



FREE THE CHILDREN
children helping children through education



India

COUNTRY PROFILE

Bordering the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, India is located between Burma and Pakistan. Despite impressive gains in economic investment and output, India faces pressing problems such as significant overpopulation, environmental degradation, extensive poverty, and ethnic and religious strife. The country's rapid population growth is a fundamental social, economic, and environmental problem. India is the second most populous country in the world after China and the largest democracy in the world. Malnutrition affects nearly half of all children under the age of five in India.

Free The Children has been operating in India since 1998 where the organization concentrates its efforts on the rural areas of northern India. Here, people have faced a long history of social exclusion and marginalization by both other populations and their government. The rural communities, native to the area, face significant challenges, which threaten the survival of their vibrant culture. Indigenous people residing in the communities where Free The Children works are designated as Scheduled Tribes (ST) also known as Adivasis, Scheduled Castes (ST) also called Dalits, Other Backward Classes (OBC), and other Forward Classes. With little access to education, water, income generation activities, and health

care services, the people in these communities have an extremely low quality of life. Rural communities also have the highest primary school dropout rate in India, a direct result of poor educational facilities, the need for children to work, and the lack of educational and health care support. Many of the children who do go to school begin their education late because schools are too far away from their communities. Approximately one out of every two to three children in the communities where Free The Children works are engaged in child labour.

In response to these needs, Free The Children has engaged several communities in various locations in Udaipur Division to implement Adopt a Village, a holistic sustainable development model. Following this model, Free The Children works in partnership with these communities to eliminate the obstacles that prevent children from accessing education. Free The Children, engages community members in development and education projects that will lift them from poverty and enable them to eventually sustain and build on the programming. A team of community outreach workers and development workers are consistently working with women, men, and youth to make this happen.



Free The Children works in the northern province of Rajasthan

Why Rajasthan?

Udaipur Division, located in the state of Rajasthan, faces numerous economic and social challenges. The girl child in India, and more specifically those belonging to the tribal populations of Rajasthan suffer from a great number of gender disparities, which serve as barriers toward development opportunities, the most significant being education. Young tribal girls, as a result of gender discrimination are not only looked down upon, given less wages for work and have more limited opportunities, but are also given less food to eat in their households as a sacrifice for their father or brothers who are seen as more in need and worthy. Tribal girls receive very poor nutrition from the time they are born impacting their physical, and cognitive development, which results in an unhealthy lifestyle that is then passed down to their babies. It is estimated in Rajasthan that one in 12 children die in first year of life, one in nine children die before 5 years (CPR Ref – Wells of India, 2008). Child labour is a rampant problem throughout the country of India. It is estimated that over 218 million children (5 to 14

years of age) in India are engaged in child labour work. In a recent child labour study conducted in Rajasthan, it was concluded that almost half of child workers in Rajasthan never enroll in school and are illiterate. The remaining 31% of the child laborers, who have the chance to attend school, drop out by the primary school level. It was found that 54% of child workers in Rajasthan are female, while 46% are males.

Although women commonly use their voice within their individual households, they are historically inhibited from sharing their opinions in a community gathering, in the general public and society. This directly and indirectly is creating the impression of women as inferior to men, and as a result, young girls mature while feeling restricted in voicing their opinions, thoughts, and views. With the changes that are transpiring within rural areas and the alteration in survival strategies and livelihoods, it is increasingly important for women (the keeper of the household) to help usher in change that is reflective of community need; thus the women's role and opinion is substantial and yet undermined or dismissed.

Free The Children has been working in India for over ten years. Some of the key components of Free The Children's work in India focuses on and incorporates into its programming:

- Gender equality
- Sustainability
- Capacity building
- Community ownership and participation
- Building on local indigenous knowledge

There are many critical issues facing the people of Udaipur that range from gross human rights violations to pollution and land erosion. Free The Children is working hard to address all of these issues and work with local community members to design new interventions and solutions. Working with local community members, Free The Children is coupling both innovative indigenous design and modern technology in India to create healthy and prosperous communities!

Adopt a Village Program Objectives

Through the implementation of Adopt a Village program components, entire communities experience holistic and sustainable development. The objectives of the program include:

- Reduction in the rates of child labour;
- Free quality primary education for all children;
- Increase enrollment rates for primary education and daily attendance rates;
- Equal ratios of girls and boys in school;
- Reduction in the rates of various poverty related diseases;
- Improved maternal and child health;
- Increased empowerment and independence of women;
- Increase in base family income – through sustainable & diversified income generating activities;
- Improved rates of adult literacy and education (specifically in regards to health education, basic literacy, and business skills);
- Access to clean water for all community members;
- Greater self-sufficiency, independence, empowerment and solidarity of entire beneficiary community; and
- Appreciation of indigenous knowledge and local world-views to support organic growth and sustainability.

