

# Opportunity through Education

Yatra Foundation Australia



**2022-23**  
**Financial Year**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

**“Every child deserves to reach her or his full potential, but gender inequalities in their lives and in the lives of those who care for them hinder this reality. Across India gender inequality results in unequal opportunities, and while it impacts on the lives of both genders, statistically it is girls that are the most disadvantaged. India will not fully develop unless both girls and boys are equally supported to reach their full potential”.**

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 and young women are especially vulnerable to such inequality.

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 [dse.education.gov.in/rte](https://dse.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://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/education)). Across India gender inequality results in unequal opportunities, and while it impacts on the lives of both genders, statistically it is girls that are the most disadvantaged.

*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. These communities have limited access to government schools.*

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 for 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 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. Now 13 years into that journey the determination to continue with that vision, turning the dream into reality, is still a driving force. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the projects has now provided Yatra with longer-term outcomes for the past students, furthering the determination to stay true to the goal of "making a difference" and promoting a love of learning for future generations.



# 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 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 to work as labourers in mining, construction work or agriculture. 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.

Around 70% of the population is tribal. Tribal people, who traditionally inhabited the forest areas of India, have their own social and governance customs. They score lowest on all measures of development, lack opportunities to improve their development and frequently face discrimination.

Seva Mandir has built up teams of skilled experts in several disciplines to provide sustainable social transformation. Since their inception more than 50 years ago, the fundamental principle underpinning all activities has been transforming social relationships within the villages, strengthening communities' capacity for self-development and governance, and reducing traditional social barriers based on caste, class, gender and age.

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 Yatra Foundation Australia

Seva Mandir has been working in collaboration with Yatra since 2012. The long-standing partnership has provided quality education to more than 4,500 children from rural and tribal areas. Initially, the Shiksha Kendras (SK), or kindergartens, aimed to ensure that out-of-school children had access to quality education

in areas where bringing them to formal schools was difficult due to distance, a lack of critical resources, poverty, and other issues. Over the years, accessibility and functioning of government schools has improved, and the value of education within the communities has enhanced significantly. The need for SKs within regions is constantly reviewed, with the aim to focus on areas where accessibility to government schools is still a concern.





## The key achievements for the period 22-23

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. Most 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. 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.

## Key achievements 2022-2023

### Improved access to education

571 out of school children (48% girls) of 6 to 14 years from most underprivileged areas were provided education through 20 SKs. The SKs ran for 21 days in a month, with 72% attendance.

### School readiness

219 children (40%) of SKs were prepared for integration into government schools. This meant they could read and understand simple texts, articulate themselves by writing a group of sentences and understand the concepts of multiplication and division.

### School retention

147 (84%) children, who passed out from SK in 2018 were found enrolled in schools, of which 51% were girls.

Of them, 107 children (72%) were studying in 6th to 9th grades and remaining in primary grades.

### Enhanced engagement with parents and communities

The parents contributed Rs. 1,30,300 against the expected fee of Rs. 1,83,950 in 20 SKs. The communities contributed Rs. 1,05,955 towards payment of rent of SKs, stationery, and food items. 101 parent meetings were held to enhance parents' knowledge and involvement on child protection, and education. 1,898 parents (55% female) participated in these meetings. In addition to engagement with parents and communities, Seva Mandir actively engage with former students (Alumni). Currently 75 former students interact with children in art, music and dancing. Alumni who have gone on to tertiary studies or employment are a positive influence on the students and are important role models.

### Enhanced capacities of SK instructors

The capacities of 25 instructors were enhanced on academics, child protection and community engagement.

### Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) system

The monitoring and evaluation system of Shiksha Kendra was enhanced with support of Yatra Foundation. With regular implementation of monitoring and evaluation the efficacy of programs can be better understood and attention focused on areas that need strengthening.

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 established in 1997, but the first school was not opened until 2004 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 aims 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.

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.

