

Grassroots Empowerment in Rural India Annual Report 2014

The GEN Initiative Ltd (GEN)

www.gen-initiative.org

Aims

GEN, a UK-based charity, is a Grassroots Empowerment Network. It works in partnership with an Indian non governmental organisation 'End Poverty' (EP), supported by Village Development Groups (VDGs) in most of the villages where it is active. Its purpose is, to contribute to the elimination of poverty in rural villages in the Alwar District of Rajasthan State, India. The underpinning principle of its work is to empower villagers to take charge of improving life in their communities. The GEN/EP programme is currently focusing on a group of villages in the Tijara area of Alwar District, where it has been working since 2009.. Supported by VDGs, the GEN/EP programme has three main strands: (i) education for adolescent girls; (ii) livelihood - craftwork; and (iii) village development, including rural tourism.

Consultation with villagers

Each year GEN and End Poverty hold a Stakeholder Meet over two or three days. The 2014 Stakeholder meet was held in EP's office in Tapukara in March 2014. Each day explored one of the main themes of EP's work.

Day 1: Education: A group of teachers and (on right) a parent



Day 2: Craftwork – artisans display their new designs.



Day 3: Village development. Tourist guide Niranjan Singh (left) talks to villagers about rural tourism



Education for unschooled adolescent girls

The main focus of the GEN/End Poverty education programme is on adolescent girls from the Meo community, many of whom have not previously received any formal education. The programme was launched in 2009. In 2014 the programme passed the milestone of 1,000 girls completing the programme. Also in 2014 the basic six-month literacy and general education programme (which includes skills in reading, writing, numeracy, health and nutrition, horticulture and sewing) was extended (by popular request) to one year in duration. Each year, more villages ask to join the programme. So far about 10% unschooled girls in the Tijara Block have been reached by the programme.

A girl in the class shows her schoolwork



Quilt-maker Khatija, from Dina ki Dhani village, shows her quilt with horse's head



Livelihood – craftwork programme

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 as a source of income is popular with women in the area and has grown significantly since then. In 2014, EP opened additional craft centres. The range of products produced by the artisans includes quilts, large and small pouches, shoulder bags, shopping bags, table cloths and cushion covers. Plans are in hand for helping the artisans to set themselves up as a producer company.

Village development and rural tourism

A key driver of rural development in the Tijara Villages is the establishment of Village Development Groups by EP. VDGs help villagers to identify problems areas, assess priorities, and take

action to tackle them. VDGs receive modest financial support from GEN for running expenses such as travel costs to meetings with government officials. In 2014, the number of VDGs doubled, from 7 to 14. Achievements of VDGs include minor road works, installation of water pumps and the provision of safety fencing for open-topped wells which are a hazard for children. A key feature of the rural development programme in 2014 has been the distribution of over 2500 lemon and guava fruit tree saplings.



Tasmeena enjoys looking after her guava sapling

In 2014, some progress was also made on the rural tourism front. A postgrad student from UK, of Indian origin, made a survey of visitor facilities available in villages. For the time being, the main focus is on attracting day visitors rather than overnight stays.

GEN's activities in the UK

Raising funds to support the work of End Poverty is one of the main activities of GEN in the UK. The three major fund-raising activities are: (i) GEN walks; (ii) Diwali party; and (iii) applications to funding organisations. During 2014 there was a series of walks which raised well over £1,500. On 25 October 2014 GEN, working with the Oxford India Society held a Diwali party in the dining hall of Corpus Christi College Oxford. The event raised over £3,500. Thanks to the Oxford India Society for their support which we hope will continue. GEN is also supported by a number of individual donors. GEN also provides specialist advice to EP, eg on craftwork and rural tourism.

The GEN/End Poverty Partnership has received generous funding for the unschooled girls education project and the handicrafts project from the Pakhar Singh Foundation through iPartner India. The Brogan Partnership has provided invaluable funding for the work of the EP field team. The WF Southall Trust has made a valuable grant towards the work of the VDGs, and the Miss K M Harbinson Trust has contributed to the girls education project. The Cobra Beer Partnership contributed to the 2014 Diwali Party organised by the Oxford India Society in collaboration with the GEN. GEN supporters, especially walkers, have regularly contributed to GENs work with EP. Many thanks to all. Without you we could not continue our work. Financial information for GEN in 2014 is given below.

THE GEN INITIATIVE LIMITED INCOME & EXPENDITURE

Year ended 31 December 2014

	£	£
INCOME		
Sundry Donations	18,685	
Pakhar Singh Foundation grant	10,500	
Diwali Party 2013	150	
Diwali Party 2014	1,513	
Handicrafts	529	
Interest	2	
Total income		31,379
OPERATING COSTS		
Bank Charges	132	
Stakeholder meeting costs – India	3,704	
Trustee meeting costs - UK	327	
Legal	48	
Total operating costs		4,211
SURPLUS FOR DISTRIBUTION		27,168
DONATIONS (TRANSFERS TO END POVERTY)		
Transfers to End Poverty – grants	13,395	
Transfers to End Poverty – handicrafts	366	
Transfers to End Poverty - Pakhar Singh Foundation grant	10,500	
Total donations (transfers to End Poverty)		24,261
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER DONATIONS		2,907
		=====