**Karuna-Shechen’s Early Childhood Development Program in India**

One of Karuna-Shechen’s most effective initiatives in India is its [Education](http://karuna-shechen.org/project/education-in-india/) Program that strengthens basic education and supports early childhood development for under-served children.

Karuna-Shechen began this program in 2014 in remote Indian villages to serve children in government schools. The Indian government has an active program that supports nurseries where young children are immunized, fed, and watched over while their parents work – but little else. Children sit in sparse indoor rooms, waiting to eat, with little or no stimuli and no interaction with the staff or each other.

The gap created by this lack of engagement was the driving force behind Karuna-Shechen’s innovative program. We decided to use the opportunity of the nursuries to educate children at the critical development stage of ages 3-6 by adding games as a learning component to their day.

Playing games in an educational way can build mental capacities in young children. The games encourage and motivate the children to interact and play together, using logic and repetition as tools for learning. By playing games they learn cooperation and communication, and are introduced to socialization skills.

The project is proactive and involves the cooperation of the school staff and local village women, whom we train in early childhood principles to help lead the activities.

The success and popularity of this program led us to expand to include 41 locations in the Gaya district of Bihar and 20 nurseries in destitute areas of Jharkhand.

GLOBAL GIVING PROJECT

Karuna-Shechen plans to bring this Early Childhood Program to additional locations in Jharkhand, where the population faces many difficulties. The villagers have few belongings, except perhaps for one or two pots for cooking and storing water. Toys and targeted education for young children are relatively nonexistent.

The scope of the project includes training the existing government staff in developmental play, hiring and training local villagers to help facilitate the activities, and providing supplies to stimulate young minds.

In each of 6 locations, 40 children will be provided with the means to engage in educational play and activities designed to be fun while also helping to develop their cognitive skills.

Through developmental play, the children also learn tools for problem solving and figuring out things on their own - important skills they can carry with them throughout their lives.

ABOUT KARUNA-SHECHEN

Karuna-Shechen began its work in the mid-1980s when our founder, Matthieu Ricard, initiated a number of small programs to improve the living conditions of the Himalayan people. Matthieu had lived in the region for over fifty years. He is an internationally best selling author, Buddhist monk, photographer, popular speaker at TED, Davos, and the United Nations, and an inspired humanitarian:<http://www.matthieuricard.org>

Our programs are designed to address the inequalities and suffering of people in India, Nepal, and Tibet. Our activities concentrate on four sectors of intervention: health, education, community development, and cultural preservation.

We have established an effective, collaborative team of trained workers from the local population and local NGOs in the field. Working within communities, we identify the greatest needs and create sustainable solutions in cooperative partnership with our beneficiaries.

Over the years, our vision has remained unchanged. It is based on community engagement and empowerment, grassroots cooperation, and respect for unique cultural identities. We strive to create projects that are sustainable models so that they can be duplicated and continued in the future.

We have international branches that raise funds for our programs and make the public aware of our activities and the conditions that we address. We are delighted to partner with Global Giving to actualize our vision of “compassion in action.”

Please visit our website to learn more: [www.karuna-shechen.org](http://www.karuna-shechen.org)