



For those not familiar with our work, we support programs in the Bodhgaya area of Bihar State in India. For 20 years now we have supported an inter-religious school, called the Prajna Vihar School, for low caste children who would not otherwise receive an education. This school currently has around 550 students and we provide between a third and half the running costs. Further details on the school are on page three.

We also support a regional literacy and broad education program for low caste women and girls, called Nari Jagram Manch (Campaign for Women's Awakening). A good overview of this program starts on page four.

This year marks the 20th birthday of the BDA. About half of us on the management committee have been with the BDA since it started in early 1992 and we've worked together and grown older together for 20 years. We've also seen the school grow.



Prajna Vihar students in class

When we started in 1992 the PV School had been running for two years and teaching had moved from two tents to a very basic mud-brick school building with a thatched roof. The school now has a solid and substantial three storey building and we have plans to build three more classrooms.

The BDA also funded a program to help people with leprosy, a hospice for the destitute and another education and self-sufficiency program for the very poor (Massihi Gyanodaya Abhiyan).

In our first decade we held many fundraising events: community film nights, dinners where we did the cooking and arranged live music, garage sales and stalls. In more recent years we've been fortunate to have some committed supporters who donate each year and students at two Brisbane schools who raise funds for our work (see page

four). There are also Buddhist sanghas in Adelaide, Sydney, Bellingen and Brisbane who regularly support our programs. One of the features of the PV School is that while it is largely funded by the Buddhist Insight Meditation community, it has Christian, Hindu and Muslim teachers, reflecting the mix of the population in Bodhgaya.

India is often not seen these days as such a poor country and it's true there is a large middle class. However, there has been a shift in the way that global poverty is viewed and rather than looking at the overall per capita wealth of countries, there is more focus on where poor people live. According to some estimates, half the world's poorest people live in India and China. Bihar state is one of the poorest in India. We think our focus is still well targeted and any support you can give is very appreciated.

Victor von der Heyde
BDA Chairperson

Prajna Vihar School Finances 2011

	Rupees - 2010	Rupees - 2011*	Australian \$ - 2011
Books, periodicals, educational expenses	95,314	36,751	667
Salary and bonus	903,200	1,045,800	18,972
Phone	1,950	1,500	27
Water	0	684	12
Electricity	3,553	3,567	65
Stationery and functions	54,047	53,513	971
Travelling and study tours	50,946	72,141	1,309
Milk, snacks, fuel	10,154	11,418	207
Seminar and training	0	0	0
Maintenance: building and furniture	0	2,376	43
Audit and legal expenses	19,050	36,420	661
Totals	1,138,194	1,264,190	22,933

* Inflation in Bihar State is currently around 9% pa.



A: Existing school building; B: School land bought around 2 years ago, where 3 classrooms are planned; C: Stage; D: Land which we hope to buy to ensure access to the school; E: Monks' land; F: Korean monastery / meditation centre; G: Waste water pond (swamp), and blocked drainage canal to the south of the school

Prajna Vihar School

The school continues to do well and by now there are second generation students: children of some of the students who went there in the early 1990s. The school is highly regarded and there are more parents who would like their kids to go to the school than places available.

One of the big changes that has emerged in the last twelve months is that the Insight Meditation / Vipassana retreats which have been run by Christopher Titmuss and others over the last 30 years in Bodhgaya will be moving to Sravasti in Uttar Pradesh, about 120 kilometres north of Lucknow. The school started as a result of the interest and funds collected from participants in these retreats, and each year they've helped with school funds. Now there will be no direct contact.

At the end of the retreats there has been a "cultural presentation" by the school to retreat participants. This has been a big event in the school calendar, an opportunity to show their performance skills to a foreign audience. The "cultural presentation" has also been a way to have contact with Westerners, who provide the main source of funds for the school.

What the impact of the change of the retreat venue will be remains unclear. One possibility is that a small group of dancers from the school will travel to perform at the annual Dharma Gathering in Sarnath (about four hours away by train).

Then there are the ongoing challenges. We have been waiting for FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) approval for over 10 years. It still hasn't come through. This approval would permit the school to receive funds directly from overseas. A lawyer has been engaged in Delhi and is working with the chair of the PVIIES (Prajna Vihar Inter-religious Education Society) to expedite the process.

There is also an issue with possible future access to the school. There had been a UNESCO master plan for the Bodhgaya area which put big restrictions on any new building work and raised questions whether classrooms could be built on

the new school land that was bought around 2 years ago. This master plan appears now to be abandoned, and consequently the classrooms can be built without problem. However, it also means that there will be more building in the area and the block of land that provides access to the school might be bought, used and closed off (with boundary walls). Two sides of the school (to the east and the south) are basically swamp, and there is private property to the west with a boundary wall, so the only access is from the north. It was decided to buy this land to the north, but it has been proving difficult to contact the owner.



