



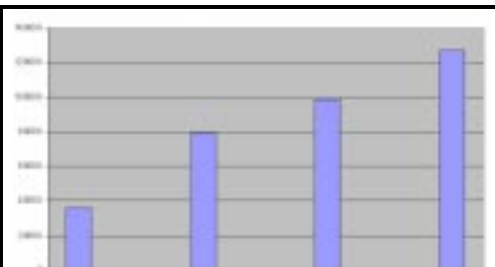
ASHA KIRAN

The Asha for Education New sletter

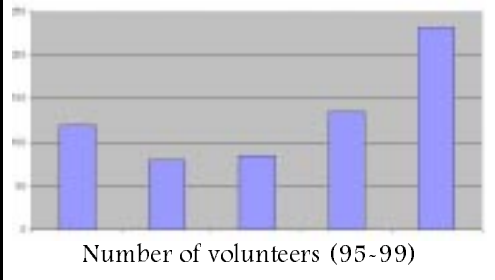
Vol. 3 , Issue 1 , Feb-Mar 2000

About Asha

Asha for education is a non-profit, voluntary organization dedicated to the support of basic education in India. ASHA strives to provide financial assistance to educate underprivileged children in India and to increase awareness within the local community about these issues. Asha's actions are based on the firm belief that education is a critical and effective catalyst for social and economic change in India.



Funds disbursed per year (95-98)



Number of volunteers (95-99)



St. Louis volunteers spelling it out at the Boston conference

Agents of change - D.P. Prakash

We have just completed one of the most amazing years in our long journey together. I wish to comment on our activities last year and emphasize what each of us must do now to keep moving forward.

Going into 1999, we had many more tasks on our agenda than ever before.

- Work-an-Hour 98, while successful, had tested the limits of our organization
- We faced a sharp rise in the number of new chapter requests, volunteers, and projects
- Our previous projects needed follow up work
- Undaunted by the many challenges faced with Work-an-Hour 98, we were taking on many fundraisers, including Work-an-Hour 99
- Asha India was taking off and mutual understanding was critical to keep pace with the momentum of volunteers in India
- Asha 2000 preparations were also well underway

All these activities challenged our abilities in working together as a team. To speak and act as one team with one voice, our decision making processes had to be streamlined. Our long term vision also needed clarification for the long walk ahead.

The conferences at Boston and Lucknow helped meet these needs swiftly. First, we have recognized the present need for a people development focus. Asha Fellowships are being established as a direct consequence. Second, to nurture progressive thoughts and facilitate bold new action, the development of the Asha Center in Lucknow was identified as a high priority. Third, a democratic, transparent, focus-group-based, decision making process has been successfully introduced for smooth operation. Thanks to the collective volunteer efforts and enthusiasm of all participants, we enter the millennium well equipped to stay on top.

Still, there is much work to be done to continue shining. More of us need to step up voluntarily and take Ashawide coordination responsibilities. We must recommit to executing brilliantly in each of our areas of responsibility. We must continue to reduce the turn around times in all our Asha activities. For example, we need to reach consensus within all the focus groups and move forward quickly, reflecting our sense of urgency. We must also build strong bonds within the Asha family and go beyond email relationships. Finally, and most importantly, each and every one of us needs to be involved directly, deeply, and meaningfully in at least one Asha project and work closely with our Asha-India counterparts.

Judging by the inspiring vision we possess, that of sending every child in India to school, and going by the unshakeable commitment of our volunteers, I am convinced that Asha is meant for great things. Let us never lose sight of our focus on basic education. Let us show the world that the brightest chapter in Indian history is being written now!

Volunteer Vignettes

"No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure." Emma Goldman.



Members of a team at the Kentucky cricket tournament (Sep. 13th-Oct. 3rd).

This being the year when a devastating cyclone hit the state of Orissa, volunteers from Asha-Illinois made an effort to collect funds to help the victims. Another chapter that went beyond the education front was Irvine, which held a toy and clothing drive. The Silicon Valley chapter had the maximum impact on the situation in Orissa; they disbursed a total of \$56,000 to Gram Vikas, which is rebuilding schools in the region.

Plenty of work was done apart from raising and disbursing funds. A very important function of any fundraiser is to spread word about Asha. Volunteers work to raise awareness in the community and reach potential volunteers. Towards that goal, every chapter tries to be present at community events and regularly set up



Madison volunteers behind their food table at University of Wisconsin's annual homecoming day.

have fun while participating in events and, use your computer skills to develop Asha web pages, research and visit projects in India, all while working for a good cause. Please contact your local Asha chapter if you wish to join the effort.

With that spirit, hundreds of people from all over the US and India have joined Asha for education. 1999 was a busy year for Asha's many chapters. There were many fundraising activities undertaken throughout the year in order to support various projects in India. With this being a World Cup year, cricket tournaments were immensely popular, with the Dallas, St. Louis, Chicago, Kentucky, Stanford and Cornell chapters all jumping on the bandwagon.