GSK continues to engage with the school Alumni who act as mentors and encourage enrolment of children into schools when there is resistance from families.

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.









### **Projects for 2022-23**

Under the fellowship program, supplementary education work has been done in Katar and Faria community with the children who are lagging in government schools. In addition to enhancing the learning this is also promoting Uday's teaching methods in the community. Benchmarking against ASER for numeracy and literacy will also occur.

### **Yatra Targets 2023**

This year saw an improved attendance for 71.9% but fewer female students (33% set against target of 45%). School retention to grade 5 increased to 63% and to year 8 retention was below expectations at 54%. The percentage of children at age appropriate level was above expectations at 79.31% as was basic computer literacy. Maintaining integration of Sports into the core curriculum was a focus for GSK. The school monitoring committee was composed of 8 men and 8 women, and the community are encouraged to participate in decision making for the school. There were 3 volunteer alumni who returned to the school.

### **Science Exhibition**

Parents and children of the community were invited to attend a science exhibition, where 22 children of upper primary made 25 models for maths and science. More than 80 children and 20 community members attended.

### **Construction Of Tapri**

Upgrading of the open-plan schoolrooms, or tapris, was undertaken to provide additional safe working spaces for the children and teachers.

### **Activities**

The main activities for the Uday Community School have included planting, Dance Club, Mehndi Club, Kitchen Gardening, Cooking Club, Sports Club, Art and Craft, Pottery, Library, School Panchayat Election, Independence and Republic Day, Holi Festival, Drama, Life Skills Session.

### **Health Monitoring**

Health and welfare are essential for academic progress. Seasonal variation in the weather often affects the health of the children which consequently affects attendance and education of the children. A health check was conducted for all the children and essential medicines were provided.

During the most recent medical assessment the number of children classified as fit was 58 whereas in the last season 21-22 the number of fit children was 33.

[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. 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. 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.

The Isha Vidhya schools follow a carefully planned methodology designed to educate and nurture the wellbeing of rural children on all levels – academically, physically and mentally. The approach has been specially designed to compensate for the absence of an English-speaking environment and the shortage of qualified teachers, creating a scalable model for delivering quality education. Isha Vidhya use a lot of learning aides and materials and therefore teacher training is essential to optimise learning opportunities.

We use a lot of learning aids and materials. Hence training was imparted to teachers in handling the materials and using them effectively to teach students. Teacher Training Programs supported by Yatra Foundation have led to improvement in time management, technical knowledge, motivation and enthusiasm for imparting knowledge. Many of the teachers have become experts and innovators in the classroom, running educational programs such as English literature clubs, storytelling, special mathematics clubs, and classroom-based mock judiciary systems.



## 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)



## 22/23 summary

### Monitoring of projects

As different agencies across the country look at the state of education for children across India it is essential to understand how each effort is contributing to the larger aim of better learning for each child. Monitoring and evaluation provide a crucial link between the decision makers associated with a Project and the implementation teams and beneficiaries. This has been gaining ground over the years with a focus on - relevant impact, long term goals and budgetary efficacy of projects. Following the appointment of an independent advisor in 2021, Yatra Foundation is now able to undertake monitoring and evaluation of the partner organisations to ensure service delivery is meeting the specified key requirements. The advisor will physically spend several days with the students and teachers twice yearly, along with regular online meetings. The face-to-face encounters are critical to develop a trusting relationship with the partner organisations and assess the qualitative and quantitative outcomes.

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 as noted in last year's report. 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. These minutes can be found on the website. Regular online meetings also take place with our newly appointed Project Monitor, who can provide an independent assessment of the projects, including all the key indicators as described above.

## 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.

*In summary, despite the significant challenges that 2022-23 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) with DGR tax deductibility status.

### 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**

**Deague Group**

**Stobart Strauss Foundation**

**Barneys Salon**

**Vanmali Foundation**

**The Peggy Charitable Trust**

**Bellwether Foundation**

**Green Scribble**

**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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