



**Partners in Aid**

AUSTRALIA

## **THE SOCIAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY CHILD EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP ANNUAL REPORT, 2022**

### **Introduction**

For many years, Partners in Aid has supported both child education programs and sustainable agricultural projects implemented by the Social Education Development Society (SEDS) in the Anantapur district on the Deccan Plateau of India. This area is out of reach of the monsoons. As a result, rainfall is highly erratic and untimely, and poverty among the farmers can be intense. While the Government contributes to the education expenses of children, there does not appear to be any compulsion to attend school for many of the children whose families exist on a very low income. This income does not always extend to educating their children as well as feeding them.

In 1994 PIA Directors Ian Pickering and Lyn Pickering, working on SEDS sustainable agricultural projects in the area noted that many of the disadvantaged local children had no access to education. Accordingly, a program to improve the educational opportunities open to children from low-income families in Andhra Pradesh, Anantapur, was established in conjunction with Partners in Aid.

Children requiring support were initially selected from families living within a 25 km radius of the SEDS campus by SEDS personnel and teachers working in the area. New students to the education program are now selected from villages where project work operates. Subsequently, a parent or guardian of the child, and the student his or herself, are interviewed at the SEDS campus prior to acceptance on the program. There is no discrimination in terms of race, caste, or religion with respect to accepting children into the program. Most of the students leave the program at the end of Year 10, but some continue to Year 11 and 12 and university, with Government support.

The support provided to each child is funded by Partners in Aid donors willing to undertake sponsorship. When a new student commences on the program, a profile and photo is sent to the donor with a short comment about the family. The child's home address, phone number, caste, village, etc are removed from the sponsor's copy: particular care is taken to protect privacy of the children, and to ensure that no information is available to anyone who might seek to use it for child grooming or other undesirable purposes.

Covid has made it impossible for the Partners in Aid Project Coordinator to carry out any field over the past few years. However, twenty visits carried out since 1994 in which the Program Coordinator has been in personal contact for periods of up to one month at a time have provided me with the opportunity to observe and take part in many activities of the students on the program and the local communities where the project work is operational. Moreover, since the inception of the program, Partners in Aid has been very fortunate to have had an excellent working relationship with SEDS through Mrs. Manil Joshua, the CEO, and her team. Reports are always available when requested.

## **Local Context**

Over the past 10 years or so, rural schools in Andhra Pradesh have experienced an influx of better trained teachers from further afield. It is not unusual for some teachers to travel more than one hour to the rural schools by bus or motorbike, facilitated by the improved condition of the local roads. Improved educational standards in the secondary schools, in particular, has benefited all students. SEDS also operate a school out of their campus which provides high quality English-medium education.

Initially the school fees of children participating in the Child Education Sponsorship Program, along with other school requirements, were supported by Partners in Aid donors. Government programs now make the provision of school fees by parents unnecessary. The government also supplies one pair of shoes and one uniform per year per child and gives children a limited supply of textbooks. However, students usually require more than one uniform per year and the textbooks that the Government supplies are not all that are required. Children from poorer families still need assistance to ensure that their children can fully realize the educational opportunities open to local children.

The cost to sponsor a child through PIA is \$260 per annum with a further \$20 non-compulsory sum to buy each child a new set of clothes by way of a present each year, not designated as birthday or Christmas or other. Although it has been increased from earlier sponsorship costs, our current figure of \$260 now barely covers the many things supplied by SEDS for each child even with the extra amount being covered by the Indian Government. Extra funds are requested via the newsletter for SEDS Medical Fund to cover items for individual students such as glasses, and cream for skin conditions prevalent in this area, and also other small medical needs. However, it is neither practical nor something I would advocate that we increase the prices for our current child education sponsors.

## **Goal**

The goal of the Child Education Sponsorship is to provide education support from Kindergarten to Year 10 for students whose parents might not otherwise be able to afford to keep them at school, thus giving them the opportunity to develop skills and potential which can improve their family's standard of living in the future. Important also, is the fact that receiving an education can also delay the early marriage of girls.

