



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.

“While poverty persists, there is no freedom.”

Nelson Mandela 2006

The GEN Initiative Ltd Grassroots Empowerment in Rural India

Progress Report 2013

(Includes Annual Report 2012)

Education



Livelihood



Village Development



UK: Fund-raising and Development



September 2013

Contact Information for The GEN Initiative Ltd is given on the back page

Foreword - Chair's Review

GEN, the Grassroots Empowerment Network, and its Indian partner, End Poverty (EP), share the fundamental principle implied in GEN's official name. We both believe our role is to support people in the Tijara villages with pursuing their own goals. Our roles are to help them find effective ways of doing this. This can mean helping leaders and spokespeople to find their way through local bureaucratic procedures to access official support they are entitled to, or opening doors to contacts and expertise that could contribute to improving conditions of in their villages. It can also mean arranging 'exposure visits' to projects which may have transferrable lessons or achievements. GEN also helps with fundraising and accessing other practical support or contact making.

Working in Partnership: Each year GEN and EP get together with representatives from the Tijara villages where together we review progress over the previous year and discuss plans and priorities for the coming year and beyond. The model for the meetings varies but the aims remain the same. In 2012 we held a preliminary meeting in the compound of a local staff member, Dayal Singh, followed by a collective meeting in the hall of the EP office in Biwadi, the small town on the main road near the villages. In 2013 we held a preliminary meeting in a park in Gurgaon, followed by consultative meetings in 3 villages. Consultations covered EPs work in education, livelihood and village development as well as emerging issues. Proposals were generated which will shape our work into 2014.

Vinod Kausik, Chair of End Poverty, visits UK: In June 2013, Vinod came to UK on a private visit, and agreed to join us for two events to give GEN supporters and potential supporters a chance to find out more about our work in India. One was in Cambridge, and was attended mostly by post graduate students, and those mainly from India. This generated valuable interest and support: 3 attendees will visit the Tijara Block in December during their vacation; one, Priya Shinghal, has already held a successful Tijara handicrafts sale in Manchester; one or more have offered to help with the 2013 Diwali fund raising party. The other was at the Abbey in Sutton Courtenay near Oxford, and was attended by GEN supporters including both walkers and the parents of a volunteer, Imogen Burgess, who with friend Hayley Cusick, is currently teaching English to EP staff, as well as to some more advanced girls at our classes in Tijara. They are also gathering information on local musical traditions.

Fund raising: GEN supports EP's core costs through various fund raising activities – regular 10 for GEN walks (£10 that is!), an annual Diwali Party, many much appreciated individual donations and in 2013 a fund raising campaign linked to Malala's day celebrated by the UN in July. We also received a generous contribution towards costs of EPs local staff from PHAST, a UK based social enterprise company working in public health. **A big thank you to all who have contributed to supporting our work.** (In 2012 we held four 10 for GEN walks, and in 2013 stepped this up (we hope) to eight. The walks are fun, and a good way of getting fresh air and exercise. Everyone welcome. Just contact me in first instance.)

Financial support: GEN and EP have benefitted from regular financial support for the girls education programme from the Pakhar Foundation via iPartner India since 2009. This has enabled us to reach 800 girls up to March 2013. In April this was matched by a second grant to support the women's handicrafts programme, and has given our work a huge boost. **Another big thank you to iPartner and Pakhar Foundation.**

Diwali Party 2013: The date is set – 7th December, and so is the venue – Whittlesford Memorial Hall, as last year. There will be a good veggie meal, entertainment, music, lighting effects, and an auction. Do come!

Handicrafts: Early in 2013 Bet Tickner, a keen seamstress from UK who regularly joins our 10 for GEN walks (and leads some), ran a workshop with some of the handicrafts workers. She was already on to a visit to India. Bet introduced them to a new bag design, and since then other new products have been added – cushion covers, table covers, yoga mat carriers, as well as the ongoing production on 3 kinds of bag, 3 kinds of pouch and quilts of various sizes. In the lead up to Christmas 2012 several GEN supporters ran 'pouch parties' for friends and neighbours, where Tijara handicrafts were on sale. We are now experimenting with more public sales outlets.

Eco Tourism – a new venture: a highlight of 2013 has been the eco-survey done in Tijara in March. Hopefully this will help progress thinking about development of eco-tourism in the area. In October UK volunteer Ameer Virani, a graduate of the Leeds Metropolitan University Responsible Tourism Masters degree will join EP for 3 months to help develop a long term plan and short term steps towards its achievement. Watch this space.

