



Hands to Hearts International

Improving the health and well-being of orphaned and vulnerable children and economically disadvantaged women around the globe.

The Need: The critical first years of life are when the most important human developments occur—the time when children develop a sense of trust and belonging, acquire language, develop curiosity and become ready to learn.

But children facing severe deprivation are at risk in all areas of personal development, health and mental capacity. The millions of children who are being raised in orphanages, in refugee or resettlement camps, or surviving under other severe hardships are deprived of the kind of care and attention that would give them the necessary skills to thrive. Yet, in these same communities, there are women who have the ability and desire to help these children be healthy and successful.

FAST FACTS:

Founded: 2004

Headquarters: Portland, Ore.

Leadership: Laura Peterson,
founder and executive director

Partners:
Journeys of the Heart
Portland State University
St. Jude's Charitable Trust
Viswa Yuva Kendra

Response: Working with local partners to its sites—primarily in India—Hands to Hearts International (HHI) provides curriculum and training to improve child caregiver education and support. Through this, HHI dramatically improves the care for vulnerable infants and children, supporting the long-term livelihood of the community at large in the process.

History: HHI originally began working in orphanages via partnerships with U.S. adoption agencies, launching direct services in Chennai, India, in February 2006.

HHI has since expanded its services, integrating its curriculum into existing programs. HHI has been requested to train teachers in the world's largest early childhood development program—India's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)—in both Kerala and Orissa.

HHI is also responding to the rapidly growing interest in its program by offering technical assistance services to other NGOs and government groups focused on child health. HHI's technical services allow other groups to apply HHI's curriculum within their own programs. Through these smart, strategic partnerships, HHI is touching the most children possible at the earliest time with the simplest, most cost-effective form of care.

Impact: Since its launch of ground operations in Chennai in February 2006 through December 2007, HHI provided 68 trainings to a total of 809 women, who are directly bettering the care they provide to 7,260 orphaned or otherwise vulnerable children. These numbers

continue to grow steadily with its model for social change having tremendous potential to directly improve the lives of millions of children and women worldwide in the coming years.

HHI's partnering agencies report that after HHI trainings, infants and children are healthier, recover quicker when they are sick (thereby needing fewer medicines), show increased weight gain and are easier to soothe. The caregivers are seen to be more nurturing and responsive to the infants and children, and hygiene and general childcare facility conditions improve. Caregivers also gain marketable skills while enhancing their own parenting abilities.

Curriculum: HHI's curriculum includes the following educational components:

- Explanation of the four domains of development
- Early brain development
- The importance of observation
- Bonding and attachment
- Baby cues
- The role of play
- Health and hygiene
- Baby massage
- Detailed descriptions of the physical cognitive, language and affective development from birth to age five.

HHI's curriculum molds to different cultures easily, using local songs, dance, games and stories.

**For more information on Hands to Hearts International, contact
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