

Meet some of the kids we love

16 life changing stories from www.projecthelpindia.co



Welcome to our story

The people we work alongside are known as the Dalits or the untouchables – they are exploited and vulnerable. We dream of a better life for them, we advocate for them and fight for their rights. 'Project Help India' is all about friendship, learning and growing with each other.

The work of Project Help India, is predominately centred around education. Through our 13 centres we currently provide educational opportunities for 570 children. Most of these kids would otherwise not go to school and instead would be begging, fossicking or involved in child labour.

Project Help India connects with these children's families, providing parenting programs, counselling and guidance. Through this we strive to impact lives by breaking the cycle of inequality and intergenerational poverty.

We are so pleased to introduce to you some of the kids we teach, their parents and family. From the littlest, four year-old Guleen, to Meekakshi who has now become a teacher at Project help india ... they are all very special to us.

For each of these kids, their family would live on no more than two dollars a day.

We are inspired by their courage, determination and resilience in the face of adversity and such heartbreaking circumstances. As you read these stories, we hope that you have a glimpse of why we do what we do.

As we get to know these amazing people, we learn about ourselves and therefore our lives are enlarged and given perspective. As we bring love, hope and purpose to their lives and circumstances, we too are changed, becoming better and more grateful people ...what a precious gift this is for us all.

love + hope + purpose
= lives changed



Bharat's Story

Bharat is a resourceful and determined 12-year-old from a very poor family in the jungles of the Himalayan foothills. Bharat loves school but he doesn't often attend because he can't walk the distance every day. An act of kindness provided him with a bicycle, transforming his life and bringing hope to his future.

Bharat, son of Mr. Lal Bahadur and Mrs. Kamla Devi, is a student at Project Help India's Kadarganj Village Centre. Despite belonging to a financially disadvantaged family, this 12-year-old boy is determined to overcome his circumstances. Bharat's father works as a labourer, while his mother takes care of their home. They face numerous challenges in making ends meet. Given the difficult circumstances at home, Bharat recognises the importance of education and diligently applies himself to his studies. He aspires to become successful and knows that education is his ticket to a brighter future. Although he has secured admission to a government school, it is located several kilometres away from his village.



Due to the distance, Bharat often relies on the kindness of others, requesting lifts to school. Unfortunately, there were times when no one was available to give him a ride, forcing him to miss classes. This problem resulted in him falling behind in his studies.

Observing his friends getting to school on their bicycles, Bharat also longed for a means of independent transportation. He desired a bike of his own so that he could attend school without depending on others. Recognising their son's determination and realizing the impact a bicycle could have on his education, Bharat's parents sought assistance from Mr. Amit Samuel, the Director of Project Help India.

After some time, a kind-hearted individual from the Project Help team came forward and generously offered Bharat his own bicycle. This selfless act of kindness brought immense joy to Bharat. Now equipped with a bike, he can confidently make his way to school on his own. Grateful for this incredible support, Bharat expresses his heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in this transformative gesture.

Vishal's Story

When you're ten years old, how do you make sense of a life of poverty and yet be filled with optimism and confidence for the future?

Not only is Vishal believing in his personal success, but he is looking beyond to how he can make a difference to the lives of other children like him and to bring about long-term change in his village.

We are so proud of this great kid!



Vishal and his father

I am Vishal and I am 10 years old. I live in Parmawala Village in the Indian jungle. I'm in Grade 3 at school. My favourite thing is football but mostly we do not have a ball to play with because the big boys steal it. I go to the Project Help Education Centre where there are 48 kids of all ages in my class. Some of us go to the government school during the day but I don't go all the time, especially during the monsoon rains and when it's too hot. My feet get blisters which do not go away quickly, so I do not like walking. Sometimes after I walk the long distance even my teacher is mostly not there, so instead I would rather be playing with my friends all day long.

At first, I didn't want to go to Project Help but my mother made me go. I wanted to be with my friends instead, where we would hang and not do much and just make a football, or tease the cattle and get into trouble. But now I realise that when I study hard I can hope to see my dreams come true.