As usual, plenty of shows and concerts were organized, as they have proven to be great fundraisers as well as a lot of fun. Some, like Asha-Arizona's Glimpses of India, celebrated India's rich cultural heritage, and included dance, music, and drama from all over India. Other chapters arranged performances by famous musicians or dancers.

Asha-NYC/NJ volunteers having fun at their Surbahaar concert. It was an immensely popular sold-out show featuring film music.



information booths at the local university. Asha-LA came up with the innovative idea of screening a documentary of one of their projects, Helping Hands. Asha chapters also organized talks by activists and social workers like Medha Patkar and Mrs. Nomita Chandy. Volunteers visited project sites, and helped chapters monitor progress and decide how best to use the money collected from fundraising.

As you can see,

there are plenty of options for anyone interested in getting involved in Asha's activities. You can

Stanford volunteers at Holi.



What does the world say about Asha? - Comments from the ashanet guestbook

"I am overwhelmed to see your website. The way your project details have been provided state wise is excellent. I wish you all a great success in your future endeavors." Dr. Saroj Kumar Adhikari, New Delhi, India.

"I live in Zurich, Switzerland. Congratulations on doing a great job. Do you have a presence in Switzerland? I would like to become an active member of your organization and contribute in whatever way possible. Keep up the good work! " Priya Wig, Rue Schlikon, Zurich, Switzerland.

"Found your organization on a flyer in a grocery store. I have been very eager to find an organization such as yours to send donations to help children in India. I am glad to find you." Vinod Parekh, Tempe, Arizona, USA.

"Good site, noble cause. I do similar work for children in Kenya. Perhaps we can link our work." Karam, United Kingdom.

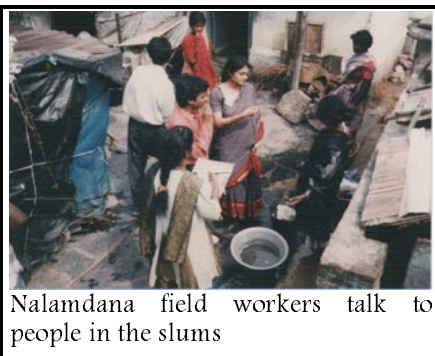
Selected Projects



Swanirvar's "Prathamik Vidyalay" at Andharmanik, West Bengal

Swanirvar was founded in 1989 by Dr. Sujit Sinha, a Princeton graduate. It aims to bring about socio-economic development in the region by addressing the problems faced by the villagers that are related to healthcare, sanitation, and agriculture, besides imparting primary education. Asha-Madison funds the three schools run by Swanirvar near Andharmanik village in West Bengal. Every school is attended by around 100 students from classes I through III. The key to Swanirvar's success has been its willingness to adapt the developmental effort to suit local conditions. Swanirvar volunteers discarded prescribed textbooks, and instead exposed the students to the same ideas using local examples, something that the rural students could relate to. Their effort to try to get the parents involved in the teaching process has ensured that the parents take more interest in their child's education.

Swanirvar's efforts are not limited to the classroom. They help the villagers experiment with alternative crops, and are developing organic techniques for growing crops, introducing mushroom cultivation, and spreading the use of Azolla, a green plant that helps atmospheric nitrogen fixation. The health care workers of Swanirvar emphasize the need for prevention, make regular home visits, and conduct immunization programs. Swanirvar takes an integrated approach to rural development and involves the community in the developmental process. Asha-Madison has sent \$1500 towards the schools in 1998 and has extended the support by contributing \$1000 for the year 1999.



Nalamdana field workers talk to people in the slums

Nalamdana in Tamil means 'Are you well?' By "well", the organization refers to holistic wellbeing - physical, mental, and economic. Their programs try to make people knowledgeable about their condition and develop local leaders within target communities. Established in December 1993 with a seed grant from the Echoing Green Foundation, Nalamdana began as a small group of dedicated, talented, educated youth who carried preventive health messages to the urban slums and rural areas of Tamil Nadu. Nalamdana built its staff from the very communities it targeted. It brought together a group of bright students from very low-income communities who demonstrate leadership and a commitment to social change. These youth used creative techniques such as street theater, popular film and music to communicate their messages.

Nalamdana selects students between the 8th and 12th grades that meet stringent criteria and supports the cost of their education for their entire tenure in school and possibly college. The students are provided with a host of out of school opportunities to broaden their exposure and build on their strengths. The hope is that they will eventually take an active role in the governance of their communities and work towards a more economically prosperous, educated, and healthy society. Asha-Kentucky is currently supporting three children per year and actively following their progress.

