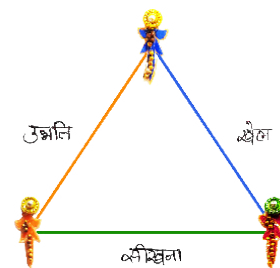


THE DIGNITY PROJECT

2024 Annual Report



The Dignity Project
Play Learn Thrive



In mid-2024, The Dignity Project lost a dear friend in Mumbai; a rogue, a rascal, a guy with big dreams and schemes and most of all, a guy who loved to bring people from all parts of community together for tea and for sport. His death will leave a place in our hearts that no one else can fill. But he leaves a legacy that serves to reminds us of what we do and why.

We dedicate this first annual report of The Dignity Project to the irreplaceable Sumesh and honour the role he played in our work for so many years.

Lincoln, Rhan, Madelene, Kanwaljit



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OUR PURPOSE

The Dignity Project (TDP) is a not-for-profit, charitable and benevolent institution established in Australia solely to provide relief to young people in need in India, in particular young people from disadvantaged communities, through local projects to provide benevolent care, support, education and training.

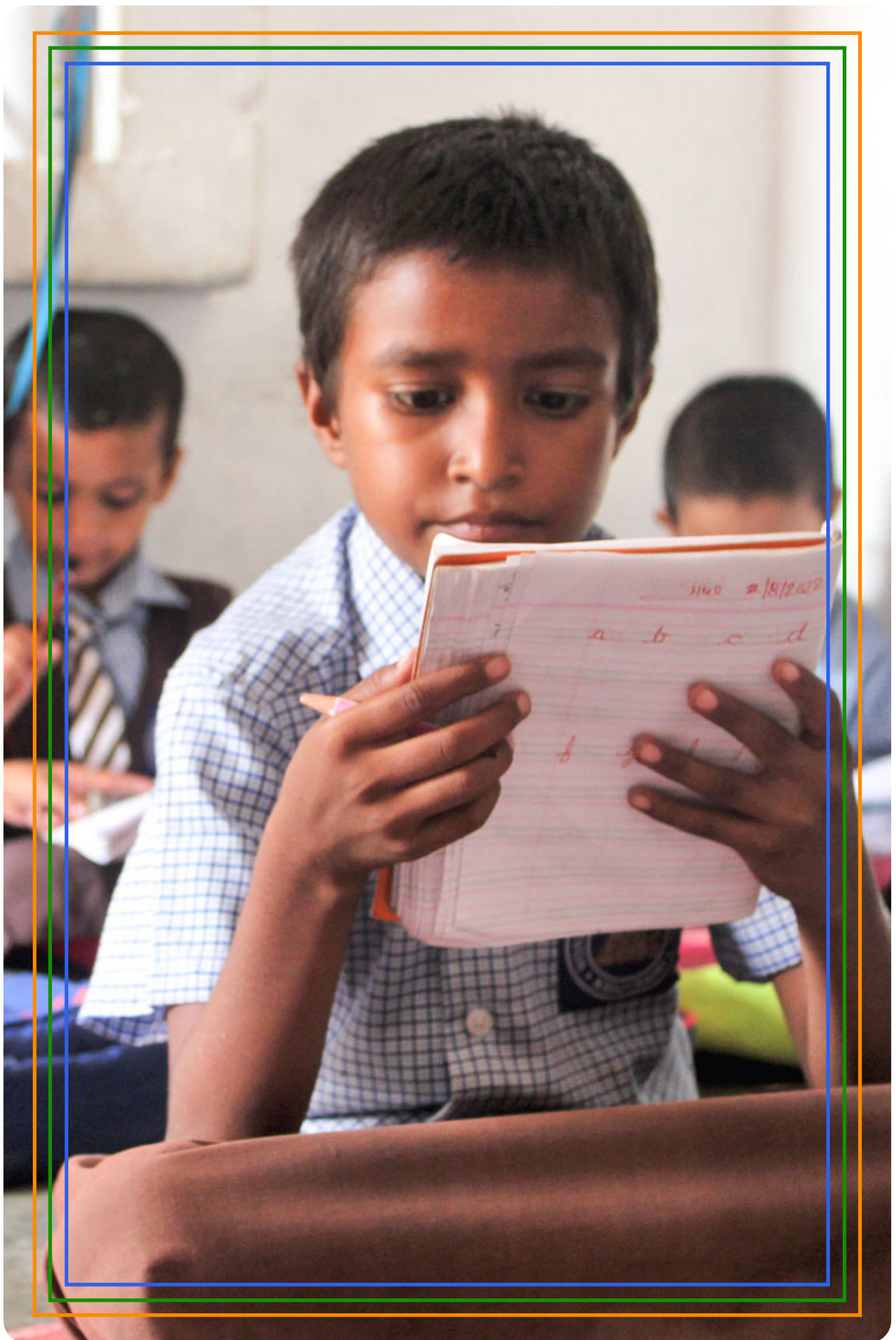
At the heart of what we do is our belief that dignity is central to the well-being of all people. Our three key areas of focus are education, recreation and women's health; TDP believes that addressing shortfalls and improving access in these areas will enable young people in India to achieve well-being.

