

The Dignity Project Monthly Update

February 2025

Introduction

Five months of TDP meal program data; online training for staff at Wonderkids begins; visit to Eco Femme, manufacturer of reusable cloth pads in Pondicherry and preparation for new sanitary product trial underway.

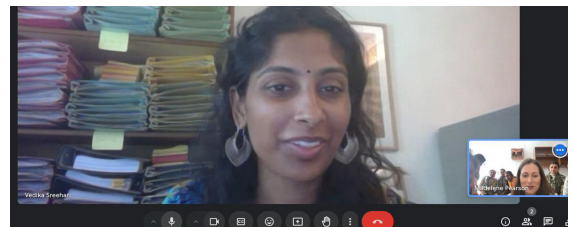
Overseas operations update

HEALTH: It's five months since TDP began serving a new breakfast program at its Thrive Community Kitchen in Khajuraho to target specific deficits in average weights of the young people participating in the daily meals program. After 5 months, 139 of 155 students, or 90 % of the cohort, have gained weight! Based on the current trends, we do anticipate closing the deficit in most age groups and getting the bulk of children at or close to Indian average weight-for-age by the end of 2025. From there, TDP would like to see a narrowing of the gap to global weight averages. The challenges ahead though include the coming 2 month summer break (when students will not attend school and therefore not receive daily breakfast from Thrive Community Kitchen) and the potential for some weight gains to be reversed. Additionally, the weight deficits in students aged 11 and above are greater than the younger students and may require extra nutrients or additional meals to be provided. TDP is currently considering adding an afternoon tea program starting in July when the next school year resumes, to boost calorie and nutrient intake of the older students. (For more detailed information about the 5 month weight gains, please see the TDP February nutrition report.) Budget costings and revisions to the meal program for the next year are underway.

TDP has appointed Jigyasa Tripathi as kitchen manager, Thrive Community Kitchen. Jigyasa will manage the day-to-day operations of the kitchen including ordering and hygiene and will ensure minimal waste of supplies and menus are followed as prescribed. As part of her responsibilities, she will also ensure all students are eating breakfast each day, provide more support to particular students where weight deficits are greatest and increase communication between TDP and the kitchen. She currently teaches at Wonderkids English School



WOMEN'S HEALTH - Sanitary pad program – The current stock of reusable sanitary pads is almost finished and TDP will seek to raise funds in the coming months to buy more pads. An online information session was conducted recently with a small group of women about the menstrual cup, with a view to trailing this product in the community. Though the community of women TDP works with was quick to adapt reusable pads, introducing menstrual cups will be a greater challenge. Twelve women have volunteered to trial a menstrual cup sold by Eco Femme, which TDP will procure and provide to the women. A follow up feedback session will take place in September, giving the women 6 months to trial the cup.



TRAINING AND EDUCATION - TDP has identified the need for capacity building and skills training among staff at Wonderkids English School. As a first step in this program, teachers have been introduced to online teacher training provided by an Indian organisation called Katha – which focuses on using stories to engage learners. Teachers recently participated in an introductory virtual workshop with Katha and can now join a weekly professional development training session. Plans are underway to provide other such skills training and workshops remotely to the teachers.



Items of significance (overseas)

TDP last year began construction of a new building in Khajuraho which will operate as a community centre, adjacent to Wonderkids English School. The community centre is nearing completion and should be fully operational in coming months. A recent meeting of nearly 40 women canvassed community views on how best to use the centre and what areas of need existed in the community. Women want educational support such as digital literacy training to improve access to financial and government services as well as prevent fraud and English classes. Access to health professionals or information, as well as nutrition workshops, are also sought. Women in the community are also keen for any activity in general that had a social nature such as yoga or cooking classes.



From the board

Madelene and Kanwal both recently visited Wonderkids English School in Khajuraho and were thrilled by the steps forward at the school. As well as the success of the meals program at Thrive Community Kitchen and student weight gains, other observations from their visit include how much healthier and stronger the children look from the nutritional boost they are receiving. At the school, classrooms are also looking more productive with evidence of student learning being displayed on classroom walls and 1-on-1 reading programs continue in Class 1. With the colder weather, it was also great to see students enjoying the school oval by eating their lunch on the grass. Again, we are reminded of the immense value and benefit of having a dedicated play space and sports ground at the school.

Madelene also visited other NGOs and their sites during her recent India visit to look for partnership opportunities with other groups and information for areas of improvement in our work. She visited the village of Naujheel in Uttar Pradesh and attended a digital literacy class offered free to the community there, as well as a facility running English classes in Delhi. In Pondicherry, she also visited Eco Femme, the manufacturers of reusable cloth pads distributed by TDP to discuss products and running health and education workshops for young women. The board will consider opportunities for collaboration or changes to existing programs in coming months.

On the administrative side, much work has been done to support local India-based partner Grass Routes, with their FCRA application. In January we compiled 3 years of activity reports and continued to work with a local CA to submit the FCRA application. That process is now underway. In Australia, TDP's ACNC application was revised following feedback from Russell Kennedy (RK) and resubmitted to RK for drafting and submission.

Looking ahead, focus will be on the ACNC application and FCRA process. Additionally, with the 2-month school break ahead, a review of the meals program and modifications will be made ahead of the new school year in July. TDP has a tour group visiting Wonderkids in March, as well as two immersive tours running in September and October which will feature activities and events at the school. Plans and preparations are being made for those tours.