

Project I-India

India, today a country with more hungry people than any other country in the world, and where 200 million people are starving every day.

Of India's 1.2 billion people, 30% live on 75 cents a day. Eleven million children live and work on the streets across India. Scary numbers that only increase!

Sure, India has experienced a huge economic boom, but do not be fooled into believing that the situation for the poor has changed. Hundreds of millions of people become exposed to caste and sex discrimination. One might ask what to do?

Indian government has given up. Society is corrupt and far too many people need help. Instead they clear up the streets of homeless people and dump them far outside of town, making it more difficult for the vulnerable to survive. Then they must also pay for the bus, to go back into town to work. A shoe shiner will possibly earn 60 rupees per day and the bus into town costs 30 rupees.

An organization named I-India was established to help the street children is the I-India. Abha Goswami and her husband, Professor Prabhakar, were the founders. In 1991 Abha worked as a teacher at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, and was commissioned to do a study on street children and prostitution. After 6 months when the job was done, Abha wondered what they could do to help all the street children. "Nothing" they replied and said "thanks and goodbye!" Abha and her husband then decided to terminate their jobs since they had promised to help the children and founded I-India. The "School-on-wheels program" was started 1992 to teach the poor out of town. In 2000 they received their first bus donated by the Finnish Embassy. Vulnerable children could call a "child line" which was open 24 hours a day. The Finnish embassy later also donated an ambulance. I-India now has 3 nurses who work full time with the children. Doctors at the hospitals refuse to treat or even touch the street children.

We visited the project Ladli that was started 2005. It is a center for 100 girls, who in addition to school also learn to make jewelry and dance. A boys' center opened in 2006. There are 50 boys who work with tailoring and handicrafts. Ladli has additional 5 'shelter homes'.

I-india is helping 3000 street children every day and it is more than any other non-government supported organization is doing. With its rolling school bus visiting 16 different places and teach 1250 children

every day. Besides school education, they get a meal (usually their only one in the day), hygiene and health education. They are educated about sexual diseases and HIV-AIDS and must learn to protect themselves against sexual exploitation. Twice a week a big water tanker comes with the school bus and gives the children an opportunity to shower and fill up the drinking water.

Abha and Prabhakar are working very seriously. If someone wants to support I-India Project, feel free to go in and read more on their website www.i-indiaonline.com and on www.ladli.org. If anyone would be interested to visit I-India, Abha would like to help to arrange a visit.

For more information on the upcoming I-India activities in Singapore, please contact Anita Williams - anitasteve65@gmail.com

Text & Photo: Cecilia Glandberger

Population Facts about India
(from UNICEF in 2005, figures in millions)

India (Total)	1'065
Children <18 years	420
Children <5 years	118
People living on <1 \$ a day (Whereof children)	360 140
Orphans	35
HIV / AIDS infected	5
Rajasthan	56
Jaipur	3

46% of marriages in India are "child marriage", i.e. those who are getting married are below 18 years.