



As we reported in our last issue of Gifts and Housewares, Jeremy Piercy and his team of fair trade crusaders were making their way to India to work alongside artisans there, to monitor the progress that had been made and see the difference that a fair trading company can make to these people's lives. The trip was a tremendous success and in the two weeks that the team was there, a lot was seen and a great experience was gained. Both rewarding for the team and the people of India, places visited included Delhi, Agra, Saharanpur and Kolkatta, where suppliers were working with hundreds of Indian producers to deliver fair-trade products on a worldwide scale. The Shared Earth team were taken to a slum, orphanage, villages, cities and funded schools travelling right across India to discover the real positive impact that Fair Trade is making on the workers and their family's lives.

Jeremy Piercy, founder of Shared Earth organised the trip, showed his enthusiasm for all that had been achieved. "During our visit we reviewed a selection of Fair Trade projects set up by Indian suppliers, which are designed to give back to the community. We visited a slum school, orphanage, workshops and schools all of which have been set up or funded through Fair Trade. It was a pleasure to view the progress and positive impact for workers, families and communities. With an increase in sales of 8% within our shops, we are hopeful of a positive take up for our Shared Earth franchise package, which is the first of its kind within the UK. This project will undoubtedly give even more work to world-wide handicraft suppliers, giving this industry a real boost."

Here are just a few short snippets of amazing stories recorded during the team's trip to India.

THE FREE SCHOOLING PROJECT IN AGRA

The Shared Earth team visited one of ASHA's community Fair Trade projects during the India trip, which offered education for 41 children on the outskirts of Agra. The small school educates

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children aged 3 – 12 years old from 9a.m to 12 mid day 6 days per week. The teacher works voluntarily and ASHA pays for the rent on the schoolhouse, resources and a daily lunch for all attendees. **"These children are so keen to learn and very much enjoy being at school,"** explains

Lavina Randive from ASHA. This project is just one of many that Fair Trade organisations are able to set up due to the increase in fairly traded goods in countries like the UK. Shared Earth is keen to promote such projects to improve education and future conditions of so many young people.

OPENING THE SECRET LOCK BOX TO FAIR TRADE

The Shared Earth team traveled 5 hours by coach from Delhi to Saharanpur during their trip to visit a range of workshops from Indian Fair Trade handicrafts supplier, ASHA. The trip would uncover the complete Fair Trade cycle from the start of a product's life in its raw material state, to its finished form. One of the first stops at Saharanpur was at a timber auction,

where wood sellers offer a range of native woods, including Shesham, Mango, Guava and Indian Elm. These wood sellers buy the wood from special government agencies that harvest the timber from managed plantations. The team also visited one of ASHA's producer workshops called Amina Enterprises, who make the unique secret lock boxes which Shared Earth sell throughout the UK. The secret lock boxes are made by master craftsmen, sixty-year-old Qurban has worked with wood for 45 years. He tells us that it takes 6 years to learn the skills required to make each box. All the patterns are completed freehand using both hands and feet in the process! Fair Trade workshops and suppliers such as ASHA have dramatically improved the lives of these craftsmen and their families.

SHARED EARTH SHOP MANAGER VISITS DELHI ORPHANAGE

The Karm Marg orphanage was established 12 years ago to give a home and support to the street children of New Delhi. Now run by the older children and their peers the orphanage gives refuge to children who would otherwise be struggling to survive. Bristol Shared Earth shop manager, Matt Kent spoke to Shared Earth founder, Jeremy Piercy who agreed to donate a large handmade wall hanging as a prize for a raffle that Matt had decided to organise. Matt was already traveling to India with the Shared Earth product development team and was delighted when Jeremy asked him to deliver the funds raised and meet some of the children face to face. The Karm Marg project is funded by a combination of Shared Earth and their suppliers within Fair Trade to help give disadvantaged children a good start in life. The children's education includes learning English and children from 15 years or older learn skills in the Karm Marg onsite workshops which give them skills to use in future careers.