



Hands to Hearts
INTERNATIONAL

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PRESS RELEASE

Integrated Child Development Services to Implement Hands to Hearts International Childcare Training Program HHI Pilot Program in Kottayam District of Kerala, India, will reach thousands of children

PORTLAND, Ore. – June 27, 2007 – [Hands to Hearts International](#) (HHI), a nonprofit that empowers women in developing countries as the catalyst for reaching the world's most at-risk infants, today announced that [Integrated Child Development Services](#) (ICDS), the largest integrated early childhood program in the world, will implement HHI childcare training in the Kottayam District of Kerala, India.

As part of the contract, HHI will lead two trainings per month in early childhood development for ICDS teachers, who today serve more than 20,000 children in the Kottayam District who come from India's poorest families. An estimated 240 ICDS teachers will receive HHI training over the next year, and they in turn will better the health and well-being of 2,400 children.

HHI has partnered with [Sishu Kshema Bhavan](#) (SKB), the orphanage division of [St. Jude's Charitable Trust](#), to implement the pilot program.

"The state of Kerala is considered one of India's most progressive and usually leads the country in health initiatives and innovation," said Laura Peterson, executive director of Hands to Hearts International. "Our partnership with ICDS will touch the lives of many, while serving as a model of innovation in how to best serve the health needs of the at-risk children in the entire country of India."

"ICDS teachers in the different parts of the district reach the most socially and economically disadvantaged segments of children from ages 30 to 60 months," said Elizabeth Abraham, director of SKB. "Women receiving HHI training will learn how to identify the children with delayed development and help families take remedial measures."

"We hope to have a long partnership with HHI," said O.A. Joseph, District Social Welfare Officer, Kottayam. "Once we complete the pilot project in the district of Kottayam with HHI we should be able to expand our partnership to the others districts in the state."

About Hands to Hearts International:

Founded in 2004 and based in Portland, Ore., HHI reaches the world's most at-risk infants during their earliest years to prevent problems before they start, utilizing the empowerment of

women as the underlying tool for care and 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>.

About Integrated Child Development Services :

ICDS is India's response to the challenge of meeting the holistic needs of the child, launched initially in 33 blocks, on October 2, 1975. Today, the ICDS is one of the world's largest and most unique programs for early childhood care and development. Recognizing that early childhood development constitutes the foundation of human development, ICDS is designed to promote holistic development of children under six years, through the strengthened capacity of communities and improved access to basic services, at the community level. The program is specifically designed to reach disadvantaged and low income groups, for effective disparity reduction.

The program provides an integrated approach for converging basic services for improved childcare, early stimulation and learning, health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation - targeting young children, expectant and nursing mothers and women groups. These target groups are reached through nearly 300,000 trained community-based Anganwadi workers and an equal number of helpers, supportive community structures/women groups - through the Anganwadi centre, the health system and the community.

About Saint Jude's Charitable Trust:

St Jude's Charitable Trust is a nonprofit organization working for the welfare of women, children and families. We are committed to fulfilling every childless couple's dream and granting what we believe is every child's right - a right to grow up in a family with all the love and affection of a father and mother. We are also committed to providing a new lease on life to every helpless woman in need, by equipping them with the strength and courage to face the trials and tribulations of life.

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