

Asha *patrika*

Volume 1 Issue 3 June 2004



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NIYA LAUNCHES "TO BABA WITH LOVE" CAMPAIGN

May 22, 2004: Raleigh, USA and Mumbai, India



To commemorate the 90th birth anniversary of Baba Amte, celebrated Indian peacemaker and humanitarian, Niya will release an International quality photo book that explores his unique legacy and vision for human and environmental justice.

"To Baba with Love" is a campaign to financially and emotionally support the Photo Book project. We invite individuals who recognize Baba Amte's outstanding contributions to humanity and the earth to come forward and join us in publishing this book. We also invite foundations, non-profits, businesses, and community groups to endorse and support the campaign.

Baba Amte has been recognized with many international and national awards like the *U.N. Human Rights Prize*, the *Templeton Prize*, the *Magsaysay Award*, and the *Gandhi Peace Prize*. But while legends like Mother Teresa inspire people around the world, Baba Amte's practical vision and expansive legacy remain India's best kept secret. In this year of war and violence, a book on Baba inspires us, gives us hope, and shares a vision for the future that we can all build together.

Half-dreamer, half-realist, Baba tested his ideas in the real world in the most challenging circumstances. At Anandwan, Baba transformed a barren and rocky quarry into a Forest of Joy - Anandwan - with only Rs.14 (less than \$2), a lame cow, and six leprosy patients.

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Welcoming visitors from around the world, Anandwan has become a spectacular blueprint for self-development.

At Hemalkasa, Baba engaged with the disenfranchised Madia Gond tribe of Central India and the project he founded there has literally protected hundreds of thousands of lives over the past 30 years.

Baba campaigned tirelessly for peace and justice - he led the "*Knit India*" campaign across the length and breadth of the country, and moved to the banks of the Narmada river for more than a decade to protest the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam which threatens to decimate an ancient ecosystem and destroy the homes and lives of its tribal residents.

His recipe for creative humanism is best expressed in a simple verse:

*"I sought my soul, my soul I could not see,
I sought my God, my God elude me, I
sought my brother, and I found all the three."*

- Anonymous

Visit the website to learn more about Baba Amte and how you can get involved in creating this historic book.

<http://baba.niya.org>

The book is scheduled for release in December 2004.

Contacts:

Neesha Mirchandani (US):

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FEEDBACK ON *Patrika*

**Please send your comments,
questions, queries, suggestions to**

secretary at ashanet dot org

Disclaimer: The views expressed in Asha Patrika are not necessarily those of Asha For Education. The views of the editor(s) do not necessarily reflect those of Asha and the views expressed by volunteers do not necessarily reflect those of the editor(s).

Editorial



At the West Coast conference, there was a strong agreement on the need for chapters and volunteers to exchange ideas and experiences. A need was also expressed to make the *Patrika* more accessible. The current issue and the previous issues of the *Patrika* are now available through a simple link:

www.ashanet.org/patrika.html

Based on feedback, we will try to make the *Patrika* index searchable. With this issue of the *Patrika*, we are starting two new columns: *More than Asha* and *Ask and Know*.

More than Asha will be contributions from project partners and other like-minded organisations that would like to tell more about their activities and ideas. In a sense, this is make us more aware of other domains of development, while we work with our project partners. These contributions will, again, have to be sent in by Asha volunteers.

Ask And Know is a FAQ section. There are times when all of us search for answers to simple questions on Asha and donot find them. It is almost like not finding the key to the house while going outdoors. This section will address 2-3 questions each issue.

Volunteers are welcome to send their questions to *editor at ashanet dot org* or *secretary at ashanet dot org* and if there are not answers available on the website or the asha-wide coordination/project lists, then the questions will be sent out on asha-wide for all volunteers to take a shot at answering them. There is also a FAQ list that has been compiled by a bunch of volunteers, and we will be utilising that resource too for this section.

