TDP Update

October 2026

Introduction

Highlights in this report include the recent whole school sports carnival at Wonderkids in India; site visits, focus groups and evaluation across TDP education, nutrition and women's health projects and meeting with parents, students, teachers and key stakeholders in our communities.



In brief:

- First visit to Wonderkids by TDP board members in 12 months.
- Conducted focus groups and evaluation of TDP's menstrual health project, including monitoring and evaluation of sanitary pad use and quality of product.
- Facilitated focus groups with Wonderkids parent community on student learning and school outcomes.
- Conducted focus groups with teachers on future needs and attitudes.
- Completed student focus groups from grades 5 to 10.
- Tested literacy and numeracy skills across the teaching cohort.
- Tested student numeracy and literacy levels in selected grades to set benchmarks.

- Reviewed English literacy skills in grade 1 and 2.
- Established remedial Hindi classes for children identified by teachers as illiterate or below standard.
- Constructed and introduced a new whole school timetable.
- Hired new sports teacher.
- A complete review of the school campus and resources.
- Facilitated school sports carnival that included more than 300 people.
- Conducted the first school excursion for a group of very excited Wonderkids' students.
- Hosted a two-week volunteer who led painting workshops in classes 1 & 2.
- Reviewed digital learning trial in classes 1 & 2
- Raised $18,000 through Richmond Institute 2-day visit and related India tour.

It was a delight to be back in Khajuraho again after a year away. As a result of our recent visit, much work has been done and there is a lot to report. We noticed many changes and improvements, while also recognising that in our absence some initiatives have slowed and as always, there is much more to achieve. The focus of our visit was to largely evaluate our existing programs to assess what has been achieved so far; to establish data and benchmarks for teaching and learning, nutrition, and women's health and connect with community stakeholders to gain their input to plan for the next few years. In this update, we will mostly provide brief summaries and snapshots of the work that we've done plus some observations from key events that took place during this time. Detailed reports and analysis of focus groups and resulting data will be provided in future updates.









OVERSEAS OPERATIONS UPDATE

Wonderkids School, Khajuraho, India

REFLECTIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Parent support and belief in our work is strong. This is evident by the number of parents that attended the focus groups held at school over 4 days, both mums and dads, as well as the number of women who attended menstrual health workshops conducted over the week. An initial review of the focus group data is positive. This suggests TDP is meeting parent desires for their children and our programs are having a positive impact, allowing us to move forward with confidence. Data from student numeracy and literacy teaching has not yet been reviewed. Meanwhile, teachers have actively participated in our data collection across programs though some were challenged by the teacher tests.











AT SCHOOL

After speaking to teachers and leadership, it became clear that the current timetable was not fully meeting curriculum needs or providing adequate breaks for teachers. The timetable was identical for the six school days of the week. In the younger classes, teachers wanted to remain with their classes for the first 3 lessons of the day to focus on literacy and numeracy, while in the senior years, teachers in science, social science, Hindi and mathematics wanted double periods.

After a tremendous effort over multiple days and several drafts, a new timetable was established that meets those needs; gives all teachers free lessons for planning; off lessons for the kitchen manager in order to fulfil the duties of the meals program and allows for deep engagement with the curriculum. Feedback from the teachers is overwhelmingly positive and they are particularly enjoying having a different timetable each day. We are deeply grateful to the work and skill of Buster Pearson who developed the new timetable.

As part of our visit, we hired a sports teacher who is currently on a one-month trial. She is very enthusiastic to be working at the school and, on our observation in a limited time, seemed to have a great range of sports and a willingness to teach games and sports to the children.









RICHMOND INSTITUTE VISIT AND FUNDRAISER

A group of students and staff totalling 18 people from the Richmond Institute in Melbourne recently visited Khajuraho for two days to participate in our all school sports carnival and deliver sport at school. While rain prevented a day of Aussie Rules at school, we conducted a day of inside games and activities across the school including a Lego challenge, chess, Uno and card games, simple ball games undercover and in classroom interactions.

