

# Silicon Valley Chapter

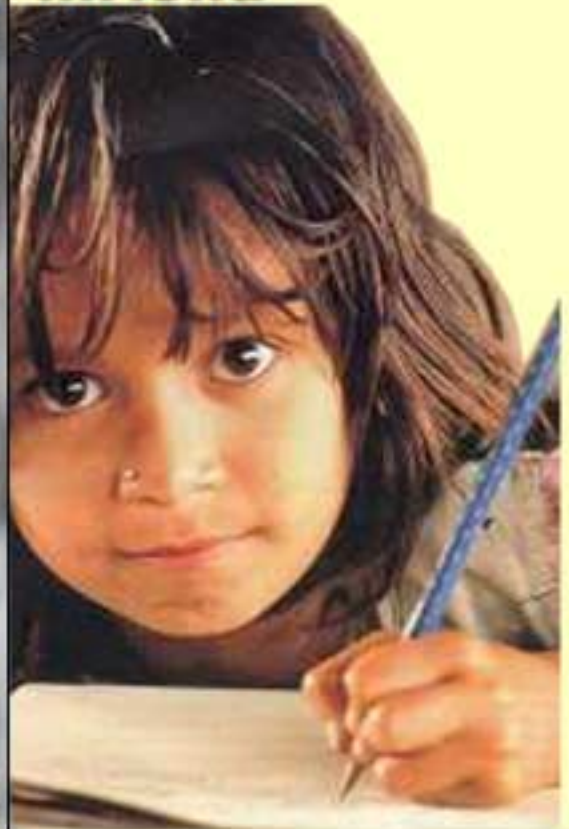


## Annual Report

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Our hearts  
Their minds  
One  
Hope

...Asha



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## 1. Introduction

Asha for Education completed ten years in 2001.

To commemorate this occasion, a conference was organized at Berkeley, CA in May 2001. More than 200 Asha-USA volunteers as well as volunteers from Asha-India attended the conference. It was inspiring to see volunteers spend their time and money to travel to this conference and discuss how best to catalyze socio-economic change through the education of underprivileged children.

Asha for Education has come a long way since its humble beginnings in Berkeley, where it was started by a handful of PhD scholars who were dedicated to the cause of bringing education to the underprivileged children of India. Today there are more than 30 chapters in the USA, about seven in India, and others in the UK, Singapore, Australia and Canada. Asha continues to expand, and new chapters are currently being started in Germany and Switzerland.

Asha Silicon Valley (Asha SV), our chapter, was founded in 1998, when professionals decided to start a new chapter in this area. Since then Asha SV has grown tremendously in spirit and strength. There are approximately 300 volunteers associated with the chapter of whom about 30 actively execute tasks on a day-to-day basis. Today we support more than 30 projects annually. In 2001 we disbursed around \$130,000 towards the cause of education for the underprivileged.

The year 2001 is a significant year in the calendar of basic education in India. This marks the year when the 93<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the Indian Constitution was passed making education a fundamental right for all children aged 6 through 14. This marks the first step towards making the governments at the state and national level accountable for the education scenario in the country. Though there are those who feel that the way the amendment is worded weakens its reach, it still marks a step in the right direction.

In this report, we would like to share with you how we at Asha SV have directed our efforts during the year 2001. To give you a clear understanding of what sponsors' contributions are achieving, we showcase a few projects and discuss their work in detail.

## 2. Literacy in India

The educational scenario in India perhaps is best described by the oft-quoted phrase 'India is a land of contradictions'. While many of us here in Silicon Valley have benefited and succeeded directly due to the education system in India, it is an unfortunate fact that we are among the small percentage that have had the opportunity to get an education at all.

The average literacy rate in India is 65.38%. A whopping 460,300,252 people are illiterate. In fact, the average Indian male has attended a mere 2.9 years of schooling and the average female only 1.8 years.

Many Asha projects focus on the girl child, since there is also a big differential between the opportunities given to women vs. men in our country. Therefore, while 75.85% of males are literate, only 54.16% percent of females can say the same.

