



GEN, a Grassroots Empowerment Network working with local NGOs and the most disadvantaged villagers to contribute to the elimination of poverty in the Alwar District of Rajasthan State, India. To find out more about the GEN's work see www.gen-initiative.org

'While poverty persists, there is no freedom'
Nelson Mandela 2006

~ GEN News – January 2013 ~

Pakhar Singh Foundation and iPartner India Support Tijara Women's Handicrafts Project

GEN and its ngo partner in India, End Poverty (EP), have been awarded a one year grant by the Pakhar Singh Foundation through iPartner India to support further development of the Tijara women's handicrafts project. The project began small at the end of 2010 with a £300 pilot project to explore whether women and girls in the Tijara villages were willing and able to try their hands at handicrafts production for improved livelihood opportunities. This resulted in a number of women producing a range of pouches and bags and use of their traditional quilt making skills to make saleable quilts.

Now, two years on, handicrafts are made in craftwork centres in three Tijara villages, with more than 30 women from five villages involved. Records for November 2012 showed that more than 14 women in this group had earned over Rupees 1000 per head from regular handicrafts production during the month. The centres also offer flexible work options catering for women who cannot work so consistently because of family and farming responsibilities.

What about handicraft sales?

In India 8 EP volunteers, led by Deepti Bhardwaj, EP's consultant for education and handicrafts, have marketed the Tijara women's work through several festive season exhibitions at the end of 2012. One included an informal fashion show to show use of the bags and pouches made by the Tijara women (see below).



Craft work centre in action in Mithiyavas. Popular new bags on R. New quilt in- the-making on L.



The End Poverty exhibition team including models on R and sales team on L

And round the world sales.....?

In UK three GEN supporters have organised 'Pre Christmas Pouch Parties' to sell the Tijara women's handicrafts to friends. Many thanks to Jean Salt, Pauline Cheeseman and Bet Tickner for this. The GEN Diwali Party included a stall selling the Tijara women's work (see below). And GEN walkers and other supporters have made purchases throughout the year. UK sales have reached almost £1500 over 2012. **In Italy**, Laura Peruzzo, an intern who worked on End Poverty's handicrafts project in early 2012, returned home and in November combined a successful conference presentation on her work in India with a handicrafts stall of Tijara products. This raised over Euros 500. She has plans for something similar in March 2013. A former EP volunteer, Sharad Sinha, whose work took him to **Angola** last year has successfully sold Tijara bags and pouches there and has asked for more! Can we reach further afield during 2013? *We will need your help – see below.*



L. Sample bag.

R. GEN Diwali Party, November 2012 – setting up the stall – bags, quilts and pouches.



The challenge for the handicrafts project in 2013 is how to put production on a more commercially sound footing, using the grant received from iPartner India and the Pakhar Singh Foundation. GEN and EP also need to find more sales outlets for the Tijara women's work.

Can you help?

If you think you could organise a pouch party or a market stall anywhere in UK (or elsewhere in the world) where good hearted people would be interested in buying the work of the Tijara women get in touch with Sue Burke in the first instance – SPBurke@aol.com – and we can work something out. It does not matter if your event is small. Every little helps. We can supply bags, pouches of different shapes and sizes, and some very cosy single and double quilts – examples below. New items and designs are in preparation including cushion covers, table cloths, single quilts, Kindle bags.



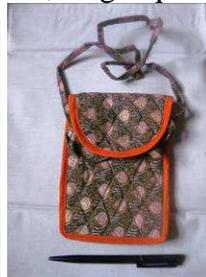
Cosy double quilt 1



Passport or Kindle bag + phone pouch



Tie up pouch



Phone pouch (or fits a camera)



Cosy double quilt 2

Girls education in Tijara – innovation is in the air

At the end of November 81 girls in the Tijara Block completed an additional year of study following their initial 6 month introductory literacy and numeracy programme under the End Poverty scheme. At the end of the programme 79% demonstrated competence in reading and writing in Hindi and Maths to Primary School Class 2 level. They had also studied basic English, horticulture, health and nutrition,

sewing and art and had learned to a range of physical games and exercises. The girls, who had attended classes in 4 different villages, had a chance to meet each other and socialise when EP organised a health camp in November 2012 where all of the girls were given a basic health check by grass roots staff from the Block health department and were given tips on health and food habits. Some were referred to the Tjara Hospital on for treatment of persistent problems such as anaemia, ear discharge, speech and breathing problems and general weakness.



