



Julie Jones, with 12-year-old Mahendra, who was born with congenital myopathy, which made his neck muscles so weak he couldn't pick his head up

Pictures: DRAGONFLY PRODUCTIONS/COVER ASIA PRESS

CITY MUM RAISES THOUSANDS FOR UNIQUE OPERATION TO CURE MAHENDRA, 12

# I couldn't ignore the boy who saw life upside-down

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JULIE JONES read the online feature about a young boy in India. She scrolled up and onto the next story ... but something kept drawing her back to the plight of 12-year-old Mahendra, who was forced to look at the world upside down. It was an image she couldn't forget.

"I work with children the same age as him and I felt for this poor little boy," she says.

Julie decided to raise thousands of pounds to change his life forever.

"It feels like such an achievement to have been able to do something," she says. "But it wasn't just me, it was the surgeon who operated on Mahendra, the people who gave money to help him, and so many others.

Mahendra's story was shown in a TV documentary shown on Channel 5 last night.

Made by the award-winning producers of One Born Every Minute, *The Boy Who Sees Upside Down* tells of the ordeal of Mahendra Ahirwar, from Madhya Pradesh, in central India, and Julie's bid to raise the money for pioneering surgery which would help him.

Due to a rare condition, Mahendra's neck muscles are so weak he cannot hold his head up meaning that, as he is forced to hang it down, everything to him is upside down.

Mum-of-two Julie launched a crowdfunding page online to raise £12,000 to pay for an operation that leading surgeon Rajagopalan Krishnan had never even done before.

Julie, 35, a careers co-ordinator at Fazakerley High School and formerly support worker, says: "I read the article about a



Mahendra with his mother before the operation

he would have been treated." Julie, who has two young children, Joel, seven, and Macy, four, set up a crowdfunding page and raised the thousands needed in less than a month.

Rajagopalan Krishnan who gave his time free of charge, performed the operation on Mahendra in March to graft bone and insert plates to strengthen and support his

first I was just crying non-stop. I could just see this tiny body with no muscle, just bones, and it was really emotional.

"I stroked his hair and, through an interpreter, asked how he was.

"I am so grateful to all those who donated money so that a young boy might have a better quality of life than he and his family could ever have hoped."