

# Opportunity through Education

Yatra Foundation Australia



**2021-22**  
**Financial Year**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

**“Over 600 million children and adolescents worldwide are unable to attain minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, even though two thirds of them are in school. For out-of-school children, foundational skills in literacy and numeracy are further from grasp”**

UNICEF [unicef.org/education](https://unicef.org/education)



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## Our vision

Every child has the right to receive an education, however the delivery of education remains a challenge for many communities across the world.

Poverty, economic or political instability, natural disaster, and conflict, remain barriers for children in many situations. Without quality education, children face barriers to future opportunities with employment and earning potential, restricting their ability for future decision making. This means children grow up having less control over their future. These inequalities also extend to health outcomes.

In recent times India has seen improvement in access to quality education, increased primary school enrolment and reduction in the numbers of children out of school. These improvements have been driven by key laws such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE, 2009 [dsel.education.gov.in/rte](https://dsel.education.gov.in/rte)), however gaps still remain with an estimated 6.1 million children out of school in 2014, 29% of children not completing primary school education and half of primary school-aged children not achieving expected grade-appropriate learning outcomes ([unicef.org/india/what-we-do/education](https://unicef.org/india/what-we-do/education)).

*Yatra Foundation Australia was established in recognition of these educational gaps, with the primary aim of providing quality education to some of the most disadvantaged communities in India.*

Yatra acknowledges the many complexities in delivering education to the disparate Indian population. Currently the education system is state based in its delivery and the educational outcomes and literacy rates are variable depending on state and locality.

For this reason, partnering with locally based NGO's allows delivery of education that is regionally appropriate and meets the specific needs of those communities.

With a focus on improving access for girls and ensuring a non-discriminatory enrolment process, the vision is to increase opportunity to these children and their families through education.

## Our mission

### Yatra Foundation Australia aims to:

- ✓ Increase access to quality education for the most severely disadvantaged children in rural and remote India
- ✓ Be non-discriminatory with regards to gender, religious background, and caste
- ✓ Monitor outcomes and adapt programs to suit the changing needs of our partners and the communities that benefit
- ✓ Increase access to education in student numbers and the years of schooling by providing incentives for further education
- ✓ Incorporate child health education and public health initiatives into the school curriculum

## Our history

Yatra Foundation (Yatra meaning 'journey' in Hindi) was founded in 2008 by four friends with a shared common goal of improving the opportunity for some of the most disadvantaged children in India. Having been given such opportunities themselves and with a desire to 'make a difference' even if only a small difference, Yatra was conceived. Now thirteen years into that journey the determination to continue with that vision, turning the dream into reality, is still real.



# AN OVERVIEW OF YATRA FOUNDATION

## About us:

## Partner organisations

Yatra Foundation partners with Local Not for Profit organisation to help deliver the education programs: Currently our partners are:

- Seva Mandir
- Gramin Shiksha Kendra ( GSK)
- Isha Vidhya

### 1. Seva Mandir:

Seva Mandir works with more than 500,000 people in 1,300 rural villages in two districts (Udaipur and Rajsamand) of southern Rajasthan. The villages are spread over large areas and are inhabited by different caste and tribal groups. The area is hilly and semi-arid, with poor infrastructure. Most of the population are subsistence farmers who struggle to make a living from their small landholdings. An increasing number of men leave the villages to look for work in distant towns. The women are left to manage the landholdings, look after the animals, labour in the villages in addition to caring for children. Many children end up working in the home or the fields to help the family make a living.

The area suffers from a lack of clean drinking water and toilets and poorly functioning health and education facilities. Malnutrition is rife, particularly among young children. In this patriarchal society, women continue to face domestic violence and illiteracy and they lack socio-political and financial independence.

Seva Mandir has built up teams of skilled experts in several disciplines to provide sustainable social transformation.

*Seva Mandir has sought to achieve its twin aims of improving lives and strengthening communities by engaging all members of a village in the process of self-governance, including decisions relating to, and the management of, development projects and education.*

#### Seva Mandir and Education

Over half of the children in the rural areas of southern Rajasthan do not attend school, and over a third have never been to school. Rural government schools are often far from tribal communities, often under-resourced, under-funded or, in some cases, closed.

Education was the first area in which Seva Mandir became involved, beginning with adult education then expanding to childhood education. Today, Seva Mandir provides quality education for children who have dropped out of or have never been to school, or who cannot attend school because of financial constraints or family obligations. Through their 148 Shiksha Kendras (bridge schools) and Residential Learning Camps, Seva Mandir offer 6,000 out-of-school children access to quality primary education every year, whilst their scholarship program offers access to quality secondary education. Through the education of thousands of first-generation learners and striving for equal enrolment of girls, Seva Mandir are witnessing a gradual transformation in the demand for quality education among families from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, empowering young people to achieve their best.

