yes," the class said.

"Then why is it that while I am standing upright in the ordinary position the blood doesn't run into my feet?"

A little fellow shouted, "Cause your feet ain't empty."

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun made a note, and posted on the apple tray:

"Take only ONE. God is watching."

Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies.

A child had written a note, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

Sometimes it just takes the mind of a child...

I was testing the children in my Sunday school class to see if they understood the concept of getting to heaven. I asked them, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into Heaven?"

"NO!" the children answered. "If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?"

Again, the answer was, "NO!"

By now I was starting to smile. Hey, this was fun!

"Well, then, if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children, and loved my husband, would that get me into Heaven?" I asked them again.

Again, they all answered, "NO!"

I was just bursting with pride for them. Well, I continued, "then how can I get into Heaven?"

A five-year-old boy shouted out,

"YOU GOTTA BE DEAD."

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