

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2009 – March 2010



Dear friends of Belaku,

Heartfelt thanks for all the support we have received from you. Last year I appealed for funds so that we could update our administrative system, and now we have been able to do that to a large extent. Not very glamorous work, but essential to the effective running of everything else. Many, many thanks.

The 'everything else' is growing constantly. We are now active in 10 villages, where we not only help on an individual level, but also provide support for village institutions such as anganwadis (government preschools). We have also organised health education programmes and have forged ever closer links with government Primary Health Centres, which makes our work even more effective. Belaku began as a health research body and the gathering of information is still vital to our work: we need to know exactly what is happening in the villages in order to assess the changing needs of those communities.

The primary aim of micro-enterprise groups is obviously to generate income, but an amazing side effect is the growth in self-confidence, initiative and knowledge in the women involved. This, in turn, affects the whole village. Kirana, the paper-making project which was our first enterprise, has now a worldwide market and is selling increasingly well here in Bangalore. This is extremely encouraging for us, for you and for the women in the groups.

Unfortunately, I have to end as I began: money. We have an excellent team of highly motivated, energetic researchers and field co-ordinators, who are doing invaluable work with and for the people in the villages, but in order to be as efficient as they are capable of being, they need good, basic office back-up. While grants are sometimes available for specific projects, it is almost impossible to get help for administrative work. Support for this as well as for the programmes in the community is where I am asking you to help us: any and every donation is felt and appreciated by those in the office, those in the field, and lastly and most importantly, by the women, men and children in the villages themselves.

Thank you for your interest in our work, and in the hope of your continued commitment,

Girish Karnad

Chief Trustee

Work in the villages

Anganwadi/Preschool programme

Belaku works with the government preschool (anganwadi) programme to increase community support and strengthen the programme overall. The community women (gelathis) who have been trained by Belaku have shown great progress, operating responsibly with little supervision; some of them show the promise of being good trainers. Support from the community increases steadily as does the demand for more such programmes in other villages. Jyothi Theresraj, the field coordinator for the programme, has been working with the gelathis on plans for expansion to more villages.



Anganwadi children playing.

Summer camp

As a part of the anganwadi support programme, we decided to utilize the summer break to organise summer camps for children. Usually the children are unoccupied during several weeks and since their parents are often still working at this time, it is a difficult time in the family. Sessions were held at six villages for a total duration of 10 days and enormously appreciated.

Income Generation Groups

Woman from Ushe, embroidery group at work.



Block printed hand-made paper products by Kirana & Deepa.



Both the skills and the markets of our three women's crafts groups continue to grow. The older two groups, Kirana (paper-making) and Deepa (block-printing), are now largely covering their costs while Belaku helps with design, marketing and training. At present, they are learning tailoring and organic dyeing. The newest group, Ushe, is specialising in embroidery. Many sales have been held throughout the city, some in private homes; shops, hotels and private companies have also kindly hosted the groups' products. At Fabindia, we were able to complement the sale with a presentation of hand block-printing, which drew a lot of interest and gave a lot of exposure to the printers. We hope to repeat this type of event in the coming year. We were able to extend our sales platform significantly in the autumn, when Saraswathy Ganapathy gave several presentations of the groups and organised demonstrations of their products in the USA.

Healthcare

The Belaku Trust collaborated with The Sankara Eye Hospital and held a free eye screening camp in the village of Achalu. Of the 450 children screened, 12 needed treatment. Through this type of screening, which is both inexpensive and painless, many serious problems in later life can be prevented.

Culture



Children from Kanakapura Taluk enjoying hand painting activities at Rangashankara.

Throughout the year, Belaku has enabled hundreds of children from the villages around Kanakapura to explore and enjoy the cultural life of the city. With the help of many individuals and institutions, such as the Rangashankara theatre, children have been bussed in from their villages and, with enthusiastic guidance from professionals, have been given access to plays, painting workshops and museums. Whole new worlds have opened for these children and we, whose children have never been deprived of these experiences, can hardly imagine the impact this might have on them.

Helping individuals

Preventing Child marriages

Child marriages are not uncommon in rural areas and yet they obviously cause many problems.

Preeti was 16. Her father planned to marry her to an older man she had seen twice and did not like. Her mother, despite fearing negative repercussions from those around her, turned to the Belaku staff for help. After a long trail of negotiations, and with the help of government officials and police, the marriage was finally stopped. Amongst the community this decision was very controversial and without the aid of Belaku, neither Preeti nor her mother would have withstood the opposition.

