

For Annual Report 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

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Letter from the Chief Trustee

Dear friends of Belaku,

In 1995, the Belaku Trust first began its work in the village communities of Kanakapura Taluk. It found families burdened with huge and entrenched challenges: poverty, caste segregation, scant awareness about health and nutrition, poorly functioning state services -- like education and healthcare -- and the especially keen deprivation experienced by women and children.

The Belaku Trust has spent twenty three years deepening ties and trust in those communities, aiming for a mutual understanding and support in the struggles and meeting the challenges. It has matched rigorous research in rural health and society with patient, responsible and committed programmes to help rural women achieve new standards of income, wellness, education for their children, access to public services that are their right, and overall, greater happiness and dignity for their families.

This year has been involving and challenging; one in which we have done much thinking about our role, effectiveness and future directions. It has also seen a move towards continuity in the programme, with leadership roles increasingly devolving to staff at the community level.

I hope that as you read this Annual Report, you will agree that no effort is spared to maintain our functioning and integrity. The Belaku Trust continues to base its programmes on carefully collected data and on the needs expressed by the women and families we work with. Every improvement in staff skills as well as for our systems improves the role we can play in these communities.

None of this would be possible without your help and encouragement. We have received support in many forms: your time, advice, money or simply a pat on the back. Without this, we know we could not exist, nor could many of the hopes of the people in these villages.

Thanks from all of us for your interest and support in the Belaku Trust.

Girish Karnad
Chief Trustee

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE STAND FOR

Belaku began as a group from various professional backgrounds, all committed to seeing a better life for the people of Kanakapura Taluk. Our focus has always been on the health and well-being of the people of the region, especially the women and children. Our research showed us the many factors that hinder them from leading a full and healthy life. We see women coping with extreme poverty, lack of health information and ignorance of the skills needed to access and improve the services that should be available to them.

All our programmes and activities have been designed keeping in mind that:

- > Charity, in the sense of handouts, is not the answer.
- > Real, lasting change must come from the village communities themselves.
- > We can work with these communities to help them gain the knowledge and skills to effect these changes.
- > We must work with the existing services, which need to be strengthened, not sidelined or replaced.
- > The community should make their own decisions about what leads to the best possible outcomes for them.

WHAT WE DO AND WHY

We believe that our activities will be most effective when based upon reliable information. Thus we collect data and keep in touch with the community, conducting more rigorous research when it is indicated. Our research has been sponsored by groups like UNICEF, the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and the World Health Organization. We have learned that poor health and nutrition comes from many related causes.

Poverty

Lack of money often restricts the care provided to children, forcing village mothers to take ill-paid labour work far from home. We try to acquaint people with the many government programmes that exist for poverty alleviation and help them get access to the services. We also provide loans to women to buy livestock, which enhances their incomes and diets. We give money for medical help to the neediest families. Belaku also developed three income generation groups, where village women produce craftwork that we helped them to market. This programme has been handed over to another organisation, but we continue to work with the women on financial decision making.

Lack of Knowledge

Working together at the income generation groups and at other venues organized by Belaku gives women the chance to discuss problems and share ideas and information. Belaku has trained community workers, called *Gelathis*, who share information on child care, health and nutrition with village families through the **Smart Start** programme..

Under the programme **A Future through Fun**, Belaku organizes summer camps for children and young people. Some seven to eight hundred children and young people learn about health, environment and gender justice through games, films and computer programmes.

Lack of formal education and skill training

Education for village people has always been hampered by transport problems and lack of money. The lack of opportunity for children affects their health and the wellbeing of their community.

Belaku supports the workers in government-sponsored Anganwadis (preschools). These workers often feel isolated, which adversely affects their functioning.

We provide scholarships so that children and young people can afford school and college.

DETAILS OF MAJOR PROGRAMMES-2017-2018

Anganwadi and Community Support Programme

Belaku has been collaborating with the Government's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme since 2006. Our aim is to increase community involvement and support of the anganwadi (preschool) programme as well as to improve health and nutrition of pregnant women and young children. Women from the community, called gelathis, have been trained by Belaku to work with the children in the pre-school as well as carry out counselling sessions with families.

This programme continues and is well received by the ICDS workers and the families.