The cultural presentation each year gives students a chance to dress up. Many of the clothes are owned by the school.

On a positive note, during the school holidays in late December and early January (2012) the school was used by Tibetan Buddhist monks coming for the Kalachakra Puja run by the Dalai Lama. In return, there were funds given to help with building maintenance and repairs.

In March, Year 10 students went on a study tour to the Barabar Hills. While only 50 km to the north of Bodhgaya, it was new to the students. It's an historical site with caves cut into the rock with inscriptions and figures dating back to 250 BCE.

Despite the challenges, the school continues to thrive.

Victor von der Heyde

“ Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” (Nelson Mandela)

One of the guiding principles of the BDA is “to enrich the local community by raising awareness and giving opportunity to participate in the Group's compassionate activities”. Two schools in the Brisbane area, St Aidan's and St Margaret's Anglican Girls Schools, have been involved once again in activities to raise funds for the PV school. This has been done in a variety of ways:

Funds were raised during free dress collections; cake stalls were held; a swim-athon was conducted; primary books were donated catering for early childhood learning with a strong Australiana theme; pre-loved secondary science books were sent to the school as were filled, hand-crafted felt pencil cases, created by Year 7 students.

By participating in these activities, Australian students may realise the good fortune of their own education and become powerful advocates of education for those less fortunate than themselves. Hopefully this young generation will grow into aware members of our 'world community', contributing to spreading the message of this powerful weapon called education.

Kerstin Liebchen-Meades, BDA management committee and founding member

Report for BDA from Nari Jagran Manch: April 2011 to April 2012

Sister Mary Lobo, program director

The social mission of our organisation – Nari Jagran Manch – urges us to build an inclusive human community, specifically by working with the poorest who struggle to find a dignified route out of their subhuman situation.

The geographic location of our work is Bodh Gaya and villages around in a radius of 18 km, all in Gaya District. A ruthless market and scarce resources bring added pressure in the lives of these Dalit communities who are among the most vulnerable of India's 35% population living below the poverty line. Dalit women and girl children of the most downtrodden Musahar caste are at the centre of our services which focus on:

1. Social: Women's empowerment and education of girl children;
2. Economic: Alternative economics for marginalised communities, with a focus on micro-credit;
3. Environmental: Concrete steps to address environmental issues.



Sister Mary Lobo (left) at training program in Kajichak with Jasmath (village leader for that program). Kajichack is about 7 km from Bodhgaya on the road to Gaya.

Below is a brief report of our activities under these three categories for this year.

The table at the end of this report (on page nine) shows the activities which have been possible with the generous support of BDA.

1. Social: Dalit awakening: mobilising, organising and empowering Dalit women.

This is done by 6 community animators (women staff) animating a total of 58 groups comprising 1,545 women with an outreach to as many more in their households. Groups are held monthly and at times more often. Eight new groups formed this year in four new villages.

There were also 12 training programs in times where there was less agricultural work (September and February). Topics for the training programs include gender justice, rights of the girl child, health, sanitation, population control, environment and energy efficiency, government schemes and rights based legislation, voter identification, participation in village councils, steps for a federation of Dalit women, business skills and micro credit concepts. As well as conveying information, the programs use role plays, charts, games, songs and discussions.

We had special training programs: a group of our community animators went to Delhi for training in August 2011; 30 women with staff went to Patna in September for a program on environment and organic cultivation; and in November we had 200 women at Nevtapur for day long program on leadership, women's rights and micro credit.

We've been networking and sharing our knowledge with eight other groups doing similar work around Gaya and beyond. And we have an educational outreach program. This has, among other activities, sponsored 10 girls for education in private schools in Bodhgaya, run an intensive 3 week tailoring camp for 20 girls, and a 15 day study camp for 12 girls at the Nevtapur village centre.

2. Alternative Economic development : Micro Credit

We are uneasy and constantly question the prevailing market economy promoted by the corporate world in league with the government. The fall out is a one-sided development model, which exploits the base and marginalises the poor. Our organisation's response is intensive micro credit activity at the base among the 1,545 women – with a systematically worked out micro credit program.

The method we use is:

- training in concept / norms and procedures of micro credit, transparency and a system of monitoring of records and accounts at all levels;
- promoting recycling of internal loans within the women groups;
- facilitating special loans from the organisation (total amount of these organisational loans given this year was 44,000 Rs (AU\$800). The procedures are cost effective, simple and flexible.

At a special function in November 2011, 22 women's groups were each given an award of 2,500 Rs (AU\$45.35) to enhance their bank accounts /savings. This award was given to these 22 groups for excellence in every aspect of their micro credit activities. This has served enormously to motivate women in the whole organisation to perform better.