Physical handicap



Jogi is in 8th grade and likes school. He wants to get an office job and earn enough to support his mother. Jogi was severely handicapped and had to be carried everywhere by his mother or painfully drag himself across the ground. As well as working to support herself and her son, Jogi's mother was his sole carer. With the financial and emotional support of Belaku, Jogi and his mother decided to try corrective surgery. This was a long and painful path, involving not just repeated surgery, but also months of intensive physiotherapy. It has been a success. The child who could not move at all is now sitting and walking with ease and will be able to complete his schooling normally.

Educational scholarships

Scholarships for three girls (Maheshwari, Usha and Archana) have been continued this year also and they are progressing well with their studies

Archana who is in the 7th standard says, 'I'm a clever student and love to go to school; Thank you very much for helping me do so.'

Research

Our research study on The Quality of Obstetric Care ended its field study stage in December 2008, and was presented to the Kanakapura health staff in April, then to a wider audience in Bangalore in December 2009. It evoked considerable discussion and interest, which may lead to further research in this area. Two papers ('The Quality of Care' and 'The Use of Oxytocin in rural Karnataka'), based on this research, were presented at The International Conference for Midwives in Hyderabad in November, and several papers are being prepared for publication.

Presentations of Belaku's work

In the context of 'Women's Health in India', Belaku gave a presentation of its work for American students of the International Honors Program. Field coordinators, community workers and women from the income generation groups all spoke. For some, it was the first time they had formally addressed a group, and their success made them grow in confidence. For the audience too it was an important experience and two of the students decided to spend time working with Belaku themselves.

Further presentations of Belaku were given in the USA by Saraswathy Ganapathy. She talked about the Trust's work at the University of South California, Los Angeles, and the University of Washington, Seattle. She also met the members of People for Progress in India, a group which has supported Belaku for many years.

Media

We are proud to say that although we are a small charity, we do get recognition:



- The Deccan Herald carried a piece in April 09 about our income generation activities and their impact on the village women.
- Clara Caverzasio Tanzi and Niko Tanzi conducted an interview for Swiss radio
- Winner of the Private Institutions Award of the Namma Bengaluru group in March 2009
- The Times of India carried a piece in August 2009 about Belaku Trust's collaboration with Rangashankara, organising the Aaha festival for children where the Trust brought 400 children from Kanakapura to see 2 plays

Staff Training

Some of our field staff has been with Belaku for 15 years. Field workers are the ones who see most immediately the needs of the communities they work with, and the ways in which these are changing. For this reason, we are very pleased to see that these staff members are eager to help plan Belaku's way ahead, and through our training programmes, we hope to give them the skills needed to do this.

Friends

Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of Belaku. Some come to us from the Asian Foundation for Philanthropy, others through personal introductions or via the net. Whether they are young, foreign students/professionals who do an internship for a few months or Bangalore residents who appear from time to time, they each provide their individual 'chip' in the mosaic of our Trust. Coming from a variety of countries, with differing professional, academic and social backgrounds, they bring to our work not only energy and enthusiasm, but also fresh insights that are extremely useful. During their time with us, they find themselves on a very steep learning curve! They often say that it is they who gain from the interaction with both the body of our work and the other staff members.



The Belaku Team and volunteers, Thibault Bertrand and Gareth Siu.

This year we have had with us:

<p>Shagufta Bhangu, India Basile Roux, Switzerland Gareth Siu, UK Samina Bhatia, UK Lisa Sengupta, UK Cayetana Calderon, US Thibault Bertrand, France Ayesha Chugh, USA Usha Abraham, who was on the Belaku staff and still pitches in with advice on nutrition programmes</p>	<p>Bangalore residents volunteering regularly: Wiea van der Zwan Rebecca Poston Emma Peyton Kate Vaast Arti Bhardwaj / Raji Narayan Fayaz Gangjee Noella Correa from Hyderabad and Aruna Beliappa from Coorg have provided excellent sales links for the women's groups</p>
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Networking

Belaku does not work in isolation: we believe strongly that linking up with other organisations, exchanging ideas, data and facilities can only strengthen us and them.

Some persons and organisations we have collaborated with in the past year are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Institute for Social Studies Trust (ISST), Bangalore ○ Sikshana, Bangalore ○ Utthan, Gujarat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr. Renganathan of Vaatsalya about his plans to set up rural health centres. ○ The Credibility Alliance on NGO organisational issues.
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Visitors

We believe that dialogue and interaction with others helps us grow. We enjoy having visitors to whom we can show our work and from whom we can gather new ideas.

