

# 2022 Annual Report

## General Information – Summary

The Learn For Life Empowerment Project (LFL) continues to work along three interconnected initiatives:

1. Early Childhood Development (ECD), primary and secondary schooling at Badi Asha School, fee and tuition scholarships until graduation
2. Vocational Training – on the job training of baking, tailoring, hospitality and tourism services in our commercial outlets
3. Practical life skills program – offering training to students and young community members (computer skills, basic tailoring).

## Our impact in numbers

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Education at Badi Asha</b>						
Pre-school (4-6 years)	36	34	35	16	10*	28
Primary school (6-14 years)	99	102	98	93	92	76
Secondary school (14-16 years)			12	27	42	50
Post-primary support (for alumni)	31	22	25	25	25	13
	<b>166</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Vocational training for young adults</b>						
Tailoring	10	16	15	11	12	6
Bakery	15	17	20	17	18	19
Cooking classes				7	7	8
Tourist guide						2
Office work, administration training				4	4	4
	<b>25</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Practical training</b>						
Computer	26	27	59	61	0**	14
Stitching	8	13	7	8	0**	7
	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Total number of beneficiaries</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>227</b>

The following number of beneficiaries has been reached in each category

\*Pre-School admission was stopped in March 2020 due to Covid-19 and started again in 2021 with a playgroup in the park.

\*\*Practical training to community members was stopped in March 2020 due to Covid-19 lockdown and resumed only in 2022.

### 1. ECD and Schooling at Badi Asha School

Learn for Life offers schooling at three levels: Early Childhood Development (or pre-school), primary school for children between 6 and 14 years old, as well as secondary school for children between 14 and 16 years old.

The school follows the official NCERT English medium curriculum, and all textbooks are in line with that standard. The teaching is informed by educational psychology research to ensure effective teaching. It is inspired by a number of different philosophies and pedagogic theories, notably the Montessori method, Krishnamurti's teaching philosophy and the Waldorf/Steiner methodology. In the process of moving away from textbooks and towards learning-oriented lesson planning, teachers are

encouraged to supplement the curriculum with creative activities and interactive lessons, as well as the use of the smartboard. Alternative teaching methods (e.g. drama activities, hands-on games and activities, educational movies, discussions, etc.) address concepts from a variety of perspectives to be more inclusive of children with different learning needs. Students are given the chance to show their work, to feel proud of their accomplishments, or to gain confidence speaking in front of large groups. This fosters relationship building between students and teachers and creates a greater sense of unity and self-esteem.

In 2022, the new building where we shifted the school has undergone some major renovation. Some major repairs included toilets, roof, water tank, doors and windows, electric system replacement, solar system installation, and painting. Still some more structural work is required which will hopefully be completed in 2023.

In the school, a Gender Equality Program led by Asian Bridge Foundation was offered to our ex-students and school staff. In 2022, we completed the first phase of the program, called the 'Behavior Change for Gender Equality', with the goal of increasing the understanding of gender-based violence and its underpinning root-causes in Indian society. The primary discussion points allowed to gain an understanding of the issue and its complexities within the family dynamic. Students and teachers explored topics related to human rights, responsibilities and constitutional obligations, discussed equity and equality, and addressed gender-based roles and related issues such as privilege, restrictions, and violence. Provided funding, we hope to continue this program to dive deeper into issues related gender based discrimination, patriarchy, masculinity and sexuality.

In 2022, two teachers left the school because they got married and two new teachers were hired as their replacements. One of them is an ex-student of our school who is now pursuing her studies in college while working at the school. In addition, we hired an experienced woman vocalist who is also part of the gender equality group. Thus, we restored the music classes and are now planning to start a band in the new session.

As per our established routine, we have once again conducted our teachers' training program, aimed at equipping our new teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, while also reinforcing the expertise of our existing faculty.

In 2022, there was an increment in the number of street/slum kids involved in the school from 14 to 20. These families are attracted by the food and healthcare security LFL can guarantee to their children and to the families in general. Therefore, the consequence is that every year more kids, from the two slum areas in our neighborhood, attend school and receive an education which represents a hope for the upliftment of their families' condition.

All grade 8 students got admitted in class 9 in other schools where they will continue their further studies with the support of LFL. Throughout the year, we have provided afternoon coaching sessions in all subjects for our alumni.

## **2. Vocational Training for Young Adults**

### ***Tailoring***

The Tailoring Project, which was established in Varanasi in 2016, has a primary focus on empowering women. The all-woman staff is trained to design and produce tailored goods, which are sold under the Learn for Life brand. All products are hand-made; the fabrics used are hand-printed and many are hand-woven. Only natural dyes are used according to traditional techniques. In India, professional tailoring is typically regarded as a male-dominated profession, making the acquisition of such skills by women a truly empowering feat.

The syllabus includes an introductory part (embroidery, stitching and tapestry), followed by the main stitching course (sewing skills and pattern design making) to increase their prospects for future employment and income generation. Trainees gain proficiency in both machine and hand-stitching methods, enabling them to create original designs as well as replicate existing ones. The training also encompasses fundamental business skills and mathematical knowledge as a significant

component. This includes learning how to measure and calculate the amount of cloth needed for a piece of clothing, the costs of materials and learning to price their work. Weekly English and computer lessons complement the training.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of two shops have led to a decrease in business for LFL, forcing the organization to reduce the number of women involved in the project by 50%. However, the tailoring project's atelier stitched all school uniforms for the students as well as the pillows for the school classrooms and all the garments (e.g. aprons for waiters) needed in the guest house and restaurant. The remaining work time was used to increase garment stock which was given to a local artisan shop supporting the project by selling our products.

