

## **2016 Report**

Support for the *Learn-for-Life* Initiative in Varanasi, India

### **Narrative Report**

#### **General Information – Summary**

As a whole, Learn for Life has matured significantly as an institution. Some of these developments have been intended direct results of the project activities (e.g. improved quality of schooling, increased number of pupils, etc.), others have been spin-off results, where actions of the project yielded additional, other results (e.g. the creation of the park, that ultimately led to the introduction of pre-school education) and others yet again were not at all envisaged by the project, but were made possible by the advanced made (such as the development of technical training and preparation for income generation for school leavers and/or parents). Additionally, the very administration of Learn for Life as an institution is now much solidly established, more focussed, more results (not input) oriented and more professional.

Learn for Life now has three main areas of operation:

1. Pre-schooling for children aged 2-6 years old
2. Primary schooling for children aged 6-15 years old.
3. Technical skills training for youths and young adults.

Below, we detail the activities and results attained by Learn for Life in the year 2016.

## **1. Regarding the schooling:**

### Number of pupils

89

### Schooling infrastructure

*Built two rooms for the stitching vocational project*

*Painted the school pretty colors*

*Hired two new teachers and two other teachers left*

*We have a new yoga teacher*

*We got a smartboard for one of the classrooms*

### Teacher training

*Nicole increased the weekly meeting and training to three and a half hours every Saturday*

*Nicole worked with the teachers in the classrooms throughout the week*

*Nicole gave 30 minute English and women's empowerment lessons to the teachers every morning before school*

*Zach, a volunteer, led training in English pronunciation and lesson planning in December*

*Every time we have a volunteer with specific professional skills and expertise, we try to involve them in our teachers trainings as well*

### Curriculum

*Followed NCERT English medium curriculum*

*Encouraged the teachers to supplement the curriculum with creative activities and interactive lessons with a focus on speaking and listening in addition to reading and writing*

*Zainab, a volunteer, helped to create a music therapy program for children with learning and emotional difficulties over four months*

*Marco, a volunteer, worked with our teachers to create more interactive science and geography lessons over six months*

*Zach, a volunteer, worked with our teachers to move away from the English textbooks in favour of more engaging teaching methods*

*Nicole started incorporating group art therapy with all of our classes*

*Suresh, a local retired social worker, screened educational movies and documentaries with classes 4 and 5 followed by discussion*

*Rosehub, a BHU student group worked with class 5 to create their own documentaries about their city and community*

*Kiran, a local educator and women's activist, led meditation with all of our classes and led groups for our older girls on topics of women's health and self-awareness*

*We have parents meetings sprinkled throughout the year to maintain family involvement in their children's education*

### Academic performance

*Two of our class 5 students passed the entrance exam to a prestigious English medium school in Varanasi*

*All of our class 5 students passed Hindi medium school entrance exams*

*While we choose not to focus so much on marks, we are happy with the progress of all of our students*

### What happens to pupils after school

*We are having trouble finding high quality Hindi medium secondary schools in Varanasi.*

*We are not happy with one of the schools which some of our former students are going to now, and are working to transfer them to a different school next year.*

## **2. Regarding pre-schooling:**

### Number of children

31

### Curriculum development

*We don't use any textbooks, we teach through songs, games, activities, and exploration according to a variety of Western and Indian pedagogies*

### **3. Vocational training**

#### Stitching Project

*Began a two year vocational training course for eight mixed gender students from classes 2 and 3*

*Began a two year vocational training course for eight mixed gender students from classes 4 and 5*

*Four women ages 15 to 25 from the community started training with our tailor*

*The purpose of the project is to train pupils on textiles and fashion design subjects.*

*The syllabus includes an introduction part (embroidery, stitching craft and tapestry), followed by the main stitching program (sewing skills and pattern design making).*

#### Bakery Project

*Children from different classes have participated in baking workshops every Saturday*

#### Computer training

*Children from classes 3, 4, and 5 take computer classes on alternate days after lunch*

*20 community members, mostly women, come every afternoon for computer training*

### **4. Future outlook**

*We are preparing our class 5 students for their transition to secondary schools*

*We are continuing the music therapy and art therapy programs and working with a local gardener to build a rooftop garden in the portion of our rooftop formerly used for storage*

*We are beginning to cooperate with the French Civil Service as a placement for long term volunteers*

*We are talking with other NGO schools with similar goals to lead combined teacher training*

*Zach, a Native English speaking volunteer with teaching experience is staying through the next school year to work with our teachers further on speech focused language learning and helping Nicole with school coordination*

