

URJA-Energy



**Annual Letter**  
2025

## To start, our sincere best wishes to all!

2024 was once again a very interesting year for us. We started out in early January with this lady:



Elke Hoste, THE pattern maker for practically every Haute Couture brand in the world, decided to support URJA in person. It was such an honour to host her, but more than anything it was the warmth with which she taught the ladies.

An unforgettable event.

Elke had already supported URJA during COVID with generous donations, but this time, added to everything, by asking her Facebook followers to donate to our cause. Needless to say her fans donated generously and started off the year famously!

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of TECHNO Design of Dusseldorf!

A hard to follow act and yet we did:



Jean-Pascal van Ypersele de Strihou, our long time supporter joined us in Siswa Bazaar with a friend, Mr Surya Sethi: a recognized thought leader in contemporary development issues facing a climate and resource constrained world.

Jean-Pascal, as an academic climatologist is a forerunner of climate change mitigation through strong decrease of fossil fuel consumption. AND we believe in this belief!

**Encouraged by such personalities we embarked on some new adventures while strengthening our existing efforts:**

- **Health Clinic**

Entirely supported by Pfeda Synthetics

We were thrilled that the local government accepted our offer of holding the vaccination camps once a month at our Centre. WE already are grateful to Dr. Sushil Kumar of Gorakhpur for his bi-weekly visits, but the vaccination camp added to this had encouraged many parents to bring their children, free of cost, for check-ups.

What motivates us is that without realising, parents bring their children for just normal growth consultations, a real grass roots level change! Pre-emptive consultations are not a habitual act in our experience.

- **Eye Care Unit**

Along with the Health Clinic we felt the need to add an eye care unit. Cataract is a major cause for blindness in our area. No recent data is available but in 2010-2011 cases of blindness were almost halved due to the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB). WE combine our efforts with Sheetal Eye Hospital in our district. All operations are carried out free of cost according to government guidelines.

- **Sewing School**

Our teachers Rachna and Rijwana, have finally come out of their shells and taken many initiatives. They are raising awareness of the sewing school through pamphlets and giving explanations in person. They managed to raise the number of students and have 3 sessions a year of basic training. During the summer vacation they held advanced courses for those interested and the best students each received a free sewing machine to start off a new life. The bond with the Centre is so strong that Rachna and Rijwana are able to call upon the girls for larger contracts. In this way everyone earns a little bit more.

There is a strong feeling of community even though we still have to impact on that level to a greater percentage.

But to see what has been achieved enjoy the following photographs which speak louder than words:







- **Agriculture**

2023 was a good year for many experiments. Kala Namak, our flagship agricultural product, surpassed expectations. Two factors played a very important role:

- Basant ji, agriculture specialist, volunteered to supervise production and came with his ambition of increasing productivity in the fields. And he did! Almost doubled our production. He is excited to create a piece of the land for experimental farming. It is here that we sowed our turmeric and the photos tell the story! It is amazing how much pleasure one gets from healthy farming.
- Nagendra Pandey ji, started us off on the road to worming compost. WE have not looked back! These diligent little worms worked miracles on the land and made so much manure that we should be able to sell some. They have been essential in keeping our crops and our land healthy during unpredictable weather. This will only improve fertility and balance moisture on the ground.
- Kala Namak, from our fields, still remains the chosen rice from people who have been buying from us the last years. Eating our rice has even led people to save we 'saved their lives'. Whether we did that or not, it is very responsibly grown and we stand behind our product.

- **Brain Science**

This has been another happy project, personally for me. In Sanah I found a soul mate as enthusiastic about bringing the 21st century to this forgotten part of India as I ever was and have been for the last 13 years through URJA.

We completed the project in 2 schools, enthusiastically received by teachers and students alike. One cannot emphasise enough the power of play for learning, being

happy and getting a sense of achievement from being able to understand the why's and the wherefores of daily life.

We will continue with our programme at a different school; learning to adapt the course to suit the needs as we understand better each time. WE will also start a small programme at the Centre, which will be a challenge to convince the parents that what they consider valuable time just studying by rote, is much faster done by play. The added bonus being the child learns to apply his learning in all subjects.

RPIC school gave us 100 students each class! Our project was meant to have a ratio of 1 teacher ideally for 12 students! A major mental challenge for us, but we got there. The greatest satisfaction came from seeing the enthusiasm of the children and there was not a single absentee! Advantages of being a grass roots level organisation with very dedicated workers.

We are now coming out with a workbook that should take care of many challenges ahead!

Other projects carry on and have been given over to the groups to run independently. We are often asked for advice and those are very proud moments. Siswa Bazaar remains a challenging place for a woman to work in; but grey hair brings with it a certain awe. 13 years have proven that we are not going to leave and I am just hoping that my ancestors are peaceful in their abodes.

The proudest moment of my 13 years came when one of my supervisors said:  
"After seeing you madam, I do not need a son. My two daughters are enough"

As Gandhi once said: Be the change you wish to see, and humbly I think I can apply that a little bit to myself.

**Take care**

**Thank you for your faith in us and your continued support. I could never have done it alone!**

BEST REGARDS

RAKA