As you can see from the table below, there is also huge range of literacy levels between the various states of India as well. While some states are well above the average literacy rate of 65.38%, many populous states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have a long way to go. There is also a big disparity between the urban and rural areas of India. While over 80% of urbanites are literate, only 59.40% of their rural counterparts can say the same. Due to all these differentials, Asha for Education is committed to supporting projects in the underserved sections of the country.

The 2001 Census showed that we are making progress. India's literacy rates recorded an impressive jump of 13.17 percentage points from 52.21% in 1991 to 65.38% in 2001. The male-female differential also decreased, from 28.84 percentage points shown in the 1991 Census to 21.70 percentage points in 2001. Let us work towards improving these statistics even more in the coming years.

Here are the hard figures from the 2001 census that organizations like Asha seek to improve with your help:

State	Male	Female	Persons
Bihar	60.32	33.57	47.53
Jharkhand	67.94	39.38	54.13
Jammu and Kashmir	65.75	41.82	54.46
Arunachal Pradesh	64.07	44.24	54.74
Uttar Pradesh	70.23	42.98	57.36
Dadra Nagar Haveli	73.32	42.99	60.03
Rajasthan	76.46	44.34	61.03
Andhra Pradesh	70.85	51.17	61.11
Meghalaya	66.14	60.41	63.31
Orissa	75.95	50.97	63.61
Madhya Pradesh	76.80	50.28	64.11
Assam	71.93	56.03	64.28
Chhatisgarh	77.86	52.40	65.18
Karnataka	76.29	57.45	67.04
Nagaland	71.77	61.92	67.11
Haryana	79.25	56.31	68.59
Manipur	77.87	59.70	68.87
West Bengal	77.58	60.22	69.22
Sikkim	76.73	61.46	69.68
Punjab	75.63	63.55	69.95
Gujarat	80.5	58.60	69.97
Uttaranchal	84.01	60.26	72.28
Tamil Nadu	82.33	64.55	73.47
Tripura	81.47	65.41	73.66
Himachal Pradesh	86.02	68.08	77.13
Maharashtra	86.27	67.51	77.27
Daman & Diu	88.40	70.37	81.09
Andaman & Nicobar	86.07	75.29	81.18
Pondicherry	88.89	74.13	81.49
Chandigarh	85.65	76.65	81.76
Delhi	87.37	75.00	81.82
Goa	88.88	75.51	82.32
Lakshadweep	93.15	81.56	87.52
Mizoram	90.69	86.13	88.49
Kerala	94.20	87.86	90.92
<b>India</b>	<b>75.85</b>	<b>54.16</b>	<b>65.38</b>

*Literacy in India Source: Census 2001*

### 3. Our Projects

With your support, the volunteers of Asha SV have done their best to make a difference in the education scenario shown above. In the past year,

Asha SV has supported 22 projects with more than \$130,000 raised in funds here in the Bay Area.

#### a. Highlights of a few Projects

Here is a quick glimpse into some of the projects addressing different needs (education, school construction, teacher salaries, resource center) and different target population (street children, tribals, mentally challenged children, migrant laborers).

##### i. VOICE - Voluntary Organization In Community Enterprise

*Location:* Mumbai

Started in 1991, by the husband-wife team of Victor and Rajashri Bansiwari, VOICE is a non-governmental organization working towards the overall development of the street child.

VOICE works for the welfare of street children by educating them. They reach out to the shoe-shine boys, the rag-pickers, coolies, flower-sellers, sweepers, and beggars; aiming to mould them into responsible, integrated citizens. By delaying their entry into the labor force and acquiring schooling, these children can become healthier, more productive, and earn more - and can thereby be better able to control their lives. Non-formal education classes are taught by volunteers on various railway platforms in Mumbai where the children work. The focus is on teaching the children how to read and write, counseling them in matters of hygiene, financial savings, sex education, and providing vocational training. Importantly, the children are made aware of their choices.



*VOICE in action on a railway platform, Mumbai*

*Asha's involvement:*

Asha SV and a few other Asha chapters have collaborated to support two programs run by VOICE: Akshar Ank Anubhav and Swadhar.

Akshar Ank Anubhav:

VOICE runs 4 non-formal education centers in Mumbai, which cater to the needs of working children. The hours are flexible and the curriculum is relevant to the environment. The schools are located at Andheri station, Bandra station, outside Dadar station, and at the pump house in Andheri.

