



Policy Plan

2025-2029



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Introduction

Stichting Thomas Bouwprojecten (hereafter called “Foundation”) has supported the construction and renovation of schools, boarding houses and other facilities in India since 1992. It does so in close cooperation with the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph (FSJ).

This cooperation has, over the past decades, resulted in dozens of projects through which thousands of children have been provided with improved opportunities for education and development.

The Foundation’s principal strength lies in defining, establishing and executing construction projects for the FSJ organisation within the limits of available donation income. In doing so, the Foundation supports the Congregation’s policy of providing children from vulnerable families with access to high-quality education. The longstanding and reliable cooperation with FSJ is professional and effective.

This cooperation remains the principal pillar of the Foundation’s policy.

The Foundation operates transparently, is a CBF-recognised charity and holds ANBI status (providing fiscal benefits for donors and for the Foundation). It endorses the prevention of child labour, promotes sustainability, values the independent role of its Advisory Board and maintains close ties with the Thomas Stichting voor Jongeren and the Thomas Foundation for Microcredits.

The Foundation complies with all statutory requirements relating to privacy legislation and integrity policies. Its statutes and internal regulations comply with applicable legislation and regulations, including the Dutch Act on Management and Supervision of Legal Entities (Wet Bestuur en Toezicht Rechtspersonen - WBTR). All members of the Board are registered with the Trade Register of the Chamber of Commerce.

Through this Policy Plan 2025-2029 the Foundation seeks to provide a clear and concise framework for its governance and strategic direction, while also identifying its priorities and setting out how it intends to strengthen its impact in a sustainable manner.

1.Objectives of the Foundation

Mission

The Foundation pursues two principal objectives:

1. To contribute to development projects in India, with a particular focus on education, healthcare and social facilities for underprivileged children and families.
- 2.To increase awareness in the Netherlands concerning development issues and poverty in India.

The Foundation holds the view that investment in education and associated infrastructure results in direct and long-term improvements for disadvantaged communities. In this

context, particular attention is paid to girls, as they are frequently the most vulnerable and get the fewest opportunities.

Vision

The Foundation is of the opinion that the approach adopted by the Congregation – comprising approximately 100 schools, more than 37,000 pupils and 20 children’s homes or boarding schools – ensures the provision of high-quality education and a safe upbringing environment. Owing to well-trained staff and individual guidance, educational standards are high and school drop-out rates are low. This substantially increases the likelihood that pupils will be able to continue their studies and subsequently secure paid employment.

The schools are accessible to children from impoverished families irrespective of religion and are open to both girls and boys. Significant emphasis is placed on parental involvement and cooperation with families. In addition to standard subjects, the educational programme provides scope for personal development, computer studies, sport, dance and social activities.

The schools and children’s homes comply with statutory standards and are constructed in such a manner as to provide sufficient capacity for the anticipated number of pupils. Of equal importance to the Foundation are good hygiene standards, safe sanitary facilities and a secure environment, with particular attention being devoted to the protection of girls.

The Foundation’s activities are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular:

- SDG 1: No Poverty
- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being
- SDG 4: Quality Education
- SDG 5: Gender Equality
- SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals





Strategy

For the period 2025-2029, the Foundation will focus its policy on the following strategic pillars:

- **Education and Infrastructure**
Expansion and renovation of schools so as to ensure compliance with updated governmental guidelines and the growing demand for higher levels of education. Increasing emphasis will be placed on ensuring appropriate infrastructure and facilities at existing schools, including adequate toilet facilities, computer and laboratory rooms and modern educational resources such as digital boards, and correspondingly less emphasis will be placed on the expansion of the total number of schools (current demographic developments in India indicate a decline in the number of children). Children's homes and boarding schools shall be supported only in exceptional circumstances.
- **Sustainability**
The use of low-maintenance materials and the structured transfer of maintenance responsibilities to FSJ.
- **FSJ Self-Reliance**
Training programmes for construction sisters and the transfer of technical expertise, with the objective of enabling FSJ increasingly to implement projects independently.
- **Social Projects**
Support for related initiatives, including healthcare provision, digitalisation and social programmes.
- **Financial Base**
Strengthening the donor network in the Netherlands and exploring opportunities for local sponsorship in India.