As I told you I am from Parmawala Village which is a very poor place in the jungles. Here most people do not know about us except for Project Help. I live in a very small hut with my mother, my father, my brother and sister. They all work hard to keep us surviving every day. My mother stays inside the house and she is ill most of the time. When she has energy she will cook and do hard work housekeeping too. My sister and brother are labourers in other people's fields, maybe they will not even earn 100 rupees (\$2AUS) a day. My father is also a labourer in the fields and he has short luck in his life. Now he mostly spends all the money by getting drunk and he quarrels at the end of the day. I stay away from him when he is like this but it is difficult when I am trying to get to sleep.

So my mother insisted I go to the Project Help Centre where my teacher is Rakhi. I think she is kind and beautiful and I love her. At first I was naughty and cheeky but Rakhi was patient and kept on smiling. She did not hit me with the stick like the teacher at the government school. Instead Rakhi asked me to help her to clean and tidy the class before and after our lessons along with some of the other children. I feel very proud and important for Rakhi to give me this responsibility so I want to work hard for her in my studies too.

Because of my hard work I am learning more things and achieving higher grades. My mother is very proud of me and she says I am changing to be a happy and more responsible boy. I want to achieve my dream for her which is to become a police officer. I want to help make our village known and not forgotten by the world. I will also keep cleaning my village to make all people proud of our location. If I concentrate in my studies I can be successful in the future too, and make the government help kids like me, so they can achieve their dreams too. I hope for this day to come with pride and confidence in myself. My mother and I thank Rakhi and Project Help for making this happen in my life.

Urmila's Boys - Abhishek and Aditya

Urmila is from the Kotdwara slum, where she and her family struggle to survive in extreme poverty. They live in a cramped room that is only 10 by 10 square feet, along with her husband and their two sons, Abhishek and Aditya who attend the Project Help Slum Centre. Despite Abhishek's polio affecting his left leg and hand, both boys excel in their studies.

Urmila dreams of providing her children with the best education, clothing, and food possible. However, her husband's heavy drinking, drug use and association with local criminals often leads to domestic violence. Most often all of the family money is used to fund her husband's habits, leaving Urmila to take odd jobs as a cleaner to feed and support her children.



Urmila's hope for her children is for them to live a life that is safe and free from the negative effects of their father's addiction. She recognises that her sons' education can help break the cycle of violence and desperation that they experience. She hopes that because of their education they will not be like their father, and ultimately have all the happiness of the world, have good clothes and food because it breaks her heart that her boys often go hungry.

Hanifa's Story

Rejected and teased by other villagers, nine year old Hanifa's world has been changed by her access to education. This little girl loves school and she has not missed one day since starting one year ago.



Hanifa is a very friendly and sweet 9 year old girl, the second youngest of five siblings, from a very poor Muslim family. They live in Dalenagar Village Kotdwara, which is where she attends the Project Help school.

Living a life of poverty has been very harsh on Hanifa's family. Their house (called a deras) is in poor condition, it is made from the sticks and grass found in the nearby junglr. They barely have enough money to make ends meet. Hanifa's parents are simple people. Her father is a labourer, relying on intermittent work to support the family. He is a very hard worker. He suffers from night blindness and cannot go out of the house at night.

Due to a lack of finances Hanifa was not born at a hospital. She was born she was very weak due to which she often falls sick. She was very ill in 2016 and 2018. Her parents were very worried, and due to lack of money, they had to take loans from people to pay for Hanifa's treatment.

Hanifa started coming to the Project Help Dalenagar Education Centre the day it opened on 1st June, 2022. Ever since she started coming to school she changed dramatically. Prior to school she was teased a lot. Kids and adults called her a lunatic, saying that she had no brain. Now, she is giving the other kids a run for their money with her academic achievements – outdoing most with her progress and grades. Hanifa never misses a day of school.

Hanifa's parents are incredibly happy to see all these changes in their daughter and they are so proud of her. They feel confident for her future now. They are grateful for Project Help India for bringing a school to their village. They say their kids would be illiterate like them, if it were not for this school. Like all of the parents, of the children in this village did not have a school before this. Many people are seeing the transformation not only in the children but in village life. There is a sense of purpose and hope now. There is something to live for, rather than just trying to survive. And there are now smiles are on their faces.

A mother's determination and a first ever school for her girls

Mrs. Anita Kaur, a 28-year-old mother of four daughters, lives in the village of Katora, Punjab where in November 22, Project Help India started a new school. Her daughters who attend our Centre are Mehkdeep (studying in 5th standard), Harpreet (studying in 4th standard), and Seerat (studying in 1st standard). The little one is too young to attend school yet.