The utility of Asha *Patrika* is dependent on how much the volunteers use it and also contribute to it. All volunteers are welcome to share any thoughts that they feel the rest of Asha will benefit from. At the West Coast conference, SKI, from Asha-MHV brought to our notice a verse from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice:

*"The quality of mercy is not strained.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."*

Paraphrasing SKI's words, if one were to substitute "mercy" with "Asha-volunteering", the import of the verse would be just as true. Through Asha, not only do we impact the life of thousands of children and change them for the better, we also impact our lives and change it for the better. The *Patrika* is one place where we can share the profit of such experiences.

Chap coords, please forward the *Patrika* issues to your appropriate chapter lists.

In Focus

ARZ - Direct Impact

Sujatha, Asha Pune

Arz, Goa works on the issue of Trafficking in Humans for commercial sexual exploitation (brothel-based prostitution) at Baina Beach, Vasco da Gama, Goa.

Arz perceives trafficking in humans as an organised crime and the focus of its interventions is from the point of view of crime and victimisation. The work of Arz is based on an anti-trafficking model that involves intervention with all groups involved in trafficking – victims, perpetrators and vulnerable persons, which includes children, women and men in

the Baina Beach community. This involves simultaneous intervention at the levels of amelioration of situation, rehabilitation and prevention. Arz follows a community-based approach.

Asha-Colorado funds the skill development program at Arz. The program is a means to impart basic sewing skills to girls so as to empower them towards earning a livelihood. This program is mainly targeted at children who are most vulnerable to prostitution viz. adolescents who could be lured or forced into the trade. Apart from imparting tailoring skills an effort is made towards imparting behavioral and life skills to the children. Towards this effect the instructors undertake various activities like Math classes, General Knowledge sessions et. Al. The progress of each child is tracked individually and counseling activities are also undertaken.

DIRECT IMPACT: Direct-Impact is a recent initiative at Asha-Pune that aims to provide support to Pune based NGO's working in the field of education, in a comprehensive and sustained manner. Towards this effect, we seek to build a volunteer base of committed individuals interested in working for the underprivileged.

Objectives:

- To work with select NGO's in Pune in identifying and defining volunteering opportunities with these NGO's.
- To build a network of people interested in and committed to volunteering directly with NGO's.
- To set up a sustainable system by which volunteers can be placed in suitable "slots" with NGO's. (These volunteers need not be members of Asha-Pune)

Guiding principle:

- NGO's need some degree of regularity or sustained commitment if they are to benefit from the efforts of volunteers. So this group's core responsibility would be to promise volunteers to NGO's only if sustained commitment can be promised by this group (not necessarily as individuals but as a group).

Current Efforts:

English classes are being conducted at Akshardeep, an NGO which educates out of school children in the Bibvewadi area in Pune. It was felt that the children would benefit from an elementary knowledge of the English language. The current instructors at Akshardeep knew very little English them-

selves and hence were unable to teach the language.

The classes are being conducted at two levels –

- a) For the instructors who have some understanding of the language and
- b) For students, mostly in the 6-12 years age group who may have little or no exposure to the language.

Contact information:

Arz - Sanjog Jolly

(sanjog_jolly at persistent dot co dot in)

Direct Impact - Sanjog Jolly

(ashapune-directimpact at yahogroups dot com

or

sanjog_jolly at persistent dot co dot in)

GYANGANGA

BITS and Asha: Partnering to bring about Socio-Economic change

Ajay Dalmia, Asha Yale

Even though so many students spend some of their crucial years in BITS, very few have heard of Jherli. Jherli, one of the most underdeveloped, is a Gram Panchayat in the Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan. Jherli, Raila and Garinda are the three villages that fall under the Panchayat with a population totaling to more than 5,000 people. The villagers make a living through farming, daily-wage labor, and by running small businesses. Like many of the small villages in Rajasthan and throughout India, unemployment, illiteracy, and poverty are rampant. There is an inherent lack of accessibility to basic facilities, such as clean water and consistent electricity, and a significant need for a stronger infrastructure.

BITS, at the Pilani campus, is taking action to help its neighbors. “We recognize that as a major entity in this community, BITS must take responsibility to help improve the educational opportunities available for children in surrounding villages,” says Dr. Motilal Dash, Professor BITS Pilani. Dr. Dash is the current lead on the Gyanganga project; a project to help improve the quality of primary and secondary education in the district.