There were some resignations of gelathis for a variety of reasons and it has been difficult to recruit new candidates who are motivated to do this kind of work.

One of the resignations, however, was actually a reason for celebration, as that gelathi, Ms Bharathi, was chosen for the post of anganwadi helper in October 2017 -- we feel this is recognition of her skills acquired during the Belaku training and that she will use them to improve the functioning of the anganwadi.

Preschool Component

The programme currently operates in ten anganwadis of nine villages. Some of the gelathis cover two villages. The gelathis are increasingly handling the planning and even the training of new recruits. They continue to interact regularly to exchange ideas and experiences, which helps them to conceive of and carry out interesting programmes with the children.

We had also observed that the number of children enrolled in the government anganwadis was decreasing as many families chose to send their children to private pre-schools. On the other hand, government school teachers have told us that the children who attend the gelathi-supported anganwadis performed well once they enter school, often better than those from the private pre-schools. The Programme Managers have planned meetings with parents and others to attempt to spread awareness of this and to understand the reasons for the decrease in anganwadi enrolment.

Home visits to families with young children and to pregnant women and new mothers

The gelathis continue to make visits to homes in the afternoons, when they share information as well as answer questions about problems perceived by the families. Growth charts of all the children attending the pre-school are maintained and reviewed with the families. Families of malnourished children are visited several times a month.

Summer Camp

The summer camps in April and May of 2017 were only held in two villages as we were trying a different approach and felt this should be done as a pilot. They were conducted by the Sarsayee Foundation and explored children's self-image and community awareness through

theatre. The response of the children was both touching and impressive and they produced excellent theatre pieces based on their perception of problems in their lives.



Community Outreach in Bommanhalli village.

After three group meetings to get the villagers' thoughts about serious problems, we held a meeting in Bommanhalli. It was well attended and there was considerable discussion, following which and some of the people present said they would get back to us about how they would like to proceed. Unfortunately we were disappointed that there was no further move from anyone. After some discussion, we felt that working with the young people of the village would be the best approach and intend to pursue this.

Income Generation Groups

The three income generation groups, Kirana, Deepa and Ushe, are now associated with a Section 25 company, Hosa Belaku, that was set up by Ms Kameshwari Devi. Belaku staff members have assisted Kameshwari and the women in working out some administrative issues, and the production and marketing aspects of the women's groups have been going satisfactorily.

Scholarships

Shyamala from Achalu village was helped with funds for engineering college and a young girl in Manipur has been received funds for her school fees and related expenses.

Livestock loans

Fifteen women had taken loans to buy cows, goats and sheep and had all completed their repayments (a total of just over Rs.100,000 by February 2018. Many women have enquired about the possibility of new loans.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD:

This unedited letter speaks for itself.

I'm Shyamala from the village Achalu. I have 2 sisters, elder sister got married last year and younger sister doing diploma in computer science engineering. I have one brother he is in 9th standard. I am from a poor family background. My parents are hard workers, they do agriculture work and sericulture. Our whole family is dependent on this. My parents are very supportive and they try their best to give good education for all of us.

I have studied up to 10 Std in Achalu government school. I got distinction in 10th Std. I am a volleyball player and I have played state levels in school. After 10th Std I joined diploma in computer science and last year I have completed my course with distinction.

I had a dream of studying computer science engineering (B.E). But people like me to go to B.E will be a dream. My parents were not in that state to support my engineering degree. In the meantime last year my sister got married and my parents were in debt. So I decided to help the family and joined garments factory to work. Even while working I was dreaming for joining BE.

It's my luck that Belaku trust who is working in our village have heard about me and they came to me and asked about my dream to become a engineer. I was told by Belaku staff that if you are interested to continue the study then you should make some effort to reach the goal.

I started dreaming of becoming engineer again and I wrote CET exam. I got the ranking in CET. I quit the job. I had some money with me and Belaku trust supported me by giving Rs.10,000. Also Belaku staff told me that where else can I approach for the scholarship.

I got the engineering seat in govt collage Bangalore. Since I have completed my diploma in computer science, considering that I got the admission directly to 3rd semester. I am staying in government hostel.

I'm very grateful to the donors who gave me this opportunity and I will do my best in the studies.

After the completion of the degree I will join to work and I support those children who are dreaming like me for getting higher education.