Prioritisation

Projects undertaken by the Foundation are selected in consultation with the leadership of the Congregation. The guiding instrument for the adopted approach is a priority list, which is updated twice annually by the Congregation's leadership.

In view of the Foundation's limited financial resources, strategic choices are required in respect of the projects that can be undertaken.

The order of priority applied by the Foundation is as follows:

1. new construction and/or expansion of schools, classrooms and supporting facilities where required;
2. new construction and/or expansion of sanitary facilities where required;
3. maintenance and renovation of schools and sanitary facilities;
4. installation of digital school infrastructure;
5. sanitary facilities and maintenance for boarding institutions.

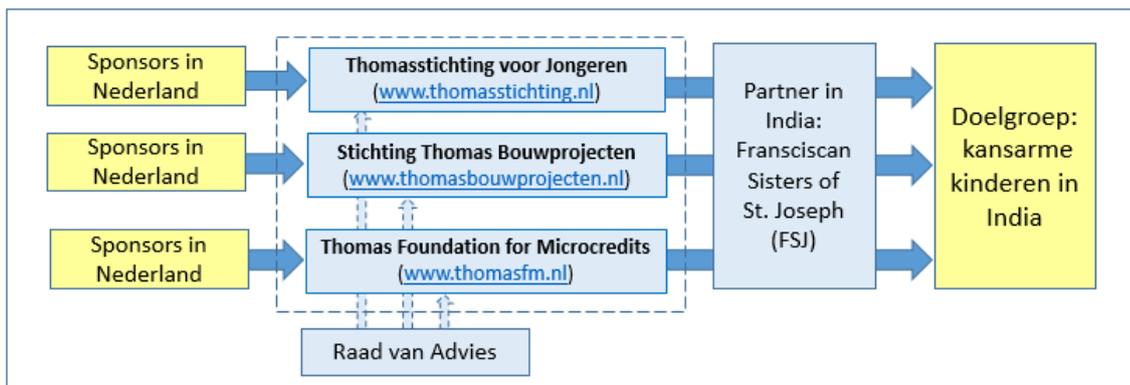
2. Organisation and Cooperation

Board

The Board constitutes the legally authorised governing and decision-making body of the Foundation and shall consist of a minimum of three and a maximum of eight members, who jointly bear responsibility for policy formulation and implementation. In addition, consultations are held twice annually with the Advisory Board in order to discuss policy, the financial, governance and operational course of affairs, and the Foundation’s planned activities.

One of these meetings shall be held jointly with the Foundation’s “sister organisations”, namely the Thomas Stichting voor Jongeren and the Thomas Foundation for Microcredits, with which organisations the Foundation shares the same Advisory Board and cooperates where appropriate.

Furthermore, the Foundation actively seeks cooperation with other foundations and organisations pursuing comparable objectives



Project Team

The project team, consisting of experienced construction professionals, is essential to the Foundation’s mission. It is responsible for architectural design, preparation of construction drawings, technical supervision, tendering procedures and construction inspections. The project team works closely with FSJ’s local construction sisters and visits projects in India at least once per year and preferably twice annually. During such visits, the works are inspected on site for compliance with contracts and specifications and for conformity with applicable building regulations and conditions, including labour conditions (in particular the prevention of child labour).

The project team also functions as an advisor to the Board. It ensures that construction activities benefit underprivileged children, verifies whether appropriate priorities are being set and assesses whether sufficient urgency exists for the construction or expansion of schools and associated sanitary facilities.



Volunteers

All activities carried out by or on behalf of the Foundation are performed by volunteers. They receive no remuneration whatsoever for such activities, such that incoming funds may be applied almost entirely towards achieving the Foundation's objectives. Expenses actually incurred may be reimbursed, provided that prior approval has been obtained from the Board.

Volunteers are expected to commit themselves to the objectives of the Foundation. Potential conflicts of interest are mitigated through application of a four-eyes principle. All volunteers are required to act in accordance with standards and values generally accepted in society.

Other Positions

Members of the Board and the project team do not hold any relevant other positions that could in any manner conflict with the interests of the Foundation or its beneficiaries. Should such situations arise, they shall be disclosed in the annual report. The same shall apply to other positions held by members of the Advisory Board.

Risk Management

The Board regularly discusses risks that may threaten the Foundation's continuity or impact. Such risks are identified, analysed, mitigated and evaluated, and where relevant are reported upon and subject to further written documentation and monitoring.

