

There have been many changes and new developments in BDA programs in the last year. In addition to our main focus, the Prajna Vihar School in Bodhgaya, the BDA has branched out, supporting new programs.



PV students performing at the school's 25th anniversary celebrations

In our last newsletter we talked about the death of Sister Mary Lobo and how it was uncertain as to whether her Nari Jagran Manch program would continue. This program hasn't continued but we now have other projects which address health, hygiene, literacy and community micro-credit groups.

One of these is a project co-ordinated by a Sr Manisha, one of the sisters in the same order as the principal of the Prajna Vihar school. This program runs in villages in and around Bodhgaya. There's a report on page 5.

The second is a program called Jeevan Deep (literally

"The Lamp of Life") which operates community education classes and a mobile health clinic. We have funded the clinic. There's more details on page 6.

And finally we have started supporting a program for a largely illiterate tribal community in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand. This is called Asha Seva Kendra ("Centre Serving Hope") and is run by the very dedicated order of sisters that Sr Mary Lobo belonged to. They run a residential TB/AIDS clinic, health care and education programs as well as community micro-credit groups. The report for this is on page 7.

The Prajna Vihar School had a two storey addition this last year and had its 25th Anniversary celebrations. Kerstin Liebchen-Meades from the BDA management committee was in Bodhgaya, helping with the preparations and was there for the celebrations. Her report is over the page.

We also gave another tertiary study scholarship to a past PV student this last year. It went to Dipti Kujur, for training to be a nurse in Jharkand. She is doing well in her studies.

We've had changes in the BDA management committee. Our wonderful and dedicated treasurer Linda Meades has left and is now in England. We are fortunate to now have Loris Neff as treasurer, and Mandy Collins-Woolcock, Gill Eastgate and Megan Howell on the management committee. It's refreshing to have new voices and perspectives.



Students in school costumes for the 25th anniversary dance presentation

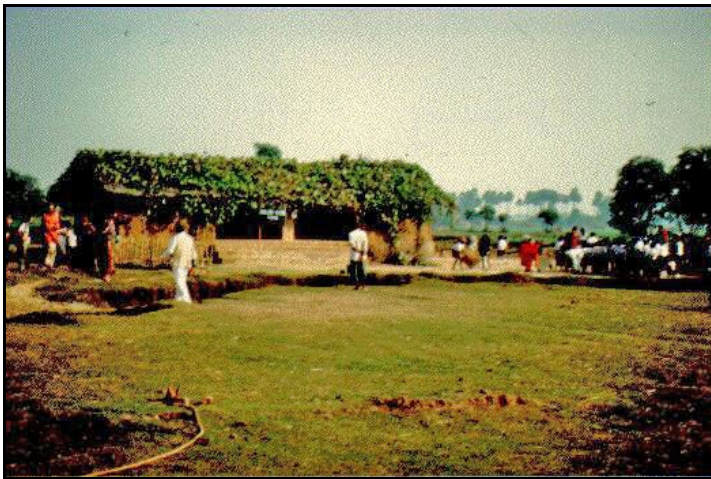
Many thanks to all of you who have supported the programs in India, either by one-off donations or on an ongoing basis. Money from Australia goes such a long way in India.

Victor von der Heyde
Chairperson, BDA

1990-2015: Achievements & the 25th Anniversary of Prajna Vihar School

The Prajna Vihar (Abode of Wisdom) School (PVS) started from very humble beginnings. Over the past 25 years, learning and teaching has progressed through several phases and school locations, moving from a tent, to two mud brick rooms, to the purchase of land, to a two-storey brick building and finally to an additional building with significantly bigger class rooms and a small flat for the Sisters of Queen of the Apostles, who have been leading the school since 1994.

The year 2015 therefore signifies a very important year. The concerted effort by the school community and those associated with the school from far and near, has not only made the journey of free education for PV students an amazing achievement, but has also contributed to the success of the 25th Anniversary Jubilee celebrations in February.



