



SAVE A FAMILY PLAN
IN INDIA SINCE 1965

Ektha-UNITY

THE SAVE A FAMILY PLAN NEWSLETTER

Celebrating
50 YEARS
of Dedication and
commitment.



SAVE A FAMILY PLAN CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

As we make preparations to celebrate our 50th Anniversary both in Canada and India, we are taking time to reflect on where we are, where we have been, and how far we have come together.

It is amazing to consider the huge number of people who have been a part of our programs over the years: the thousands of donors who continue contributing to our programs, the countless volunteers who give their time to support our work, and the tens of thousands of families in India who never fail to amaze us with their determination, courage, and hope.

All of this was set into motion fifty years ago because of the vision of just one person. Our founder, Father Gus, decided back in 1965 that he could make a small difference in the world by connecting five families from his community in Canada with five impoverished families in his home country of India. He hoped that a small amount of money from Canada could improve the lives of the families

who needed a helping hand and that the partnered families would be about to learn more about each other by writing letters.

Now, fifty years later, more than 10,000 families in India are participating in this same program and every year, thousands graduate and are able to live their lives in an empowered and sustainable way. This is an important reminder for all of us that taking a small action can lead to something bigger than we can imagine!

While our commitment to creating a just world has stayed strong, our approach to our work has continued to change and improve over the years. Our programs used to focus on meeting the basic needs of the families, including food, shelter, education, and healthcare. Now, our programs go far beyond, supporting families to become

confident, active, and engaged members of their communities who will work for change.

As we approached the 50 year milestone, we decided as an organization that we needed a new logo to capture the spirit of our work, including the values that have been central to our programs from the very beginning: the importance of strong family values and the interconnectedness of people around the world. The new look of our publications reflect the vibrancy the communities we work with in India and the joy we share when change takes place.

We would like to extend an enormous thank you to every person who has contributed in some way to making Save A Family Plan what it is today. We look forward to sharing this incredible journey with you as we carry our work into the future.



**“THEIR smiles
WARMED OUR
HEARTS AGAIN
AND AGAIN”**

SAFP CONTRIBUTORS DAVE AND AROKI SCHILLER REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES IN INDIA



Our unforgettable journey to India started on January 7, 2015 in London, Ontario. For over two decades, we have had a growing interest in India, fueled first by a desire to visit where my son Aroki was born, and second, to meet the two families that my wife Elzeke and I had sponsored through Save A Family Plan.

This was the trip of a lifetime. My oldest son Joshua, my youngest son Aroki and I woke up to a wild blizzard on Wednesday, the day of our flight. That afternoon we left for Toronto’s Pearson Airport. After a long flight and a two hour stop-over in Dubai, we landed at the Cochin International Airport. Once there (Friday morning, India time), we were greeted by Father Marshel, the Executive Director, and BabyGeorge, our driver. We were exhausted, excited, and very grateful for the wonderful hospitality that we received upon arrival. This was their winter and it was 30 degrees Celsius.

It is impossible in this short writing to explain all of the wonderful work done across India by Save A Family Plan through its partner agencies. Thousands and thousands of women, men and children literally have better lives due to their well-organized programs.

In Idukki, my sons and I visited one of our sponsored families with the help of Siju, an SAFP Coordinator. The family was very welcoming, hospitable, and happy with the cement home they were able to build, two years ago, with the support of SAFP. In Maryayoor, we met Sister Sneha, Melvin, and the dedicated staff of the Tribal School situated in the National Forest Reserve. Save A Family Plan was instrumental in helping to establish this primary school in this remote, mountainous, location. These beautiful young students were quite shy in meeting these strangers from a place called Canada. They were all in uniforms and were given a hot lunch each day.

In Coimbatore, after we visited where my son Aroki was born, we met our resourceful host, Shiva, from the Coimbatore Multipurpose Social Service Society.

He guided us to some remote locations where women in groups worked on their “income generating projects”.

Some made rope, some made mosquito netting, jewellery, shopping bags, or clothing. These goods were sold and all benefitted. These women took great pride in their accomplishments, and became self-sustaining.

In Ooty, in the mountains, Madame Superaba, Project Manager at the Manos Unidas Animation Centre, brought us to visit a tribal group project (IGP), where women make shawls, table cloths, purses and wallets to sell. The next morning a beneficiary group of HIV/AIDS victims made presentations of how SAFP helped improve their daily lives. The afternoon presentations were by abandoned and deserted women. Life, vocational and banking skills are taught to empower participants to move out of poverty. Joshua, Aroki and I were also impressed at the Tuition Centre where children from the slums received regular tutoring to help with school success.

In Mysore, Sister Lovely, a kind, compassionate, and humorous coordinator, introduced us to 5 different families, all living in small, two room homes. Their income generating projects include making saris, a beauty parlour, dish rental, tailoring, and selling incense and rosaries. SAFP is helping install toilets in the homes of the poor and sick.

Upon return to Cochin, Aroki, Joshua and I was fortunate enough to visit my second sponsored family with a coordinator, Sheela. Gracey had been abandoned and was raising her daughter in a small, spotless, neat home with some well cared-for flower gardens outside. Her project was tailoring.

After this, we were able to meet the two sponsored families of my mother, Margaret Schiller of Windsor. One family of six in Ernakulam- mother, disabled father, two daughters, and a handicapped son who has now progressed to a regular

grade school, and a son in high school. One daughter is studying Computers and the other, Accounting. Both were making dresses, as taught by their mother. The second family, in Pala, was now independent- a mother and an adult son who studies Travel/Tourism. They were caring for the very sick grandfather. The mother’s food business has progressed to the point where she is not able to keep up with demand. She has now hired four other people to help in production. Again, Save A Family Plan has set these families up for success. They are very grateful for the support of people in Canada.

My sons and I were very impressed with the care and support given to needy children by Father Joe at the Don Bosco Welfare Centre. This happened at their Street Boys Home and their Street Girls Home.

Before we returned to Canada we had the pleasure of getting re-acquainted with Father Sebastian, who years ago, had worked out of the London, Ontario office of SAFP and helped in our own parish. He had returned to India and became Bishop Sebastian. This very busy apostle works in the diocese of Ernakulam, serving the people of God. SAFP continues to be close to his heart. Our visit with him was personal and inspiring.

Looking back, as those 21 days flew by, we had so many amazing experiences. Seeing that thousands and thousands of lives have improved across India, where people were empowered to change their lives, were able to participate locally in the programs and took the steps with lots of support, to become self-sustaining. Their smiles warmed our hearts again and again.

Planning a trip to India and interested in meeting your partner family?

CONTACT OUR OFFICE TO ARRANGE YOUR VISIT!



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PARTNERING WITH THE POOR FOR A JUST WORLD

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