In partnership with Seva Mandir, Yatra has established 20 Shiksha Kendras (rural educational learning centres) each with an average of 30 students drawn from the corresponding local village with the teachers often sourced from the same village. These children receive a quality bridging education with the aim of integrating them into government schools when the requisite skills have been acquired to equip them for future long-term success.

The beneficiaries are the residents of villages, who are young children, aged 6-14 years who reside in remote areas not serviced by government schools, and the teachers who are drawn also from the villages and given teacher training. The majority of this population live on less than \$2 per day and over 90% rely on subsistence agriculture, where conditions are arid, the land degraded, and water is scarce.

Public services are dysfunctional and there is a high level of malnutrition, and the majority of children do not attend school. Yatra Foundation has supported the primary education of more than 3000 children over the last six years through Seva Mandir facilitated Shiksha Kendra (SKs) in the rural and tribal hamlets of GirwaBlock, Udaipur.

***Yatra aims to oversee the transition of all School Capital funding from the Yatra Foundation to full community ownership. It is expected that in so doing, local governments will begin to implement Yatra Foundation protocols to optimize school readiness preparation to cope with increased enrolment in government schools. Yatra will begin the transition of School maintenance responsibilities to be taken up in partnership with the local community and government. The completion of such a transition will be expected in 2030.***

[www.sevamandir.org](http://www.sevamandir.org)





## 2. Gramin Shiksha Kendra (GSK):

is a non-Governmental organization based in Rajasthan, India, on the fringe of the tiger reserve Ranthambore. GSK was first established in 1997 but the first school was not launched until 2004. GSK was established in response to community demand for quality education in the rural communities of Sawai Madhopur. Through their educational programs GSK have brought about significant change in the way education is understood and perceived by the communities.

*GSK aim is to engage the communities so they may be active participants in the process of change. GSK have been working with the communities for almost two decades, to eliminate discrimination based on caste or gender, in accessing education.*





GSK believes that schools are an extension of the community. They are not delinked from the society but an integral part of it. For the society to change, schools will play a crucial role. And for schools to improve, communities need to engage with the schools. The GSK program is built on the idea that the community is a partner in the process of education, rather than schools being merely a service provider to them. Community involvement lies at the heart of all GSK's interventions.

Yatra Foundation established a partnership with GSK in 2008 and the combined efforts have focused around the Fariya community. The strong relationship has enabled children within the nearby communities to attend the school and become engaged in co-curricular activities such as the sports programs. Yatra Foundation continue to support more than 125 students enrolled at the Fariya school and will continue this partnership until transition to full community ownership.

[graminshiksha.org.in](http://graminshiksha.org.in)



### 3. Isha Vidhya:

Isha Vidhya is a not-for-profit education initiative, working for the economic and social empowerment of rural children in the villages across southern state of Tamil Nadu, India. The foundation is committed to raising the level of education and literacy in rural India and to helping disadvantaged children realize their full potential. This has created the possibility for the rural children to pursue higher education or find gainful employment and build a strong foundation for the future of these children and elevate themselves out of poverty. The foundation, through its Isha Vidhya English-medium schools, offer a nurturing approach to education in villages. Isha Vidhya has been an active supporter of promoting education among female children in the villages and all Isha Vidhya schools have seen an increased enrolment of girls. Of the 8500 Isha Vidhya students, 47% are girls and 64% of the students are on a full scholarship. The remaining students make a small co-payment for their school attendance.

Isha Vidhya functions on a grass-roots level, relying on community involvement and the support of innumerable volunteers and donors. Isha Vidhya currently runs nine schools. Yatra Foundation has partnered with Isha Vidhya for their Cuddalore school program via teacher salary and teacher training. This enables Isha Vidhya to recruit and retain the best available teachers. The teacher training program targeted at local rural teachers further extends the reach of Isha Vidhya and leverages the effectiveness by reaching much greater numbers of needy children.

### Isha Vidhya also makes qualitative impacts such as:

- ✓ Transforming parental attitudes to education and increasing educational awareness in rural communities
- ✓ Improving health and health awareness of the children and local communities
- ✓ Increased employment opportunities and civic infrastructure around the Isha Vidhya schools
- ✓ Increasing awareness and instilling pride in local traditions and culture among the children
- ✓ Providing opportunities to thousands of volunteers to experience the joy of giving

[ishavidhya.org](http://ishavidhya.org)





## 21/22 summary

### Covid-19

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought education in many parts of India to a halt. The challenge of delivering education with limited infrastructure and a lack of educational materials, restricted options for 'remote-learning'. Challenges were faced by the Yatra Foundation partner schools, as most families did not have the infrastructure or technology to support 'home schooling'. In addition to the logistical challenges, home isolation for many families meant a lack of food and water supplies due to the limited storage and refrigeration in households. Simply surviving from day to day was the priority as the COVID pandemic escalated around India.