The mud-brick school building in early 1993 with its thatched roof

The academic school year commences in April and numerous events, competitions and learning opportunities enrich our students' lives. There are several religious and cultural events that are recognised and celebrated throughout the calendar year. Whether it is the Muslim celebration of Id-Ud-Fiter marking the end of Ramadan, the Hindu festival of Holi, the Christian Easter and Christmas or Buddha's birthday celebration, all these events enable our students to learn about and respect the different religions present in the microcosm that is Bodhgaya.

Students also showcase their skills in other areas: there is the annual inter-school speech, essay and drawing competition, the PV School based Ragoli



The school building in early 2015, with the new extension on the left

contest and the display of science and art projects; they also take part in the annual school parade, organise Teachers' Day celebrations and the Graduation Event for the Year 10 students. These opportunities develop many positive qualities and skills for the students.



PV student in the early 1990s



PV students in early 2015

A more detailed description of the events can be found on the school website (www.pvschool.in) in the current (2015) school newsletter.

The PVS has made a name for itself as a school excelling in both classical and modern dance. Our music teacher accompanies and rehearses with the students and several staff prepare and teach students for various dance competitions. Many of the dance costumes have been purchased over 10 years ago and are being looked after incredibly well. Appreciating valuable resources is commonplace for the school community.

On Sunday, 15 February, past and present principals, society members, staff, teachers and community members assembled for the big event. The photographic display of 25 years of teaching, learning, interacting with the Bodhgaya community brought home how much *had been achieved*. The program included ceremonial blessings of the new building, speeches, plays and dances. Those members of the community who had been involved with the school over the years were officially thanked and staff received gifts in recognition of their service to the school and student community.

The following day, students and parents were invited to another rendition of dances and school plays, as we had not been able to accommodate everybody on Sunday. With only performances by the children and a Hip Hop group of past students on display, the atmosphere was festive and uplifting.

During nearly two months of staying in Bodhgaya, I was privileged to be part of many activities and witness the [remarkable progress of the various building and construction stages of the new classrooms](#). There's a video tour of the completed construction on the [PVS website](#). Your kind donations have most certainly contributed to the improvement of the school's teaching and learning facilities and therefore to the empowerment and transformation of the students through education; as Nandita Sakya (currently in Class 9) so aptly put in a



PV Students in school dance costumes

[video of interviews](#) of students, past students and parents (also on the school website): “Here I have spent my childhood, my golden childhood and I don’t want to leave this school”.

Like some of the other invited supporters of the PVS I delivered a speech (kriebchen.edublogs.org/2015/03/) on behalf of the BDA and concluded with "Nelson Mandela said: Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Let Prajna Vihar School’s future be one such powerful weapon."

Kerstin Liebchen-Meades
BDA Management Committee member

Prajna Vihar School Expenditure 1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015

	In Rupees	In Australian dollars
Salary and wages including superannuation and bonus, for 12 teaching and 2 non teaching staff	1,569,694	33,313
Bank charges	455	10
Books, periodicals, educational expense	106,963	2,270
Travel, study tour, functions	23,893	507
Refreshments, fuel	10,766	228
Electricity and water	16,620	353
Printing and stationery	23,341	495
Miscellaneous	24,685	524
Phone and broadband	2,727	58
Auditing and legal fees	53,320	1,132
Total running costs	1,832,464	38,889
Supply of equipment for new building, repairs	568,881	12,073
New computers	182,705	3,877
Total costs other than building constructions costs	2,584,050	54,839

The school has approximately 560 students. The figures in Australian dollars have changed since our 2014 Newsletter since the Australian dollar has fallen in the year from close to 56 Rupees to the dollar to around 47 Rupees.

The BDA would like to thank St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School in Corinda, Queensland, for their generous support in printing this newsletter and Lisa Jensen, the director of [Schoolstuff](#), for her generous donation of stationery items for PV School students. Their help is very much appreciated.