While most villagers recognize the importance of educating their children, the dearth of proper school buildings and the scarcity of teachers are not conducive to learning. Through the Gyanganga project, Dr Dash and fellow Bitsians are working to change that. There is now an increased awareness of quality education and the importance of it for both boys and girls alike. The number of children attending school is higher and the dropout rate is lower. The impact of healthcare education on cleanliness, general hygiene and environment is also visible among villages. Villagers are not only aware about general healthcare, but also about the hazards of eating pan masala, drinking alcohol, chewing tobacco and malnutrition to name a few.

Though the Gyanganga project was conceived in 2001, it only became a reality when initial funding was received from Asha for Education, a non-profit organization dedicated to catalyzing socio-economic change in India through education. Dr. Dash: “We are so pleased to partner with an organization, such as Asha for Education, to support our efforts to create quality learning experiences for all children in the district.” He adds, “With their assistance, we have been able to create and sustain a very successful project that will not only help improve the lives’ of these villagers, but also our commu-

nity as a whole.” With the support of Asha, the Gyanganga project has developed programs to assist villagers in finding alternate sources of income, and in creating power and water resource management schemes. A cooperative spirit is being fostered between the rural and urban, between the educated and illiterate, and between the privileged and underprivileged; opposite spectrums of society learning from each other and cultivating change.

Efforts such as these can only be sustained if all of us with a desire to create change, in small or even unimaginable ways commit our passion, energy, and time. I know it is easy getting caught up in our daily life. But if we can take a moment, just a moment to recognize what all of us can give back to a culture and heritage that has contributed to the foundation of our values and ideals we can do wonders.

If you would like to get involved with the project or would like to make a donation to further its efforts, please visit

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=319>

or send an email to

Ajay Dalmia at ajaymona@yahoo.com

or to

Dr. Motilal Dash at

dash@bits-pilani.ac.in.

Together, we can make a difference in the world.



ASK AND KNOW

Q: Can you give a typical project lifecycle?

A: Typical project cycle includes:

- (i) Direct perception of the needs through Site visits by volunteers
- (ii) Proposal preparation
- (iii) Proposal submission and presentation to an Asha chapter and discussion/ decision on funding
- (iv) Fundraising to meet the needs
- (v) Tracking progress and working with other initiatives in Asha to support the project in non-monetary ways.
- (vi) Promoting the project to self-reliance
- (vii) Exit when project is proceeding in a stable way to self-reliance and Asha's help is no longer necessary

Q: What are some good time management techniques that Asha volunteers can use to balance their personal lives, professional lives and Asha volunteering?

A: Asha believes in accountability coming from individual volunteers than from a need imposed top-down. This in turn boils down to the volunteers identifying the amount of time they can devote to Asha work and managing it well to aid the project's and chapter's progress. Some pointers towards this are available at:

<http://www.ashanet.org/Dbase/asha-12/posters/Time-Management-And-Asha.ppt>



Coordination Items

ASHA PROJECTS PAGES

Shailen Mistry,

Asha DB Dev, NYC/NJ

Projects define Asha.

Central to everything we do are our projects. Fundraising, publicity, recruiting, awareness, and meetings all work towards the bottom line of helping our projects in India.

One of the characteristics of Asha is that we are a transparent organization. Our financials, conferences, minutes, and projects information are all open to the public. The projects pages are a key part of showing Asha's accountability to our donors as well as visitors to our website.

We get thousands of visitors to the www.ashanet.org website daily. The two links that have the largest number of hits are the chapters page and the projects page. The project pages on the Asha website started off as a pages developed by each chapter in the chapter website. Then there was a move to get all the projects information in one place that was available on the main Asha website.

The initial project pages were simple data files with info on each project in each state in text format. This information was not easy to update as one of the webmasters had to make the changes. In 2002, a web based database was started that could be accessed by all chapters and project contacts. Financial information on all projects dating back to 1991 were added to the database.

