

TDP Collaboration Update

October 2025

Introduction

October is full of highlights. A year of data has been collected from TDP's Thrive Community Kitchen in Khajuraho, India with weight gains recorded across most students in the 12 month period; TDP hosted a group of Australian families at Wonderkids for a week of experiential learning, language development and relationship building; past and present students at Wonderkids attended the first annual careers panel; a new digital literacy trial began after the donation of 100 computer tablets and our women's health program expanded further through our growing partnership with NGO Reality Gives.



Overseas operations update

NUTRITION

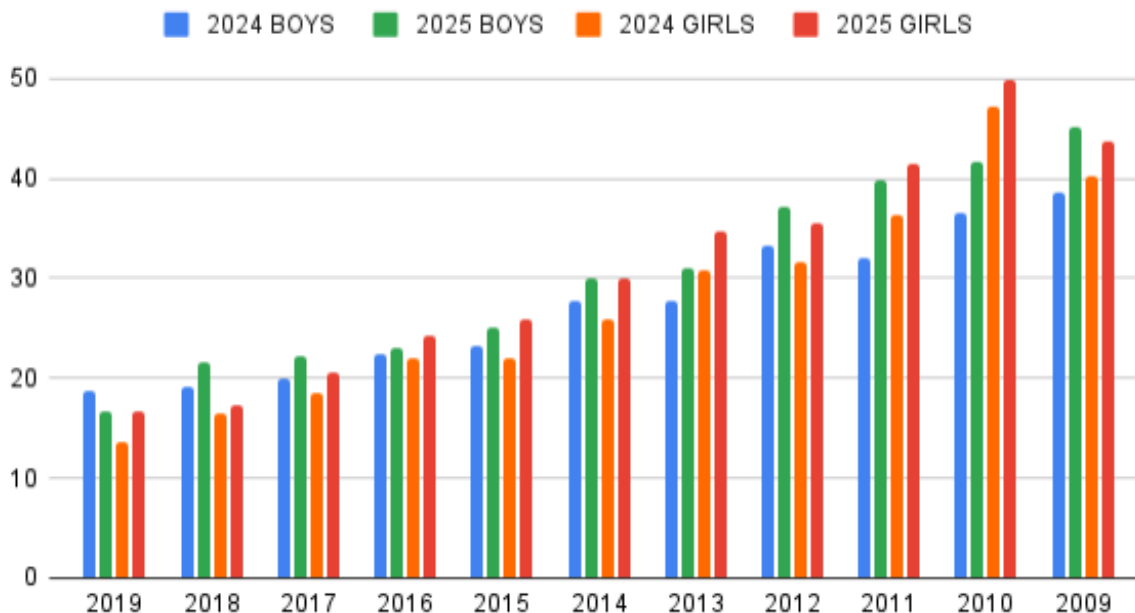
Twelve months ago, TDP began tracking the weight of students at Wonderkids school in Khajuraho who receive a hot daily meal from the Thrive Community Kitchen. Each month the children's weight is checked for changes. Students at the school receive a meal 6 days per week, designed in accordance with strict local customs (predominantly pure vegetarian) as breakfast before classes begin. The meals are nutrient rich and high in protein and carbohydrates. Additionally, in recent months TDP has introduced a morning snack for students and staff 3 days per week.

At the start of the data collection period, significant gaps were recorded in average weight-for-age of most students compared with Indian and global standards. After 12 months, nine of the 10 school classes have seen gains in average weights, with the exception being class 1 - who are a new cohort of students since June this year and haven't been receiving meals for 12 months.



The data reveals double digit gains in 14 of 22 age groups in the 12 month period. Gains of 25 percent in the average weight of boys born in 2011 were recorded and gains of 17 percent in 2009 boys. The biggest gains in the average weight of female students can be seen in 2009 girls with 22 percent increases in the average; 2015 girls with an 18 percent gain; 2014 girls at 16 percent and 2011 girls at 14 percent. Additionally, there are now some students (not a large number) who have reached or are near the Indian weight-for-age average for their age. The challenge is now shifting goal posts – as despite gains made with support of our meal program – each year as a student gets older the expected average weight for that age increases, and at this stage, it is faster than we can close the weight deficit for age. Though it is heartening to see increases across all ages and anecdotally through our observations at the school we see healthier and stronger looking students, we still have a long way to go. Data will be collected for another 12 months and analysis of weight changes done on a regular basis. The following table provides a snapshot of gains in the average weight of cohorts based on the year of birth.