Once again I thank you all and I hope that I will get the same support from you till the completion of my degree.

Administration

The main operations are carried out at the office at Kanakapura; accounting and some group meetings are held in Bangalore.

Fund raising

Part of our fundraising was done through Ammodo, an on-line fund raising platform. To our distress, we found in February 2018 that it had closed down, following apparent misuse of funds. Belaku only lost a small amount, as far as we know, as even accounts could not be procured. One of the persons who had attempted to donate through Ammodo very kindly repeated her donation directly through a bank transfer. Another ex-volunteer went through enormous trouble, despite repeated failed attempts, to make sure her donation reached us, finally hand delivering a cheque in London. To them, and other loyal supporters, we express our enormous gratitude.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

Ms Thejaswini M.S and Ms Jyothi Thereseraj have taken over the planning and functioning of Belaku's programmes. They have continued with existing programmes and are also exploring ways to expand and strengthen the work.

The underlying imperative will be to empower the community and also work closely with government service providers.

CHALLENGES

Working in this environment is always challenging.

Administrative issues like getting the necessary government clearances for our work and funding take time and effort, as does developing the skills of staff members for the work in hand.

Dealing with public services and trying to help the community to gain access to their programmes is a slow process.

Change can be seen as a threat by some sections of the community. Our goal of helping women and children improve their lives may result in changes in family structure and norms. We have to be sensitive to this.

GOVERNANCE and Staff as of 31 March 2018

Name	Gender	Role	Occupation
Girish Karnad	Male	Chief Trustee	Film-maker
Sarita Bakhshi	Female	Trustee	Business Realty
GS Jayanthi	Female	Trustee	Proprietor Ananya Boutique
Sadiqa Peerbhoy	Female	Trustee	Director - MAA Communications Pvt. Ltd.
Baneen Karachiwala	Female	Trustee	Health policy consultant

STAFF

The staff at Belaku are of paramount importance in helping us move ahead and put our efforts in the right direction, while keeping in mind our vision and goals.

The Programme Managers Ms Thejaswini M.S and Ms Jyothi Thereseraj felt they needed to acquire additional administrative and leadership skills. Towards this end, visioning exercise was conducted by Ms Srilakshmi Divakar and we also held two consultations with Ms Kaveri Kuttappa, Baneen Karachiwala and Srilakshmi Divakar. In addition, the Programme Managers attended a workshop in Mysore on fund raising and one on communication for NGOs conducted by the India Cares group.

Staff as of 31 March 2018

Director of Projects	
Saraswathy Ganapathy	
Office Manager part-time	Programme Managers
Shiny Thomas	Thejaswini MS Jyothi Thereseraj
Community health facilitators (Gelathis)	
Prema, Jyothi, Pavitra, Kanya, Nagamma, Chaitra and Shruthi	

Ms. Anuradha of Divitia Consulting Private Limited has been our accountant for the past many years.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT ...

We truly appreciate the support we have received during the year, which has come from individuals, family foundations and organisations.

And once again, we ask for your help in maintaining programmes like the following:

>Rs. 500 (USD \$8) supports educational enrichment programmes for rural children. Boys and girls who have never travelled more than a few miles from home benefit from trips to museums and historical sites. At summer camps they can meet new people and learn about health and the environment.

>Rs. 2000 (USD \$30) supports a community health care worker for a month and gives families access to health care and advice.

>Rs. 20,000 (USD \$300) can help a woman purchase livestock which contributes to the welfare of women and their families.

HOW TO DONATE

> Cheque Donations

Please make out to the Belaku Trust,

697, 15th Cross Road,
JP Nagar Phase II,
Bangalore, India, 560078

> Direct bank transfer

For Indian Citizens

Account name: Belaku Trust
Bank RTGS code -IFSC code : SBIN0015658
Account no: 54018362960

Address: State Bank of India
State Bank of India
No.311/9, 1st Main Road 40th Cross,
Jayanagar 8th Block
Bangalore 560070

Overseas

Overseas direct transfers can be made through our Bank's partners in your country of residence. For full information on how to donate this way please contact us at belaku@belakustrust.org.

> **Donating as a US Resident**

For US residents looking to make tax deductible donations –please donate through People for Progress in India

Online

www.ppi-usa.org.

