



Experience the Joy of Giving Back through IDRF!

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Telugu-American community has always been very conscientious in maintaining ties with their motherland and helping the underprivileged back home. India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF), a USA-based tax-exempt public charity maintains a close collaboration with the Indian-American community and offers them a platform to help realize their dreams of giving back to the land of their ancestors (www.idrf.org). IDRF was founded in 1988 by Dr. Vinod Prakash, a former World Bank economist, who has been working as a volunteer for IDRF since then.

IDRF's main goal has always been-fo put power and not charity in the hands of those in need. It strives to break the cycle of poverty by empowering the marginalized people with skills, services and infrastructure grounded in sustainable development. Since its inception 30 years ago, the Indian-American donors have helped disburse \$35 million+ in grants to various developmental programs: education, health, women's empowerment, eco-friendly development, good governance and disaster relief/rehabilitation. The marginalized are served by IDRF without regard to religion, caste, or creed.

Many Telugu-speaking donors have partnered with IDRF to give back to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to help empower the needy. A NRI couple from West Godavari District, with support from IDRF, were able to provide quality and value-based education for economically-disadvantaged children

from rural areas by constructing the Jayarama School.

IDRF has been supporting two schools set up by the Sahaj Seva Samsthan in Hyderabad, since 2005. One provides free education to children with special needs and the other provides free education to children from slums, in an environment where noble qualities and moral values are being inculcated in the students through associative teaching methods.

IDRF has been providing support to elderly, disabled and destitute children in partnership with Atma Vidya Ashram. Sivanda Ashram/Orphanage and School is located near Narsipuram, in Srikakulam District that benefits not only the Ashram children but also those from the surrounding rural areas. The funds go towards providing lodging, boarding and education for 200+



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poor children. In addition, the Ashram set up an old-age home in Nidadavolu, that serves the elderly women, and, people who suffer from serious physical or mental illnesses.

IDRF's partnership with Shyamprasad Institute for Social Service, implemented the Arogya Dhara project (2013-2016) benefitting 10,000 families in 162 tribal villages of Adilabad District. People were encouraged to construct toilets and soak pits to end open defecation. Health awareness camps, mobile clinics and distribution of homeopathic medicines were organized in villages and schools. Vocational training courses for unemployed youth and horticulture and backyard plantation were propagated.

IDRF has also been integral in rebuilding communities in the aftermath of various disasters. Some calamities such as: the cyclone (1997), tsunami (2004) and floods (2015) devastated communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana that were already living in extreme poverty. IDRF helped in long-term rehabilitation, with the goal of turning disasters into opportunities for new sustainable development.

IDRF has been able to keep its operating costs below 4%, which is rare in United States and ensures that out of every \$1 you donate, 96 cents go directly in the hands of the beneficiary NGO. IDRF has a high standard of compliance and fully vet the reputation and reliability of a NGO before making it a partner. IDRF encourages the site visits to its projects by the volunteers and Board

Members, receiving periodic reports and financial explanations of the funds invested. IDRF's transparency, accountability and financial health have won it the coveted Platinum Seal from Guide Star and a four out of four star rating from Charity Navigator for five consecutive years. Charity Navigator has also rated IDRF as one of the ten "Highly Rated Charities Reiving on Private Contributions".

These were some insights into the kind of work IDRF does in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to empower the poor and under-privileged people. We encourage TANA members to suggest to us if there is a cause you hold dear and want to support or motivates you to continue giving to improve the lives of the less fortunate in India. ❁

