



STICHTING STIEFKINDEREN VAN MOEDER INDIA

STEPCHILDREN OF MOTHER INDIA FOUNDATION

Founded 10-06-2001 Chamber of Commerce Haaglanden 27243778

May 2023

Dear Friends of Karm Marg,

Good news! Viviane Bakker, daughter of Paul, has joined the board of SCOMI. Here she introduces herself:

For many years I heard my father's stories and followed the developments that would lead to the founding of SCOMI. Besides the fact that I truly want to continue his work as I know how much it meant to him, Karm Marg has always held my interest because I work with children and as a teacher know how important stability, creativity and love are for children. It is wonderful that Karm Marg offers this to children for whom this is certainly not available and that deserves our support.

Welcome Viviane! Fons, Romy and I are happy you have joined us and are looking forward to a fruitful collaboration.

My husband Steve and I had last visited Karm Marg in April 2022. In February 2023 we returned. This time not for a birthday or an anniversary, but because Frans Hakkemars, a Dutch puppeteer, was participating in the Ishara Puppet Theater Festival in New Delhi. He was introduced to Veena through SCOMI board member Fons Diepenmaat and she thought it would be great if Frans spent a week working with the children at Karm Marg

On February 14 we left cold, gray Amsterdam and arrived in warm, hazy Delhi. There we attended two of the Indian performances of the festival in the beautiful amphitheater of the Habitat Center. Frans had a shadow puppet theater so small it could fit on a bicycle! We also saw a performance with a doll so large that it had to be operated by three players. It was nice to see how both children and adults could enjoy the different types of performances

After a week in Delhi, we were picked up by Veena and Islammudin on February 21. Here is the account of our week at Karm Marg.

Sincerely,
Deborah Pepper

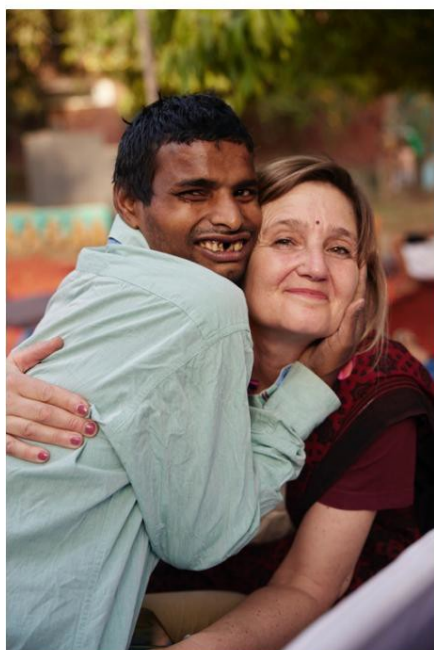
Visit to Karm Marg 2023

It's always special to arrive at Karm Marg with someone who's never been there before. From urbanized and polluted Delhi you drive on busy highways through neighborhoods of many concrete high-rise buildings. Slowly the landscape changes and green fields begin to appear. The last leg of the road to Karm Marg is now paved, but still quite bumpy. Fortunately, Karm Marg's new car has good shock absorbers. When you arrive at the gate, the driver honks the horn.

Then the gate opens: it is green and colorful. A large mango tree near the parking lot is in bloom and the vegetable garden is filled with lettuce, carrots, cabbage and lots of herbs. Most children are at school in the middle of the day, so it is serene and calm. This is not what people expect when you tell them they are going to a home for sixty disadvantaged Indian children.

For me, one important person was missing this time: Mahua. A deaf-mute boy, who was once found by Veena on the side of the road, is no longer at Karm Marg. The young man, who used to jump upon me like a monkey when I walked in and always came to greet me later by making the gesture of an airplane with his hands, has moved. He now lives together with the disabled Vijay, in an institution in Amritsar. Karm Marg could no longer provide the two grown men with the care they needed. Karm Marg children have moved to this institution before and have settled in well there. Veena is going to see how Mahua and Vijay are doing in March.

Another boy I missed was Sidharth. This intelligent and likeable boy was the strong unifier in the group of teenage boys. In August last year he was struck by acute leukemia. Despite all medical efforts to save his life, he died. He was only 16 years old and has left a huge void in Karm Marg.



Mahua and Inez in 2022



Sidharth in 2022

Puppet Theatre Workshops

On the first evening, before dark, Veena calls the children together to introduce Frans. We all sit in a circle with the children and Frans takes out his accordion. Music is always a big hit with the kids and, before he knows it, Frans has them singing and moving:

Clap your hands, 1-2-3.

Head aside, to the left to the right.

Stamp with your feet, 1-2-3.

Raise your arms, wave your hands

(Freeze:)

When you are not in motion you keep the bad emotions (Move:)

”

When you are in motion you get the best emotions

Frans calls it his rap and it is repeated often in the following days.