Anita's husband is a drug addict who has started injecting, putting the children's safety at risk. Recently, there has been frequent fighting in the house over money. Whatever money her husband earns, he spends it all on drugs, leaving the household expenses to be covered by Anita's income, earned through working in people's homes. Running the household is a great difficulty for her, as the house is in a very poor and dirty condition, and the family does not get good food to eat. Anita is always living in fear because of her husband's addiction.

Anita was very concerned about her daughters' education and had been feeling hopeless about their future until she heard about the new Project Help Centre towards the end of last year. She started sending her daughter Mehkdeep to the centre, and our teachers invited the other sisters to also attend. The girls are very bright in studies, and this has been their first-ever school experience.

Anita hopes that her daughters will become literate and lead a good life. She once felt desperate with no hope, but the teachers at the centre have made her feel happy, especially when she drops her children off at the centre. Whenever she gets the chance, she loves to spend time with our teacher, Mrs. Seema, who encourages her in life and parenting.



5 daughters in a house with no roof

This is the story of Pinki, a 35-year-old woman living in Kotdwara slum with her husband, Suraj, and their five daughters: Ritika (14), Deepika (13), Radhika (11), Durga (9), and Kanak (3). They live in a small, cracked house without a roof, and during the rainy season, water enters their home. Pinki uses a plastic sheet to cover their roof, and her children huddle in a corner, unable to sleep. It's a dire situation, and Pinki worries for the safety of her children.

Suraj is a daily wage labourer earning INR 3000 (\$60AUS) per month, with irregular work. It's a challenge for Pinki to provide for their family. However, she encourages her children to attend Project Help's education centre, and they excel in their studies. Pinki believes that with a quality education, her children can have a better future and transform their lives.

"Quality education will make a difference in my family and the future of my children. I have hope that my children will have a better quality of life."



Kashish, Mahi, Nikhil, Bulbul and Rohan

These children pictured below with their mum, attend our Centre in Bijnor. They live with their mum and dad in a very small room in a slum. There is basically no roof over their heads which is open to the elements. During the heavy rains of the Monsoon season, their room and the kitchen floods, causing immense problems. Yet, their parents remain positive and resilient. They go to work early in the morning and return late in the evening, to provide for their family.

Poonam wants to ensure that her children don't have to experience the same struggles she has and can live a better life. She believes that their only hope is for them to become successful and happy through education. She is thankful to Project Help for making this possible.



Madhu's Story

Madhu is a daughter of a poor Hindu family. She is 7 years old and studies in class 3. Her father's name is Dhyhan Singh and her mother's name is Jayavanti Devi. Madhu has two younger sisters and a younger brother. Both of Madhu's parents work as labours. They both leave for work in the morning, after that Madhu takes care of her sisters and brother, as well as getting herself to and from school each day. Madhu is a very playful girl.

Madhu's living condition is not safe as her father drinks alcohol every day and is addicted to gambling. Madhu's father sometimes fights with her mother in his drunken state. Her mother is also addicted to gambling. When her parents fight with each other, Madhu and her siblings go without food most nights. Her father wastes his earnings on either alcohol or in gambling, and does not seem to care for his children.

Madhu has been attending one of the Project Help Jungle Village centres for the last 3 to 4 years. In the beginning she used to fight with the other students, use bad words and rarely attend. She would mostly be very rude and ignore her teacher. But now she has changed. She attends the centre regularly and whenever she is ill she informs the teacher about it. She doesn't use bad words or fight anymore. She is doing well in her studies and tries her hard to learn new things. She takes part in the extra-curricular programs held in the centre specially dancing. She is now friends with everyone.

Madhu's mother is very thankful to Project Help and says that the whole village community is changing because all of the children can now access education in their locality. This education is changing the future of the children from one where there is no hope, to one filled with possibility and promise. Many kids like Madhu are working hard because they want a better life, than what they now have. While it's slow and gradual, there is evidence of this community being transformed by education and having a sense of purpose.



Ichha's Story



Ichha is a daughter of a very poor family. She also has two older brothers. Her father, Manoj, works as a junk dealer and her mother, Aarti, works as a utensils hawker. The condition of her family is not well as her father is a drunkard. Because of this there are many fights in the house. Sometimes Manoj beats his wife and children when he is drunk. Ichha's mother is also not well. And they live in a rented cottage near their Grandmother's house.