Sr Manisha Program for the Empowerment of Very Poor Women

Sister Manisha has been working with very poor women and children in Bihar and Jharkhand for the last thirty years. She has a degree in Social Work and is from the same religious order as the principal of the PV School. In the last two years she has been in the Bodhgaya area. The BDA has provided funding for her programs in the fields of health and education.

Many of the women and children in these villages are illiterate. One program we have provided funds for has a health and hygiene focus and it is run in small groups. It covers immunisation, personal hygiene, pregnancy care, environmental sanitation and basic information on illness: symptoms, prevention and cure.



Women's health education



Outdoor classroom in children's program

There is a separate initiative which involves three non-formal education centres, each with a capacity for 30 to 40 children. Teachers are trained outside the formal schooling system to provide basic education in these centres. Children receive a uniform, a sitting carpet, textbooks and writing materials. These programs are at an early stage but the children are already engaged and there are many positive signs in terms of attitude and behaviour.

Sr Manisha has also organised training programs for tailoring skills and we have started supporting one tailoring program.

Tribute - Susan Butler

BODHI's beloved co-founder, Susan Woldenberg Butler, died peacefully, surrounded by Buddhist prayer, on 4th October 2014. Susan worked tirelessly for BODHI, Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (www.bodhi.net.au), from 1989-2014. Amongst other things she was the director; main secretary; finance officer; web designer; project liaison officer; teacher and good will catalyst. I feel honoured to have had the opportunity to have worked with Susan whilst wearing all those hats and more. She has been a very active supporter of the BDA, and will be missed.

Kim Lewis, BDA secretary

Jeevan Deep

Jeevan Deep is a registered charitable trust (NGO) in Bodhgaya, Bihar, working for and with poor people to empower them via education and health programs.

Jeevan Deep's (JD) director, Kailash Prasad, was thrilled to receive initial funding from BDA in the last days of 2014. Kerstin's extended visit to Bodhgaya followed soon in January, when Kerstin and her sister visited Jeevan Deep's projects near Bodhgaya and met JD's health project staff Dr Janardan and nurse Pushpa. Kerstin also set up a [Facebook page for the project](#) with photos of their visit, accessible from the BDA website. There is also a historical overview (<http://tinyurl.com/pc5cjuq>) of Jeevan Deep's development from its early phases.

The boost in confidence that Kailash and his staff received from that great start to their New Year has helped them through a roller-coaster of a year. The health project assisted the population of 10 villages through the extreme cold of winter, into a disastrous hot season of high 40s in which thousands died from heat exhaustion in India. On a personal front, the long illness and death of Kailash's wife was followed by the relief of finding a suitable boy to marry their daughter.

As well as keeping their 10 village schools and health clinics running, (by holding clinics early in the mornings before the extreme heat set in), Jeevan Deep responded to the tragic suffering of their Nepali neighbours from severe earthquakes. Dr Janardan and Kailash's son (not project staff) sped to Nepal to assist in any way possible, carrying with them medicines obtained on credit from local suppliers, as well as relief supplies purchased in border areas. This considerable emergency assistance over some weeks was not funded by any project funds, but is being contributed to from JD's project staff's salaries over time, and by supportive friends. Meanwhile the monsoonal rains are insufficient, as often occurs



Dr Janardan at the mobile health clinic

around Bodhgaya and that area of Bihar.

Kailash, the Jeevan Deep staff and all supported villagers are continuously grateful to the BDA and donors who support their work for the poor and oppressed "dalit" communities and they pray for your long lives and well being.

May All Beings be Well and Happy!

Mary Lightfoot on behalf of Jeevan Deep,
Bodh Gaya

All donations to the Bodhgaya Development Association go to the programs in India. No part of funds donated goes to BDA administration. The BDA is run on a volunteer basis and all running costs are donated by the management committee members.

If you would like to be on the BDA email list, please let us know.

