



ASHA KIRAN

The Asha for Education Newsletter

June 1998

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.

Contribute for FREE

Asha-AT&T Program

If your long distance carrier is AT&T, please take a moment to call **1-800-426-0015, select #3** and sign up for this program. Be sure to choose "Asha" as your beneficiary association. **It costs you absolutely nothing.**

A Voice from India:

Rajasvini Bhansali, an ASHA Berkeley volunteer, was in India earlier this year. She spent 2 1/2 months in *Pirji ki Dhani*, about 13kms from Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

Along with some other social workers, she set up a non-conventional school based on a *seekho-sikha* plan. The approach is based on communication and interaction rather than conventional teaching methods. The village community has been excited and involved in the project from the very beginning. The children attending the school are 5 to 15 years old and are mostly girls. Earlier, most girls couldn't go to school since the nearest regular school was 5km away, across a busy highway.

Everyday, the volunteers and the children break up into three groups, each with about 10 kids. Each group is led by one volunteer and one person from the village. The next few hours are devoted to

conversing with the kids. The children bring their slates along, expecting to learn a,b,c. Instead, they are delighted at being able to express whatever they want and not having to learn by rote.

In Rajasvini's own words: "It has been beautiful! In a week, the kids were teaching me how to brush up my *Marwari* and were eagerly asking questions about light bulbs and the sun and why the trees are green and you can't even imagine what else.....slowly, they have started to aid each other in speaking *Hindi* and are recognizing the value of traditional knowledge. The villagers are coming forth to lead groups and take them around the fields and answer questions about farming. The kids take us around and talk about their baby camels and sheep and goats and what have you!!

Now that the kids, women and men all enjoy the thought of a school, it becomes very easy to think of sustaining a project like this."

<p>Berkeley, July 4th at Oakland. Contact SKI (510 649 3018)</p>	<p>ASHA volunteers will be present at the National Konkani Convention on July 4th at Oakland, CA.</p>
<p>Detroit, Contact Srikanth (248 353 7504)</p>	<p>We welcome ASHA Detroit, the newest chapter in the U.S., to the growing ASHA family!</p>
<p>Los Angeles, July 11th, Contact Anand (310 473 9656)</p>	<p>The ASHA LA chapter has prepared a corporate folder to make presentations about ASHA at various fora. The first presentation will be at the NET-IP luncheon on July 11th.</p>
<p>Seattle, July 19th, Sammamish state park. Contact Jayashree (425 868 9819)</p>	<p>ASHA Seattle is organizing its annual Summer picnic on July 19th. Tickets are being sold for this event. The picnic starts at 11 AM and ASHA volunteers will provide the fun 'n' games and all the food.</p>
<p>Stanford, June 20th, Cubberly auditorium, Palo Alto. Contact Mouli (408 730 1861)</p>	<p>ASHA Stanford is organizing Tamasha, a festival of games, food and fun. You can sweat it out to win prizes, cool off with a Falooda, snack on some spicy Indian food and get a palmist to tell you about your prospects: all at Tamasha!</p>
<p>St. Louis, July 4th weekend, Downtown St. Louis. Contact Garima (314 863 8286)</p>	<p>The St. Louis chapter has teamed up with a local Indian restaurant to operate a booth at Fair St. Louis, giving an international flavour to "America's biggest Birthday party"!</p>

Current ASHA Projects:

CHETANAA, Haryana. Begun in 1990 with just 35 children and classes conducted under trees, CHETANAA now has 150 students who are educated in academic, co-curricular activities, morals and hygiene. Asha-South East Florida and Asha-Seattle provided \$1000 in Nov.'97 to cover expenses for books, uniforms, educational trips.

SODWAC, Karnataka. The Society for Development of Women and Children aims at reinforcing school education for girls and providing an informal exposure to nutrition, health and family welfare. A site visit was conducted by Asha-MIT in Dec '97 and funding of \$1000 per year approved in March '98 to provide tutorial sessions to 50 girls.

KFI, U.P. The Rajghat Rural Center offers free education, health care and vocational training to the people in villages around Varanasi. A site visit was conducted in March '98 and funding (\$2000) for a mid-day meal scheme was approved by Asha St. Louis.

Star English High School, Maharashtra. This is an organization in Mumbai that educates children living in the Cheetah Camp slum. The project helps around 350 children a year and is supported with \$1500 through Asha LA's Asha * program, with an additional \$2000 provided by Asha Berkeley.

VISA, T.N. Village Improvement Service Association provides non formal education to economically backward school dropouts in villages of T. N. The children are

given three years of non formal schooling to enable them to have a minimum primary education. Funding for 3 years (\$2460/yr) has been approved by Asha MIT.

Sharda Kalyan Bhandar, W.B. The organization educates around 360 child laborers in Midnapore district. Uniforms, books, food and medical check ups are also provided. The project has been funded by Asha LA since December 1994. Further funding of \$1800 was approved in Dec. '97 after a site visit.



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and a blackboard.

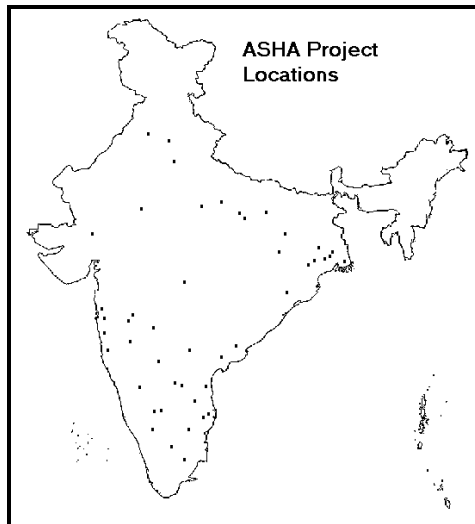
About 107 children (between 3-14 years old) from the neighboring areas attend the Jagaddal center. The other two centers at Sonarpur and Shyamnagar support a similar number of students.

Most of the teachers are educated housewives who live nearby. The children come from extremely impoverished backgrounds. Their parents are either daily laborers or domestic servants. The economic pressure on the families make these children prime targets for child labor. Many of these children have worked at tea stalls, cycle repair shops, waste paper collection units and fisheries.

In little over a year, the center has made significant progress in getting its students into the formal education system.

Lalitha Mahato, a 12 year old girl who studies at VESC, had this to say: "My father would have arranged for my marriage were it not for this center. In the beginning I could not read or write. Now I can read a newspaper, write and even recite poems by Rabindranath Tagore." This is the transformation effected in a year.

If you would like to contribute to this project, please contact Prithvi at (602) 829 9571.



Spotlight: VESC, W.B.

The Vivekananda Education Society was founded to address the problem of child labor in the 24 Parganas district. The Jagaddal center is located in a semi-rural neighborhood, about 20kms from Calcutta. The center is a tiny shed with bamboo walls and a thatched roof. The small classroom has straw mats on the floor, a few benches

By the year 2000 every second illiterate person in the world will be 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).

Please contact your local ASHA chapter and find out how you can help make a difference. You can make checks payable to "Asha for Education" and mail them to: **Asha-Stanford, PO Box 9485, Stanford, CA 94309.** 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.

Visit ASHA on the web at <http://www.ashanet.org/>