Education

The tribal female literacy rate in Rajasthan of 26.2 % is lower than the national average of 34.8 % recorded by all tribal females (Census India, 2001). Recent reports indicate that illiteracy among tribal [girls in Rajasthan] is still lower than any other group in Indian society.

Gender inequality in India is a major hurdle that Free The Children is attempting to confront. It is still very common for families to reject the idea of their daughter studying in school because they do not want to spend the money. It is estimated that only 36% of girls enroll for secondary education, while there is an enrollment percentage of 66% for boys. It is Free The Children's goal to enroll indigenous children into school that would otherwise would be unable due to child labour and early child marriage.

Free The Children aims to achieve this goal through educational programming and community mobilization which includes training on critical thinking, innovation, gender equality, health, physical education and leadership. We will work

together with the community members to break down the barriers to education and increase girls increase confidence and their ability to engage in society. Through equal education opportunities we're working to increase gender equality.

In the Education phase of the Adopt a Village program, you can help with:

- Building new schools or rehabilitating old structures;
- Furnishing and outfitting classrooms with basic education resources;
- Providing school supplies to students to support their learning;
- Supporting teacher training and quality education programs;
- Providing teacher accommodations; and
- Supporting community awareness and mobilization activities encouraging parents to send both their sons and daughters to school.



Old classrooms in the villages where Free The Children works are often in complete disrepair



Health Care

It is estimated in Rajasthan that 1 in 12 children die in first year, 1 in 9 children die before 5 years. In Rajasthan half the child population is under nourished and 90% of the women are anaemic.

Free the Children's health programming in India includes both Ayurvedic (ancient Indian medical tradition based on Indian philosophies of health and wellness) and Allopathic (derived from western medical tradition) to provide both reactionary and preventative health care. By utilizing both of these health care traditions, Free The Children is working with local community and honouring indigenous knowledge and resources to create sustainable medical care to reduce malnutrition, infant mortality, TB and many more.

In conjunction with the local and central government in India, Free The Children's goal in health programming is to build a Community Center for women and children that will act as a resource for preventative health care treatment to aid in supplementing the dietary requirements for pregnant women and young children, in addition to using the center as a place of community outreach on mother and child health education. The state government of Rajasthan will send allopathic medical practitioners to deliver vaccinations such as polio injections to combat disease and illness from the preventative standpoint.

Health education will center on using local and indigenous herbal health care remedies, incorporating herbal gardens that will use local plants grown in abundance such as Aloe Vera and plants with iron to supplement the diet of pregnant women suffering from anemia. Free The Children is ensuring that Indian traditions and values are upheld while empowering community members through health education and having them take ownership over the resource and community center.

In the Health Care phase of the Adopt a Village program, your fundraising efforts will support:

- Construction of community health centers;
- Mobile health education programs and services;
- Shipping of essential medical supplies;
- Community garden and nutrition programs; and
- HIV/AIDS awareness and education.



Herbal gardens at school teach children important lessons about nutrition and health



Young girls are often the ones responsible for collecting water each day

Clean Water and Sanitation

It is estimated that “only 5% of primary schools have water and sanitation” in rural Rajasthan. As a result of poor drinking water, children have been prone to many water borne diseases, such as, typhoid, jaundice, skin disease and diarrhea.

Clean water and sanitation projects are vital to develop healthy communities. Safe water and proper sanitation helps reduce the prevalence of preventable diseases.

Udaipur is subject to very poor water access in an area where drought often prevails. In the state of Rajasthan, high incidents of droughts have led to the decrease in livestock and in the poor health of existing livestock. Cows and buffalo are not able to supply as much milk as once did in the past. This in turn has reduced the amount of milk, buttermilk, yogurt and butter available to give to children, resulting in widespread

malnutrition and illness. Moreover, water available in rural areas is often diverted for usage in urban centers. Now more than ever efficient water usage, recharging of water sources and clean storage of water is necessary for survival. A major issue in water and sanitation in the province has been cross-contamination of water with fecal matter and other contaminants. The same water source as used for the community’s drinking water is also used to provide drinking water for animals, washing, cooking and irrigation. While the same water source has so many beneficiaries the water often becomes contaminated in retrieval and usage, and/or inappropriate drainage for water (contaminated or not) creates pools of stagnant water which provokes a rise in water born illnesses such as malaria.