Cooperation and Relationship with FSJ

- The Foundation focuses in particular on projects located in those regions of India in which the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, based in Chennai, India, is active.
- Projects undertaken by the Foundation are selected in consultation with the leadership of the Congregation. The priority list established by the Congregation serves as the guiding instrument for the Foundation's approach, and the Congregation determines its own priorities upon which the Foundation bases its construction activities.
- Contractual responsibility for execution of the project's rests with the leadership of the Congregation in India, under the supervision of the project team.
- The Congregation appoints a senior contact person empowered to make arrangements at leadership level concerning priorities and financing.
- The Congregation appoints a "construction sister" responsible for construction supervision both during preparatory phases and throughout construction, and for maintenance planning.
- The Congregation retains ownership of the land upon which construction takes place and of the buildings erected thereon.
- The Congregation is responsible for compliance with national and regional laws and requirements (including legislation relating to child labour), as well as for obtaining all required building permits.



3. Project Management

Project Approach

- The Foundation supervises projects from initial design through to final completion, including tendering procedures involving multiple contractors and the deployment of local expertise.
- Project leaders direct the process, frequently in cooperation with locally trained professionals. Efforts are made to achieve an appropriate balance between local needs, operational capacity and available resources.
- Increasing involvement of members of the Congregation (the so-called construction sisters) as construction supervisors on projects is pursued as a policy objective.
- Active involvement of the Sisters in the evaluation of major projects is promoted.
- The Congregation shall assume increasing maintenance obligations following completion of projects.
- Projects shall only commence once sponsorship has been contractually secured.
- In certain cases, cooperation with other partners may take place.

Objectives and Roles

FSJ's Own Responsibility

For several years the project team has regarded it as both its responsibility and a core task to emphasise to the Congregation that it bears its own responsibility for the construction and, in particular, the maintenance of buildings.

It is considered necessary for the Congregation to participate increasingly in the current activities of the project leaders and, in the future, to be able to carry out a greater number of tasks independently.

The project leaders supervise locally executed activities in an active manner, both during site visits and remotely, by means of e-mail, WhatsApp and telephone.

Maintenance

The project team devotes substantial attention to raising awareness within the Congregation that systematic maintenance of buildings is essential in order to extend their service life. Construction sisters are instructed in preparing comprehensive inventories of all buildings and in developing maintenance plans for each building, coordinated with the Sister responsible for the budget allocated to that building.

Sustainability

The project team undertakes, particularly through Indian sources, to continue identifying higher-quality and more sustainable construction materials. Rapid developments in India are resulting in an expanding supply of such materials.



Child Labour

The leadership of the Congregation has been requested to declare formally in writing that it shall take all possible measures to prevent the use of child labour. The Foundation's project leaders ensure that this policy is applied in practice and consult with local supervisors regarding compliance. As early as 2012, a clause prohibiting child labour was incorporated into the standard contracts with contractors. Upon execution of such contracts, the contractor is explicitly reminded of this obligation by the Congregation.

Other

Multiple Dutch foundations are active in South India. A continuing point of attention remains the exchange of knowledge and experience in relation to design practices, selection of materials, experience with contractors, execution of inspections and related matters.

4. Financial Policy

Within the financial policy domain, the Foundation distinguishes two principal lines of responsibility:

1. safeguarding and monitoring financial resources;
2. rendering accountability.

Safeguarding and Monitoring Financial Resources

The Board monitors the Foundation's financial resources at three levels.

- **Strategic (Long Term)**

- The continuity of the Foundation is paramount.
- An adequate continuity reserve shall be maintained.
- Where necessary, additional provisions shall be established

- **Tactical (Medium Term)**

- Focus shall be placed on the implementation of policy plans and activities.
- Sufficient solvency shall be maintained.
- The following standards apply:
programme expenditure ratio (expenditure on objectives / total expenditure) \geq 95%; fundraising cost ratio (fundraising costs / total income) \leq 2%.

- **Operational (Short Term)**

- An annual operating budget shall be prepared, together with periodic financial adjustments.
- An efficiently organised administration shall be maintained to facilitate swift and accountable decision-making.
- Strict financial control of construction projects shall be applied through five phases: receipt of donations, approval of budgets, entering into contractual commitments, execution of payments and final financial review.