Frans plays the accordion



And the kids sing along

Every morning around 11 o'clock Frans starts to work with a group of children who, for various reasons, cannot go to school at the moment. He teaches them how to operate glove puppets and has them invent little stories for their dolls. Later in the week, the shadow puppets emerge. Frans looks for a place where the sunlight is good so the children can project shadows on the wall. And then he finds all kinds of materials like twigs, fabrics and paper so that the children can make their own shadow puppets.

Early in the evening, when the other children have come home from school, a second group gets to work. It's nice to see the children getting into the act. Some begin shy and become more confident and free in the performance later in the week.



Alka and Komal with Katrijn and Maxima



Veer shows his shadowship

The last evening Frans performs his Jan Klaassen play for the children. Lacking a puppet theatre, he uses the window from which food is usually served. The children watch attentively: they have been playing with the puppets all week, but now they see how Frans' skill brings them to life! Later, when it gets dark, Frans hangs up a large white canvas on which the children can show their own shadow puppets. Lots of laughter and fun!



Watching the performance



The shadow puppet show

The Future of Karm Marg

As Steve and I were staying with Veena, we had a lot of time to talk together. One conversation was about the future of Karm Marg: the future of Karm Marg as an organization and the future of the children.

Concerning Karm Marg as an organization: Veena and the staff are working with a coach to see how they want to move into the future. A few things are already clear: they don't need to grow, fifty to sixty children are enough. They also do not want to open new branches.

What they do want is that more local children use the facilities and activities of Karm Marg by participating in training courses. This is already happening with STEM training.

STEM stands for *Science, Technology, Engineering and Math* and was originally designed to interest girls in these subjects.

At Karm Marg, both boys and girls now follow this training and it is a great success. The kids like to attend the classes. Beyond the subjects themselves, they learn to think critically and collaborate.

The future of the children is also a concern. Karm Marg used to make many products from waste: newspaper bags, jewelry and bags from waste materials, candles from coconut husks. These products were sold in markets by the older children and in this way the children learned to become entrepreneurs. With this experience many children started their own small businesses after leaving Karm Marg. Today's children are less interested in these activities and it is becoming increasingly difficult to earn a living with these kinds of products. New times call for new skills. Together with the children, Veena looked at where their interests now lie. Here are four directions:

Baking

Karm Marg children have always been interested in cooking and baking. Already in 2011, Veena and I baked bread together with the children. Bread and pastries are becoming more and more popular in India, so bakers are in demand. A German NGO is going to organize a baking workshop at Karm Marg. Children who show real interest can then participate in a workshop in Delhi. And for those who are really serious and have talent, there is a possibility to follow a course in Germany to become a baker.



Veena and Deborah baking bread in 2011



Pooja and Shabila cooking

Repairing computers and mobile phones

Many children can already take apart and repair mobile phones and even know how to hack a computer. This talent can also be useful in getting a good job later on. This also requires workshops and training.

Data Analysis

There are many companies in India that collect and analyze data and they need many employees. Due to the STEM training, a number of children have become interested in this. Through follow-up training, they can be trained for paid work in this industry.

Gardening

Gardening is also an activity that has been going on for a long time at Karm Marg. As usual, Karm Marg is ahead of its time. At present, private gardens are becoming popular in India. Garden design, planting and maintenance therefore offer future opportunities for the children. And they already have a teaching garden!



Anish (ex Karm Marg kid) with lettuce



The cabbage patch

An exciting project at Karm Marg combining baking and gardening is a small cafe in the garden. In recent years, many new homes have been built near Karm Marg and many people have come to live there. For local residents there were few places for a meeting, a family gathering or just for a nice outing. Karm Marg has transformed a small shed on the edge of the garden into a cozy cafe. Veena's son Rahul provides freshly baked bread and biscuits. You can order sandwiches and pizzas with fresh ingredients from the garden and coffee and tea. This is a good example of Karm Marg's ingenuity combining many of its strengths: learning a trade (gardening and baking), learning organization and social skills (service) and making a difference for the environment. We attended the opening and it was a real party!



The café is ready for visitors



Waiters Abhishek and Sohan

It is wonderful to see how Karm Marg continues to develop: contemplating the future, with professional support and in line with the needs, wishes and talents of the children.
As always, creative and resourceful solutions are sought to give these underprivileged children a full future.

Your donation will help Karm Marg teach the children skills appropriate to today's job market. Continue to help us realize these valuable projects.

To all loyal and new donors: thank you very much for the support given in 2022.

If you also want to be on our digital mailing list, send an email to info@scomi.org.

And... if you want to contribute again in 2023: you can do so on account number:

NL12 INGB 0008 038194 or NL61 ABNA 0573 771340

STIEFKINDEREN VAN MOEDER INDIA

You can also donate through our website: www.scomi.org

We are an ANBI-recognized charity. If you want to declare your contribution for a tax deduction, call Deborah Pepper 06 54945584 for the easy to fill in form.



Veena, Mahima (KM board member), Rahul, Anish and Islammudin at the opening of the cafe