The Akshar Ank Anubhav program is aimed at children between the ages of 3 and 14, who live and work on the streets of Mumbai.

Today, approximately 285 children are being educated because of this innovative program.

Overall Goals of the program are:

- To give the children the opportunity to learn the 3 R's - reading, writing, and arithmetic, in both English and Hindi
- To be able to read with comprehension and more importantly, enjoy reading
- To be able to write neatly and lucidly
- To be able to apply mathematical concepts and skills to solve simple problems of day-to-day life
- To recognize the importance of regularity and punctuality, cleanliness, hard work and to inculcate a sense of duty, service, responsibility, cooperation, truthfulness and national identity

*Support from SV:*

\$ 7,200

Swadhar: Towards self-reliance:

This is a "graduate program" which started in April 1999. This program was initiated for children in the age group 13-15 who drop out of school. The goal was to further improve their literary levels, provide vocational training and consolidate their value system. Today 25 children are part of Swadhar. An additional 10 will join this group in the year 2002.

These children are exposed to the following:

- Literary skills in Hindi, English and Math
- General knowledge

- Value education
- Skill training: children participate in making decorative diyas for diwali, screen printing of wrapping paper, cards, letterheads and making 'torans'. Swadhar is working towards enabling entrepreneurship in the children with help from cooperatives within 5 years

## ii. Vanavasi Ashram

*Location:* Wayanad district of Kerala

Dr. Appanu Nambiar, a retired professor of education, founded Vanavasi Ashram Trust in 1996. It became a registered trust on 15th July 1997, whose objective was to uplift the tribal population of Wayanad. The trust members include three tribal chieftains, a medical practitioner, a lady teacher and a retired schoolteacher.

Vanavasi Ashram runs a formal school (affiliated to the Kerala State Board of Education) for the tribal children of Wayanad. Asha has been supporting this school called Pazhassi Raja Tribal Vidyalaya since 1997.

The project is located in Wayanad, which is considered the most backward district in Kerala. It is the home of the Paniya, Nayikar, Adiyar, Kuruma and Kurrichias tribes. Their livelihood depends entirely on the forest. At present, the tribes are in a difficult position due to deforestation and settlement of non-tribal people.



*Children outside the school at Vanavasi Ashram*

*Asha's involvement:*

Currently, the school has 213 students with the girl boy ratio being 2:3. These children are currently in grades 1-8. Asha SV and Asha Stanford worked together to fund the construction of a concrete building for the school. Construction began in the summer of 2001 and was completed in November 2001. Classes are now being conducted in the new building. The curriculum followed in the school is the one prescribed by the Kerala state board of education. This is providing many tribal children their first opportunity to get a good education.

The system of education is similar to a 'Gurukul', where the students and teachers live together and share their experiences like a family. The students, teachers and parents work together to grow vegetables, tapioca, banana and pulses. Students are taught stitching, tailoring, basket making, clay modeling, mat making, music, yoga and archery. As it is a tribal area, archery is given its due importance. Archery competitions are held for men, women and children every year. The Trust has been running the school for the last 4 years. Today there is a significant change in their attitude towards education and health care. Children talented in music and folk arts are encouraged to develop their talents by the school.

*Support from SV:*

\$6,500 for classroom construction

### **iii. Jeevan Gnanodaya**

*Location:* Near Chennai

Started in 1989 by Mr. Devaraj, Jeevan Gnanodaya is a school for the deaf and mentally challenged. Mr. Devaraj has a son who was born with a hearing defect. The nearest school that provided special education facilities was in Chennai. The school required that during the first year, the parent had to attend classes as an observer, along with the child. Father and son religiously went through this process. But in the second year, Jeevan, the son was enrolled as a day scholar and they had to make the long trip to school every morning. This required that Mr. Devaraj quit his job and spend all his time taking his son to school. Since he was the sole breadwinner of their family, this was not

practical at all. The futility of pursuing this course of action was what prompted him to start a school of his own. Though it started as a day school for 4 children, including his son, he quickly had to provide residential facilities to the children because of their poverty-stricken backgrounds.

