



Winter 2019 Updates on the Work

The past few months have brought several changes to our TIG families—new babies, illnesses, another surgery partnership with the Children’s Burn Foundation, and our students progressing in school. In December Paul and Richard traveled to India to check in on the status of our families and provide support to another child getting surgery for severe burns. TIG’s annual group trip to India will occur in February providing another opportunity to follow up on some of the concerns in this report.

Three New Babies in Khajuraho & Delhi

KHAJURAHO: In September, Annu, our first child who received burn surgery, and her older sister, Nellu, both gave birth to sons. You may recall we celebrated Annu’s and Nellu’s marriages last year. While Annu’s baby seems to be thriving, Nellu’s baby has been unhealthy since birth which led to an extended stay in the hospital. During the December visit, we noticed a clear difference in the size and alertness of both babies. Nellu reported that she

was unhappy in her marriage saying she is treated like a servant living in her in-laws home and she temporarily returned home with her baby before her in-laws came to get them. TIG will continue to advocate for the health of Nellu’s baby



Father & mother, Charanjeet & Baby, welcomed a new sister for Amandeep

DELHI: In December, the only Sikh family in our program welcomed a healthy baby daughter to their family whose only other child is Amandeep whom TIG supports. Baby, the mother, required Caesarean surgery for the delivery and Dr. Shelley Batra, our TIG medical consultant in Delhi, stepped in to arrange for and supervise the delivery.

Mudila: Saving Another Burned Child

Our work to provide medical help for burned children is a relatively new initiative for TIG that began with Annu. In helping Annu, TIG formed a partnership with the [Children’s Burn Foundation](#) based in California and Dr. Sunil Choudhary, a plastic surgeon at [Max Super Specialty Hospital](#) in Delhi. The CBF pays for the surgery and associated expenses, Dr. Choudhary and his team do the surgery and follow-up, and TIG provides the logistical support—meeting with parents/caregivers, helping transport the child to the hospital if necessary, and encouraging the necessary post-surgery care.

This past fall TIG was contacted about another severely burned child needing surgery. Mudila is a young boy, about 13 or 14 year’s old. His father is dead and his mother abandoned him, leaving him with his grandmother who apparently couldn’t care for him and brought him to Grace Home Orphanage in Odisha, a state on India’s east coast. The orphanage has 34 children



Mudila with Terek, Baba, Paul, Aju, & Richard

and is a home for hard-to-place children like Mudila in an impoverished area which has a high incidence of people who are HIV positive and a high incidence of those with Sickle-cell anemia.

When a young child, Mudila fell into a fire when his mother was cooking, a tragedy similar to what happened to Annu and to Vansh, the second child we supported for burn surgery. Mudila had significant burns on the right side of his face and a deformed arm and hand on his right side. Severely burned children are often not allowed to attend school and have limited future prospects because of their disfigurement so TIG's efforts to support Vansh and Mudila will include paying for school for them once they're healed enough to attend.

The surgery occurred in December while Paul and Richard were in Delhi. Mudila was accompanied to Delhi by Pastor Cherian who runs the orphanage and made the initial contact about Mudila's condition. Dr. Choudhary kept TIG apprised of the successful outcome and Pastor Cherian has continued to update us on Mudila's progress back in Odisha.

School for the Children

Paul and Richard visited the schools to get reports on all of the children and the February TIG group will be doing follow-up school visits as well as meeting with the families and our tutors who work with the children to get their updates and input. When meeting with the families we stress:

- 1. The children need to go to school and tutoring every day.**
- 2. Both the mother & father need to be involved with the school, going to parent-teacher conferences & school events.**
- 3. The children had to work hard.**

VARANASI: TIG has now enrolled ten children from three Varanasi families in school including the children of three family units (nineteen individuals) living in one compound, all related to Govinda, our Varanasi boatman father. There are three additional children living in the family compound who are not yet school age who will be enrolled at school age. While all of the Varanasi children are reported to being doing OK in school, three of them, all girls, are excelling in test scores and work: Priya, Pammy and GunGun



Priya, mom Poonam, & Pammy



Sakshi

NOWGONG: TIG sends three children from one family, two girls and a boy, to a Catholic school in Nowgong. Both daughters are doing well in school and Sakshi, the older daughter, is showing promise as an artist. TIG is looking for a sponsor for art lessons for her. Deepak, the son, has struggled with school and failed math on his latest report card, a situation that will be monitored on our February visit.

Bablu, the father of our Nowgong family, continues to have difficulty finding work and TIG has been providing additional support to this family by helping them pay rent so the children can stay in the Nowgong school. The children's education is a concern as the family talks about moving so Bablu can get a job. Each time TIG visits, we try to assist Bablu in finding work by talking to the school his children attends and a hospital in a nearby town. The realities of finding work are difficult for our fathers whose options are minimal given their literacy skills (none attended school) and the still-operating caste system that dictates who gets what jobs.