Guiding our work are the TDP core values of dignity, inclusivity, compassion and efficacy. The Dignity Project is committed to ensuring these values are upheld through the aims and actions of its projects and those contributing to its work.

OUR HISTORY

The Dignity Project (TDP) was established in 2019 by founders Lincoln Harris, Madelene Pearson and Rhan Harris, formalising more than two decades of community projects and engagement in India under a single banner. It combines their expertise and passions in the fields of education, sport and community engagement and creates a platform on which to grow previous programs. Prior to establishing The Dignity Project, the founders operated in India a countrywide sports program, supported local schools and partnered with NGOs in projects to distribute women's sanitary products. In 2023 Kanwaljit Singh joined The Dignity Project as India manager based in New Delhi, adding not only his compassion and never-ending patience to the board, but bolstering the local knowledge and expertise held by TDP in India.

Lincoln, Madelene, Rhan and Kanwaljit are united not only by friendship, but a common desire to promote dignity for all individuals and communities The Dignity Project engages with. Together, they have established ambitious targets and policies to advance the work of TDP into future decades.



ABOUT US



Lincoln Harris (TDP Secretary)

Lincoln Harris helms The Dignity Project in Australia as secretary backed by a Certificate in Governance for Not-for-Profits from the Governance Institute of Australia and a rich knowledge of India gained from 30 years of living, working and travelling the length and breadth of the country. Lincoln's expertise includes an ability to examine and assess projects and communities that sit within the TDP purpose, decades of experience in travel in India and a proven ability to plan and manage complex logistics in-country. He has a track record working with NGOs in India in relevant fields and played a pivotal role in sharing Australian rules football in India, particularly through the development of pan-India Aussie rules carnivals and inclusive sporting events. He has ambitious targets for TDP for the next decade and beyond and is never deterred by the challenges working in India can present!



Rhan Harris (TDP Board Member)

Rhan Harris joins TDP with more than two decades of experience and expertise working in the not-for-profit sector in Australia, with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities and engagement through recreation and a proven ability to deliver a wide range of sports and recreation programs to those communities. Additionally, through his professional career in the not-for-profit sector he brings to TDP an understanding of risk management, fundraising and stakeholder engagement. Rhan's professional and personal interests are intertwined in sports and nutrition and his passion lies in building healthier, more active communities that foster connectedness and dignity. For the past 15 years, Rhan has been a regular visitor to India - devoting his travel in the country to not only building an understanding of people and places, but on delivering sporting events and coaching clinics to various communities along the way. Rhan is an instant role model to all those he meets on the sporting field in India.