Ichha has been attending one of the Project Help centres regularly for the past six months. She is progressing well in her studies and also very punctual. She is also very good at helping others. Ichha is 7 years old and she also attends studying in class 2 at the local Government Primary School. Her favourite subjects are maths and Hindi. She also likes to sing.

Ichha loves to attend the Project Help Centre. She learns a lot of new things here. What she learns certainly extends the poor quality of education received at her local school where they do not teach English. One of the things that she now learned is to greet everyone with a "good morning" - which they say is very delightful to hear.

Ichha's parents are greatly indebted to Project Help, saying that they teach such good habits and have given her greater confidence. They are very thankful to Project Help India and they say they pray for the directors and teacher's family that they may always be happy.

Rehan's Story

Rehan is 13 years old and he attends our Disability Centre on a daily basis. His mother, Shahroz, is a housewife and his father, Shahnawaz is a labourer. They are incredibly poor. Rehan is unable to walk so his mother carries him to our centre. For much of last year, Rehan's mother frequently asked if it was possible for us to provide her son with a wheel chair. So in this new year Amit and Daisy from Project help India gifted a wheelchair to Rehan. Rehan was overjoyed to receive this gift and his parents were incredibly grateful.



Tarun's Story

Eleven year-old Tarun is a very friendly and loving boy who belongs to a very poor family and lives in the slums area.

He is the son of Mr. Ravi Kumar. Ravi is a very hardworking man who works as a labourer to earn his daily wages to support his family and bring the bread to the table. Unfortunately sometimes he does not get work or wages and as a result his family faces many problems.

Tarun's mother, Pooja is simple housewife and mostly she spends most of her time in the house, working and looking after her family. Tarun's family has their own house which is run down and in bad condition.

Tarun has been studying at 4th grade level, in the Project Help Slums Centre for the last two years. When he first started was he was always very quiet, and weak at his studies. But after some time there has been many changes in his life. Tarun's reading and studies have progressed and he is also doing very well in his social life. Tarun behaves very nicely with other children in the Centre and also helps the teachers and other children in any work. Tarun attends to his studies but he is particularly interested in painting and doing craft work.

Tarun's parents are very grateful for Project Help India being able to provide good education for their son. They also say that ever since Tarun started going to the Centre, he wakes up early in the morning and says good morning to his parents and his brothers. They say he is happy at last.



Guleen's Story

Whilst education is a human right, the majority of children in this isolated and marginalised district are unable to attend a local school. Little 4 year-old Gurleen Kaur is one of these kids. Gurleen is the eldest of 4 siblings. Her mother died during the delivery of her baby sister. Gurleen's father is an addict in a community where drugs are cheap and easily available. He would only be in his early twenties, he never comes home and he is unemployed. The kids are looked after by their ill, elderly grandparents who live in a house that is falling down.

Our new teacher Sonia Rani appealed to the grandparents to allow Gurleen to attend our centre and we are pleased that she now attends school on a daily basis. As well as starting to learn new things, we see Gurleen respond to the nurture and safety that school provides – for her this is a transformative experience.



Amritpal's Story

Amritpal Singh regularly attends our centre in Western Punjab on the Pakistani border. He has two brothers, Harman and Husanpreet. As a baby Amritpal contracted polio and as result he cannot walk. Due to this he has faced many problems in his life. When it comes to learning he has to receive intensive support from a teacher, and this is simply not possible, therefore he has never attended a school, until attending our centre. He loves just being around other children and he diligently tries his very best in all activities – despite his teacher not being able to give him the learning support that he needs.

Amritpal's family are very upset by his condition and they feel completely helpless, unable to support him. He belongs to a very poor family. His father is the only one in the family who earns an income which barely covers the expenses needed for the family to survive, let alone pay for the boys' education. The family is praying that one Amritpal might one day have a wheelchair.



Naveen's Story

Twelve year-old Naveen Singh is suffering from severe malnutrition.

Naveen lives with his father (Charon), his mother (Omvati) and two sisters. Both of his parents are also suffering from health issues. Charon has a rib injury and is unable to walk. Due to poverty, they are unable to afford the proper treatment. Until recently Naveen has not been able to attend school, due to a lack of interest and no energy to walk the eight-kilometre distance each way.

Due to his mother's insistence, he now attends the Project Help Centre in his village. With this he has changed and now he smiles for the first time. He is interested in learning and he attends every day happily and with enthusiasm. The meal he receives has also assisted his health but unfortunately, he is still very unwell.