Sue Burke, Chair of the GEN

GEN and End Poverty Activities in India

About the Tijara Block Villages where we are working

Currently, the work of End Poverty, supported by the GEN, is focusing on a group of villages in the Tijara Block in Alwar District in the State of Rajasthan. The area is primarily agricultural, and is one of the most impoverished districts of India. The majority of the people in the area are Meos, who follow a unique branch of Islam. Others include several resettled Sikh villages and various unscheduled Hindu caste groups. The number of villages included in the End Poverty programme continues to grow. Six new villages were added to the programme during 2012 and up to mid-2013 eight new villages had joined the programme. In total by the middle of 2013, we were working with more than 20 villages. The programme is divided into three main strands: (i) Education; (ii) Livelihood; and (iii) Village Development.

Education

The main focus of the education programme is on teenage girls, many of whom have not previously received any formal education and will shortly get married. Since the programme was launched in 2009, over 800 unschooled teenage girls from 13 villages have attended EP's 6 month literacy and general education programme and gained basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy, health and nutrition, horticulture and sewing. Of these over 130 have attended the newly instituted follow-on one year programme, and are asking for more.



A class in the village of Jojaka, which joined the programme in 2012



A class in the village of Khidarpur, which joined the programme in 2013

Education was one of the key topics discussed at the GEN / EP Stakeholder Meetings in March 2013. There was much enthusiasm for the girls' education programme with suggestions that it should be more condensed and shorter. It was also suggested that girls should have the opportunity to reach level 8 of schooling. Currently through EP they can only reach level 3, although work is underway on providing higher level opportunities.

[Note: Despite this enthusiasm, we are disappointed that 2 villages have opted out of the EP education programme because village elders don't want their girls to participate and get an education! Working in this culturally plural area can be challenging.] More detailed information on the education programme is available in reports on the 'Kishori Shiksha Programs' prepared by EP and GEN - contact GEN for a copy.

Donate to the GEN

To support the work of the GEN, you can donate on-line at <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/gen>

Livelihood

Craft Work

The Tijara villages have a tradition of craft work (in particular the production of quilts). In 2010 GEN launched a pilot handicrafts project by giving End Poverty £250 to buy sewing machines and materials for women and girls from Tijara villages where EP was actively engaged. The craft work project has grown significantly since then. Three handicrafts centres have been established, involving 62 women, and more are planned. The range of products produced by the women includes quilts, large and small pouches, shoulder bags, shopping bags, table cloths and cushion covers. Plans are in hand for helping the women to set themselves up as a producer company.



Craftwork training in action



Quilt-maker in Dina ki Dhani village

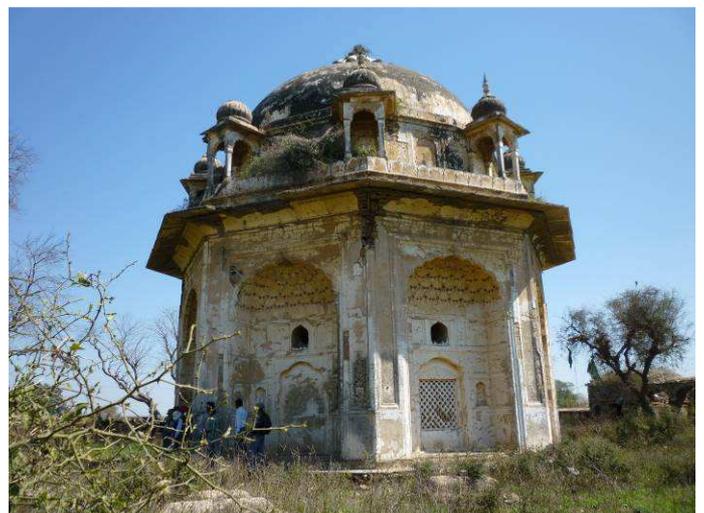
At the Stakeholder Meeting in March 2013, work for income generation was seen as a high priority, especially handicrafts production. Expansion of the current programme was proposed, with suggestions on how to ensure range and quality of products are saleable in the market place and how to improve the quality of equipment available. It was proposed that the girls' education programme should include more sewing skills so they can move into handicrafts production after completing the education programme.