*The Yatra partner schools responded to these challenges in a proactive manner, providing health resources, nutritional food parcels, and then reaching out to communities to establish learning in small groups to maintain engagement of the children and their families.*

### Monitoring of projects

In September 2021, an independent advisor was appointed to monitor the Yatra projects.

Several key indicators will be reviewed including:

- Enrolment of children by age and gender
- Attendance and consistency in attendance of children and teachers
- Adherence to teaching pedagogy
- Teacher training initiatives
- School committee record and engagement
- Progression and retention of students by year group
- Health and welfare of students and teachers
- Engagement of children in the learning process
- Degree of peer-to-peer learning
- Incorporation of sport and other extra-curricular activities
- Outreach to government school
- Utilization of funds



## Tax deductibility

After several years of work, Yatra Foundation Australia was granted tax deductibility within Australia.

The Yatra board worked tirelessly on the DGR application which was submitted to the Australian Government for review early in 2021.

This is a landmark achievement for our organisation and Yatra is hoping this will encourage more sustainable and regular donations.

## Communication with the board and partners

Yatra Australia have continued to meet regularly with our partner organisations via Zoom links to discuss the projects in India, in addition to monthly board meetings. Minutes from the board meetings can be found on the website. Regular online meetings also take place with our newly appointed Project Monitor, who provides the Yatra board with an independent assessment of the projects, including all the key indicators as described above, benchmarking against the ASER results.

## Fundraising efforts

Like many not-for-profit organisations, fundraising for Yatra Foundation has been challenging over the past 2-3 years. Yatra Foundation Australia are fortunate to have the continued support of many via the 'Yatri' program, with monthly donations. On June 26th, 2022, a fundraising event was held at Avani Winery in Red Hill, Victoria. The event was attended by more than 80 guests. The day was a huge success not only with raising vital funds to sustain the Yatra projects, but to enhance awareness and continue advocacy for the importance of education in bringing about positive change. Yatra was fortunate to have the support of Macquarie Bank who matched the donations received, giving a huge boost to the overall funds raised on the day of the event.

*In summary, despite the significant challenges that 2020-21 brought, Yatra Foundation were able to continue providing education to the most disadvantaged children in parts of rural and remote India, via our partner organisations. With the continuity of education, we hope to see all the children back in the classroom soon.*

## Our People



**Sanjay Jain**

Co-founder  
2008 - ongoing



**Sophie Beaumont**

Co-founder  
2008 - ongoing



**Renu Binaykia**

Co-founder  
2008 - ongoing



**Ravi Savarirayan**

Co-founder  
2008 - ongoing

# GOVERNANCE

## Structure & management

Yatra Foundation Australia is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

### Our objectives and activities

The objectives for Yatra Foundation for the upcoming year include:

- ✓ Continued support for our partner organisations
- ✓ Implementation of an independent audit of the programs
- ✓ Continue to work with our local supporters
- ✓ Improve the awareness of Yatra and its projects and goals in Australia
- ✓ Increase the support network both locally and overseas
- ✓ Increase the financial support both locally and overseas
- ✓ Improve programs based on feedback from the communities
- ✓ Implementation of health and community welfare projects



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND THANK YOU**

### **Foundation, trust, corporate and supporters**

**Bellwether Foundation**

**Vanmali Foundation**

**The Peggy Charitable Trust**

**Stobart Strauss Foundation**

**Macquarie Bank**

**Barneys Salon**

**Green Scribble**

**Avani Winery**

**We would also like to thank all our individual supporters and volunteers.**

## How you can help

### Become a member

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Contact [info@yatrafoundation.org](mailto:info@yatrafoundation.org) or go to our website [www.yatrafoundation.org](http://www.yatrafoundation.org)

### Volunteer your time

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Contact [info@yatrafoundation.org](mailto:info@yatrafoundation.org) or go to our website [www.yatrafoundation.org](http://www.yatrafoundation.org)

### Make a donation

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Visit our website and click on 'donate' for more information

Electronic Funds Transfer can be made directly to:

**Account name:** Yatra Foundation

**BSB:** 083-088

**Account number:** 81 287 6964

Or by cheque payable to  
Yatra Foundation

C/O 265 Pigdon Street  
Princes Hill VIC 3054

### Support an event or fundraising activity

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Please contact Sophie Beaumont on 0414 834 855 or Renu Binaykia on 0412 109 944 for more information.









## Contact us

Yatra Foundation Australia



[www.yatrafoundation.org](http://www.yatrafoundation.org)



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