Madelene Pearson (TDP Chair)

Madelene Pearson is a passionate Australia-based educator with experience in primary and secondary classrooms as well as international immersive study programs. As well as her knowledge in education, her media and communications background offer TDP support in both communications and marketing, as well as policy construction. She has lived in Mumbai and spent almost 25 years exploring India, giving her a valuable insight into the social and cultural environments across the country. Her passion is achieving dignity through education, and she is happiest when she is teaching and learning with young people and educators in India.



Kanwaljit Singh (TDP Associate Board Member)

Based in New Delhi, Kanwaljit Singh is The Dignity Project's India manager. Kanwaljit provides local expertise in India and a keen ability to assess overseas projects and partners based on a deep understanding of the social and cultural norms and challenges in India. He offers TDP a rare insight into locations and people within India; his curiosity for the world and people and an incredible capacity to build local connections and relationships, support the ongoing work and purpose of TDP. Additionally, Kanwaljit's professional expertise in logistics and events in India provide valuable support to in-country events and projects. Kanwaljit's superpower is his ability to listen and talk to everyone, regardless of their background, age, gender, or status and he has solved many a problem and made many new friends for TDP with his gentle manner and kindness.

GOVERNANCE

STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT

The Dignity Project Ltd is a company limited by guarantee. TDP is registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and is currently in the process of applying to become a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). TDP is committed to spending 100% of contributions made by supporters on project work. TDP's board are all volunteers.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

2024 is a year of numbers and milestones for me: it's almost 30 years since I first travelled to India; 15 years since I moved to Mumbai and our first community sporting program began there and five years since The Dignity Project was formalised. Added to that, there's the 65,780 breakfasts that have been served at Wonderkids School in Khajuraho in the two years since our meals program began there, the more than 170 kids that attended our first annual sports carnival and this milestone - TDP's inaugural annual report. During this year, as we have formalised our policies and strategies and strengthened our governance and reporting, the numbers have formed an important part of the story. In part, the numbers and data allow us to track and measure what we do and its impact.

As part of our desire to evaluate our efforts, measure impact and reflect on what we do, during the year board members were asked to consider what individual strength or skill they offer to TDP and which area of TDP's work they most wanted to contribute to. Why did we do this? Firstly, TDP wants to measure success and that involves ongoing reflection. Though we are a not-for-profit and all volunteers, as we move towards becoming a registered charity, we must ensure that we have the best people with the right skills working with us - and that applies to all of us, from the board down. We are committed to the governing documents and policies we have established in 2024 which shape all aspects of our operations, from protecting those we work with to financial oversight and having the most suitable people in our team. Secondly, part of achieving dignity for all is recognising the inherent, uniqueness of all human beings: we value all the different skills and qualities in people, even ourselves, and want to support the development of people's individual skills and passions - from the students in our schools to the board level. Through this reflection, our capacity as a board has strengthened as we each begin to focus more on specific areas of TDP aligned with our strengths and grow into the future. Furthermore, I have observed how the formalisation of policies and strategic plans, plus our evaluation and reflections, have increased our commitment to our work and our ambitions!

Based on the solid foundational work of 2024, we are looking ahead to achieving charity status and expanding the scale of supported projects. As I reflect personally on my journey with India over three decades and more recently, the continuing growth of The Dignity Project, I am excited about the potential for TDP's future. More than ever, recent events have shined a light on the need for all individuals to be seen, to be respected and to be supported to live a life of dignity and well-being.

Lincoln Harris
TDP Secretary

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The Dignity Project is committed to achieving Australian government charitable status, as recognised by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC). This year, we have taken concrete steps toward that goal, devoting significant time and energy at a board level to applying for ACNC charity status as a matter of priority. As part of that process, in 2024 the board conducted a full audit and review of most aspects of TDP operations; additionally, it prepared, reviewed, discussed and adopted close to 20 formal policies and strategy documents and conducted risk assessments on operations locally and overseas. The work included the development and adoption of TDP's Educational Priorities and Values, a formal Code of Conduct, TDP's Policy for safeguarding children and vulnerable people and policies relating to financial regulation and anti-corruption measures. These policies and strategies allow TDP to move forward more confidently with consistent focus and policies that underpin decision making and expansion plans.