The school houses and educates deaf, speech-impaired and mentally retarded children from poor, rural backgrounds. When children are admitted, their hearing level is determined and they are given the hearing aid equipment necessary for them. They are provided special speech therapy classes in addition to the regular curriculum.

*Asha's involvement:*

Jeevan Gnanodaya currently runs a residential school up to Class 10 for hearing impaired children. All the facilities provided by the school are free, including food and lodging. Asha SV supports teacher salaries for Jeevan Gnanodaya.

The school is also planning to start an Industrial Training Institute (ITI) for hearing-impaired children where they will acquire technical and industry-based skills like fitting, turning, carpentry, etc. Vocational skills like weaving, typing and sewing are already being imparted to the children.

*Support from SV:*

\$7,900 for teacher salaries

### **iv. MICDA - Mother India Community Development Organization**

*Location:* Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh

MICDA was established in 1987 by Dr. Subbaramaiah in association with a group of service-oriented persons in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.

The organization works to educate the children of the children of previously landless laborers who have recently settled on poorly developed government land. The main goal of MICDA is empowerment of the poor in general and that of the scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and women in particular through organization, social action, education and asset creation.

MICDA is undertaking various land development and watershed programs with an intention to provide income support to the community.

The objective of the project is to achieve comprehensive development of the land to ensure sustainable development of the new settlers. To achieve this development some of the activities that need to be taken up are:

Development of reliable irrigation facilities,  
Further leveling and bundling of land,  
Development of roads, drinking water facility,  
housing and electricity,  
Development of educational, medical and recreational facilities,



*One of the classrooms run by MICDA*

After allotment the land has been cleared for habitation, temporary housing has been put up, approach roads have been laid and drinking water pumps have been provided. Land is being prepared for cultivation of quick yield crops and a temporary school has been put up.

*Asha's involvement:*

Asha has supported MICDA in the construction of buildings for its school under the National Child Labor Project. The school runs as a composite of 3 NCLP schools as each NCLP (National Child Labor Protection) school is meant only for a maximum of 50 children. Thus the NCLP School caters to the need of only 150 children, however there is demand from approximately 300 children in the area.

Asha SV has supported the building construction for Classes 1 through 7 since the children attended the classes in temporary thatched shelters. Asha also supported the salaries of the teachers for 3 years.

*Support from SV:*

\$33,000 for school construction

## **v. Manaviya Shiksha Sanskar Sansthan**

*Location:* Mandhana, Kanpur, UP

Manaviya Shiksha Sanskar Sansthan (MS3) is a significant milestone in Asha's growth as it gets directly involved in social work. It is a project run by one of Asha's founders. This 'sansthan' (also known as Asha center) is an effort to move one step ahead in our mission of "catalyzing socio-economic change in India through education of underprivileged children."

This project was inspired by the voluntary work done by Vijaya Didi to teach the children of migrant laborers in construction sites. It evolved into a structured project from an informal activity funded by Asha.

The main goal of the 'Sansthan' is two fold:

1. Provide basic education to the children of migrant laborers
2. Establish an institute with 3-yr participatory courses that promotes education with humanistic values.

The approach adopted to achieve this goal is to:

1. Create a self-sustaining center.
2. Teach children of migrant laborers, and prepare them for self-sustenance in their respective fields.
3. Include additional students as participants in the self-sustenance projects.



*Classes being run at a construction site, Kanpur*

The institute offers 1/2/3 years courses on Human Education, a unique blend of Production, Management, Technology and Commerce founded on self-actualization, self-realization and regular practice (Culture development). Only ten students are enrolled every year to ensure personal attention for all students.

Programs planned in Phase I and II of MS3:

#### Phase I

Establish a Swavalamban Kendra ensuring Swavalamban of teachers (Total 5)  
Teaching/training of ward of migrant workers  
Motivational work on the migrant workers for swavalamban in their respective areas & providing training if found necessary.

#### Phase II

Include additional members, as students, for 1/2/3 years (10 per year) as participants in the Swavalamban projects. That is, starting from the second year, take additional students according to II Yr.-10, III Yr.-20, IV Yr.-30 students.

Activities:

1. Agriculture
2. Dairy
3. Bee - Keeping
4. Ayurvedic Medicines
5. Horticulture
6. Software Development
7. Tool-Room Development

*Asha's involvement:*

Asha is involved in the work of MS3 in a holistic

sense i.e. in all aspects of the work of the Sansthan.