### ***Bakery Vocational Training***

The vocational training program follows the logic of the European dual training system, where apprentices are trained also within a company. The training is threefold: 1. Bakery and kitchen training, 2. Computer classes, and 3. Basic math, English and business training. This skill set prepares youths to support themselves, whether employed or self-employed. Many of the people involved come from difficult backgrounds, often with very little education. Some are ex-students or family members of students from the Badi Asha School, others come from the street or from shelters.

In 2022, our Baking Vocational Training has been recognized and supported by the German Embassy in India as well as by the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce in India. Moreover, a cooperation was established between LFL and a government vocational training institute in Pforzheim and in Berlin (Germany). LFL is going register an Official Vocational Training Centre in Varanasi, in order to train professional bakers and in the future also chefs. It will consist of a 2 years course in professional baking. The students won't be charged a fee, on the contrary, they will partly work either in the Delhi or Varanasi bakery and receive a monthly allowance of 9000 Rs.

### ***Varanasi***

The restaurant and guesthouse began to produce revenue for the project once again. During the first nine months of 2022, most of our clients were locals and Indian tourists, whereas in the last three months of the year, we started receiving more and more foreign tourists. It seems that international tourism is slowly recovering. Although we are hopeful, it should be noted that sales generated from the restaurant and guesthouse by the end of 2022 were only around 60% of pre-Covid sales.

We completed some important renovation work on the property of our Restaurant and Guesthouse. Our rooms are now more comfortable after we upgraded them (including changing the air conditioning machines and renovating the entire electric system). We have carried out significant renovation work on our bakery building, too. Several former school classrooms have been transformed to house the bakery training centre and the original bakery has been upgraded. These modifications are necessary to meet the requirements of the German dual training system, which mandates trainees to work in a commercial bakery while attending classes at a baking institute.

In 2022, vocational training in professional cooking thrived at the guesthouse and restaurant premises, with a rotation of different teachers. A new batch of former Badi Asha School 'students has started working as trainees in the bakery, too. In addition, two mothers of our students have even joined our baking training program for the first time.

Since the school opened post-COVID, the Bakery in Varanasi started again providing breakfast and lunch to all the students and the staff. Throughout 2022, the bakery in Varanasi kept up the production of food for Rama Krishna Mission's distribution to malnourished women and children in Varanasi and surrounding areas, by sourcing products from small-scale farmers near Varanasi.

We have also established a cheese production unit in the renovated old school building. Our locally produced cheese will be supplied to the patrons of our restaurant, a nearby hotel that already sources our

bakery products, and individual customers who can place their orders directly with us through our home delivery service.

### ***Delhi***

In 2022, our bakery in Delhi remained the primary source of income, largely due to our loyal customer base consisting of both local residents and expatriates. Our home-delivery service continues to be popular, and we also supply stock to various stores, which has further increased our sales.

Rather than reopening the Delhi restaurant, we opted to establish a small café that features a bread and cheese counter. Throughout 2022, we had regular stalls at several weekend markets in Delhi (e.g. German Embassy, Italian Embassy, Sunder Nursery Market etc.). Moreover, the German and Italian Embassies sourced our catering services for several events for both the embassies as well as for EU Commission. We strengthened our collaboration with the Nuernberger Messe and the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce by providing personnel and catering services for the German Pavilion at multiple trade fairs held in Noida and Delhi. The 2022 Christmas Markets, respectively at the Swiss and German Embassies, have been a great success: they both saw a high attendance, almost at pre-Covid level.

Our Delhi Bakery underwent renovations over the summer of 2022, and we are currently searching for a larger, more centrally-located space to relocate the bakery and accommodate bakers and trainees. Additionally, we are delighted to announce that we have welcomed new trainees from Salaam Balaak Trust and Karam Marg shelter homes to participate in our vocational training program in Delhi.

### **3. Practical training for students and community members**

In addition to providing education to children, Learn for Life offers basic computer classes and vocational training to adults in the community. Our computer courses were previously geared towards women and aim to provide them with technological literacy and internet access, thereby expanding their income-generating opportunities. However, these classes were temporarily suspended in March 2020 due to the pandemic and resumed in 2022; this time also to young men pushed into the work force before completing their studies.

Recently, we were able to restart our computer classes with the help of Lapdoo who have helped us out tremendously in the last years and so far have donated over 60 tablets and laptops. The plan is to enhance this program further in 2023.

### **Looking forward**

Despite the gradual recovery of international tourism, the financial impact of the pandemic on our organization continues to be a challenge. We remain dedicated to improving the cost-effectiveness of our activities and exploring ways to reduce costs without compromising the quality of service we provide to our beneficiaries, particularly the school students. We are determined to weather the storm and emerge stronger on the other side. For this reason, we are now in the process to reach out for funds and support.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for your continued support of our project, especially during these challenging times. Your support is more valuable than ever before and is greatly appreciated.