

Dargah Hazrat Inayat Khan Hope Project Newsletter

Edited by Rita Nanda and Heiko Schrader

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The Suvidha—Ashiyana Story

Women from the basti have been involved in handicraft production (stitching and embroidery) for the Hope Project since long. With the setting up of the Vocational Training Unit more and more women got training as means to earn supplementary income from such handicraft work. Then the Hope Project started initiative to eventually shift these wage earners into independent, self-sufficient entrepreneurial entity. We brought in trainers, designers, helped developing domestic and over-seas markets, taught the women basic entrepreneurial skills such as costing, calculating and bookkeeping and eventually reduced the subsidies given by Hope in a phased manner. While the women improved their skills, they did not develop market competitiveness. We became aware that our aim was too ambitious and closed down the Suvidha co-operative with the consent of the women involved. What was the major obstacle for achieving our goal? Most women were content being wage earners and particularly averse to taking risks which are inherent in own enterprise. Hence, some of these women were attached to reputed retail shops from where they can get regular work. Others who are not prepared to go out of the basti to work with such retail shops will continue working for Hope as wage earners in the Ashiyana production unit and the products made by this unit will be used for fundraising. However, some women indeed developed the capabilities we aimed at, and they are starting their own enterprises. We have learned our lessons that every individual can not set up business enterprise and we cannot implement ideas from above that are reasonable from an NGO perspective but not in accordance with the perspectives of the stakeholders.

Vocational Training Centre

So far the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) has concentrated on providing basic skills in tailoring, hand and machine embroidery to girls/women. It has served as a good opportunity to encourage young girls to come out of their homes, as they are often not even allowed to do so for studying. In the last few months the profile of the group has changed and now a lot more school going girls and young married women are joining the VTC. There is potential in the VTC but it needs to be redefined to continue to be attractive for the women and youth of the basti. The plan is to diversify the training for girls and women to cover some more activities. We are currently engaged in holding individual discussions with the boys of the basti and have plans to run training classes in computer repairs, watch repairs, mobile repairs, cooking, wiring and rewinding etc. These plans will be finalized soon. Another initiative is underway to tap the latent cooking skills of the basti residents. A small group of ex Hope staff members and basti women were brought together under the Head of Home Science and lunch samples were provided to banks and offices in the neighborhood. These efforts have helped us to critically analyse our systems and overhead costs. We have learnt that women need some more training to cook less oily and less spicy meals to fulfill the expectations of the customers.



<i>The Suvidha-Ashiyana Story</i>	1
<i>Vocational Training Centre</i>	
<i>Family Planning and Reproductive Health Project: Condom Depot Holders</i>	2
<i>All Good Deeds Should Add Up to Three</i>	3
<i>Contact Addresses Donation Accounts New ED at Hope</i>	4

Family Planning and Reproductive Health Project: Condom Depot Holders

Three years ago, the NGO began a program to increase awareness around issues of family planning and reproductive health. Community outreach workers and staff were trained in discussing sensitive issues with women such as the importance of using condoms to prevent pregnancy and STIs. In the context of the predominantly Muslim community, previous attempts at addressing these issues were sparse at best. Before the NGO training, reproductive health and safe sex were only talked about if a patient brought it up with a doctor in the privacy of doctor's office. There were no community awareness campaigns and staff members were not trained or sensitized to the issues. Once outreach workers were trained, they began to approach people to discuss issues such as family planning and STI prevention. Part of this awareness campaign included distributing condoms. Immediately this was met with resistance from the community. Women argued that their husbands would not accept the use of contraceptives because blocking the natural cycle of procreation is seen as equivalent to blocking the "Will of God". One woman said that if she used any form of contraception, "cows would not graze at her grave", implying that by blocking her



Health talks to males

fertility, she would not be able to provide fertile land for cows to graze on and her soul would not be accepted by God. However with continued efforts of the community workers and the community's own initiative, there was a gradual change in attitudes and practice. There was an in-creasing demand for condoms but women were not ready to come to the clinic to ask for them because they did not want to be identified. This was too confidential a matter and the clinic did not provide the privacy they desired. So, the women found their own solution and without the intervention of the NGO, they chose women in various areas to become depot holders for condoms. Now women in the neighborhood could come and pick up condoms without attracting attention and with the knowledge that their secret was safe.

When the NGO discovered this self help initiative, it trained the depot holders as peer educators who

could also spread awareness about reproductive health issues within their communities. At present there are five depot holders in the community. A.* runs a shop in Area A. She has been distributing condoms for about three years. She says that initially she faced a lot of resistance from surrounding neighbors but after some time they have come to accept it. Women who might feel shy or hesitant to come and openly ask for condoms often send their children to pick up "biscuits" from these depots. This way gossip is curtailed and safe sex is practiced. B. has been a depot holder for about a year. Previously her upstairs neighbor was the depot holder but she moved and B figured that women in the area already knew where to come for condoms and decided to keep it up. She is now trained as a peer educator. She herself has been using contraceptives for four years, has two children and does not plan to have any more. Her husband is fully supportive. C is also a depot holder and her husband has been so supportive that he has begun to distribute condoms himself amongst men in the community. D. is the youngest of E's three wives and mother of of his three children. While E was away in Saudi Arabia, D became a depot holder and peer educator. On his return he found this activity very suspicious and was not cooperative. Parveen, a community worker from Hope Project explained to E what was going on and the purpose for it, he became supportive. One of E's wives has already gone in for sterilization and D's operation will be in December.

