

# Asha Chennai Overview

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By

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# Asha Chennai

- Over the last few years Asha has been moving away from a project centric view point to a more integrated approach to attain the goal of Universal Quality Education in India by 15th August 2047 (UQE 2047). Asha Chennai also views its projects from this broader and inclusive perspective.
- Asha Chennai has since inception played the role of a project implementor and facilitator rather than that of a funding agency. The funding for most of the Asha Chennai projects come from other non-Indian chapters of Asha. Asha Chennai believes that the goal of UQE 2047 cannot be realized without the active participation of all the drivers concerned (Government, NGOs, Corporations etc.). Asha Chennai also believes that Technology must be effectively leveraged to accelerate the path towards this goal.
- Asha Chennai projects tend to involve all the above identified drivers with Asha playing the role of an integrator or facilitator. For instance in the Urur Olcott school, the salaries for most of the teachers and the money for the midday noon meal scheme are already being paid by the government. Some of the existing infrastructure is paid for by Rotary club and other such sponsors. Asha makes this infrastructure perform to the best by providing the essential monetary and non-monetary assistance and by constantly monitoring the project. Most of Asha Chennai's projects are of a similar nature.

# Current Projects - 1

- **Asha Scholarships:** Asha Chennai identifies children from under privileged background, going to different schools and offers them scholarships that cover their school fees, books and uniform.
- **Project Build:** This project aims to bring back to the fold of education children of migrant brick kiln laborers in the Thiruvallur district. This would operate non-formal classes next to the brick kilns so that during their days in the brick kiln they continue their education that allows them to go back and join their schools when they return to their homes.
- **Project Pride:** The aim of this project is to make Besant Nagar/Urur Kuppam area a model area for Chennai. The activities initially included cleaning up the beach etc. The project now focuses primarily on improvements to the Urur Olcott School and the Urur Kuppam Balwadi.

## Current Projects - 2

- **Project Bridge** : The intention behind the project is to create a educational content development and teacher training center for Technology Assisted Learning (TAL) at the Olcott Memorial High School. It must be noted that OMHS is a Tamil medium school for the underprivileged run by the Theosophical society. We believe this can become a source of contents for all our projects and other schools for under-privileged children.
- **Udhavum Karangal**: Udhavum Karangal is a well-known charitable institution in Chennai. Our project with them currently is to spread the benefits of Technology Assisted Learning to the children at their school in Thiruverkadu.
- **Seva Chakra**: Seva Chakra runs an Orphanage. Asha Chennai helped Seva Chakra by funding the ongoing expenses at their Computer center.

# Asha Scholarships

## Chennai, Tamil Nadu

### – Background

- While many of the projects of Asha-Chennai focus on helping schools that educate under-privileged children, we felt there is also a need to help under-privileged children who attend other schools spread all over the city. In addition to providing financial assistance to these children we believe the Asha volunteers can provide alternate role models and provide valuable mentoring to these children.
- To this end the Asha Scholarships project aims to fund the school fees and cost of uniform and books for children from 1st standard to college (LKG and UKG in exceptional cases). The children should be from under-privileged background and be nominated by a nominee who should be an Asha volunteer or someone trusted by Asha. The nominee would play an active role in mentoring the children

# Asha Chennai Scholarships - 2

## – **Project Goals**

- Reach a wide and diverse cross-section of children spread over the metropolitan area of Chennai.
- Provide active mentoring and funding to empower the children to become fully functional adults.

## – **Current Focus Items**

- Complete disbursements for 2002-2003
- Raise funding for the 2003-2004 program.
- Evaluate children for 2003-2004.

# Asha Chennai Scholarships - Financials

- Total received/in pipeline so far for Scholarships Rs. 1,78,413
- Total to be spent for Scholarships Rs. 1,61,419
- Total balance expected at end of 2002-2003 Rs. 16,994
- Total students benefited 49
- Average expense per student Rs. 3294/Year
  
- Money is left over from this year's funds, which we propose to use for
  - a) for some more very needy students who have requested for asha help during the course of the year.
  - b) for some students who have had to pay more than their estimates due to increase in school fees during the course of the year.
  
- Money left over due to the following reasons -
  - some students have not been given support because of lack of proof of payments,
  - few of students have taken less than they asked for as the course they have taken up did not require the expected fees, their financial circumstance improved ( being to earn while learning).

## Asha Chennai Scholarships - Future

- Lessons learned applied for next academic year
- Improve mentoring programs - use of retired people suggested
- Stretching the dollar initiatives - reach more needy people with current budget
- Attempt to increase budget for 2003-2004 based on feedback and expressed need
- Focus on self sustainability at the individual level
- Apply lessons learned from Sowbhagya Trust activities (Asha SV project) and Women's India Association

# Asha-Build

## Migrant Brick Workers

### Chennai, Tamil Nadu

- **Alternative School, Student/Teacher ratio - 75:3, 50/50 boy/girls**
- Growing awareness about child labor in India - focused only on certain sectors such as the firecracker, match, and beedi industries
- Most neglected sectors is brick industries. More than 80,000 children are working in brick industries near Chennai city alone. These children face a more difficult situation than child laborers in other industries because they are the children of migrant workers. They accompany their parents to the brick chambers and assist their parents in their work. Since their location changes, it is difficult for them to enroll in a full time school. They also face respiratory illnesses, malnourishment and dire living conditions.
- The Pasumai Trust was involved educating the child labor in brick industries from 1997 onwards. We have been running 5 motivation centers for the children in 5 brick chambers, nearly 100 children are attending these centers. The objective of these centers is to provide basic literacy and numeric skills and motivate the children to continue their formal education.
- We have accomplished in instituting a system by which children can obtain transfer certificates and join two schools - one in the village and the other near the brick kiln in each school year. This ensures the continuity of the children's education.

# Project Build - Project Goals

- To create educational opportunities for the children working in brick industries.
- To motivate children to enroll and continue their formal education.
- To provide nutritious supplementary food for children.
- To carry on advocacy and campaigning activities to change the education policies of the government to accommodate the needs of migrant labor children.
- To organize the parents (Workers in brick industries) of the children working in brick kilns.
- To create awareness about child labor in brick industries.

## Project Build - Some pictures



# Project Build



# Project Build



# Project Build - Current Focus Items

- Continue with operations that have been started
- started Jan22, 2003- Tamarai- 50
- started Jan29, 2003- Roja- 20
- started Feb 5, 2003- Chembarathi - 56
- Schools work on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
- Wednesdays are used by the teachers for the discussions, lesson planning and sharing of experiences.
- Developing a nutrition program including providing nutritious food for the children and health education for women and children.
- Encouraging parents to join the Manual Workers Welfare Board where they will receive benefits such as insurance, maternity benefits, and scholarships for children.
- Encouraging parents to form a trade union.

# Project Build - Financials

- Total received/in pipeline so far for Build Rs. 3,00,009
  - Total to be spent for Build Rs. 1,77,000
  - Total balance expected so far Rs. 1,23,900
  - Total students benefited 126
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- Current balance expected to carry project forward until July 2003
  - Most of the initial expenses related to start-up and capital costs etc

# Asha Chennai - Finding a home in US

- Need a “mirror” chapter to help transfer funds
- Virtual chapter in place with own treasurer and regular meetings
- Chapter on ground with highly credible Asha team
- Partnerships with IIT Chennai, other corporates
- Follow all Asha guidelines for project approval, evaluation and analysis
- Do not want to set precedent for creation of virtual chapters to send money
- Only alternative is to create another chapter - most are willing
- Princeton and my involvement
- Future of Princeton and of Asha for Education