Rural Tourism

A project on rural tourism in the Tijara villages was launched in 2011, when two postgraduate students pursuing an MA in Responsible Tourism at Leeds Metropolitan University, UK, carried out a preliminary feasibility study, which aimed to identify prospects in rural tourism for income generation and boosting the local economy.



The ecological survey team checks what birds can be seen



Historic building from the Mughal period at Dholi Pahadi

In March 2013 GEN arranged for an ecological survey of the Tijara villages to be carried out, with the objective of identifying the main ecological resources of the area. Two Indian experts in birds and ecology, Niranjan Singh and Brijender Singh, and one UK ecologist, Jan Hewlett, with supporting teams from GEN and EP, spent three days collecting information on birdlife, local vegetation and land use, and historic buildings in EP's area of activity. The ecosurvey has resulted in mapping of two walking trails for visitors to the area – these will be used for 'led walks' by the EP team and local volunteers. The team has also produced an informative note for visitors on historic buildings in the area, and a preliminary list of over 50 species of bird identified during the survey. A provisional start up plan was drafted as a basis for preparing a policy on the development of rural tourism for discussion with EP's Board. This includes suggestions for developing village-based accommodation for visitors interested in experiencing life in a rural village in Rajasthan. One household has piloted this for several GEN interns, and can act as a model for future visitors.

Village Development

Identifying village needs: the 'Stakeholder Meet' in March 2013

The annual 'Stakeholder Meet' is a key event in the GEN-EP programme in the Tijara villages. In 2013, instead of a plenary meeting involving all villages at once, a series of meetings was held in individual villages. This was preceded by a planning meeting between GEN and End Poverty staff, held in a park in Gurgaon. One of the main approaches taken to village development is to encourage the formation of Village Development Groups (VDGs), which can identify needs and assess priorities for development at a village level. VDGs have had many successes. Over 50 small infrastructure development projects have been undertaken at the instigation of village development groups supported by EP. These have included providing water pumps, improvement of roads and pathways, building proper boundaries to schools and other public places, improving agricultural production through water management and supply of better plants and seeds.



GEN and EP staff meet in a park in Gurgaon to discuss the approach to the Stakeholder Meetings



At a Stakeholder Meeting in Meethiyawas, village representatives discuss how to improve the craft work

The programme for the VDGS was reviewed at the Stakeholder Meetings in March 2013. Action identified for VDGs' attention included: arranging training for farmers to increase productivity and improve marketing of their products; ensure fair prices and availability of seeds, fertiliser and pesticides; find loans for livestock; set up dairies at village level; improve quality of roads; support widows engagement with livestock and dairy activities; improve distribution of water and access to drinking water; programme to install toilets. VDGs were also asked to address problems of youth unemployment, to press for improvements in the quality of schools and the quality and level of education they provide including provision to level 8 or better still a local secondary school, and to seek ways to provide higher education for girls in the villages. End Poverty and GEN will make supporting villagers in meeting these aspirations a priority in 2013-14.

GEN Activities in the UK

Fundraising – walks programme

During 2012 there was a regular programme of '10 for GEN' walks, to raise funds for the GEN. '10 for GEN' refers to the average length of the walk (about 10 kilometres) and the minimum donation requested (£10). Since the start of 2013 there have already been 5 more 10 for GEN fund raising walks, one in the snow, one in the damp, and three in the sun. In the snow we followed a beautiful circuit around Saffron Walden. A stalwart seven completed the course and promised to come back on a sunnier day. On a sunny day in April more than 20 walkers took a trail in a spectacular part of the South Chilterns taking in Pishill and an excellent lunch in a historic pub there called The Crown. Sunny day two was a walk near the former home of George Bernard Shaw in Ayot St Lawrence near St Albans. Sunny day three was another S Chilterns beauty spot around Ibstone. The damp walk was linked to a 'Walk, Eat Talk' event when EP chair, Vinod Kausik came to talk with GEN supporters. . So far 2013 walks have raised well over £1250. At least two more walks are planned in 2013.

Fundraising - Diwali Party 2012

On Saturday 17 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 Central Edinburgh in July 2014; a chance to test drive an Aston Martin, Indian cooking lessons, Tijara quilts and lots more. 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 about what is happening there.