The Richmond delegation were enthusiastic and eager to engage with the staff and students at our school and provided a day of fun and alternative activities at the school, as well as support to the sports carnival. (See below.) We hope to welcome future groups from Richmond back to the school and thank them deeply for their contributions. Overall, their visit and India tour raised a total of approximately $18,000 for the Dignity Project, which goes straight into the costs of running the school.



WONDERKIDS SPORTS CARNIVAL

A key highlight from our recent visit was this year's Wonderkids all school sports carnival, which brings together our school cohort of 200 plus approximately 100 parents and guests for a day of fun, sport, athletics and lunch. We were delighted to have staff and students from the Richmond Institute to help us facilitate the day and deliver a range of sports. It was an amazing day with a morning of rotating sports activities and games and an afternoon of some well-known Aussie sports carnival events such as three-legged races and running races. The carnival was held at a central, beautifully grassed ground which we hope to use again in the future. Though rain hampered the picnic lunch, we got through most of the events on the day thanks to a tremendous effort by the TDP team and volunteers and the incredibly enthusiastic and energetic Richmond Institute students. The kids were talking about it for days and they loved the format and the events. Again, our TDP Thrive Kitchen provided lunch for 300 people and we must acknowledge the incredible hard work of our two school kitchen staff to provide such a healthy nutritious meal on such a large scale. It supports our budget and guarantees the quality of the food. As well as creating rich memories, this event brings together the school community, while promoting promote sport and sharing a meal.













WONDERIDS ALUMNI

While at the school, we had the opportunity to meet our Wonderkids alumni—the Year 10 students who left last year and are now attending government schools. While they are benefiting from a wider range of subject selection, they have transitioned from small classes of approximately 15 students at Wonderkids to classrooms with over 70 students. Observationally, we noticed a certain fragility among these students, especially the female students, who appear to have lost some confidence as well as some of the weight and health gains they achieved while at Wonderkids.

Despite this, it was an absolute joy to have them return to the school on a public holiday for a morning of games, a hearty morning tea and conversation and to catch up with these special people. They also all attended our sports carnival, and several of the young girls participated in the women's health sessions and reviews that were conducted. We aim to host alumni events at future visits to the school.



WOMEN'S HEALTH

TDP is currently conducting a review of its menstrual health program to determine if community needs are being met, the longevity and quality of our existing product and to what extent community needs are being met. TDP provides reusable cloth sanitary pads to the community at no costs, as well as information sessions about women's health.

During our recent visit we were again joined by Vedika Sreehari, who has worked previously with TDP on menstrual health education and delivering in-school workshops, to evaluate our women's health and menstrual pad project while also facilitating some knowledge-based sessions for the women at our school. This included information sessions for our teachers and our senior girls in year 8, 9 and 10 about menstrual health and hygiene. As part of this process, TDP conducted community engagement meetings and asked all women to bring back their pads for review. As a result, we believe that our product is being used regularly and actively by most recipients and thus meeting a need for menstrual products in our community. In some cases, women who first received pads from TDP 4 year's ago, were given new pads as the lifespan of their existing kits was nearing the end, thus suggesting the product life is close to 3 to 4 years and not 5.

We are currently working on a funding proposal and trial for the introduction of menstrual cups in our community. Details to follow in coming months.









FROM THE BOARD

In November the board will meet for its AGM and to approve the annual report. We are currently in the process of hiring an operations manager to be based in India, who will liaise with our communities and partners and manage TDP projects. It is hoped this role will start before year's end. In coming months, reports will be released from the recent focus groups and efforts to secure additional funds for new women's health projects will be sought.

Other highlights in pictures

- Our first school excursion occurred with classes 1 & 2 visiting the world-famous Khajuraho temples to sketch
- Australian volunteer Sabi Donovan spent 2 weeks at the school conducting daily painting workshops with Class 1 & 2 and some simple craft workshops with the senior girls
- The school day now begins with energy and joy with dancing and exercises conducted by the Class 1 teacher at the end of the assembly.
- We can report that the quality, quantity and taste of meals coming from the Thrive Community kitchen is outstanding!