Asha Seva Kendra

Asha Seva Kendra is a centre in Gomia, in Jharkhand state, about two and a half hours drive from Bodhgaya. The centre is run by five sisters from the order that Sr Mary Lobo belonged to. This is a radical Catholic order which focuses on help for the poor. The sisters in this order live very simply and do not wear habits. They receive basic necessities from the order like toothpaste and soap, but any other personal items comes from their families.



Patient in the Tuberculosis/AIDs clinic with his possessions behind

We supported Mary Lobo's work in Bodhgaya for some years and were impressed with her dedication, careful articulate reports and warm manner. In getting to know other people from this order we were again impressed by their care and articulate communication. We thought that despite the programs being out of Bodhgaya, this would be a good group to support and develop some partnership with.

Asha Seva Kendra (ASK) is in a tribal area and works primarily with members of the Santhal tribe. ASK runs a residential TB/AIDs clinic, health care and education programs as well as community micro-credit

groups. Santhal tribe members are largely illiterate. Many of the men work mining coal and this contributes to incidence of tuberculosis.

The clinic is very basic. Relatives come and cook for any family member staying there. The electricity supply is intermittent and is usually cut in the evenings. The clinic used to have solar powered lights but they were stolen. This makes it harder dealing with emergencies at night. On a positive side though the Santhal people are outside the caste system and in general the women are treated better than women in Hindu culture.

We have a touching report on ASK done by an American filmmaker who visited Gomia earlier this year. It's on the BDA website, under [Asha Seva Kendra](#).

The BDA management committee was unsure how our supporters would regard a program further from Bodhgaya than anything else we have been involved with. Because of this, we decided to make it possible to specify Asha Seva Kendra if you'd like your funds to go there. It's a very worthwhile program.

Victor von der Heyde,
BDA Chairperson



Santhal woman and child in ASK education program



Coal transport in the Gomia area

BDA Financial Report 2015

First of all, I would like to thank Linda Meades, our former Treasurer for her tireless work for the past number of years. We hope you enjoy living in England for the next couple of years. What a great adventure! You will be missed by everyone.

We wish to acknowledge the generous donations from all BDA supporters, many of you have been giving unsparingly for many years. We would like to welcome our first time donors as well. Your support is greatly appreciated.

There are minor running costs associated with transferring money to India, these costs are reimbursed by the committee members. Other administrative costs are gifted by the committee members.

We would like to acknowledge the very generous support of our Auditors, GCY Accountants in East Brisbane. Their assistance has been invaluable and we cannot thank them enough for their support.

	For the year ending Feb. 28, 2015	Amount
Donations received		
	General	9880.22
	Cloudroom	527
	PV School	9251.22
	Interest	3157.78
Total donations received		\$22,807.22
Funds transferred		
	Prajna Vihar School	27591
	Scholarship	2075
	Sister Manisha	500
	Assumpta Society (Asha Seva Kendra)	500
	Jeevan Deep	1000
Total Funds Spend		\$31,666.00

Loris Neff
BDA Treasurer

You are most welcome to visit BDA programs in India. There is visitor accommodation at the sister's apartment in the Prajna Vihar School and a room for visitors at the Asha Seva Kendra program in Gomia. If you would like to visit the programs and stay at one of these places, please contact us.



PV Students' dance presentation at the school's 25th anniversary celebrations



Donation Form

Donations can be made by cheque, funds transfer or PayPal. [PayPal details are on the BDA website.](#)
Our bank details for a funds transfer are:

Bank: Bank of Queensland
Branch Cannon Hill
Account name: Bodhgaya Development Association Inc.
BSB: 124-001
Account Number: 10142193

If you do transfer funds directly, please let us know who you are and how we can contact you.
Cheques can be made out to "Bodhgaya Development Association Inc" and sent to 147 Richmond Road Morningside Qld 4170

Name:

Address:

.....

Email:

Phone:

Amount:

Donation amount for Prajna Vihar School.

Donation amount for Asha Seva Kendra (program for tribal women).

Donation amount to be used at our discretion.