Health checks in progress

- Health Camp** NEW
 The health camp (L) also provided for opportunities for all the girls to play together and participate in a drawing competition.
- Drawing competition**
 The drawing competition (R) produced such good results that EP plans to use some of the results in a 2014 fund raising calendar



Art competition in action

Who attends EPs programmes? Learner profiles – Fatima and Saabra



Fatima

Fatima is 15 and very shy! She had some formal education when she was very young but did not continue because of the distance to school and local social customs. She scored 78% in her July test and 93% in December. As well as the basics she likes games and drawing, has learned stitching, and wants to study more with the EP programme. With what she has learned so far she now helps her mother record daily milk production. Her family is happy she can continue her learning locally.

Saabra (17) has learned how to read Hindi fluently. In Maths she had learned the basics of adding and subtracting and scored 64% in the July test. By November she had added multiplication and division to her skills and scored 90% in the end of year test. Her favourite subjects are English, drawing and stitching. She reads the newspaper at home and wants to continue her studies. Here she is with her father and mother and one of the EP gifted fruit trees that she has cultivated.



Saabra and her family

Creativity at work – some examples



Two of the pictures done by the girls for the EP fund raising calendar

EP's educational work contributes to Indian government's educational aspirations



In April 2010 the Indian government passed the 'Right to Education' (RTE) legislation which set as a target the provision of primary school education to all the children in the country. Initially the legislation was thought to have serious implications for provision of community based education provided by non governmental organisations, and that ngo educational initiatives would have to stop. The government has now made it clear that it sees the ngo sector as having a part to play in achieving RTE goals. So ngo's like End Poverty are now exploring ways of joining hands with government in meeting its educational goals. In EPs case this includes helping to find female support teachers to work in government primary schools in Tjara. It also includes encouraging girls who have completed the EP educational programmes to enter mainstream education. With this in mind EP is arranging for girls and their parents to visit and observe primary schooling-in-action in the area. *More in next GEN News.*

How GEN celebrated Diwali! Cambridge 17th November 2012

On 17th November 2012 GEN celebrated Diwali with a fund raising party for over 200 people in a community hall near Cambridge. Classical Indian dancing on stage by girls from a local dance school, a veggie meal for all who attended, outdoor fire dancing, music by Deep Blue, the Cambridge band of academics who love to entertain, and a two part auction. Auction part 1 was for actual items such as a long weekend in Dundlod Fort, Rajasthan or in an Oxford town house; a week in a flat in C Edinburgh in July 2014; a chance to test drive an Aston Martin, Indian cooking lessons, Tijara quilts and lots more.



Diwali Party audience entertained by young dancers from a local dance school

Auction part 2 was for virtual items to provide direct support to people in the villages supported by the GEN – help with funding the girls education; contributions to support women making handicrafts; bikes for teachers and village based field workers; help for farmers to improve their productivity, water management and dairying skills. The Diwali Party raised over £5000 much needed funds to enable the GEN to support villagers and village development in 10 villages in the Tijara Block in Rajasthan through its partnership with Indian ngo, End Poverty - see www.endpovertyindia.org to find out more.

10 for GEN walkers defy floods! Abingdon 2nd December 2012



GEN walkers besides a full River Thames in Abingdon

Despite serious Thames flooding along most of our planned riverside walk from Abingdon to Sutton Courtenay on 2nd December 15 GEN supporters completed the 10 km circuit with the help of local guide and GEN supporter, David Clark. When every alternative path seemed under water David found us a non flooded path to reach the Swan at Sutton Courtenay for lunch and a chance to dry off and warm up before our return journey to Abingdon.

In September more than 20 GEN walkers followed the course of Royal Parks half maratho led by GEN trustee, Tony Charlwood, who was joining the run as a sponsored participant later in that month. Tony's run and the walk raised £Our route took us through St James Park, Green Park and Hyde Park where we visited some of the lesser known corners of the parks on this delightful inner city trail.

NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW

On 10th February we launch a new series of north of London walks. The first will follow a historic circuit from Saffron Walden to Audley End and back. Contact andrewpicken@cantab.net for details .

Our 10 for GEN walks are fun and keep you fit! They also raise funds for GENs work in India. Think about joining us sometime. The South Chilterns walks will continue in 2013 as well as the new series.

Next issue – news from the GEN / End Poverty Stakeholder Meet in India at the end of February. We will be reviewing progress over the past year and setting priorities for 2013-14

GEN News is currently compiled and edited by Sue Burke, Chair of the GEN. SPBurke@aol.com 020 7794 9495. All enquiries should go to Sue. Donations to the GEN Initiative also welcome by cheque c/o Colin Marsh (below) or via www.justgiving.com

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