

6-monthly accounts of PALAS

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To: Chidambaram Narayanan <chidu.narayanan@gmail.com>, Shyam Chikatamarla <shyam_css@yahoo.com>

Dear Chidu and Friends of ASHA Zurich

2007 continues with our efforts to reach adivasi children in 25 centres spread over the Satpuda foothills in Northern Shirpur Taluka, District Dhule, Maharashtra

Season's Note

The Winter of Shirpur is upon us. Temperatures plunge to 15 Deg.Cen. maybe even lower on the hillsides. With small hearths, and meagre clothing, adivasis stand up to the elements. It is also the Season of labour migrations. The monsoon devastation left many fields cropless occasioning searches for casual labour wages.

It is also a Season of human celebration. Simple village fairs where little trinkets from beads to bangles are as avidly gazed at and sought after as capitalist glitter rivets affluent buyers. There are Death Remembrances celebrated with ritual mourning followed by great community meals where a spot of mutton swims in fiery gravy to be mopped up by jowar or bajra bhakars, accompanied by the swill of home brewed spirits (from mohua or jaggery fermentations). There are dances to the great resounding drums. At times a brawl gets out of hand. Weddings are held in adivasi social idiom bereft of the overly religious pretensions of affluent society. Here again a reverse of Indian custom takes place with the bride's party getting the price of a wife from the groom's family.

Labour wages come from plucking cotton, shelling groundnut, migrating for sugar-cane cutting, or as "petty" labour (in India the cultural denigration of labour makes for poor wages as compared to the elite earnings of the chosen classes).

Celebration and Labour Occupation both take their toll of our - and other - educational programmes. The distances being long to get to another village, people take more time to reach the venue of a feast or to travel to work sites. They take the children with them for want of a better option. Regular classes suffer. But we keep doing what we can with the children still in their hamlets. If the family returns we begin with the children again.

NEW TEACHING AIDS: LEARNING TENT

We've got designed a wall-panel coloured flex scenario of a small village (dimensions 4' x 5') on the lower border of which we have printed boldly the most commonly used Devnagiri Alphabets. Children match alphabets with the pictures of the scene. They identify colours, count items, and use depictions in a story line. They also can discuss local geography, agriculture, gram panchayat issues devolving from the scenario. We are launching this aid in the current month of jan.2007. Each panel costs Rs.300. Besides our Shirpur PALAS classes, Janseva Nandurbar, learning centres in Raigad District, and Nashik's tribal north west will also be using the flex panels.

We hope to produce a series of such panels to create a new learning environment. Such panels could form a LEARNING TENT for children to identify more easily with themes like: environment, health, organic farming, watershed development, English learning, etc.

WOULD YOU HAVE ANY DONORS INTERESTED IN FINANCING ANY PARTICULAR THEME. Production costs amount to Rs.16,000. If we print say 500 such panels the break down of production plus duplication printing costs would amount to Rs.332-350 per panel. Even if we print less the production costs would remain constant for each panel.

That's just in case anyone is interested.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE

We are happy to have Fr.Augustine D'Mello join our PALAS team with special charge of our adivasi education outreach. It gives me space to visit and assist other such learning centres in Maharashtra and contribute the PALAS experience to support such ventures. Our assistance includes, teaching aids, teachers' training, organisational consultation.

LEARNING CENTRES

List of Learning Centres that survived (January 1, 2007)

| | Name of Teacher: |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Rampura | Rohidas Sursing |
| 2. Vadpura | Rohidas Sursing |
| 3. Telyamulya | Ambaram Munga |
| 4. Vahanyapani (<i>suspended from Jan.2007, Bigger Children go to work, numbers fall</i>) | Ambaram Munga |
| 5. Tembepada | Virsing Bahadur |
| 6. Junapani | Virsing Bahadur |
| 7. Chundi | Bhaiya Raila |
| 8. Boidapada (<i>Reopened after the floods subsided</i>) | Bhaiya Raila |
| 9. Kharia (<i>To have village meeting before continuing in Jan.2007</i>) | Jagan Pawara |
| 10. Ratanpada | Sursing Pawara |
| 11. Marutipada (<i>Teacher shifts family into these hills to access class more easily</i>) | Dilwar Jeeksing |
| 12. Dabadevei | Dilwar Jeeksing |
| 13. Kadaipani (Kekdiapada) | Bharat Rumalya |
| 14. Kadaipani (Jamapada) | Bharat Rumalya |
| 15. Kalapani (<i>Local teacher replaces Tarasing</i>) | Chagan Kaharia |
| 16. Nimbari | Tarasing Chetram |
| 17. Batwa | Sunil Nansing |
| 18. Khajanaik | Sunil Nansing |
| 19. Garboidi - I | Karamsing Rupsing |
| 20. Chakachaki | Karamsing Rupsing |
| 21. Kuyakundi | Dilip Kuwarsing |
| 22. Chapryapani | Dilip Kuwarsing |
| 23. Bomliapada | Jayakumar Maharu |
| 24. Khamkheda | Shevji Khajan |
| 25. Hegaon | Shevji Khajan |
| 26. Roshnipada (<i>To close in Jan '07, attendance drops</i>) | Sampat More |
| 27. Piprapada | Sampat More |
| 28. Moida | Dharmendra Pawara |
| 29. Garboidi - II | Bhimsing Pawara |

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Consolidation of the previous months' learning.

Advances in language and maths

Attention to English (oral) - special trainings begun for Teachers in January. They will be held every month with a two day workshop at the end of the accademic year (around April 2007).

BUDGET FROM JUNE 2006 TO DECEMBER 2006

I. Teachers' Stipends (*Note: Totals vary from month to month due to deductions for teachers' missing classdays or suspension of classes during periods when children migrate or are engaged in other chores*)

1. June Rs. 24,415
2. July Rs. 22,467
3. August Rs. 21,080
4. September Rs. 13,370

5. October Rs. 20,430
6. November Rs. 20,590

Total Rs.1,22,352

II. Teachers' Inservice Training

1. June Rs.735
2. July Rs.625
3. August Rs.1250
4. September Rs. 600
5. October Rs. 500
6. November Rs. 500

Total Rs.4,210

III. Coordinator's Stipend @ Rs.2,000 for 6 months

Total Rs.12,000

IV. Total Expenses on the Programme

I + II + III = Rs. 1,38,562

V. Received from ASHA- Zurich on August 4, 2006, credited to State Bank of India, Shirpur

Rs.1,54,544
Less Expenses Rs.1,38,562

Balance Rs. 15,982

Note:- I have not yet obtained the printing costs of the new teaching aids which would amount to the remaining balance (even more)

VI. Request for Second Instalment

Our Programme needs the Second Instalment from ASHA. Please arrange to send us the help soon. If there is any further clarification I shall be happy to provide information.

Thank you and Best Wishes for the Times to Come.

Fr.Godfrey D'Lima

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