CHAGNE 2024 TO 2025 BOYS AND GIRLS



WOMEN'S HEALTH

TDP purchased 20 menstrual cups plus 277 packs of reusable sanitary pads from Eco Femme in September: each pack has 8 reusable organic cotton cloth pads and a travel pouch. 100 packs of pads were delivered to Reality Gives in Delhi and the balance to Wonderkids in Khajuraho. The program benefited from a grant from The Phillips Foundation and its Living Ripples program, plus a donation of \$1,000 from Keala Klugman Harris, a grade 8 student from Queensland who raised funds as part of a school baking project and donated it to TDP for the purchase of sanitary pads.

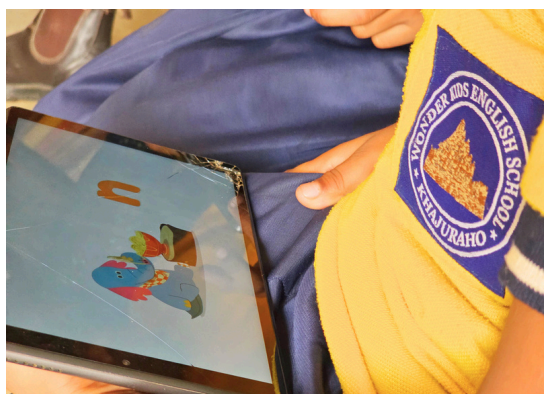
Efforts to reach more women through our menstrual health program were boosted in recent months, with increased collaboration with NGO Reality Gives which will supply sanitary pads and women's health education through their community centres in Delhi and Naujheel (a small town in the state of Uttar Pradesh). In September, TDP facilitated training for 2 Reality Gives staff who participated in an online training with Eco Femme, followed by a 3-day site visit to TDP's projects in Khajuraho to understand our model of pad distribution and women's health workshops. Those RG staff will now become facilitators and distributors of reusable cloth pads. TDP's Madelene Pearson attended the first women's health workshop at the Reality Gives community centre in Delhi on September 26 and reports a positive response from attending women and an impressive delivery of information by RG staff. A second workshop was held in early October by RG in Naujheel.

TDP will seek more such partnerships and will soon seek funding for further pads to support the RG collaboration.



DIGITAL LITERACY

Expanding digital literacy in our community received a significant boost this month, with a donation of 100 pre-used tablets from Reality Gives. The tablets were shipped to Wonderkids school in Khajuraho from Mumbai, where they have been sitting unused. To support the use of the tablets, the WIFI connection at the school has been upgraded, allowing for all-school access and a secure storage cupboard purchased. During September, TDP's Lincoln Harris visited the school and set up more than 20 tablets with logins and online learning apps. For the remainder of the year, the Class 1 and 2 teacher is trialing Khan Academy online learning with her classes. The students are using the app to learn the alphabet plus phonic sounds, pronunciation and vocabulary, as well as simple maths. The classes are conducted in the Community Centre to allow greater space for the students. Early feedback from the teacher is some students are engaging with the online learning but for some students it is difficult. The trial will continue for the remainder for the year before potentially being expanded to other classes.



WONDERKIDS SCHOOL, Khajuraho India

In September, past and present senior students gathered in the TDP Community Centre for the inaugural Wonderkids Careers Panel. Four speakers discussed their education and learning journey, their current careers and previous work experiences and provided some tips for students. The afternoon was attended by 20 Wonderkids alumni, plus class 9 and 10 students and school staff. A question and answer session followed plus an opportunity for all to mingle over afternoon tea of samosa and kulfi. Feedback was positive and TDP hopes to facilitate more of these types of sessions.

The school is currently at capacity in terms of space and urgently needs extra classrooms. Negotiations began in September to expand into the other rooms connected to the school, currently being rented privately. It is anticipated the school can take the lease for 4 extra rooms and the courtyard within coming months.



From the board

The board met twice in recent months: the July meeting focused on future planning for TDP following the granting of Australian government charity status, while the September meeting conducted ongoing business with a special discussion on how the Indian schooling system operates. Looking forward, the board has two key administrative steps to complete, being a complete review of TDP policies as well as compiling the mandated ACNC Annual Activity Statement. These two tasks will be completed before the board meets again to discuss long-term strategic work to start in 2026.