The dancers prepare for the display at the Diwali party



Guests receive the Diwali meal

Fundraising – Sponsors

During 2012 and 2013 particular thanks are due to:

- iPartner India and the Pakhar Foundation for support for the girls literacy programme and the handicrafts project (latter since April 2013)
- Sponsors of the 2012 Diwali Party – the Deep Blue Band, Shai Vyakarnam
- 10 for GEN walkers – too many to name but their generosity has made a big difference
- Other Sponsors – Eric Arnold, Felix & Kim Arnold, Sue Burke, John McCormick, John & Jean Salt, John Veit-Wilson, Greg Yates and PHAST (the Public Health Action Support Team).

Financial Information

The GEN Initiative Limited

Statement of Financial Activities

Year Ended 31 December 2012

	Total Funds	Total Funds
	2012 £	2011 £
INCOMING RESOURCES		
Incoming resources from generating funds	19,091	21,433
Investment income	5	4
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	19,096	21,437
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Costs of generating voluntary income	216	198
Support - End Poverty	14,434	19,768
Governance costs	2,798	3,301
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	17,448	23,267
NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR	1,648	-1,830
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD	15,665	17,495
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	17,313	15,665

All movements are in Unrestricted Funds

The charity has no recognised gains or losses other than the results for the year as set out above

All of the activities of the charity are classed as continuing.

Summary Financial History 2008-2012

Year ended 31 December	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	£	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES	15,052	14,334	19,029	21,437	19,096
RESOURCES EXPENDED	29,393	19,454	13,089	23,267	17,448
NET INCOMING RESOURCES (-)	-14,341	-5,120	5,940	-1,830	1,648

About 'End Poverty' (India)

End Poverty (EP), GEN's partner in India, is a non-profit organisation founded in February 2009. Based in Gurgaon, Haryana, it is registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860. Its dream is to see a poverty-free India. EP is a team of experienced social development professionals, working towards sustainable and scalable solutions towards reducing poverty in India. 'Scalable' in this context means that the approach is capable of being expanded both in scope and geographical coverage. EP started its work from villages and slum areas in and around Gurgaon and now has presence in more than 20 villages in Alwar District of Rajasthan. EP believes that an integrated approach, where you combine literacy, education, livelihood and placement/micro-finance together through a single program to help increase the earning potential of the needy works well, and is experimenting with this model to make it sharper and scalable.

The GEN – EP Partnership in 2013-14

The outlook for the GEN-EP partnership in 2013-14 is bright. Key features include:

- Higher level literacy classes are being offered to girls who have attended the basic course, plus the basic course is being taken to more villages. Education centres offering 7 years primary schooling to girls either in parallel to local primary schools or in localities near where girls live are in the planning stage.
- Expansion of craft work activity with growth of exports to UK as well as in and around Delhi. More craftworkers are expected to join the programme, and the product range is continuously being expanded.
- Further research to expand the prospects for developing rural tourism for income generation.

Date for your diary – contact SPBurke@aol.com for more information

The GEN fund raising Diwali Party 2013 is scheduled for Saturday 7 December: food – fun – lights in some shape or form – a fantastic night of entertainment including music, an auction and a chance to dance and enjoy.

Further Information On How You Can Help

How You Can Help

Are you interested in finding out more about the GEN or in getting more actively involved? We need more trustees and well informed associates to join our small team. You will have the opportunity to connect with grassroots India. We also need more funds. Get in touch with Sue Burke, Chair of the GEN, to find out more. SPBurke@aol.com. **If you wish to make a donation, go to <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/gen>.** *(Please note that GEN no longer uses JustGiving.)*

Further information about the GEN and End Poverty

Further information about the GEN is available on its website or by email:

www.gen-initiative.org / contact@gen-initiative.org

Further information about End Poverty (India) is available on its website:

<http://www.endpovertyindia.org/>.

Contacts and support for EP

GEN assists EP by finding suitable contacts and organisations in the UK and elsewhere which can support its work.

GEN Trustees

GEN Trustees: Sue Burke (Chair), Tony Charlwood, Andrew Picken, Sunetra Puri and Shailendra Vyakarnam

GEN Associates and Volunteers: John McCormick, Eric Arnold, Michael Anderson

Company Secretary: Colin Marsh. **Accountants:** Radbourne Management Services, Radbourne House, Butchers Lane, Pattishall, Northamptonshire

Charity Registration No. 1101193, Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered Office: Radbourne House, Butchers Lane, Pattishall, Northamptonshire., **Registration No. 4620446**