

## Turning Less Into More!

With a little ingenuity, Hands to Hearts International (HHI) spent less money and reached more people in 2009.

***HHI Trained 50% More Women, and Spent 22% Less!***

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In 2004, when Hands to Hearts International's (HHI) visionary director, Laura Peterson, started the program, she wanted to create a cost effective, low tech, easily replicable way to improve child health and in particular promote healthy attachment for the most vulnerable young ones.

Starting in India where, as the United Nations reports, there are "57 million of the world's 146 million malnourished children..." HHI slowly grew, providing training to orphanage caregivers and village mothers. The results were amazing! In orphanages, the reports of HHI trainings were as dramatic as, "*no babies have died since [HHI] training.*"



Hands to Hearts International (HHI), teaches mothers and caregivers about the critical early years of child development. They learn how they can build bonds of love and support brain development every day. This then lays the foundation for the development of a child's positive self-image, for a successful start to their schooling years. They have better physical health, and healthier social interactions with friends and anyone the child encounters in early years and throughout the rest of his or her life.

Word of HHI's success spread quickly and in 2007, Viswa Yuva Kendra (VYK) a grassroots non-profit, based in Orissa, India, requested HHI's life changing child development trainings to improve Orissa's society. After just one year of facilitating these trainings, organizations all over Orissa started to notice the overwhelmingly positive outcomes of HHI's work and wanted the trainings for their own communities. The popular demand caused VYK to ask HHI to fund additional trainings around the state.

Laura Peterson responded with a counter offer. Instead of "giving them the fish" by funding many workshops for mothers and caregivers, she would teach them "how to fish" by offering a training of trainers series of workshops for five different local nonprofits. They excitedly agreed and by July, nine new women were officially empowered to lead HHI's train and spread it as far as possible throughout Orissa.

The agreement was that each nonprofit had to commit to giving at least one community training per month, anywhere in their state, using their own funding. With five nonprofits completing their trainings, this would lead to 60 new free trainings in a year. During the first six months of this experiment, these nonprofits exceeded their agreements - training **522 women, who are now able to better their care for 2,546 young children!**

But the numbers go beyond anything that HHI can possibly calculate. Inspired by what they have learned, women are returning to their villages and leading their own trainings for other mothers.

When a mother has taken even some of the lessons from these workshops, (such as proper hygiene practices, spending more time talking to her baby while snuggling her close to her chest as she goes about her daily routine) she can rest assured that she is supporting her baby's brain and language development, preparing her child for success in school, while building bonds of love and trust that will last a lifetime. She knows that what she learned through HHI is preventing her baby from becoming another tragic health statistic.



In addition, HHI's training is also providing government pre-school teachers and daycare workers the proper skills to nurture the children of their community. These workers are typically young women who have little formal education and almost no information about the importance of early childhood. HHI trainings helps to improve village economies by giving mothers the confidence to leave their homes and earn an income during the day, knowing their children are in good hands.

#### **From some of the women trained as a trainer of HHI's curriculum:**

*Sangeeta Thapa: "When I go back to these villages, I see the women are sharing what they learned with others, and the children's health and behavior is improving. What makes me happy is that these women want more training. The HHI training makes them want to learn more about how to care for their children and make their village a better place."*

*Bharati Sahoo: "[the women in the village have] changed massage, nutrition and mother-child bonding practices. They take care of children in a different and better way than before.... There is a huge need of mother trainings. HHI's model is important – [baby] massage and every other part of the curriculum training is not available in trainings provided by any other group..."*

As opposed to other Western non-profits who have been accused of forcing their programs on the people and communities, HHI only offers the trainings to those who want it. As Executive Director Laura Peterson says, "We will train them, but it's up to the communities to embrace this." And they have been embracing it. Mothers and caregivers constantly show up to trainings. HHI's program is proving itself because massive numbers of women are demanding its trainings and voluntarily attending because they know the value of learning how to best care for their baby.



HHI's model of smart growth gives the support and tools that any nonprofit can incorporate into their own programs. This efficiency is imperative in a time where many are struggling to adjust in a rapidly shifting global economy. Not only is this a perfect example of sustainability in international development, it is true women's empowerment because it is teaching them how to own the gift of training and spreading important knowledge. Most importantly, HHI is giving children a chance to have healthier and happier lives.

Learn all the details at [www.handstohearts.org](http://www.handstohearts.org)

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