Please email PPI at ppiusa@ppi-usa.org informing them about your donation to the Belaku Trust.

Cheque

Mail checks payable to People for Progress in India (make sure you write Belaku Trust somewhere on your Cheque) and mail to:

People for Progress in India (PPI), c/o S.K. Srinath, 13927 SE 47th St,
Bellevue, Wa 98006, USA

Please be sure to give your email when sending a donation via PPI. PPI will not provide your email to any other organization.

> **For residents of other countries**

For cheque donations or direct bank transfers, please contact us at belaku@belakustrust.org for details.

WITH THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

> **Donors**

A complete list of our donors is available in our audited accounts.

NETWORKING AND VISITORS

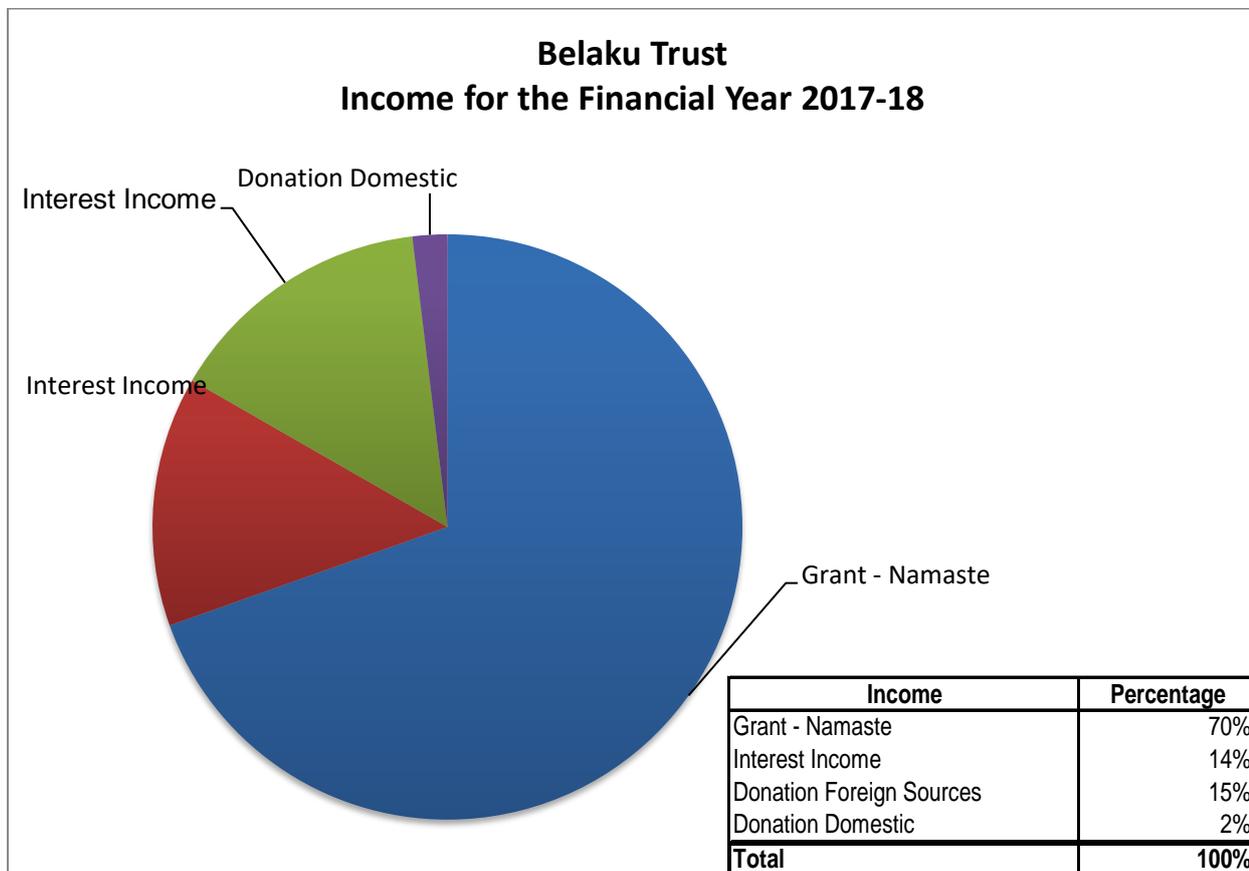
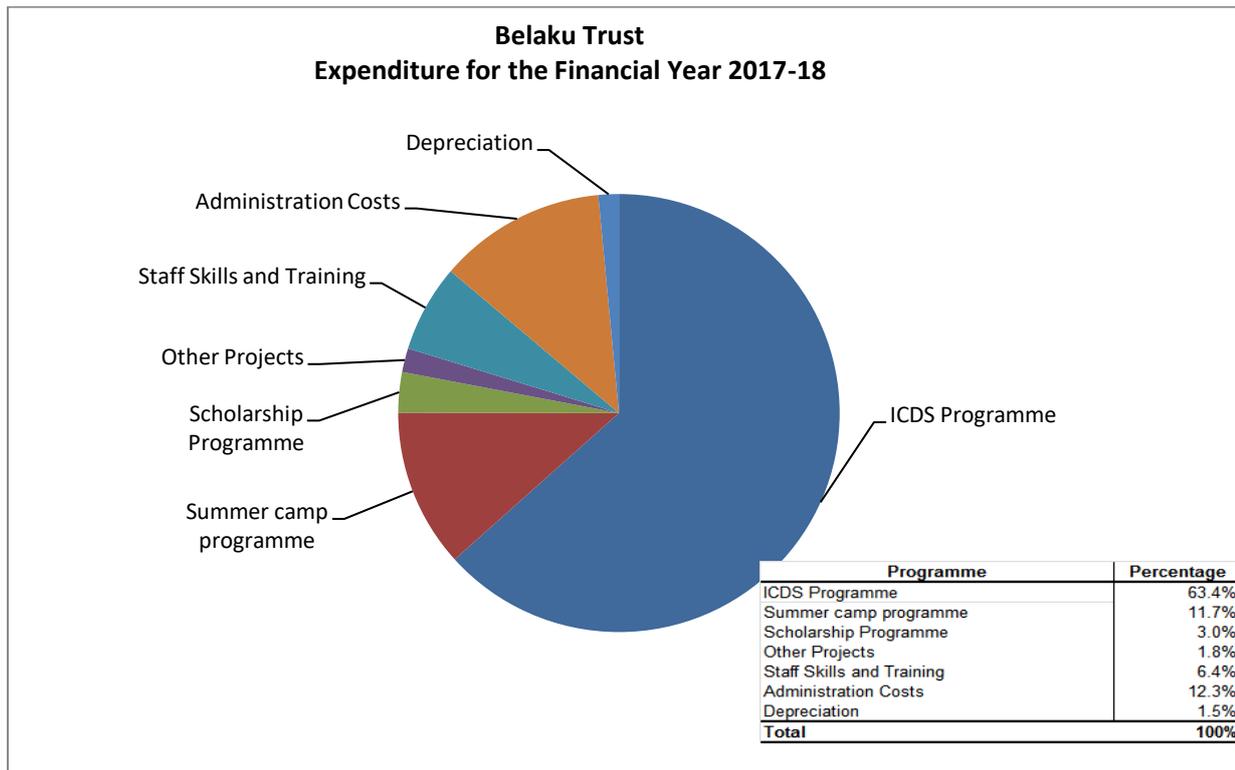
Meetings attended

The Centre for Budget and Policy Studies

We had visits from friends and supporters which, as always, encourage and stimulate us:

- The group that Baneen Karachiwala was with conducted a pilot survey on maternal health aims to understand the interpersonal aspects of quality of obstetric care.
- Pre-school teachers from the YWCA
- The Namaste group went around the villages in March

FINANCES 2017-2018



Bankers	Auditors
State Bank of India No.311/9, 1st Main Road 40th Cross, Jayanagar 8th Block Bangalore 560070	T. Sriram and Co.Chartered Accountants 2974 17th Cross, K.R. Road, Bangalore 560070

Audited accounts are available on request.

CONTACT DETAILS

T: +91 9880950915

E: belaku@belakustrust.org

W: www.belakustrust.org

FB: [www.facebook.com>belakustrust](http://www.facebook.com/belakustrust)

697, 15th Cross Road

JP Nagar Phase II

Bangalore 560078, India.