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20 Austinites • 6 months • \$20,000

A Library at the Education Centre for Tribal Children in Igatpuri, India

“Where would you go if you had a plane ticket in your pocket?”

Is the question Vanessa was asked during a French lunch hour with some colleagues at “Chez Nous” restaurant at the end of the year of 2014. Surprisingly, the response was hard to find. Vanessa had been traveling and living abroad most of her life, the world was still to be discovered, so many places and cultures to learn from, it was hard to choose...

Another question was posed. “What about India”? This time, the answer came clearly and quickly to Vanessa. “YES!! But only if there was a charity project involved.”

It had been more than 6 years that the *Austin2Africa* project had ended; travels around the world could still pursue, nothing would replace the emotion shared in South Africa with the group of Austin volunteers and the township community.

In 2009, the *Austin2Africa* team fundraised \$12,000+ and built an orphanage in Nyanga for kids with AIDS. Sleeping on the floor in a small and leaking shack was not an option anymore. The new building would include a game room, a real bathroom with running water and 3 fully furnished bedrooms. And more importantly, the orphanage would finally become eligible to receive governmental grants. What a journey it was – all working as ‘One’ to provide awareness and collect donations in Austin, in the middle of the 2009 economic crisis. Never giving up the dream to go to South Africa, finalize the construction and finally meet with those we had hoped to offer a new and better future.

In 2012, one of the *Austin2Africa* volunteers got inspired by the model and created *Austin2Angkor* ; the team fundraised \$6,000+ and helped construct a Community Training Center to increase teaching and learning in the remote Cham Resh village in Cambodia.

So maybe it was time, time again to bring the magic back... A new project, new Austin group, new opportunity to change the world...

“Where there is Love, there is Life” said Gandhi

That is how Vanessa’s presentation, in front of her coworkers on February 14, 2015, began. The presentation had to be successful. It had to touch hearts, it had to show that anything is possible if everyone joins their good energy for a wonderful cause. It had happened before, why not now?

“So would you ‘marry me’? Are you ready to commit some time and effort for a project that could change lives? And your own life with it?” finished Vanessa. On Valentine’s day of 2015, 20 volunteers signed up, *Austin2India* was born.

Every child has the right to proper education

Austin2India has partnered with *Aseema Charitable Trust*, a Mumbai based non-governmental organization with a mission to equip children from marginalized communities with high quality, value based, education enabling development of their limitless potential.

Over the past 17 years, *Aseema* has worked extensively with children living in slum communities in Mumbai and remote tribal communities in Igatpuri. *Aseema* reaches out to over 4,000 children annually.

In Igatpuri (Maharashtra), *Aseema* has set up an Education Centre for Tribal Children in the remote village of Awalkheda. The Centre currently has a Pre Primary Section and reaches out to children from the village and eight neighboring hamlets. In the year 2015, *Aseema* has commenced construction of the Primary and Secondary Sections of this Centre.

Austin2India’s goal is to fundraise \$20,000 by September 2015, for the construction of the Library at the Education Centre for Tribal Children in Igatpuri, India. All monetary donations are entirely going towards the construction of the Library.

In May 2015, Vanessa traveled to Mumbai to meet with *Aseema’s* staff and discuss planning and budget for the project. She also traveled to the mountain in Igatpuri to view the construction site, meet with the children, teachers and families living in the village.

In December of 2015, *Austin2India’s* team will travel to Igatpuri to witness the construction of the library, bring school supplies and books and share unique moments and smiles in the school and village.

Ordinary people for an extraordinary cause

Every week, the *Austin2India* team, all residents of Austin, meets to discuss personal and group fundraising initiatives. Because that is also what the project is about: brainstorm, create and come together to implement strategic ideas and just have fun while doing so. That is where the magic is - we all may come from different backgrounds and places but we share the same love for Austin, humility in going through life, and a dream to help poor children miles away become *someone*.

Our upcoming fundraising events include:

MAY 30

Fundraising party at the Flying Carpet on Oltorf from 6:30pm to 10pm. DJ, raffle and a special Moroccan menu for *Austin2India*.

JUNE 4

Bollywood Dance Flash Mob on South Congress.

JUNE 14

Curry cook-off with first place winner prizes.

JUNE 28

Street organ and French music on Lady Bird Lake.

References

Austin2Africa:

- Videos: <http://www.austin2india.com/austin2africa.html>
- Media coverage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3bE33ndUOg> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-5Ysev-fgw>

Austin2Angkor:

- <https://austin2angkor.wordpress.com/>

Austin2India:

- www.Austin2India.com
- www.facebook.com/Austin2India
- www.aseema.org