



Grassroots Empowerment in Rural India Annual Report 2015 The GEN Initiative Ltd (GEN) www.gen-initiative.org

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

Aims

GEN, a UK-based charity, is a Grassroots Empowerment Network. It works in partnership with Indian nongovernmental organisation 'End Poverty' (EP), supported by Village Development Groups (VDGs) and farmers groups 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 support to increase effective farming practices

Consultation with villagers

Each year GEN and End Poverty hold a Stakeholder Meet over two or three days. The 2015 Stakeholder meet was held in EP's office in Tapukara in February 2015. Each day explored one or more of the main themes of GEN and EP's work.

Day 1: VDG members discuss future needs with Gen and EP staff



Day 2: Craftwork – artisans hard at work.



Day 2: Education: teachers formulating plans for the coming year.



Education for unschooled adolescent girls

The main focus of the GEN/EP 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 2015 the programme passed the milestone of 1,200 girls completing the programme. Also in 2015 EP launched a one year programme on popular demand replacing the basic six-month literacy and general education programme. This includes skills in reading, writing, numeracy, health and nutrition, horticulture, sewing and sports. 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. During 2015 EP ran 15 centres and trained 14 local women to teach at the centres.

A girl in the class learning to read



Livelihood – craftwork programme

New good quality products made by one group of artisans



Women from the Tijara villages have a tradition of craft work (in particular the production of quilts). In 2010 GEN launched a pilot handicrafts project to empower local women by giving EP £300 to provide training and buy sewing machines and materials for women and girls from 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 2015, EP opened 10 craft production centres. The range of products produced includes quilts, large and small pouches, shoulder bags, shopping bags, table cloths and cushion covers. Over 200 women were trained in sewing skills. In addition the quality of products was consistently upgraded and an outreach / marketing plan developed.

Village development and rural tourism

A key driver of rural development in the Tijara Villages is the establishment of Village Development Groups. VDGs help villagers to identify problem areas, assess priorities, and take action to tackle them. VDGs receive modest financial support from GEN for expenses such as travel costs to meetings with government officials and study visits. In 2015 EP launched training programmes on crop management, and soil testing for improving farming skills. 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 2015 has been the distribution of over 6,100 tree saplings and for the first time 10 farmers were able to market the fruit they produced.

In 2015, some progress was also made on the rural tourism front. Some pilot day visits were made by groups of Japanese visitors to test the approach..

GEN and EP reps with one farmer who received saplings



GEN's activities in the UK

Raising funds to support the work of End Poverty is a major activity of GEN in the UK. In addition specialist advice and support is provided to EP e.g. on craftwork and rural tourism. Occasionally GEN also provides EP with interns. For several years the Pakhar Singh Foundation through iPartner India has provided funds for the adolescent girls education programme and the handicrafts project. These funds are now tapering off which has meant increased focus on other sources. In 2015 GEN strengthened its fundraising from foundations and through social media. The WF Southall Trust in 2015 has made a valuable grant of towards the development of the VDG programme and the Waterloo Trust and the Miss K M Harbinson Trust provided much needed support for the unschooled girls' education programme. PHAST, the Public Health Support Team, contributed to GEN / EP running costs. GEN supporters, especially walkers, have regularly contributed to GENs work with EP. GEN is also supported by a number of individual donors. Many thanks to all. Without you we could not continue our work.

Financial information for GEN in 2015 is given below.

THE GEN INITIATIVE LIMITED INCOME & EXPENDITURE

Year ended 31 December 2015

| | £ | £ |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| INCOME | | |
| Non Specific Donations | 13419 | |
| Grant 1 | 11523 | |
| Grant 2 | 2000 | |
| Grant 3 | 5804 | |
| Everyclick | 4 | |
| Handicrafts | 932 | |
| Interest | 3 | |
| Total income | <u>33685</u> | 33685 |
| OPERATING COSTS | | |
| Cost of generating voluntary income | 124 | |
| Governance Costs | <u>406</u> | |
| Total Operating Costs | | 530 |
| SURPLUS FOR DISTRIBUTION | | |
| | | 33155 |
| Transfers to End Poverty – grants | | 25316 |
| EXCESS OF DONATIONS OVER INCOME | | |
| | | <u>7839</u> |