

## **CHILDREN ON THE EDGE & TRADE AID**

### **EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN BROTHEL COMMUNITIES** <sup>®</sup>

With the support of Trade Aid, this year Children on the Edge has been provided primary education to 67 children ages 5-18 living in the brothel communities of Bihar State in India.

We provide education classes which run from 9am to 3pm , teaching children how to read and write in Hindi and English, as well as learning maths and social sciences. Not only does this provide these children with key skills, enabling them to read signs in marketplaces, conduct financial transactions without being tricked and understand health posters, but it is beginning to build an expectation among the local community that their children can gain an education.

The project aims to offer these children, especially girls, positive alternatives when considering choices for the future. Currently, the precedent for young girls in these communities is to follow their mothers into prostitution. By offering basic education and information about their value and rights as children, the hope is that these children will explore alternative options to the sex trade. Parents surveyed from the community are clear that they prefer that their children find other means of employment, but, with limited choices, many are still drawn into the same line of work.

For young Mohammed, age 10 years old, these classes are the only exposure to education he has ever received. His typical day is spent helping his father work the crops in a nearby field and care for his younger siblings. His favourite subject is maths, and he hopes that the skills he learns will prepare him to run his own shop someday.

In addition to providing primary education, we have also begun to provide vocational skills training to a further 24 teenage girls in the two most prominent brothel communities. We offer sewing skills training which targets the most vulnerable demographic of children in these communities, teenage girls. These classes meet 10 hours per week for a year to provide the skills needed to become a professional seamstress. Currently the programme is small and each class must share a single sewing machine, and yet the enthusiasm of the girls is palpable and we hope to begin to improve on this and increase the facilities available.

Lakita, age 14, is one of the students learning how to sew. She says that she, “hopes that these classes will give her a way to leave this community.” Her goal is to become a seamstress and sewing teacher in the nearby town of Prunea once her training is complete later this year. From there, she says, she can begin a new life outside of the brothel area.

