

# Project Proposal

## **Ananda Siksha Niketan**

Sponsored By  
Deenabandhu - Friends of the Poor

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Prepared By  
Manjaree Ghosh-Lavers and Joshua Lavers

## Introduction

### History:

At 16, Babar Ali is perhaps India's youngest headmaster. However Babar Ali thinks of himself first and foremost as a teacher and education is his passion.

Babar Ali teaches students from his village who cannot go to school due to extreme poverty. He holds his classes free of charge in his family backyard where 800 students –boys and girls - come from as far as 10 kms away to attend his classes. Classes are held late in the afternoon to accommodate underprivileged students who have to work during the day.

Babar Ali started teaching at the age of 9. He started with eight students teaching them whatever he learnt in class that day. Today he heads a volunteer staff of 10 teachers who teach the students a syllabus in accordance with West Bengal Department of School Education.



*“In the beginning I was just play-acting, teaching my friends but then I realized these children will never learn to read and write if they don't have proper lessons. It's my duty to educate them, to help our country build a better future.”*

- Babar Ali

### Media and Reader Reaction:

In February 2009 CNN in partnership with IBN an Indian local news station, did a series called “Real Heroes”. Babar Ali was featured as one of the youth heroes in the series (article attached). Babar's story was picked up in October 2009 as a part of BBC's “Hunger to Learn” series (article attached). The article included two videos depicting the conditions in which Babar holds his classes as well as the dedication that these underprivileged students bring to their studies in the face of extreme poverty (interview with student Chumki Hajra).

Both the articles presented the challenges faced by the young man, and the outstanding job he does on a daily basis despite these obstacles. These two articles, as well as reprints on the article, have elicited a very strong response (reader comments attached). The recurrent question remains “*What Can We Do to Help?*”

### Funding Issues:

To date Babar Ali has had access to only local funding. Foreign funding has been extremely hard to arrange for, mainly due to the following reasons:

- Remoteness of the village (Gangapur does not show up even on district Maps)
- Lack of communication infrastructure (no computer access in village)
- Language Barriers (Babar Ali communicates primarily in Bangla)

According to Babar the only foreign aid he has ever received was from the students in Plymouth School, UK (refer the third video on BBC, where the students from Plymouth have a video conference question/answer session with Babar), in form of supplies. No further long term contacts could be developed due to the issues mentioned above.

### **Deenabandhu “Friends of the Poor”:**

Deenabandhu “Friends of the Poor” is a non-profit organization registered in California with 501(c) tax exempt status. The organization is headquartered in Los Angeles, with a branch in Kolkata, India. Further details regarding the organization including information regarding its other projects and current initiatives can be found on [www.deenabandhu.org](http://www.deenabandhu.org).

*Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see. India, by one count, has 18 million street children and over 22 million child laborers. Nearly 20% of the children 6-14 years old have no access to primary education. Half the children do not get enough food everyday and are chronically or acutely undernourished. Ask yourself - is this really how your message should read?*

[www.deenabandhu.org](http://www.deenabandhu.org)

Deenabandhu's vision is to ensure that every underprivileged child attains his or her right to education, health and opportunity. To that end, the non-profit supports numerous deserving projects that focus on providing education to poverty-stricken children in rural India. Deenabandhu provides a means to collect donations, account and provide receipts for the same, in India and the US, both for individuals and corporations.

All in all, we feel that initiative such as Babar Ali's should be encouraged and would like your help to support Deenabandhu and ASN in its endeavor to provide education for some of the most deprived children in India.

## **Project Details**

After visiting the ASN project site, Deenabandhu has decided to sponsor the project and has local staff on the ground to track its progress periodically. The non-profit is compliant with all Indian regulatory boards and is permitted by the GOI to obtain foreign donation. **Deenabandhu will route 100% of all donations to Babar Ali's school.** A memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining the terms and commitments that ASN has to comply with and meet in order to receive aid from Deenabandhu, was drawn and signed by all parties on November 2009. The MOU can be provided upon request.

The project has no political/religious affiliation. The school operates from a single location and classes are currently held in Babar Ali's backyard in the village of Gangapur (rural India).

### **Contact Information for ASN:**

Babar Ali, Headmaster,  
Ananda Siksha Niketan,  
Village PO Bhabta, Beldanga,  
District Murshidabad, Pin Code 742134,  
West Bengal, INDIA  
Cell Phone: 91-9007100960

### Student profile:

At present approximately 800 students attend the school, of which about 300 are boys and 500 are girls. Students come from extremely poor families. Due to their poverty, they cannot afford to go to the free state-run school, which while not charging school fees, still requires its students to pay for uniforms,



books and transport (totaling about \$40 per year). Moreover most of these children work during the day to help support their families. Boys work in the fields, whereas girls work as maid servants in the village where they cook, clean, wash clothes and dishes for their employers. Without their earnings (about \$5 a month), their families would find it hard to survive.