Seeing the change in Naveen his parents say that they now realise the importance of education. They pray and wish for every child and for Project Help to gain further success for it to bring light to the lives of many children.



Muskan's Story

Muskan is a 15-year-old girl born to a Muslim family. Her father is a daily wage worker and her mother is a housewife. Muskan is the eldest sibling and has 3 sisters and 2 brothers. Her family is too poor for the children to own a cell phone and because of this, she was unable to access online learning during the COVID pandemic, and therefore she had no choice but to stop attending school. At the end of the lockdown, she was informed by the school that she was behind in her studies and she was not permitted to return to school. Added to this Muskan's parents could not afford the school fees for all of the siblings.

Muskan, still wanting to learn and grow, took admission in the Women's Sewing Centre a vocational training program started for women by Project Help India. She is currently in the final month of her sewing diploma course. She feels confident that she has learnt many new skills and with ongoing guidance and mentoring from Project Help she will start a small sewing business. Muskan now keeps herself very busy making repairs to her brothers and sister's clothes and creating new clothes for them too. Her skills have also progressed enough for her to sometimes work in her uncle's tailoring shop.



After the COVID lockdown last year she was becoming very anxious about what was ahead for her future. She is grateful for now having an opportunity that gives her confidence for her life. Muskan thanks Project Help for assisting her in achieving her dream. Further to this, by changing Muskan's life, her entire family has benefited in many ways too.

And when the kids grow up ...Meenakshi's Story

Meenakshi is from a very poor family living in the Kotdwara slum community in Northern India. She is 22 years old and lives with her mother and younger brother. The family is presently mourning the loss of their father Mr Hukam Singh who suddenly died of a heart attack in March this year.

Hope happened quickly in Meenakshi's life. When she decided to attend the Project Help India SHINE Women's Empowerment Conference in 2017, she had little idea that her life would be transformed in such a powerful way. Meenakshi first attended SHINE and she had never experienced anything like it. The room was filled with 500 women. Meenakshi was nervous and wondered what it was all about. She remembers with fondness the women from Australia who spoke about having belief in yourself. They spoke about the future and having inner strength and courage to achieve your dreams. Meenakshi did not think this was possible for a woman. But it was the Director, Daisy Samuel who shared her life story about being a girl in a remote mountain village, who despite great adversity, Daisy's convictions and faith gave her the determination to achieve her dream of attending school and university. Daisy's message about a woman's individual 'uniqueness' inspired Meenakshi to learn and study. Meenakshi worked hard to pay for her tuition fees. Her mother also attended SHINE and she wanted her to succeed.

Earlier this year Meenakshi graduated from university with a Masters in Sociology, with plans to leave Kotdwara to find a good job. But then the family was hit with the news of their father's death. Being the eldest child, Meenakshi would have to get work quickly and become the chief breadwinner in the family. Meenakshi went to Daisy for guidance. It turned out that at the same time, Project Help was looking for a new employee - a teacher and office administrator. You might be able to guess who got the job ... Meenakshi!

Meenakshi now teaches slum kids from her community. She knows many of the parents and understands the challenges they face. She cannot believe how she is now doing something that she never dreamt was possible. That first seed of hope that was planted in her heart and mind at SHINE in 2017 has grown, and Meenakshi says it is now her turn to bring hope to needy people and children.

Meenakshi has attended every SHINE Conference since 2017. She cannot believe that next time she will not be a delegate, but rather a member of the Project Help team, that brings this powerful message of hope to a crowded hall of women ...she can't wait!

Meenakshi says that hope is happening all around her and it's changing her life and her world.



Meenakshi's story demonstrates the power of generational impact and change, which is a long-term goal of Project Help India.

The power of education

The work of Project Help India centres around education and nutrition. Many of our students would otherwise not go to school and instead would be begging, fossicking or involved in child labour. We connect with these children's families, providing parenting programs, counselling and guidance. Through this we strive to impact lives by breaking the cycle of inequality and intergenerational poverty.

What does it cost us?

- \$35 to educate a child per month
- \$45 to educate a child at our Disability Centre a month
- \$100 for a teacher's monthly salary
- We also pay rent for most of our 13 centres



Big smiles for these kids on their first ever day at school. Village Dalenagar. June 2022