The TDP board approached the process of preparing for an ACNC application methodically, and while it was slow and at times frustrating and laborious, it was also extremely valuable in guiding our operations and further enhancing our administrative and decision-making processes. As a result, we feel stronger and more structured to achieve the purpose of TDP into the future. Following the policy and strategy work within TDP, we have prepared a body of evidence that supports our ACNC application and continue to work with Melbourne-based lawyers Russell Kennedy who will now assist TDP in preparing a formal submission to the ACNC. TDP aspires to achieve not only ACNC charitable status, but the so-called DGR1 status also. Looking forward, we will continue to prioritise time at a board level to this application. Having overseen much of this process, I can say that while the development of policy and strategy may not look as exciting on paper as our field work in India, this 12-month period has been rich and rewarding. Every policy we formalised; every decision we made about how we operate; all the strategic plans that were developed to lay out our goals and the cementing of our beliefs in what we want our organisations to achieve and to look like in the future, are further posts in the ground on which to build.

I acknowledge the work of the board and the commitment of all the incredible individual members to achieving best practice in all that we do - and their patience with the paperwork!

Madelene Pearson
TDP Chair

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the 2023-24 financial year The Dignity Project received contributions totalling \$31,680 and spent a total of Rs 1587285 (equivalent to AU\$28,859) on approved in-country projects to provide relief. Expenditure in 2023-24 increased 22% from 2022-23.

Income	AUD
<i>Phillips Coaching</i>	15,680
<i>India Unbound</i>	16,000
	31,680

Expenditure	INR
<i>Education - activities to provide relief for BPL students through learning</i>	1053595^
<i>Nutrition - meal program to provide relief from hunger</i>	467690
<i>Menstrual health - access to hygiene products to provide relief from period poverty</i>	0*
<i>Digital literacy - activities related to improving future employment for beneficiaries</i>	66000
	1587285

^ Includes Rs 270,000 in one-time costs relating to new school premises

*The menstrual health program operated through 2023-24 with menstrual products purchased in 2022-23.



HIGHLIGHTS

There are many achievements to highlight in this reporting period. The most significant development in 2024 has been the much-needed shift to a new and bigger campus for Wonderkids School in Khajuraho. Other noteworthy achievements include a whole school sports carnival in Khajuraho, India; the expansion of TDP's sanitary pad program; a student survey and the establishment of TDP's formal 10-year strategic plan. Below are a full list of 2024 highlights. In preparing this list, we would like to acknowledge that there are many people that have made these happen and share these successes with all.

OVERSEAS OPERATIONS

Wonderkids School, Khajuraho (India):

New school campus: After a long search, a new premises was finally secured for Wonderkids. With more than 175 students, the school had long outgrown its old campus, with teachers and students sharing hallways and corridors as classrooms. At the start of the 2024 Indian school year, Wonderkids shifted to a new site with rooms for all classes, a dedicated computer lab and library, an office, a large open-air kitchen where the breakfast program can be distributed from, a female staff toilet and additional toilets for students. However, the most notable feature of the new campus is the large grass playground. Each morning, assembly is conducted among the green, student bicycles line the edge of the field, and a volleyball net has been erected for play. Both teachers and students are thrilled with the new location. With the additional space, Wonderkids has been able to expand to middle school and in 2024 offered Class 9 for the first time, allowing the school to retain its student leaders who are both studious and engaged young people. The school will continue to add grades now through to Class 12. The school acquired furniture for all classrooms, with some students gaining a desk for the first time, and new CCTV installed, among other works onsite. Trees, including mangoes, blackberries and chikoo, have been planted around the school grounds. The new space is fresh, light, buzzing with energy and potential for teaching and learning. By far the new school is the most significant achievement of the year.