ASN offers classes 1 through 8. The youngest students are about 4 years old.

Babar does not have any age restrictions. Students as old as 18, attend his classes. In some cases young mothers join their children in class to learn. While most students come from neighboring communities, some students travel up to 10 kms by foot to avail of Babar's free evening classes.

The school is recognized and certified by the government of West Bengal. Several students finish class 8 exams and based on their exam results transfer to nearby schools run by local non-profit organizations (Ramakrishna Mission Boys School, and Pulinda Girls High School).

*"Many of (the students) need to work during the day to support their relatives. In most circumstances, these children would remain uneducated and illiterate, forced to do menial jobs for the rest of their lives. Thanks to Babar's help, they may have a chance at a better life."*

Source: [www.gimundo.com](http://www.gimundo.com)

### Effect on youth/community:

In addition to increasing local literacy rates (for which Babar has been recognized by the State Govt), a fallout of ASN has been increased awareness and involvement of local youth in the educational development of their community. Inspired by Babar, other school students now volunteer at ASN. The 10 volunteer teachers include 5 teachers aged between 13 and 18, students themselves of classes 9th to 12th.

Babar Ali's project has served to bring about a sense of ownership, participation and empowerment amongst the local youth.



### Current operation, challenges, obstacles:

ASN's most urgent need remains a permanent school building. Classes are currently taught in the open, with rains interrupting classes. Students study seated on the ground. Lack of funds poses a serious obstacle for Babar Ali. The children

are so poor that they need anything and everything. Their top requirements are clothes, pencils and notebooks.

### **Current funders/supporters:**

ASN's funders include Reliance Industries, CNN-IBN, ICRA Limited. In February 2009 he received a one time donation of Rs.5 lakh from Reliance which had sponsored CNN-IBN's Real Heroes series. Most of this donation was used to purchase the land for the proposed school.

Most of ASN's donors are local individuals who make one time donations.

While no direct funding is provided by the Govt, the State Govt is facilitating and supporting ASN in procuring zoning requirements, building permits, engineering requirements, legal registrations and certifications.



## **Plans for New School Facilities**

### **Scope of facility:**

The facility would ultimately comprise of 10 class rooms, each designed to accommodate 100 students. Each room is approximately 15'X20'. It would also include two administrative offices, one library and one restroom. The facility would have tables and chairs for teachers and benches for students. Library would contain textbooks for students to borrow. The estimate includes provisions for 10 computers and monitors, and two printers. The final item included in ASN's estimated expense is the means to provide safe drinking water for his students by installing arsenic-free tube wells (arsenic poisoning is a tremendous problem in this area of Bengal).



### **Schedule:**

The project is slated to be carried out in phases.

Construction of permanent classrooms is an essential element of the project and gets the highest priority. Construction is planned to be executed stage by stage based on the Chief Engineer's recommendation and funds available.

Other elements of the project – such as the purchase of benches, digging of tube wells, establishing a library, acquiring computer equipment etc - will be prioritized.

### **Cost Estimate**

Details regarding cost estimate are on the following page.

**All Inclusive Cost Estimate  
ASN**

Sl. No.	Description of works	Units	Unit Description	Unit Rate	Total (USD)
1	Classroom: 22.7' x 30' room to accommodate roughly 100 pupils with earth excavation, foundation and 15" wide brick wall and lintel with cement, sand mortar in the ratio of 1:5 with concrete roofing, wooden doors & windows, with inside & outside plastering.	10	Classroom	\$ 7,254	\$ 72,536
2	Administrative Office: 12' x 15' room (same construction type as #1 above)	2	Office	\$ 2,901	\$ 5,803
3	Library: 15' x 12' room	1	Library	\$ 2,901	\$ 2,901
4	Restroom Boys: 15' x 20' small building to accommodate 10 urinals	1	Restroom	\$ 4,988	\$ 4,988
5	Separate Restroom for Girls: 15' x 20' small building to accommodate stalls that will give girls privacy, while ensuring high standards of hygiene.	1	Restroom	\$ 4,988	\$ 4,988
6	Wooden benches for students	200	Bench	\$ 4	\$ 738
7	Tables for teachers	10	Desk	\$ 28	\$ 282
8	Chairs for teachers	10	Chair	\$ 13	\$ 130
9	Arsenic Free Tubewell for drinking water	4	Tubewell	\$ 3,144	\$ 12,577
10	Teaching & Learning Materials	1	-	\$ 260	\$ 260
11	Library Books	1	-	\$ 911	\$ 911
12	Computers	10	Computer	\$ 581	\$ 5,812
13	Monitors	10	Monitor	\$ 33	\$ 325
14	Printers	2	Printer	\$ 87	\$ 173
<b>Total Estimated Cost</b>					<b>\$112,423.47</b>