*Support from SV:*

\$16,267

## b. Analysis of Project Funding

Projects Statistics:

In an effort to better convey where the dollars we send are making the most impact, we decided to present our financials and project details in the charts presented in pages 8-11.

**Chart 1** shows the distribution of funds in different states of India. This is representative of Asha SV's projects, not the entire organization of Asha's. It is quite heartening to see that Asha SV is funding projects from 12 different states in India.

There is a predominance of projects from South India, especially Tamil Nadu. One of the reasons behind this is that we have contacts with credible organizations in these states and have supported them over multiple years and have therefore developed a trusting relationship with them over time.

We are in the process of correcting this regional disparity. Asha SV will be taking special efforts to find projects from credible organizations in Bihar and Jharkhand for the next couple of years. (These are the states with lowest literacy rates and maximum male/female literacy rate disparity). We also hope to gradually establish relations with more organizations in the North and Northeast.

In **Chart 2** we show the distribution of funds based on different educational aspects. In other words, it shows what percentage of funds went to Balwadis, primary education, non-formal education etc.

If you look at the project types, you will see that the main focus of Asha SV (and that of Asha for Education in general) continues to be at the level of supporting children in the age groups of 3-15, from Balwadis to Secondary education. An important component in the graph is the fact that we are supporting projects that take children who

have some education towards self-sufficiency – through vocational training. As you can see, we have funded vocational training in our projects to the same extent as we have supported Balwadis or Primary Education.

A small but significant component, which we hope will grow over the years, is support for Asha Centers. Currently, it accounts for 4% of our annual budget but since we are working with two of the bigger Asha Centers (Kanpur and Lalpur) and actively working on setting up one in Assam, Asha SV hopes to support more of Asha's grassroots work representing our direct involvement in affecting socio-economic change in India.

There is an equal emphasis on NFE (Non Formal Education) centers. They target dropouts or street children and motivate them to get back into regular school. This is also an important avenue for social change through education, and it finds an equal place in the funds distribution chart.

**Chart 3** is similar to the second one, but instead of funds distribution, it reflects the number of projects (out of the 22 we supported last year) that deal with these different aspects of education. As you can see, many projects address more than one aspect, like for example, running primary and secondary schools.

**Chart 4** shows distribution of projects by target population served. For example, what percentage of funds goes towards helping children in tribal areas. Along with geographical distribution, this best summarizes Asha SV's focus. As you can see, a significant amount of Asha SV funds target tribal populations (who do not have proper access to education), agricultural laborers (who may be migrant, may prefer to take the children to work in the fields) and women. This reflects that we are addressing male-female and urban-rural literacy disparity in many parts of India. There is also some focus on working with children with disabilities and giving them special education.

In **Chart 5**, we show the timeline of involvement with the 22 project partners that we supported in 2001. Since many projects are co-funded with other chapters we have taken into account

involvement from all Asha chapters in the US. As you can see, Asha has had many years of collaboration with these organizations. This chart shows two things: we place a lot of importance on credibility, and that Asha works with organizations over multiple years to build trusting relationships in order to make a significant difference with them.

**Chart 6**, shows the distribution of funds in terms of the need addressed at the project - like teachers' salaries, computer education or vocational training. This chart answers the question: "How was the money spent by the project."

As you can see, the two main needs (in terms of amount required) are teacher salaries and infrastructure. On the basis of the project details (available on the SV website), we can say that all of the teachers in Asha projects earn less than what they could, if they worked in government schools. So, motivation to teach is a big part of why they are there with the projects. Also, the infrastructure costs in many projects are less than conventional costs of construction, since some projects get the land for a school from the local community for free, or get support from them for building the school, thereby getting free labor. Some of the constructions use locally available material, or earthquake resistant construction techniques (as is the case in a Gujarat project), which are cheaper, safer than conventional structures, and last longer.

The administrative expenses mentioned include travel costs for the teachers and coordinators to reach schools located far away, as well as coordinator salaries. Technically the coordinators also teach in most of the projects, which means that this amount is not an administrative overhead. Travel costs are also essential to some of the projects, where the teachers have to travel many kilometers to reach the schools.