The reception desk at the NGO is also a depot and both men and women can come and get condoms from the receptionist. Reports show that about 525 people are now active condom users in the community; a remarkable figure in a socio-cultural context which holds that talking about, hearing about or using contraceptives is highly taboo. Through the use of peer educators, both women and men are able to talk about and receive information on highly sensitive and important issues, they have access to condoms to protect themselves against STIs and to promote family planning. They have a space where they can openly share and discuss these issues with their peers. In addition to condom use 49 women under went tubectomy, 125 started using oral contraceptive and 161 women went for copper- T insertion.

Dr. Bimla

*** all names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. All identification markers have been deleted.**

All Good Deeds Should Add Up to Three – So Claims a German Proverb

After my retirement my intention was to continue doing “good deeds“, being involved in other people’s lives as I did before as a teacher. Fortunately, there was the Hope Project in Delhi, for which I had been donating for quite a long time. I had met the Executive Director and the Head of Education of The Hope Project at the Sufi Alps Camp, talked to them about my intentions and was told that they would be happy to find “useful tasks” for me at the project. So I got on a plane to India, a country which I remembered from former journeys as quite a challenge for Westerners.

My visit in Nizamuddin began with the Urs Festival of Hazrat Inayat Khan, and here I was able to see the girls from the Hope School for the first time on stage, with their colorful dresses and long black braids. After the performance I was invited to a scholars’ assembly at the school building. Much to my disappointment I was hardly taken notice of due to the fact that several generous US-American ladies favored the girls with large bags full of pens. However, within the next three weeks I got my chance. I was asked to accompany the English teachers to their lectures in order to observe their methodological-didactical capabilities and provide some suggestions for improvement. But once we entered the “English Lab”, a room with tables and chairs contrary to some other class rooms where the kids sit on the ground, the teacher handed me the crayon, smiled gently, announced that she was working on “syntax in English” and I could take over. So I took over – as I did in all the other classes where I was supposed to observe only. And I got to know the girls I had seen on stage. They talked to me not only about their every-day life, but also about their dreams which started from “a good husband “ and progressed to becoming “Miss India”.

After school I met them in the narrow lanes of the basti, accompanied by their brothers and sisters, busy shopping for their daily needs, sometimes veiled. They greeted me with respect like at school – and their behavior was so pleasing compared to what I had encountered in my years at a Berlin school. During my stay in 2006 I had a similar experience. I was welcomed with friendly smiles and handed over the English lessons. But this time some questions regarding my teaching style came from my colleagues, they even wrote down how I organized the lectures and asked me for advice with regard to the introduction of a new topic.

During the tea breaks they started asking me about my life in Germany, and they wanted to know whether I planned to come again next year. I came back for the third time in February, 2007; the security guard embraced me at the crack of dawn while the dogs were barking at high pitch. After a few hours of sleep a small hand tickled my nose. Abida had sneaked into the guest apartment. She knew that I had arrived and wanted me to join her English lesson right away. So I did. In the course of the following weeks I taught different topics in various groups, produced working material, exchanged information with my colleagues about the curricula and drank a lot of chai with them during the breaks, in the corridor and after the lectures.



During the fare-well chai-break when we exchanged sweets – I was offered a delicious carrot cake from Bismillah bakery, and I offered the noble morsels from the Sweet Shop at Sunder Nagar Market - they surprised me with the finest compliments by saying that I was almost like one of them. And that is why I have decided that all good deeds can go beyond the number three. I will go back to Nizamuddin and the Hope Project a fourth time in 2008, and as before I will wonder about the not very timely start off the lectures despite the punctual roar of a school-bell, the calmness of teachers and pupils if a lesson is being cancelled or shifted, or when a class room cannot be used because the garbage trucks are making too much noise while doing their job underneath the window. This wondering will once again turn into the amazing insight of a miracle taking place: all remains in a flow, because this house is in-habited by the spirit of love, harmony and beauty. *Heidi Hanf, Berlin*



<http://www.sufiorder.org/>
<http://www.hope-project.de/>
<http://www.hopeprojectindia.org>

DARGAH HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN HOPE PROJECT

Initiated by Pir Vilayat Khan in 1975

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Donation accounts Please send your donation to one of the following accounts. Do not forget your name and address!

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New ED at the Hope Project

At the Urs of Hazrat Inayat Khan, Kamini Prakash (right), ED of the Hope Project since 2001, handed over the responsibility of management to our new director, Rita Nanda (left), who switched from finance to the social sector. The ceremony took place at the Dargah Hazrat Vilayat Khan, in the presence of the staff and the Board members. Kamini will join the NGO Pravah, working with youth and on citizenship education. We are thankful to the great work Kamini did for Hope, and we are excited about the future.