KHAJURAHO: TIG supports children in three schools here—Kidzee School, Mt. Zion, and a school we call the Jain School. We are concerned that the quality of education in Kidzee School, which two children attend, has dropped with the departure of the previous principal, but our parents want to keep their children there, in part

because they like the school's programs and it has community status. TIG believes parents should make those decisions, but we will monitor the school again on our February trip. Four children attend the Jain school and all of them received a "doing well" report during the December trip from the school and tutor. TIG continues to pay Baba, one of our Khajuraho fathers, to transport the children to Jain school and tutoring.

DELHI: All of the Delhi children are doing well in school according to their teachers and their tutor.

FAMILY MEDICAL ISSUES

TIG continues to provide ongoing medical care for the immediate families of our children. There were a variety of doctor visits we funded this fall and winter to treat a variety of medical conditions. Insuring family health is one of TIG's initiatives because a healthy family provides support to their children, insuring that they are cared for and attending school.

SPOTLIGHT

Meet Ajay!

Ajay lives in Khajuraho, a small rural community in northeast India, in one of six families supported by TIG in that area. He entered the program three years ago as a twelve-year old. His family comes from the low farming caste and we met them through other families in the program who are their neighbors. Farming is difficult work in Khajuraho; global warming has changed the seasons and the wet monsoon season, which farmers depend on for crops, has become drier. This year the families will have to buy much of what they eat because the growing season last year was disastrous. Ajay's father tried to earn some income from driving a tuk-tuk, but this year he and his wife have been forced to go to Kashmir to do hard labor construction work, living in a primitive camp following the construction jobs.



Ajay on his bike

Neither of Ajay's parents ever attended school but are so committed to having him get an education, they left him with an uncle who lives on the family farm so he can continue in the school where we've enrolled him. When his father approached us about supporting Ajay, he wasn't in school. He'd attended the nearby government school, but in rural India government schools are poorly funded with class sizes of up to 50 and teachers who sporadically come to work because they don't always get paid. His sister had been supplementing his schooling but when she was married off to a man in another village, Ajay quit going to school. When we interviewed Ajay and his father two years ago, we wondered if there was any possibility of success for him. He was illiterate in both Hindi and English and so far behind, it seemed impossible that he could catch up. But his father was so determined, we took a chance on Ajay and enrolled him in a small, private Christian school, attended by another younger child in the program, with an intensive one on one tutoring program for him. We felt it gave him a better chance than the larger pre-school-12 school that was our other option. The school tested him and placed him in the first grade as a twelve-year old.



Ajay

His teacher and tutor both report he is very shy but very committed to learning, and though it's socially hard for him to be in a class with much younger children (he is 15 and now at the end of his fifth grade year), they see enough promise in him that they think they can advance him two grades a year next year and hopefully the two years after that so he'll complete 8th grade by age 17.

The school only goes to 8th grade so at that point we'll need to make another decision with Ajay and his family about next steps. He wants to graduate from high school.

Our group was impressed by Ajay's tenacity. He stands out as a sixteen-year-old teenager in a class of 5th graders, but understands why he needs to be in that class. A TIG donor's annual donation purchased a bike and regular bike repairs for him so he could commute to school/tutoring on Monday through Saturday. It's a 45-minute one-way commute on a rutted dirt trail through fields and a busy Indian highway. Despite the difficult commute and with no parents to monitor him, his school says his attendance is good.

We visited the family farm last spring during the Holi celebration, an experience that further reinforced the odds that Ajay faces. The farm is located outside of Khajuraho and is inaccessible by regular roads. You walk or bike a trail through the fields to get to the farm compound.

Ajay's parents and his five uncles and their families live in four basic huts on the property. All of the families now do migrant construction work, taking their children with them wherever they go. Ajay's cousins sporadically attend the local government school when back in the area so Ajay is the

only child in the extended family getting a regular, high quality education. While there, our group explored the possibility of sending other children in the extended family to school, but because their parents couldn't commit to regular school attendance given their migratory working conditions, we determined it wouldn't work. It did underscore for us the importance of committed parents and the difference between Ajay's parents and his uncles regarding the value of educating their children in a caste system that will likely mean Ajay's cousins have no future other than low wage, caste determined work.

Two additional issues emerged in our work with Ajay on this visit: The uncle's family is refusing to provide him with a lunch which he needs because his school day, which includes tutoring, lasts until 5pm. We made arrangements for the mother of one of our other Khajuraho families to make lunch for him and we will pay her for that service.

Both of Ajay's parents came home for the Holi celebration so we were able to see them. His mother has been suffering from severe abdominal pain for awhile so we arranged for the public health nurse on our team to meet with her for a diagnosis; she sent her to the hospital for bloodwork and other tests. Part of our mission here is family medical care and that funding comes from TIG's general fund—undesignated donations that support our general work.

Most recently, the bike that TIG bought for Ajay became an unreliable mode of transportation after he used it for a year. Luckily, his school bought a van and TIG now subsidizes his transportation in our tuition payments.