- Donations shall be expended in accordance with their designated purpose; undesignated donations shall be allocated to general or thematic funds.
- Cost control shall be exercised as follows: fundraising costs in accordance with applicable standards, and management and administrative costs below 5%.
- Interest income shall be optimised subject to very limited risk exposure, through savings accounts and short-term deposits in the Netherlands.

Additional Measures

In addition to the measures applied within the above-mentioned three levels, the Board has established several additional practical measures in its internal regulations relating to governance-level financial oversight.

- Expenditure exceeding EUR 1,500 (excluding construction projects) shall require prior approval by the Board.
- Payments made shall be reviewed semi-annually by a Board member other than the Treasurer, with written reporting to the Board.

Financial Aspects of Projects

- Projects shall commence only when all financial resources, permits and project information are available or contractually secured.
- Payments shall be made in phases: the Foundation shall transfer funds to the Congregation, which shall in turn pay contractors in accordance with contractual arrangements.
- The Congregation shall maintain a transparent project administration, which upon completion of projects – and annually in the case of longer-term projects – shall be audited by an Indian certified accountant.

Administrative records and audit reports shall be shared with the Foundation, which shall be entitled to inspect all relevant documentation upon request.

Rendering Accountability

- **Internally**
 - The Treasurer shall render accountability to the Board through proper administration and reporting.
 - The Board shall receive monthly financial reports, including information regarding donations, movements in funds and outstanding liabilities.
- **Externally**
 - The Foundation shall report transparently to society and to donors.
 - The annual report, including the annual accounts, shall be published no later than 1 July.
 - The annual accounts shall include an auditor's review statement issued by a Netherlands-based certified accountant.



PR and Sponsorship

The relationships with donors constitute the core of the Foundation's fundraising activities. Personal contact and a project-oriented approach have proven to be the most effective methods.

Donors are kept regularly informed through newsletters, project reports and personal discussions.

A challenge faced by the Foundation is the ageing donor base. Accordingly, the Foundation pursues renewal, inter alia through cooperation with other foundations and by applying for grants from organizations such as Wilde Ganzen.

The Foundation utilizes multiple communication channels, including an up-to-date website, a newsletter, social media platforms and the annual Thomas Magazine. These instruments enhance public visibility and contribute to the acquisition of new donors and the retention of existing supporters.

At the request of third parties, the Foundation delivers lectures and provides information sessions and interviews in order to disseminate the Foundation's objectives and projects as widely as possible.

Policy Principles for Fundraising

The Foundation seeks to maximize certainty regarding future income streams by:

- strengthening relationships with existing regular supporters;
- identifying and approaching new target groups, including companies and institutions within the Dutch construction sector;
- securing donors for multi-year periods through periodic donation agreements;
- cooperating with comparable organizations to obtain grants and making increased use of grant providers such as Wilde Ganzen and Cordaid;
- identifying companies in India willing to provide direct contributions to the Congregation through local sponsorship arrangements.



Policy Principles for Communication

The Foundation shall optimally inform (potential) donors and other interested parties regarding its activities by:

- maintaining and, where necessary, renewing its website;
- actively promoting the Foundation's work through email newsletters and the printed Thomas Magazine;
- utilizing social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook to support dissemination of content published on the website and thereby enhance name recognition;
- periodically and in a targeted manner informing (potential) donors regarding the status of new and ongoing projects;
- improving, within the Netherlands, the level of information regarding India and the baseline situation of underprivileged children, particularly in the states in which the Foundation operates. In doing so, attention shall be given both to the Congregation's contribution to the provision of high-quality education and to broader developments in India and the position of the Congregation therein.



Policy of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph

Introduction

This chapter constitutes a Dutch-language summary of and response to the FSJ policy document titled:

“The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph; Our Policy - Three-Year Plan 2025-2028”.

This policy plan was prepared and issued in July 2025 by the FSJ Congregation under the responsibility of Sr. M. Arockiam FSJ, Superior General.

The complete original English version of that document is published on the Foundation’s website. <https://thomasbouwprojecten.nl/documenten/>

1. Summary of the FSJ Policy Plan

Vision

The Congregation follows the prophetic vision of its founder, Bishop John Aelen, that education alone provides a lasting alternative for the poor, particularly for women and children.