## **Expenditure**

Sadly, Covid-related pressures on their family incomes led to the loss of some of the program sponsors during 2021-2022. In all \$39,624 was remitted to SEDS for child education sponsorship.

## **Intended and Achieved Actions**

As indicated above, students need to find funds to supplement the school supplies they receive from the Government. Sponsored children now receive from Partners in Aid a second uniform, notebooks, stationary, school bags, slippers/sandals and a 'geometry box' which includes protractors, rulers, divider, etc. Where there is a need, SEDS also assist some local government school students who are not in the sponsorship program. Each sponsored student also receives a new set of clothes from SEDS once per year.

Monthly visits to SEDS for cultural and sporting activities and health checks are also arranged for the children. SEDS have the students at the campus one Saturday each month for activities which include cultural, sporting, regular health checks, and measuring for new uniform. Where necessary, SEDS also assists through the sponsorship program in the provision of glasses, creams for skin conditions which are prevalent in this area and other small medical needs.

In 2021-2022, approximately 155 students' educational needs were sponsored by Partners in Aid donors. The lockdowns during the 2020-21 year had made schooling very challenging for the students, and, while many of them returned to school, not all have done so in the short term. Some went to work as agricultural labourers as their parents and grandparents had done in the past. The 2021-2022 year has again been difficult, as Covid was still causing lockdowns from time to time in the first few months of the academic year in India. Despite the lockdowns in the early part of the school year, however, some sponsored students achieved excellent results across the school years from Kinder to Year 10. For example:

- Year 6 – Mahendra and Arun scored in the high 90s. Rashitha received four 100% passes and two 99% passes. Akshitha received high 90s in all six subjects.
- Year 7 – Madhu passed all seven subjects with scores in the high 80s, and Charan, Deepika and Pavithra also received very good results,
- Year 8 – Navya, Aishwarya and Hindu Sree all received very good results,
- Year 9 – Sneha had excellent results, as did Bhagya and Akshaya, and
- Year 10 – four Year 10 girls received a first division pass.

Four older boys who have continued on in our program for the year, with their donor's support, and beyond Year 10 to university, also received very good results. Anji passed all eleven subjects in his first year of a Bachelor of Technology Degree. Anil passed all six subjects in his second year of Engineering Trades – Electrician. Both Anji and Anil have called SEDS home since they were very young boys. Abu did very well in his first year of Mechanical Engineering, passing all nine subjects and his twin Umar passed his nine subjects in his Bachelor of Technology.

Since late 1994 in excess of 700 students have benefitted from the SEDS/PIA child education program. Currently there are 165 students on the program. For every child who has received, or who is still receiving support from this valuable program this is seen as a positive outcome. PIA has never looked to extend beyond 200 students at any one time, and monitoring has been very successful. My visits to SEDS have always included one of the monthly activities at the SEDS campus, and from there my visits to the various schools where the students attend have been very achievable.

### Risks and Risk Management

Risk	Likelihood	Severity	Means of Mitigation
Large-scale relocation of the targeted families in the area	Low	High	Reallocate sponsorship arrangements to different children if any education sponsorship is still required. Otherwise, phase program out
Migration of participating families	Low	Moderate	
Family events occur which motivate children to drop out	Medium	Low	

Economic, social, or political events encourage many parents to withdraw children from school, regardless of whether they are receiving support	Low	High	
Lack of sponsors makes it impossible to support enough children to make program worth continuing in its present form.	Low	High	PIA to campaign to find more sponsors, or phase out of PIA support of Program, if support no longer critical.
Breach of PIA internet records regarding children being sponsored	Low	High	Maintain constant check of Partners in Aid cyber security arrangements

Note: Probability = how likely is it to happen (low, moderate, high)?

Severity = how bad would the results be if it did happen (low, moderate, high)?

Lyn Pickering  
Co-ordinator of Child Education Program

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