First annual sports day:

In September 2023, TDP hosted the first annual Wonderkids Sports Carnival in Khajuraho, running a full day of student-centred sports activities that resembled an Australian school athletics day. The students at Wonderkids love playful movement, any type of game, sports and are always eager for any chance to participate in physical activities. A sports carnival has never been experienced by the school or students and though the event was held on a public holiday, every child attended plus more than 50 parents and family members. The day's program included Aussie rules footy drills, tunnel ball, games such as ball and spoon races for the younger grades and running races. Even the attending dads, school principal and Aussies could not resist the challenge of the final event - a traditional sack race! A sports event in India would not be complete without a few hitches, including the venue for play being made unavailable the day before the carnival, but in the end, the TDP team and guest visitors from Australia made it happen. The day was a celebration of sport, community and teamwork and is scheduled to run again in the 2025 reporting period.

Breakfast program:

In total, 32,720 breakfasts were served during the 2024 reporting period, providing a daily meal to both staff and students. A key feature of this program is that everyone at the school can eat as much as they need each day, providing a full meal to all to begin the day. TDP notes the role this program plays, with the day beginning with a full school breakfast before any learning begins. The program has a focus also on sustainability, with all students bringing their own container for the breakfast and no disposable crockery or cutlery employed and the cook only keeps supplies of non-perishable goods on-hand. Perishable items are purchased daily to minimise waste. TDP has been working with Wonderkids to expand the breakfast roster to bolster the nutrient count provided each day to students. In the coming year, this push to add nutrients will remain a focus.

Sanitary pad distribution:

Wonderkids holds an important role as a hub for providing sanitary pads to women and girls in the community, with two female teaching staff (Pushpa and Maneesha) trained by pad provider Ecofemme and facilitating the pad distribution sessions at the school. To date, everyone woman or girl connected to the school in some way, including teaching staff, students, mothers, sisters and aunts, have received reuseable pads and are now using them. Additionally, in 2024, TDP partnered with local NGO Baavan, which works with villages outside of Khajuraho, and expanded its pad project to Banki Girauli. Located about 90 kms from Khajuraho, Banki is a tribal village on the edge of the forest with very little access to basic facilities. The Baavan team has been working in this village for a few years with a focus on nature conservation, women's health and education of local children with the help of the government primary school. TDP India manager Kanwaljit Singh, Wonderkids Principal Ganesh Tiwari and lead teachers Pushpa and Maneesha travelled to Banki village for a menstrual hygiene awareness program and pad distribution session with Baavan in early 2024. This was the first session held in the village on menstrual health, which is still a taboo topic, with about 40 girls and women present for the workshop. TDP, with Baavan, distributed 30 packs of reuseable sanitary pads during this initial workshop; a follow up workshop is scheduled for late in calendar 2024. TDP is keen to further develop its relationship with Baavan and the distribution of reuseable sanitary pads into tribal communities.

Student survey data:

The board determined this year a need to continually evaluate its work and ensure that it was meeting the needs of communities and individuals most in need, as stated in TDP's constitutional purpose. As part of this process, more than half the students at Wonderkids were surveyed to assess family background and composition, student ambitions and goals, plus their thoughts on the school and learning. The survey results were collated and not only provided a snapshot of the families in our community, but unexpected data about numeracy and literacy which has helped plan for learning at the school. This initial survey provides base line data for us to measure student well-being. As a result, TDP is confident it is meeting the needs of those most in need. A follow up survey will be conducted in 2025.

Ongoing operations (Australia)

Inaugural TDP AGM: After many remote meetings and the tyranny of distance resulting from COVID, the TDP board met in person for the first time in September, coming together not just for the sports carnival in Khajuraho, but for an afternoon of strategic planning and goal setting. The board noted how positive it was to be meeting together with time to reflect and to plan, underscoring how important it is for people to come together and for the creation of community. The board is scheduled to hold its second AGM in Khajuraho in the 2025 reporting period.