The Congregation exists already for more than 135 years and operates in six dioceses across large parts of India, particularly in the poorest regions, with a primary concentration in South India.

Mission

The mission of striving for the integral liberation and development of girls and women is implemented by more than 500 Sisters through several principal fields of activity:

- prayer, evangelisation and formation of aspirant Sisters;
- education (a primary activity ranging from kindergarten to college level, encompassing more than 100 schools, with approximately 125 Sisters employed as teachers);
- healthcare (three hospitals and eighteen health posts or pharmacies, employing forty-eight Sisters);
- social work (forty institutions in which fifty-nine Sisters are directly active), together with innovative and specialised initiatives and homes for widows, children with HIV/AIDS, homeless children and transgender persons.

Governance

The Congregation is governed by the Superior General and the General Council. Beneath these bodies operate four Provincial Councils and Provincial Superiors.

A General Chapter is convened every six years to discuss strategic directions and elect a new leadership team, most recently in May 2022. At provincial level, such assemblies are held every three years.



Apostolic Vision and Priorities

At a General Chapter convened in July 2025, the following priority areas were established:

- (i) renewal of spiritual life and mission;
- (ii) improvement of the position of oppressed and disadvantaged groups;
- (iii) strengthening governance and administrative structures;
- (iv) protection of the natural environment and care for ecological sustainability

Action Plans 2025-2028

For each of the aforementioned principal fields of activity, action plans have been formulated and committees appointed to implement those plans and to monitor and report on progress.

For the Education domain, which is of particular relevance to the Foundation, this process is led by Sr. Susai Mary, a member of the General Council.

The Education action plan is comprehensive and includes, inter alia:

- Ensuring that the most disadvantaged, disabled children and weaker pupils have access to education and appropriate support, with specific training provided to teaching staff;
- Introducing digital and innovative learning environments and school management systems, supported by teacher training through annual educational conferences and knowledge-sharing initiatives;
- Improving communication with parents through seminars and workshops;
- Regularising school finances so that rural schools receive necessary infrastructure;
- Recording and analysing data relating to tuition-fee exemptions and student numbers for strategic planning purposes;
- Establishing an education committee to inspect each school annually and verify compliance with Congregational guidelines.

Implementation and Review of the Action Plans

Comparable action plans have been established for other fields of activity.

The Superior General, together with the General Council and Provincial Superiors, coordinates the work of the committees, receives annual reports and undertakes evaluations and adjustments where required.

Relationship with Thomas Stichting

In concluding its policy plan, the Congregation expresses gratitude to Thomas Bouwprojecten for its contribution over the past thirty-three years, which enabled the construction of numerous institutions, and for sharing in its vision and mission. The Congregation further expresses its hope that this cooperation may be continued in the future.



2. Key Observations on the FSJ Policy Plan 2025–2028

The preparation of the FSJ Policy Plan 2025-2028 has clearly required a substantial effort and merits explicit appreciation.

The Foundation has formulated several observations on this FSJ Policy Plan and communicated these to the Sisters:

- Not all, though a number of significant, external developments have been incorporated into the updated policy, including socio-economic changes in India, increasing governmental regulation and developments in public education.
- The Congregation continues to accord the highest priority to supporting girls and women, notwithstanding the general improvement in their relative position within Indian society.
- The policy plan is comprehensive and covers all activity domains. In view of limited financial and organisational resources, strategic prioritisation within and across domains will be required. At present, however, the policy plan does not yet specify such prioritisation.
- For the Education domain, which is of primary relevance to the Foundation, the FSJ policy plan is thoroughly prepared and elaborated. It is considered essential that this domain continues to receive appropriate priority and resources.
- The Congregation remains active in the area of boarding institutions. In light of declining numbers of children in such facilities and increasing governmental restrictions, Thomas Bouwprojecten shall accord lower priority to these, and shall focus primarily on direct educational facilities, including classrooms, sanitary facilities and digital infrastructure.

3. Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing, the Foundation concludes that the Congregation has adopted a coherent policy framework designed to ensure the continuity and quality of its activities.

Notwithstanding the observations set out above, the Foundation further concludes that the policies of the Congregation and those of Thomas Bouwprojecten are to a significant extent mutually consistent.

Taken together, these factors provide confidence that the FSJ Congregation will continue to constitute a reliable partner in the future and that the Foundation will thereby be able to achieve its mission and objectives.