As you can see, there is also enough emphasis on spending on teaching materials, like books, toys, textbooks, as well as nutritional supplements for the children.

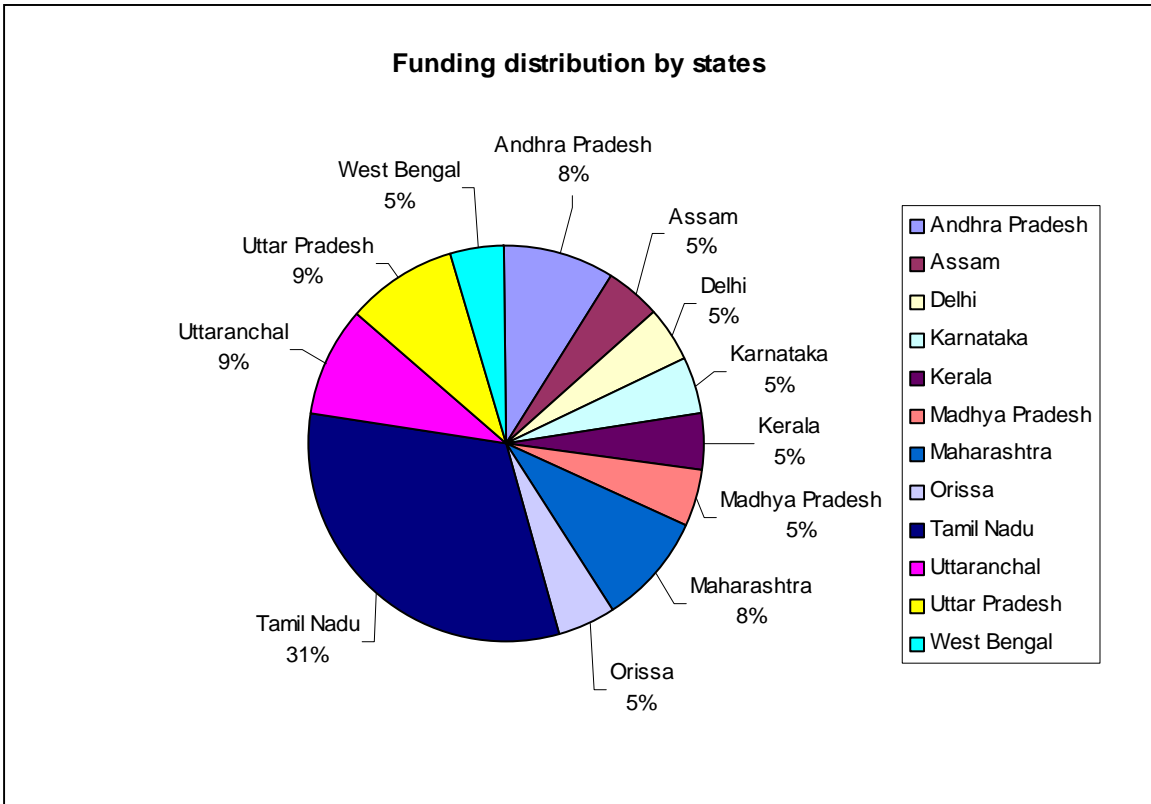


Chart 1: Distribution of funds raised in 2001 to different states (not all states in India indicated)