Soon, we had very robust, dynamic Asha project pages that can be viewed in many ways <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/>

By State

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/state.php>

By Chapter

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/chapter.php>

By Funding (funding by year, project, or chapter)

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/funding.php>

By Status, Project Type, or Focus

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-category.php>

It is the responsibility of each project contact to make sure the project information on the website is kept up to date. Chapters are also responsible to make sure all their project financials are maintained. Chapter project coordinators can also update the database.

If you are a project contact, chapter coordinator, chapter treasurer, or chapter projects coordinator and need access to update the projects page through the simple web interface, please email secretary at ashanet.org or webmaster at ashanet.org with your name, chapter affiliation, and project affiliation.

SUMMARY OF MONTHLY COORDINATION CALL

(Netika, Asha- SV)

Attendees: Netika (SV), Minali (CO), Naresh (CO), Arvind (Florida), Vignesh (St. Louis), Venkat (Salt Lake City), Sathya (Asha CO), Melli (Boston), Mehar (Munich), Manoj, Shailen (NYC-NJ), Anand (SV)

*) IRS tax filing has been completed. Nagi (NYC/NJ) and Ajith (Detroit) are working on getting the audit done for the year. *) Asha-wide intranet is being developed on the model of the SV intranet. This will be a knowledge resource and coordination resource for archiving decisions, discussions and other legal documents. The prototype is being prepared by the web team

and will be testing in about a month's time.

*) Agenda for the East Coast conference is shaping well with inputs from volunteers and inputs from the West Coast conference. Discussions will be carried on from the WC coast.

*) WAH reviews completed and all documents have been uploaded to InfoShare. We seem to be revisiting the same questions on fund raising targets every year and knowledge transfer is not taking place.

*) There is a need for a clear non-discriminatory policy statement in Asha's constitution. This is needed especially by many corporate donors, especially since the enactment of the Patriot Act. Many not-for-profit

organisations have implemented this and we need to work on the appropriate amendment.

*) Some legalities of having a Friends-of-Asha board are being worked on and will be presented to Asha-wide with complete details.

*) large number of requests to start new chapters is beginning to strain the asha-wide mentor group. In order to address bandwidth issues, we either need more volunteers stepping forward to help with the mentoring

process or need to slow down on adding new chapters.

*) A PR-proposal to take a pro-active approach in internal Asha awareness, media outreach and website work is in place. Asha-Chicago is considering it for recommending to the ARC process.

*) Asha Europe financials have not been taken into account for the current financial statement. We need to work on more streamlined processes for submitting financial information.

*) Vasundhara project from Maharashtra has been submitted for the Tech Museum Awards.

*) Clear need for doing better on the coordination team transition process. The Intranet will hopefully help with the documentation needed for this.

SUMMARY OF MONTHLY PROJECTS CALL

(Anand, Asha SV)

Attendees: Minali (Colorado), Murali (Boston), Anand (SV), Vignesh (St. Louis), Satarupa (SV), Melli (Boston), Parthanil (Cornell), Sabita (SV), Madhav (DC), Devyani (DC), Venkata (USC)

*) Proposals database almost done, a few bugs being worked on by Shailen (NYC) and Sabita (SV). Many chapters using this system. The aim is to enable all chapters to use this system. Need to actively involve the

Europe chapters too.

*) WAH projects votes due on 20th. Discussion on concurrence between projects related to healthcare and Asha's mission statement need to be addressed at larger fora. For now, the mandate on WAH projects rests with the chapters' votes.

*) Need for a projects process in Asha, especially to address volunteer burnout, lack of quality followup with some projects, and conflict of interest issues in the relation between Asha volunteers and project partners. Some suggestions from the West Coast conference will be presented for discussion at the East Coast conference and Mid West Conference. Proposal will be presented to all chapters.

*) Asha-AAPI initiative being coordinated by Sharique (Princeton) and will start with focus on pediatric AIDS and preventable blindness. More information available on asha-healthcare initiative. Need volunteers to help with this effort.

*) Asha PR effort to be project focussed this year. Looking for articles on how Asha has impacted projects. Looking at showcasing it on our website, media etc. Send articles to prteam@ashanet.org. Length is flexible. Media will send specifications, and PR team can work with the steward to tailor to those specifications if/when needed.