The women are involved in businesses which are village-based and geared towards a sustainable village market. Most are involved in livestock enterprises and loans are often employed for this. Land mortgaged to money lenders is redeemed with micro loans and women are able to cultivate their own small plots for themselves and their families. Other businesses include tailoring, small village shops, fruit and vegetable stalls, selling clothes or ornaments, and the purchase and hiring out of bullocks for ploughing.

Last year there was great business with the visit of the Dalai Lama and the Kalachakra Puja – with the sale of eggs, vegetables, sweets and clothes.

As a policy we encourage these productive loans and discourage un-productive loans taken for marriages or ritual celebrations.

3. Environmental

Rising costs of food, scarce resources and degradation of the environment have hit the poorest in a drastic way. Awareness and training programs have brought greater attention to these survival problems.

We have taken the following concrete steps.

(a) Several meetings were held in 2 villages to decide on a spot for water pumps in summer – but unfortunately the communities could not agree because of interference by other castes so this work is postponed for this year.

(b) 72 pressure cookers (for energy efficiency) were sold to 72 households at subsidised rates.

(c) 800 saplings (200 of these were for fruit) were planted in 135 households.

(d) Subsidies were given for 3 compost pits – and organic cultivation is encouraged.

Concluding remarks : BDA's generous support for different components of the work have brought hope, resilience and improved standards of living to a great number of people on the margins. With Martin Luther King Jr., we can say that "we have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have 3 meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits ... What self-centred people have torn down, other-centred people can build up ... and we shall overcome."

We feel encouraged and inspired to move on in grateful solidarity with BDA.

Mary Lobo

*Program Animator / Nari Jagran Manch
Bodh Gaya – Bihar – India
10th April 2012*



Nari Jagran Manch (Forum for Women's Awakening) training program in Upadhyabigha, a village about 1.5 km from the Burmese Vihar on the main river-side road heading towards Gaya.



**Bodhgaya
Development
Association**

Donation Form

You can transfer funds directly to our bank account:

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 or money orders can be made out to "Bodhgaya Development Association Inc" and sent to 147 Richmond Road Morningside Qld 4170

Name:

Address:

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Email:

Phone:

Amount:

Donation form on reverse

Nari Jagran Manch Expenditure on BDA Account
for the period 1 April 2011 - 31 March 2012, in Rupees (AUD in parentheses)

	Income	Expenditure on BDA account
Received from BDA	150,000 (\$2,721)	
Previous balance	1,540 (\$28)	
1 Awards given to motivate 12 groups that excelled in micro credit activities Rs 2500 for each group		30,000 (\$544)
2. Micro loans given with BDA support to 8 women, from 2000 Rs (\$36) to 5000 Rs (\$90)		31,000 (\$562)
3. Costs for 6 training programs at Rs 800 each (2 at Nevtapur, 1 each at Tirka, Maunia, Kajichak, Shekwara		4,800 (\$87)
4. Costs for the Patna training Program at Taru Mitra for 30 women (350 Rs each)		10,500 (\$190)
5. Support for 2 community animators (12 months : Reena Rs 2000 / Urmila Rs 2200)		50,400 (\$914)
6. Support to 1 office assistant (Rs 800 x12)		9,600 (\$174)
7. Administration (Phone, part office rent, transport, Xerox, stationery) Rs 1000 p.m		12,000 (\$217)
Total spent		148,300 (\$2,690)
Balance on hand	3,240 (\$59)	



Micro-credit group in Upadhayabigha, with Nirmala (NJM staff) writing credit records

BDA Finance Report 2011 - 2012

Donations for the past year, March 2011 to February 2012, were \$12,668.81 and interest \$4820.02 giving us a total revenue of \$17,488.12. While this is down from our previous financial year where the revenue was \$28,420.35, it is still very healthy and allows us to maintain our objectives.

This is because of the generous donations from BDA supporters, many of whom have been constant in their giving for many years. All donations are warmly received and much appreciated.

There are minor running costs associated with transfers of money to India and bank charges. These costs are reimbursed by the committee members. Postage, newsletter costs and other administrative costs are gifted by the committee members. This ensures that all money raised and your donations go to the BDA projects.

We would like to acknowledge also the very generous support of our new auditors, GCY Accountants (George C Yanardasis and Associates) in East Brisbane. Their work for the BDA was free of charge and we cannot thank them enough for their time and effort.

	Funds received	Funds allocated
Cloudroom use (talks, meetings, meditations)	\$2,720.90	
General donations	\$9,947.20	
Interest	\$4,820.02	
Prajna Vihar School		\$10,000.00
Nari Jagran Manch		\$3,445.90
Totals	\$17,488.12	\$13,445.90

Thank you all.

Linda Meades
BDA Treasurer



Prajna Vihar students outside classrooms



Prajna Vihar student at school assembly