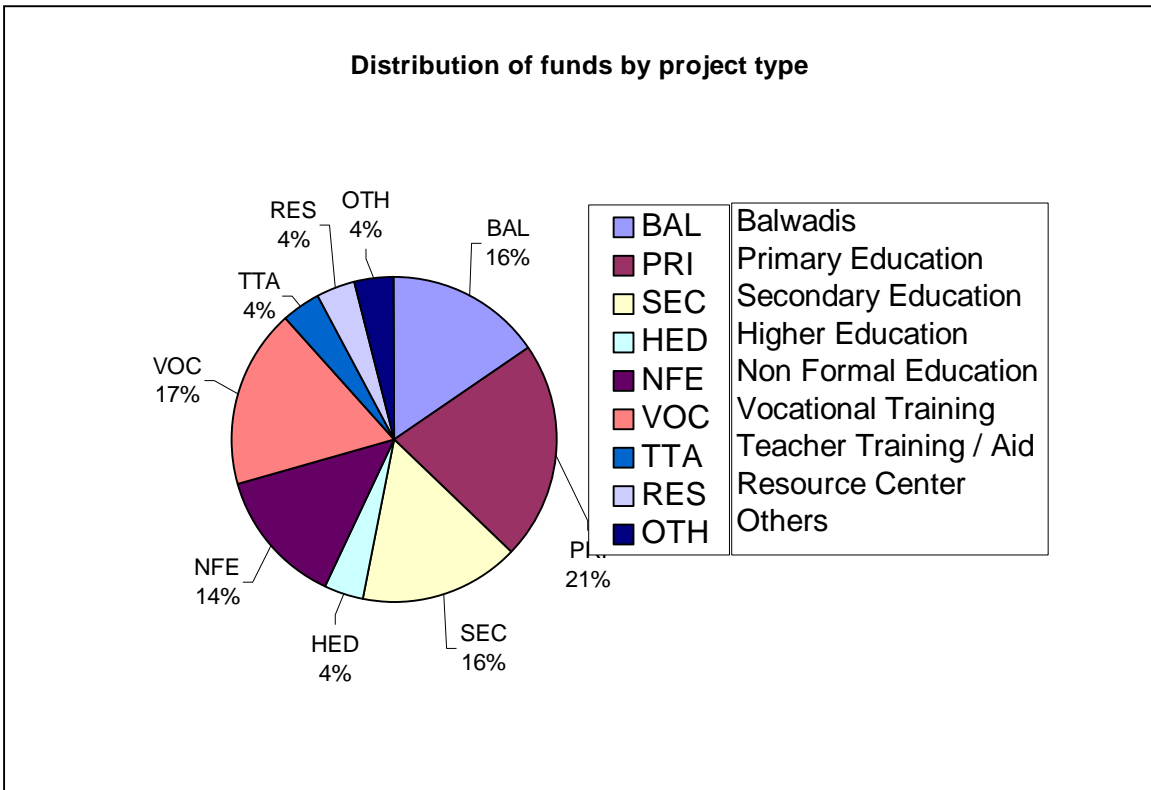


Chart 2: Percentage of funds distributed towards different project categories

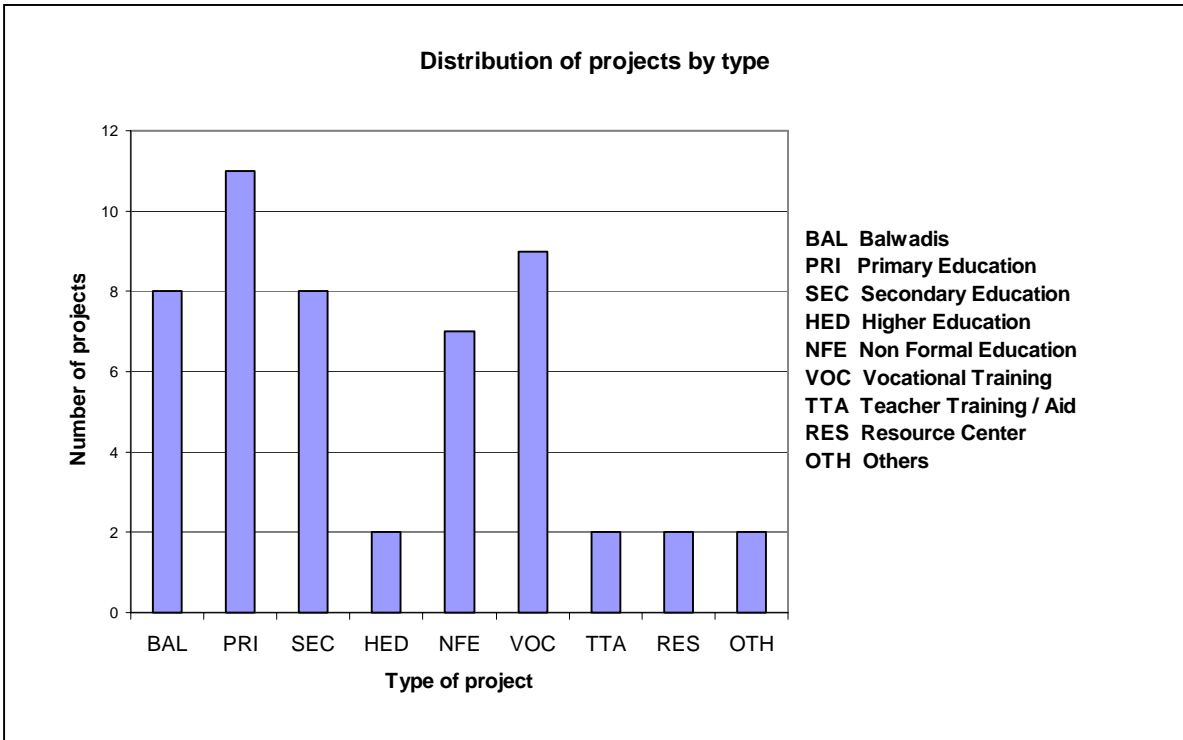