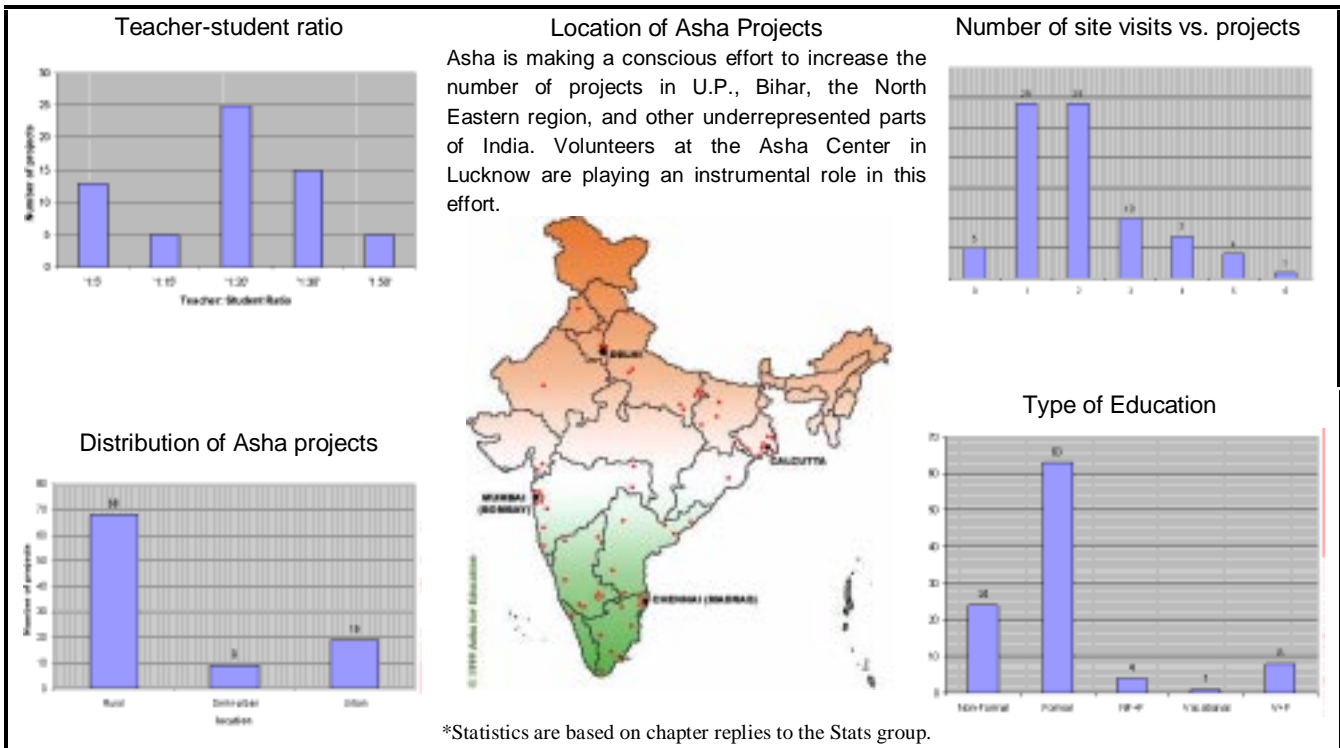
Abhiyan is an active Non Governmental Organization (NGO) in Patna led by youths who believe in JP and Gandhian philosophy. The activists work for social change and upliftment in the lives of weak, poor, and exploited sections of society. They have worked on organizing sewing classes for women, educating people and raising awareness on panchayati raj, implementing government programs. They have been able to build a rapport with the community since

their local workers are from the same area and can empathize with the target community. Asha Arizona is funding Abhiyan's activities in Bhaiswa village. The school will provide primary education to approximately 80 scheduled class children of extremely poor families living in dire, inhuman conditions. Out of these, 30 children belong to mushar community ('rat eaters') which is an outcaste within the outcaste and their children are even today considered socially unacceptable and do not go to the govt. schools. These children would be the first generation going to school from this community. The objective of the education program is to raise people with right understanding, right behavior, and self-sufficiency in occupation. \$5300 has been disbursed this year for the project and an additional \$4000 per year will be disbursed over the next 2 years.

A spastic child writing with her toes; an indication of Sweekar's success and achievements



Sweekar is a special school and rehabilitation institute for handicapped children located in Hyderabad. Sweekar was established in 1977 and has grown into a 75-room facility, with 150 staff members serving 750 inmates and additional outpatients. Sweekar caters both to the rich and the poor, and charges for services based on the patient's ability to pay. This project runs a special school for the mentally handicapped that provides educational and vocational training and imparts industrial knowledge of trades like embroidery, tailoring, toy making, candle making, and book binding. The school for the deaf uses special teaching aids to educate the children. In addition, computer training is also provided. The physical medicine and rehabilitation center administers physiotherapy and also develops artificial limbs for handicapped patients. The staff at Sweekar has an excellent rapport with all the children. Asha-MIT is funding the institute with \$1500 per year for various rehabilitation programs for the children.



Every second illiterate person in the world is an Indian.

We need you!

Join Asha	Give Asha	Partake Asha	Buy Asha
Be a part of a motivated group of people	You can make tax exempt donations to Asha	Participate in various Asha events and schemes	Buy Asha merchandise (calendars, mugs and cards)

Please contact your local ASHA chapter and find out how you can help. You can make checks payable to "Asha for Education" and mail them to: Asha for Education, P.O. Box 322, New York, NY 10040-0322. 100% of your contributions go towards supporting Asha projects in India. All administrative expenses are borne by ASHA volunteers. Asha for Education is a non profit organization.