## Project Lead Team and Contact Information

Name	Organization	Contact Information
Saibal Mitra	President, Deenabandhu, Friends of the Poor (USA)	5744 Damon Street, Simi Valley, CA 93063 Phone: 818.679.8622 Email: <a href="mailto:smitra@deenabandhu.org">smitra@deenabandhu.org</a>
Almitra Patel	Environmentalism, Member, Supreme Court Committee for Solid Waste Management, Trustee and Executive Committee Member for 4 rural educational institutions with 3500 students.	50 Kothnur, Bagalur Road Bangalore 560077 Phone: 080-2846 5365 Fax/Phone: 080-2846 5195 Mobile 98443-02914 Website <a href="http://www.almitrapatel.com">www.almitrapatel.com</a>
Sakti Das	Professor Emeritus of Urology presently working at Alameda County Medical Center. Board of Director, Foundation for Freedom	Sakti Das, Foundation for Freedom, Inc 195 Graystone Terrace San Francisco, CA 94114 Phone: 415-343 5955 Website: <a href="http://f4freedom.org/">http://f4freedom.org/</a>
Joshua Lavers and Manjaree Ghosh-Lavers	Project Analyst, Fluor Corp. Secretary, Deenabandhu	27662 Aliso Creek Road, #4315, Aliso Viejo, Ca – 92656. Phone: 949.900.6692 Email: <a href="mailto:joshua.lavers@fluor.com">joshua.lavers@fluor.com</a> <a href="mailto:manj13@hotmail.com">manj13@hotmail.com</a>
Prof. Subhajit Chatterjee	Chairman, Deenabandhu Trust, India	CF-95, Sector 1 Salt Lake City, Kolkata, West Bengal, 700064, India Phone: +91.94330.85385 Email: <a href="mailto:Subhajitch@hotmail.com">Subhajitch@hotmail.com</a>

## Bio-data

**Saibal 'Sam' Mitra:** Saibal is a chemical engineer based in Los Angeles. In a career spanning over 20 years, he has gathered extensive experience in project management and business development at different levels of management. Saibal has worked with various engineering companies in India, Middle East and the US, and is currently a technical sales manager at Corpro Companies, Inc. In addition to being the president and founder of Deenabandhu - Friends of the Poor, Saibal is a board member at ASTI (American Service to India, US) and GRSV Sevakendra, Gohaldanga, India. He passionately believes that education can bring about lasting positive change in the lives of underprivileged children and give them opportunities for a better life.

**Almitra H. Patel:** An environmentalist with vast experience, Almitra graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with a master's degree. Since 1971, she has designed and supervised the construction of 41 low-cost homes, 22 poultry sheds and 2 large school buildings in rural India. Almitra is on the board of several think-tanks, headed multiple environmental campaigns, and has been recognized as a leading authority on waste management by several local and state planning boards. She is one of 8 members of the Supreme Court Committee, constituted to formulate a national policy for hygienic urban solid waste management and disposal; Report endorsed by the Supreme Court of India in February 2000. Since 1961, Almitra has been a trustee and executive committee member for Sarasvati Education Society which oversees the operations of four rural educational institutions (serving 3500 village students). Almitra brings much experience to this project. Further details regarding her bio-data can be found on her website <http://www.almitrapatel.com/biodata.htm>.

**Sakti Das:** Sakti is a Professor Emeritus of Urology presently working at Alameda County Medical Center. He is inspired by a passion to teach as well as by a passion to help the underserved. This is both what keeps him grounded in the East Bay as well as what motivates him to serve internationally. For the last two decades, he's traveled around the globe to work in partnership with others on International medical missions. He has also supported several primary education centers in the developing world and, in doing so, has been the motivating force behind Foundation For Freedom.

**Joshua Lavers:** Joshua works as a project analyst for Fluor Corporation where he manages cost on major government engineering and construction projects. His professional experience includes 3 years as an English teacher in Japan. Joshua has a bachelor's degree in International Business from Cal State Long Beach and has travelled extensively in Asia. While travelling in India in 1999, he had the opportunity to visit an orphanage for disabled children in Delhi; an experience that moved him profoundly.

**Manjaree Ghosh-Lavers:** Manjaree's most recent professional experience is as product pricing analyst for a financial derivative company where she helped launch various financial products and oversaw various internal projects. Previous to that she worked for 6 years at an investment bank, where she specialized in valuations and led efforts to set up operations in India. Born in India, she has travelled extensively, lived and worked in different countries with very varied cultures and is fluent in Bangla. Manjaree finished her undergraduate in India and has an MBA.