



Hands to Hearts
INTERNATIONAL

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PRESS RELEASE

Hands to Hearts International Surpasses First-Year Goals Model for global change impacts lives of more than 285 women and 1500 orphaned infants

PORTLAND, Ore. – February 15, 2007 – [Hands to Hearts International](#) (HHI), a nonprofit based in Portland, Ore., that empowers women in developing countries as the catalyst for reaching the world's most at-risk infants, has marked its first year of ground operations with notable success, surpassing year-end goals and touching thousands of lives in the process.

Since implementing its first program in India in February 2006, HHI has held 21 trainings in infant care in India and Russia, reaching 285 women, who are directly providing care to nearly 1500 orphaned infants. The number of children and women reached exceeded original goals by more than 350 percent.

HHI moves beyond charity, employing an innovative and sustainable business model, which trains and hires local women to provide child-centered care to orphaned infants, allowing thousands of individuals to be reached.

Orphanage directors partnering with HHI report that children are sick less often, get healthier faster, need less medicine, gain weight quicker and are easier to soothe, and that hygiene and general living conditions in the orphanages improves. The program also increases infants' potential to be adopted, allowing them to escape a lifetime of institutionalism.

Women participating in the program receive a formal education and career, reaping long-term benefits for their families and communities.

"This first year has been astounding," said Laura Peterson. "We intended to improve child-care in orphanage settings, but what we have done is establish a new model of excellence in care for all orphaned children, ages zero to three, and we have proven that our model is replicable on an enormous scale."

The scope of the orphan problem is massive, with millions of children abandoned and orphaned around the globe due to conflict, AIDS/HIV and other diseases, the stigma of unwed motherhood and profound poverty. UNICEF reports that in Asia alone, there are 10.5 million orphaned children age five or younger.

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About Hands to Hearts International:

Founded by Laura Peterson in 2004 after a decade of working with children with severe emotional and behavioral problems, HHI aims to prevent problems before they start, reaching the world's most at-risk infants during their earliest years, utilizing the empowerment of women as the underlying tool for care as well as economic development in the long-term. A film about HHI is available at <http://stage.dotsub.com/films/handstohearts/index.php>. For more information, visit <http://www.handstohearts.org>.