



ASHA KIRAN

The Asha for Education Newsletter

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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 AT&T is your long distance carrier, please call 1-800-426-0015, select 1 and enroll in this program. Choose "Asha" as your beneficiary association. AT&T donates a percentage of your bill to ASHA at no extra cost to you!

ASHA Web Info

Go to <http://www.ashanet.org/> and check out the various links!
Want to contact your local chapter? [chapters.html](#) has links to the 30+ Asha chapters.
Interested in Asha project activity? [projects.html](#) is the place to go.
Want to read earlier editions of *Asha Kiran*? [newsletters.html](#) has the old newsletters archived.
Got a burning issue to discuss? [/InfoShare/board.html](#) lets you post and read articles.
Maintaining chapter mailing lists? The mailing list manager at [/Mail](#) can help you out.
Need to keep track of chapter events? [/chapter_name/calendar](#) can make your life easier.

Asha: Past, Present and Future

Dear friends,

Seven years have passed since we started our journey on the Asha freeway. We have accomplished a lot in these short years. We are living proof that a group of people, united by their commitment, can make a strong impact on basic education in India. With every passing year we are gaining momentum through our remarkably creative efforts.

Take a look at our web page and notice the number and nature of projects we are working on today. About 300 of us volunteers are involved in 30 projects all over India! Together we are reaching out to children with the most challenging backgrounds. Blind children, abandoned children, slum dwelling kids, children in remote hills, tribal children, children of commercial sex workers, all receive our care. By taking responsibility for their education we are sending a strong message across the globe that there is hope for humanity.

Let us remember the driving force behind our positive results. Firstly, there is outstanding personal leadership. This tells me that Asha's heart is in the right place. Asha volunteers comprise a progressive, global team with actions that transcend borders.

Second, being an action group, we go one step beyond coming up with lofty ideas. We go out and execute them. Thirdly, the Internet: like no other volunteer generation before us we have a tool to network, integrate and direct our energies. We are riding at the very forefront of the Internet wave. Our highly successful Work-an-hour event is one stellar example that encompasses all of the above qualities.

As we welcome the New Year, I wish to give you my perspective on where we are heading. Asha is now a fast growing non-profit organization beginning to receive international attention. Next year, following the first All India Asha meeting on Dec 22nd, we will begin to work more closely with dedicated volunteers in India. This will give a tremendous boost to our ability to find and monitor projects in India. With many exciting new activities planned, the critical mass within Asha will expand. Our collective decision making that involves each Asha member will further strengthen and extend the freeway out into the future.

Thanks to every volunteer, visible and invisible, we are doing exceedingly well. Let us continue on our journey along the Asha freeway.

D P

(D Prakash, President, Asha for Education)

Arizona, Jan 30th,
Camelback High School. Phoenix
Contact Amy (602 917 9424)

Asha AZ presents the *Glimpses of India*, a cultural extravaganza with music, dances and food from all corners of India.

Volunteer Vignettes

Volunteers are Asha's biggest assets. Hundreds of people from different parts of the US and India have made time to take some action for education in India. Their ideas, energy and can do spirit have made Asha what it is today.

Volunteers perform all



The ghostly group at Stanford's Halloween bash. Volunteers at Stanford & Berkeley were instrumental in setting up the Asha web site and in getting Asha for Education registered as a non-profit organization.



Melli, Srikanth and Vinay posing for a photo at MIT. Vinay chairs the monthly meetings, Srikanth and Melli are active in the Projects & Strategy groups. Along with Seattle, MIT is one of the most organized Asha chapters. A visit to the chapter web page makes that evident. The Work an Hour program originated at Asha MIT.



kinds of functions: from creating web pages to visiting village schools in India, from keeping track of finances to cooking food for events. Most importantly, they enjoy volunteering and always have fun while doing the work! Please contact your local chapter if you wish to become an Asha volunteer.

Shailen, the Ashanet web whiz at Berkeley. Shailen maintains the extensive Asha web pages and dreams up new ways to leverage the power of the Internet.



Aditi, Asha NYC/NJ's youngest member! She got a mention in the local newspaper for asking her friends to make donations to Asha in lieu of birthday presents. She raised \$600 from this unique fundraiser.

Depending on your interest and free time, you can enlist for any number of Asha "employment" opportunities. One time volunteer opportunities abound at fundraising events. We always need people to man Asha booths at events, or to help sell tickets, put up flyers and cook/serve food. You can put your PR skills at work by being a liaison for local TV/Radio stations and print media. You can help

spread Asha's message of hope to a much wider audience by doing feature stories about Asha.

Most Asha chapters are not entirely India-centric in their outlook. They also believe in helping the local community. Computer literacy programs run by organizations such as NETDAY can help put your computer skills to use. A variety of students need training for basic applications such as Word and Excel.

You could visit Asha projects in India and meet teachers, children, parents and administrators, thus providing us with first hand information of project activities and providing you with an opportunity to get acquainted with the project beneficiaries.