To mitigate this cross-contamination Free The Children will be drilling wells and constructing storage tanks at various points within Udaipur in addition to hand washing stations and latrines on school grounds. In the rural areas where we work water and sanitation infrastructure is extremely limited or non-existent, causing high incidences of water borne disease and childhood mortality. Free The Children ensures that community members are well trained in the importance of clean water and sanitation through community mobilization and education. Our education programs engage all stakeholders within the community to ensure widespread and proper use of the new systems.

Free The Children will also be working in Udaipur in the area of watershed management, recharging ground water supplies using indigenous techniques that will help to prevent land degradation and soil erosion and the contamination of ground water using stone barriers, losses stone check dams and stone wall terraces. These are all activities that the community will work on providing in order to have them take ownership over these projects.

In the Water and Sanitation phase of the Adopt a Village campaign, your contribution will support:

- Community and school-based water systems;
- Clean water storage systems;
- Latrines and hand washing stations; and
- Water and sanitation education programs.



Alternative Income

Globalization and increasing industrialization in the country can often exploit the land and resources of rural populations, or is dependent on the rural population to 'pave the infrastructure' to meet market demands and expand urban development.

Ironically, this new mode of survival is breaking down gender and age disparity as women and children are flocking in masses to supplement the household income.

Free The Children's alternative income programming in India focuses on providing women and men the ability to find self-sustaining methods to support their families with a steady income. One example of this is with the use of a Solar Tunnel Dryer.

As an example, many farming villagers are losing money on the 'middle men' they use to sell their produce on the market. With this major loss of income many farmers are finding themselves out of work as their lands lay to waste. This solar tunnel dryer is able to eliminate the middle man, improving the potential of farmers, bringing women jobs and brings a 40% increase in profit on what they would receive rather than selling their produce to the middle man. Farmers are able to bring their produce directly to the women who can then, with the use of the solar tunnel dryer, process, wash, polish, dry and package this produce and then sell directly to the market.

In India, the product that will be used in the alternative income projects will be geographically specific based on the assets of the community and the market. Program beneficiaries will be provided with the resources and literacy and financial skills training in order to properly sell and market their produce.

In the alternative income phase of the Adopt a Village program, your fundraising efforts will provide families, especially women, with a sustainable source of income through:

- Productive resources and/or loans to start a micro-business
- Financial and literacy classes;
- Specialized business skills trainings;
- Animal husbandry programs; and
- Gender equality workshops for communities.



Drying fresh ginger in this solar tunnel dryer increases the value of the crop in the market



Buree (far left), pictured here when she an 11 year-old girl in 2008 had to leave school early

Buree in Kaliyon Kee Bagal

Buree lives in a middle class home of five children, within a farming village in rural India, Kaliyon Kee Bagal. The head master and students from her primary school remember Buree fondly, as until class 3 Buree was always eager to attend classes and participate in school activities.

Unfortunately, Buree was held back from completing her final year of primary education by her family. After Buree's mother had fallen ill and her two older siblings (both girls) had already been married off before the age of fifteen, Buree was left behind to take care of her two younger siblings while upholding much of the household responsibilities. In addition to caring for her little sister and brother, Buree spent most of her days cooking meals in an unventilated traditional wood and mud stove, tending to their livestock through the surrounding village terrain, and weeding their crops in their small plot of land in the nearby valley.

Buree was looking forward to the opportunity to continue her education, but her parents felt a better way to secure their daughters' futures was to have them wed early. This way they could instead invest more financially in their only son's education. As a result, Buree's engagement was finalized with her wedding set to take place in a short number of years. After her wedding Buree would leave her community and move to the town her husband and in-laws belong to, likely never again being able to return to school.

For many young girls in the rural Rajasthani communities Free The Children works in, early marriage and sacrificed opportunities for the sake of preferential treatment of the boy child - especially in the field of education - is common practice. Fortunately, with the support of the *panchayat* (local grassroot bodies of government), Free the Children was able to build a new school room within Kaliyon Kee Bagal Primary School. With this new school came awareness-raising and excitement around the necessity of education for both boys and girls. Through Free the Children's efforts, Buree's father agreed to at least allow Buree to complete her primary education before her wedding.

Furthermore, while increasing the primary school's infrastructure and capacity, the school would also be able to increase instruction from class 1 to class 5 and up, allowing most girls in the village who are waiting to be sent to their in-laws homes to complete their primary level education and to continue learning.