



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.

Night Fever!

Asha NYC/NJ chapter added another feather to its cap by organizing an entertaining evening of Indian Film music performed by Surbahaar, a not-for-profit music group consisting of professionals and students. This event was held at Kathryn Bache Miller Theater, New York on April 11, 1999. Asha was able to net more than \$20,000 from this event. Over 600 people attended this sold out show and judging by the enthusiastic response received from the audience, they definitely felt that they had gotten their money's worth!

New Chapters!

Asha would like to welcome its newest chapters and volunteers:

Athens, GA- Bala Narasimhan

E. Lansing, MI- Prasanna Pendse

Gainesville, FL- Sangeetha Shekar

Minnesota- Ashutosh Malaviya

Redlands, CA- Uma Rajasekaran

This kind of exponential growth is essential to make an impact on education in India. Please do contact your local Asha chapter and help us tilt the odds in the battle against poverty and apathy. And don't let the lack of a local chapter dampen your enthusiasm: You can start one!

Asha 2000

Since its inception eight years ago, Asha has been supporting NGOs in India with establishing and running schools and learning centers for underprivileged children. We have often asked ourselves questions like: Are we making a difference? Are we addressing the right issues? In the right way? Are we doing enough?

Asha 2000 is an attempt to answer fundamental questions about our effectiveness and understand the issues faced by the people that NGOs are trying to help. Asha 2000 was proposed by Shanmuga, an Asha volunteer from Princeton, who will be completing his Ph.D. studies in February 2000 and wants to settle in India doing social development work. He is leaving for India in November and plans to spend the next 18 months visiting 50 Asha projects all over the country, spending 3-5 days at each project. The goal of this effort is four-fold:

1. Comprehensive Project Reports

At the most basic level, each extended visit in itself provides a comprehensive look at some of the NGOs being supported by Asha. It answers questions such as, what is the organization trying to accomplish in the short and long-term. How does it plan to accomplish its goals? How does the local community feel about the effectiveness of the NGO? What role can Asha play besides providing funding? How is the organization working towards self-sustainability?

2. Comparative Project Study

By visiting various projects across the county, Shanmuga will be able to compare them. He would develop a hypothesis on which projects are more successful and why. This study would lead to sharing of successful ideas and strategies across various NGOs.

3. Understand the Issues

More importantly, it will help us understand the most critical issues at the grass-roots level. For example, poverty often cited as the single most important reason for children not attending school. However, the real issues are often quality, relevance and accessibility of education, rather than cost. Through Shanmuga's visit we hope to gain a better understanding of the social, economic and developmental issues facing India and determine common themes and differences.

4. Establishing the foundation

Asha 2000 is also a personal journey for Shanmuga. It will help him understand the challenges facing his endeavors towards doing social development work in India, and also the rewards of success.

The Princeton chapter of Asha is managing the effort from the US. Shanmuga will document his findings and communicate with Asha volunteers on a regular basis. The Berkeley chapter is supporting the cost of visiting five of the projects and some of the overall expenses of the trip. If you are interested in contributing towards this effort or would like to get more information, please contact us.

Asha Berkeley Volunteers

Arizona , November 20 th , 2 – 9 p.m. Contact B.S.B.Murthy (480 820 5394)	Children's Day - An exciting array of activities for the whole family- from the youngest children to adults, including games, balloon sculpture, face and T-shirt painting, music and dancing. Also, an opportunity to treat your taste buds to delicacies from all around India!
Berkeley , November 7 th , Contact Manali (510 845 4744)	Images of India' is an cultural show featuring a mix of cultural pageantry and festivity. An evening of song, dance and celebration, helping to raise funds for the projects undertaken by Asha..
Cleveland , November 5 th , Contact Ajit (716 932 9306)	On the occasion of Diwali , Asha-Cleveland has arranged for a dinner, entertainment and dance function where they will give a presentation on ASHA and Asha-Cleveland projects.
NYC/NJ , April 4 th , Contact Arun (201 792 4554)	Marathon Run for Literacy - Six brave souls including Shankar Srinivas NYC/NJ and Sridhar Desikan Princeton will give their blood, sweat, and tears (and more sweat) by running for Asha! Pledge for this event at http://www.ashanet.org/nycnj/marathon .
Princeton December 12 th , Contact Rajesh (732 452 0276)	Asha-Princeton is organizing a Kuchipudi dance recital by Siri Rama, who is based in Hong Kong, and is proficient in the Bharat Natyam and Kuchipudi styles of classical dance.
Urbana-Champaign , Nov. 14 th Contact Saurabh (217 328 1456)	Essay-writing Competition - children will be asked to write on a topic concerning education and its significance to them. There will be several prizes for the winners.
Washington DC , November 4 th , Contact Sukumar (202 667 6299)	Global Performing Arts presents the premiere screening of Deepa Mehta's long-awaited film "Earth" , from the director of the bold and controversial film "Fire" . This special event will benefit Asha.

Asha 2000 Projects

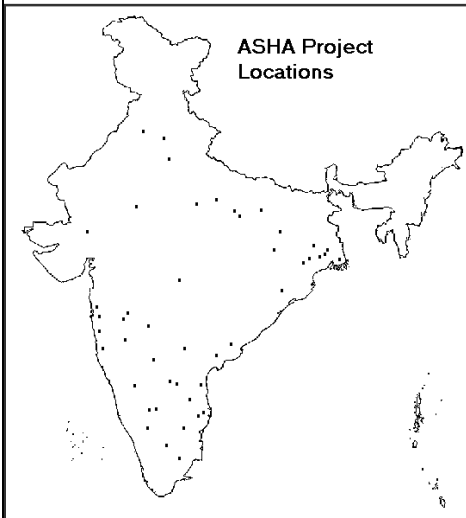
Beginning with Asha-Ballia, Shanmuga is slated to tour the length and breadth of India to perform comprehensive site visits. Here are some selective projects that will undergo his scrutiny:

Path of Light: The National Association for the Blind, Valsad, works with the visually impaired. Asha supports assistance to the students and procurement of special educational material. The school provides academic and vocational training for about 60 blind or partially blind children.

Key issues - We need to determine the status of the planned construction of a girls' hostel, and obtain information about methodology used for the blind.

VOICE: VOICE works towards the overall development of the street child. Volunteer-led classes are held on various railway platforms where children work, with a focus on teaching them to read and write, counseling them in hygiene issues, and encouraging them to join formal school.

Key issues - How do VOICE projects compare cost-wise with other non-formal educational programs? How is the progress of the children in the educational program monitored?



AID Bihar: The mission of the organization is to empower grassroots communities to decide and determine their own needs and development. The current project is for 11,000 carpet weaving child laborers. 89% of the children and

93% of their parents are illiterate. **Key issues** - Due to the contradictory nature of site visit reports, a clear understanding of the present situation is needed.

Little Stars: This project aims to run a school for the poorer sections starting from nursery level to the fifth standard. The school provides nutritional snacks, hygiene instruction and extra-curricular activities besides imparting the three R's.

Key issues - How are the children coping after primary education? Is there an effort to achieve self-sufficiency? If so, what are the main challenges being faced?

Anugriha: Asha funds will be used to set up a model-school providing an integral approach, philosophy of the mother, techniques of Doman (including field trips, flash cards, videos, 1:5 teaching etc) and to increase the capacity of the existing school and teacher-training center.

Key issues - Non-specific demand for the funds, low number of students. What are their expansion plans?

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 programs	Buy Asha merchandise (calendars, mugs and cards)

You can make checks payable to "Asha for Education" and mail them to: Asha for Education, Anthony Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. 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/>