One of the biggest tasks before Asha chapters is fund raising. You can expand the donor base by establishing relationships with the local community or work with local United Way agencies and set up donations through payroll deductions. Donor relations is another area where

Vidhi, Sharmila, Mohan and Murali at work during the annual India Day activities at Madison. Volunteers sell Asha merchandize (T-shirts, mugs) and raise awareness about Asha and education at such events.





Holding the banner aloft at the annual India Day parade in New York.

The group at LA after a productive meeting! Asha LA came up with the revolutionary Asha Star concept.



volunteers are welcome. We need people who can compile funding information and periodically update donors with Asha news.

Your creativity can be put to use in designing T-shirts, calendars and other Asha merchandize. You could also help prepare publicity material such as banners, brochures and flyers. Organizing talks by visiting activists and social workers helps raise awareness in the local community. In short, there are a wide variety of choices before you; all you need to do is to get in touch with your local Asha chapter and involve yourself in our activities.

WANTED!

Someone with good writing skills to prepare the Asha FAQ list (~25 hours total).
 Web designers to work on the Ashanet projects page. (~50 hours initially, 1 hour/week after that).
 Please send us an email at comments@ashanet.org if you're interested in these (or any other) positions.

1998 Projects Overview

This year, the various chapters of ASHA supported a variety of projects focussed at providing basic education to children. They are varied in terms of level of education - from elementary schools facilitating basic literacy to technical institutes for vocational skills - and reach - under-privileged children in remote rural areas to those in slums within bustling metropolis. Along with promoting basic education, associated issues pertaining to childcare such as health, nutrition also received attention. Some of the projects addressed the special needs of physically and mentally handicapped children and children of migrant workers. The effectiveness of these efforts was ensured by a careful study of the needs of targeted milieu, close coordination with grassroots organizations and measured disbursements of allocated funds.

Our relationship with some of our earlier projects was strengthened by means of continued participation and interest in its success. New methods of support were explored for child literacy activities that formed part of multi-faceted child development programs carried out by collaborating NGOs. Some of the projects involve cooperation with other social service organizations in tackling related issues of child labor and problems facing the girl child.

All the projects, irrespective of its size and geographic location, are a result of personal involvement, careful evaluation, and close monitoring by numerous dedicated Asha volunteers.

Basic Education

Enabling children to develop the skills of reading, writing and knowledge of numeracy and basic sciences formed a major goal of most of our projects. This involved development of school infrastructure, provision of supplies, educational aids, and at times designing curriculum for children. Along with education, the health and nutritional needs of the targeted children were also met by means of mid-day meals and health check-up schemes.

Located at Nedumbaram and Arungulam villages outside Madras, the CDDP project runs an evening school for children who rear cattle during the day. For most of the children, this is their first exposure to a school.



Non-formal Education

Making education relevant to the rural conditions with an optimum use of scarce resources has led to the development of non-formal teaching methods. The entire syllabus and teaching methodology is tailored to the needs of the local populace. Knowledge is inculcated not by rote but by comprehension. Classes are held at convenient to children who come from poor families in the villages (eg. families of laborers). Cultural skills like music, drama, dance etc. are also emphasized in addition to necessary reading and writing skills. The goal is to motivate the children and help them develop their talents and interests. The success of such methods of education can be seen in Asha supported projects at Tiruvannamalai-Sambuvarayar, TN and Andharmanik, WB. For spastic children, polio victims, deaf and dumb children of the Appropriate Learning Project in Bangalore, Karnataka, non-formal education also includes occupational, physio-, speech and special therapy.



Project Prerana provides impetus to the process of setting up Government schools in school-less villages in Raichur district, Karnataka. The project involves 12 villages and educates 2,000 children.



Facilitating Access to Education

To ensure equal opportunities of education to all, various economic, social and geographical barriers need to be overcome. For the children of tribal communities near Wadgaon, Maharashtra, a hostel attached to the school helps them to focus attention on their education, which otherwise would not

The Vigyanvahini Project runs a mobile science laboratory to demonstrate scientific experiments to students in the rural and backward areas of Maharashtra.

have been possible given their nomadic community lifestyle. In the Lokshala Project at Hoshangabad district, MP, supported by Asha and

UNICEF, local communities are mobilized to influence the government to open schools in their villages. In Kunthigram, Karnataka, SODWAC conducts tutorials to motivate girls to stay in school and also provides them informal exposure to nutrition and health care.

Community Involvement

This year, the active involvement and interest of the Indian community within the US in promoting educational efforts in India was seen in a greater number of projects being supported by "Asha Stars". The "Asha Stars" concept affords a convenient method for individuals to share their knowledge and financial resources in tackling specific educational

The Neelbagh residential school in Bangalore provides children of migrant families a good environment to grow in along with good education, food, medicare and a caring staff to nurture them.



projects in India. Such projects enable a greater level of personal involvement and interaction between the donors and direct beneficiaries. This increased community involvement helps in transforming child education from a mission statement to a more potent, widespread and sustaining movement.

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 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-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.