SPECIAL REPORT

Heads, Hearts and Hands Tour 2025 - By Madelene Pearson



In September, we welcomed a group of as many as 19 volunteers in Khajuraho for a week of intensive teaching and learning at Wonderkids school. The *Heads, Hearts and Hands* Tour was hosted by me, Lincoln Harris, and our son Buster Pearson and included an enthusiastic group of families from Australia (6 parents and their 6 delightful teenagers) who joined us for a week of experiential learning and relationship building bookended by some touring in India. Over the years, many of our friends and families have expressed a desire to visit Wonderkids and see our work firsthand and offer their own contribution. We designed this tour with the desire to bring a range of new experiences and skills to the school through a series of special workshops created for the local students; to help teenagers from home understand the differences, challenges and culture of living and studying in regional India; to raise funds for the school and hopefully create bonds between a group of visiting Australians and the staff and students at Wonderkids. We also had with us a local fieldworker in women's menstrual health and hygiene plus two staff members from Reality Gives who came to learn more about our community pad sessions.

Over the week we watched as a range of unique project-based classes unfolded including animation, song writing, see saw building, science lessons, Lego building, mathematics classes, weaving, embroidery, paper plane making and sports lessons. We saw rich, deep learning taking place, English language in practice, new friendships formed, teenagers from Australia pouring their hearts and energy into creating experiences for other students while the local children absorbed and participated in every opportunity. We shared meals, reflections, sightseeing, laughter, birthdays, excursions, stories, resources and created a mountain of memories.

The Heads, Hearts and Hands Tour 2025 raised \$12,247.96 for TDP. We are currently considering offering a similar tour for families with teenagers in 2026. Detailed descriptions of the individual projects delivered during the week are included below. We are deeply grateful to all of those who joined us on the tour and trusted us to bring their children to India. It was a rich and rewarding tour for all involved and thoroughly enjoyable. The memories of the experience will stay with those in Khajuraho and the visiting Australians for a lifetime, we are sure.

Menstrual Health Workshops

Designed for adolescent girls in classes 8-to-10, this project focused on improving what young women know about their bodies, menstruation and women's health. Over six days, female students participated in workshops which involved learning about the female reproductive system, how to discuss the female body correctly in English and Hindi and understanding the stages of the menstrual cycle; shared their first period stories; explored the range of menstrual products available and learnt how to track their cycles. As part of this project, the girls also collaborated in a craft project where small groups of young women wove the menstrual cycle into bicycle frames creating beautiful weavings that provide a visual reminder of the menstrual cycle. The weavings now hang in TDP's Community Centre. Visiting Australian women and teenagers plus the local students and teachers worked on this together, shared stories, singing and conversations. Workshops were delivered by a field worker from Eco Femme, maker of reusable sanitary pads distributed by TDP.



Science intensives

Over the course of the week, class 6 and 7 students participated in two science intensives – mechanics and the digestive system. Students were taught in English and developed an understanding of the vocabulary of physics and the human body from a native English speaker. Each unit had a hands-on activity to accompany the theory with 2 wooden see saws built as part of the physics classes and a model of the large intestine (and the passage of food through it) created using stockings, crackers and bananas. The see saws remain at the school for play and were very popular with the students from all classes.



Non-stop sports classes!

Always one of the most popular activities with students, two dedicated Australian teenagers ran back-to-back sports classes every day, for 8 lessons in a row. That was despite the incredible heat and challenging conditions! The students at Wonderkids love to play sport, participate in games and relish any opportunity to run around. Securing a permanent sports teacher remains a challenge at Wonderkids. Over the week, the older classes focused on developing an understanding of the skills and rules of volleyball and played games like tail tag and the local favourite kho kho, while the younger classes practised skipping, obstacle courses and simple games.



Lego and craft

In Class 5, the week's project focused on a combination of Lego, mathematics and learning embroidery under the theme of tigers. Tigers can be seen at the national park near Khajuraho and create a good context for learning that Wonderkids children can relate to. Children delighted in the introduction of Lego, with 30 kgs making its way to the school as a donation with the Australian group. Lego was used for play, counting, building, games, mathematics, measuring and in general, a lot fun. The class also learnt embroidery and stitched a tiger which was later sewn onto a cap. Additionally, there were drawing activities related to tigers, the development of vocabulary and language in English associated with tigers and an incursion with a local NGO on tiger conservation.



Animation

Male students from classes 8-to-10 spent the week learning the art of animation. Beginning with creating a character that represented themselves from clay, the students learnt script writing, shooting video and taking photos, wrote and performed an accompanying song and painted back drops for the film. During the course of the week, the students were deeply engaged in creative work, designing, thinking and communicating in English and relationship building with the visiting Australians. From the focus of students and joy on their faces, it was clear to see that this project was rich in deep and creative learning, language development, the joy of singing, the exploration of self and the development of bonds between groups of people. The resulting video was screened for the whole school on the final day and is a wonderful souvenir from the trip.

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