Amongst the many we have hosted this year:

A group of UK doctors, and one of UK midwives visited the villages, which led to a very interesting exchange of ideas. SK Srinath of PPI, Noella Correa, Dr Omesh Bharati of the Medico Friends' Circle, Dr. Ramesh and Mrs. Shanta Gangolli, Bala Thakrar/Viji Rao of the Asian Foundation for Philanthropy, Avni Jamdar, Devina Patel, Dr. Sylvia Babu, Sandhya Rao, Kate and John Fields, Vibha Pingle of Ubuntu.

Among the visitors who have plans to purchase from the women's groups were Trudi Edmunds from the UK, Mira and Zal Thimmayya from Sweden.

Past volunteers Srilatha Kintala and Heena Desai along with her new husband Yadevinder Singh Chaudhri also came back to visit.

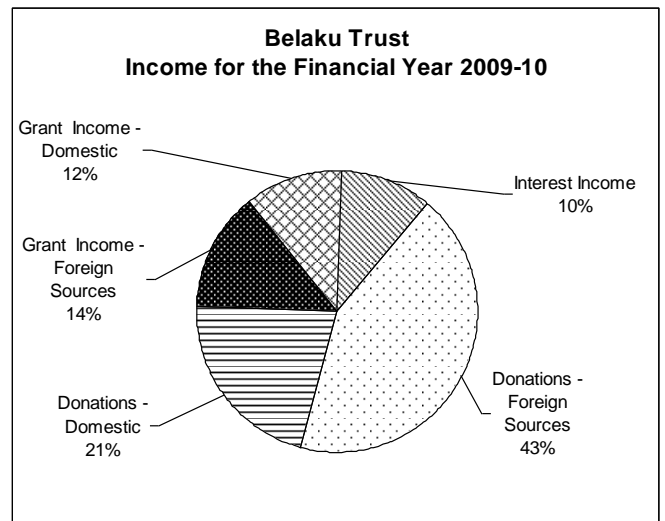
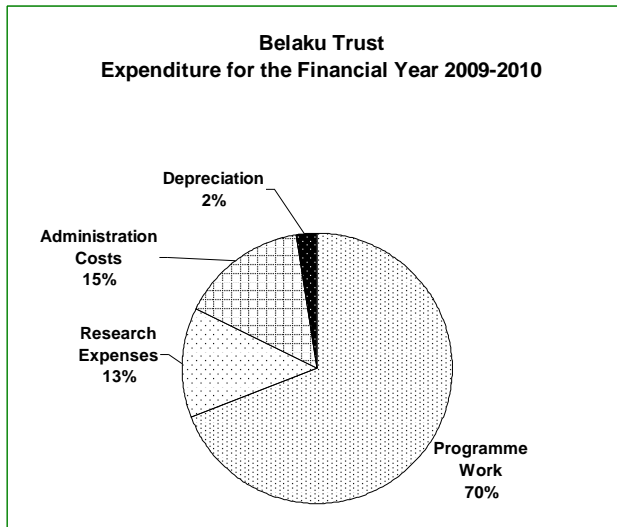
Contributions to our work

We would like to thank everyone, both members of organisations and individuals, who have given with great generosity. This may have been time, money, space, professional advice, practical skills, or encouragement.

People at Belaku

<p style="text-align: center;">Trustees</p> <p>Girish Karnad, Chief Trustee G.S. Jayanthi Sadiqa Peerbhoy Anjana Vivek Sarita Bakhshi</p> <p>Mr. V.S. Thyagarajan, advisor</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Staff Members, Bangalore</p> <p>Saraswathy Ganapathy Asha Kilaru Baneen Karachiwala Malavika Thirukode Ramya Mohan Kaveri Kuttappa Anuradha</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Field staff</p> <p>Gopal Jyothi Thereseraj , Mallika Mani Manjula Tejaswini Ramakka, Sunitha, Venkatappa</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Office staff</p> <p>Shiny Thomas, Office Administrator Channaveera, Senior Office Assistant Chetan Kumar, Office Assistant Rajesh K.S, Office Assistant Seetha Chakravathi - Data entry operator</p>

Finances



Bankers	Auditors
State Bank of Mysore, Banashankari Branch, 305 40 th Cross 3 rd Main Road Jayanagar 8 th Block Bangalore 560082	T. Sriram and Co. Chartered Accountants 2974 17 th Cross, K.R. Road Bangalore 560070

(Audited accounts are available on request.)

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