TDP 10-year strategic plan:

As part of this year's policy and planning work, the board set targets for the next 2, 5, and 10 years. These targets, which will be reviewed each year around the annual general meeting in September, outline how TDP will achieve its stated constitutional purpose. TDP is pleased to state that two of the five goals for the first 2 years have been achieved and significant progress made on the remaining three. Within a decade TDP aspires to operate 5 schools in India and have established vocational training and pathways for other young people.

ACNC application:

A major development in 2024 was steps taken toward a formal application by TDP to the Australian Charities and not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) to achieve registered charity status and the related DGR1 status. TDP is committed to achieving both ACNC charitable and DGR1 status and has prioritised this in 2024. As part of this process TDP conducted a full audit of its operations and policies, and methodically evaluated and established the policies, documents and strategic direction required to not only complete an ACNC application, but to support TDP to grow into the future. As a result, the board has increased confidence in the direction and operational procedures of TDP. The Dignity Project will now work with its lawyers to make a formal ACNC application in the 2025 reporting period.

TDP Educational goals and values:

In February 2024, the board was asked to consider, individually and collectively, their values and priorities for education. Each board member was asked to reflect on questions such as 'What do you value in education', 'What are the priorities for a school' and 'What do we want children to take away from learning'. Board members also conducted professional reading and research on the role of creativity in the classroom and looked for ways to boost nutrition in our meal program in schools in India. Coming together in a special board meeting, the board was able to establish a key strategic document to guide the work of TDP in education. The TDP Educational goals and values policy articulates our educational values of compassion, confidence, humility, curiosity, open-mindedness and critical thinking. These are the values TDP seeks to instil in students through learning.

All TDP policies, strategic plans and related documents will be made available via its website in the coming months.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANK YOUS

We express our deep gratitude to all the people that welcome us into their communities in India and in many ways, teach, guide and nurture us.

We thank all our supporters, big and small, for their interest in our work and ongoing contributions, which allow us to pursue our goal of dignity. We particularly wish to thank and acknowledge the following people and their contributions this year:

Liz and Anthony Phillips and Phillips Coaching. We thank you deeply for your ongoing generous support, belief in our work and the time you always give to understanding our projects and people. We acknowledge how much you believe in our work and the many years you have supported us. We hold great value in the faith you put in what we do.

India Unbound and all those whose interest in and travel to India help allow TDP to advance its goals.

Mr. Anoop Jain, Ganesh Tiwari, Pushpa, Maneesha and all the devoted teachers at Wonderkids for their ongoing hard work and commitment, particularly to the young people at the centre of our projects.

We acknowledge the unwavering support of Mayur Parmar and Shantanu Jogelkar who stand behind us with open hearts and minds and are integral in so many ways to the success of The Dignity Project. We thank you for believing in us so fully and your willingness to walk this journey with us.

We also thank: Baavan NGO, Nabaneetha Singh, Mr. Mehanga Singh, Sanjeev Chaturvedi, Samuel Mendelsohn and Reimagined in Melbourne, Saurabh, Natalie Pearson, the families and friends that donated pencils and crayons during this year's pencil drive, Wayne & Marissa, Buster Pearson and Mr. Ravi Kumar.

There are many hands and hearts behind The Dignity Project. We thank you all.

With appreciation,

Lincoln, Madelene, Rhan and Kanwaljit

OUR KEY SUPPOTERS



**Phillips
Coaching**

Developing positive
pathways



**INDIA
UNBOUND**

CUSTOM MADE JOURNEYS

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In 2025 TDP will continue to focus on achieving its ACNC and DGR1 ambitions. Once achieved, the board will actively ramp up its fundraising efforts and seek to expand its donor network significantly. Operationally, it is expected that the first phase (the initial 2-year targets) of TDP's 10-year strategic direction will be achieved. We aim to be present on the ground in Khajuraho, India as much as possible, and to continue our own learning about the structure of education in India. Finally, TDP has always dreamed of owning a sports field in India where sports and recreation programs can be run and efforts toward this dream may advance in the year ahead.



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