Chart 3: Distribution of types of education imparted at our projects

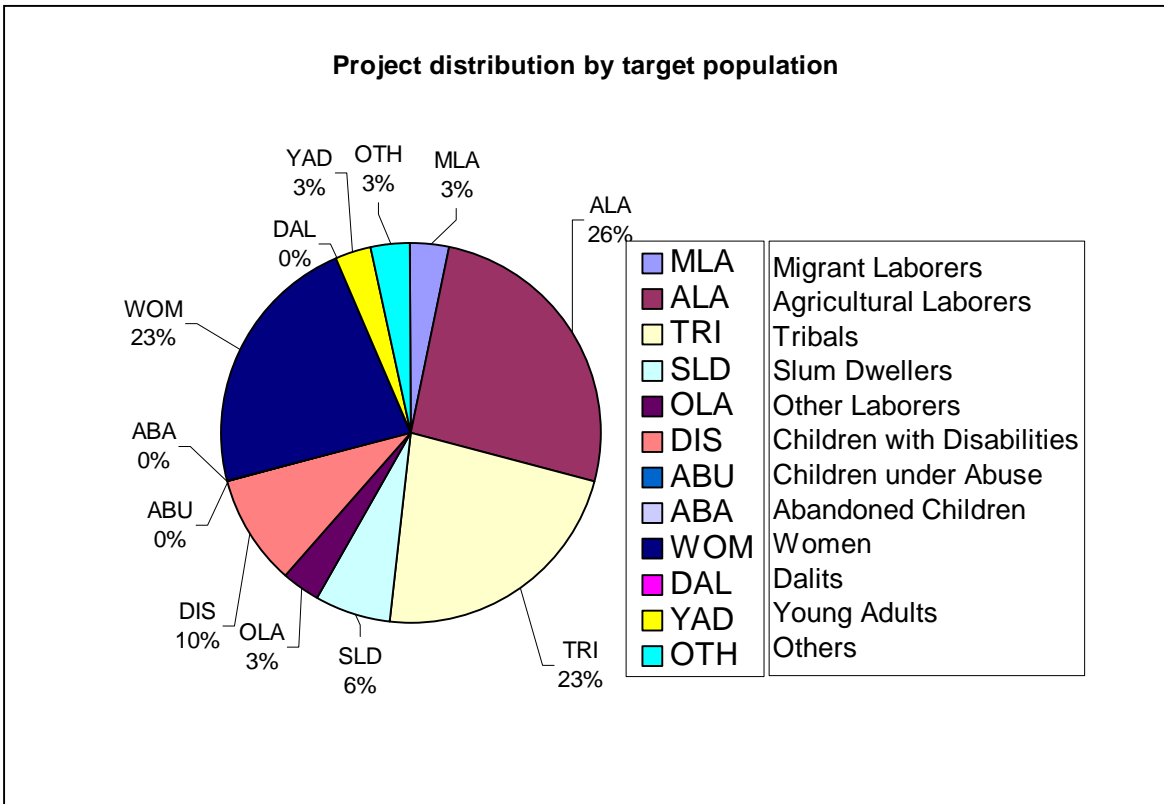


Chart 4: Distribution of projects based on target populations served

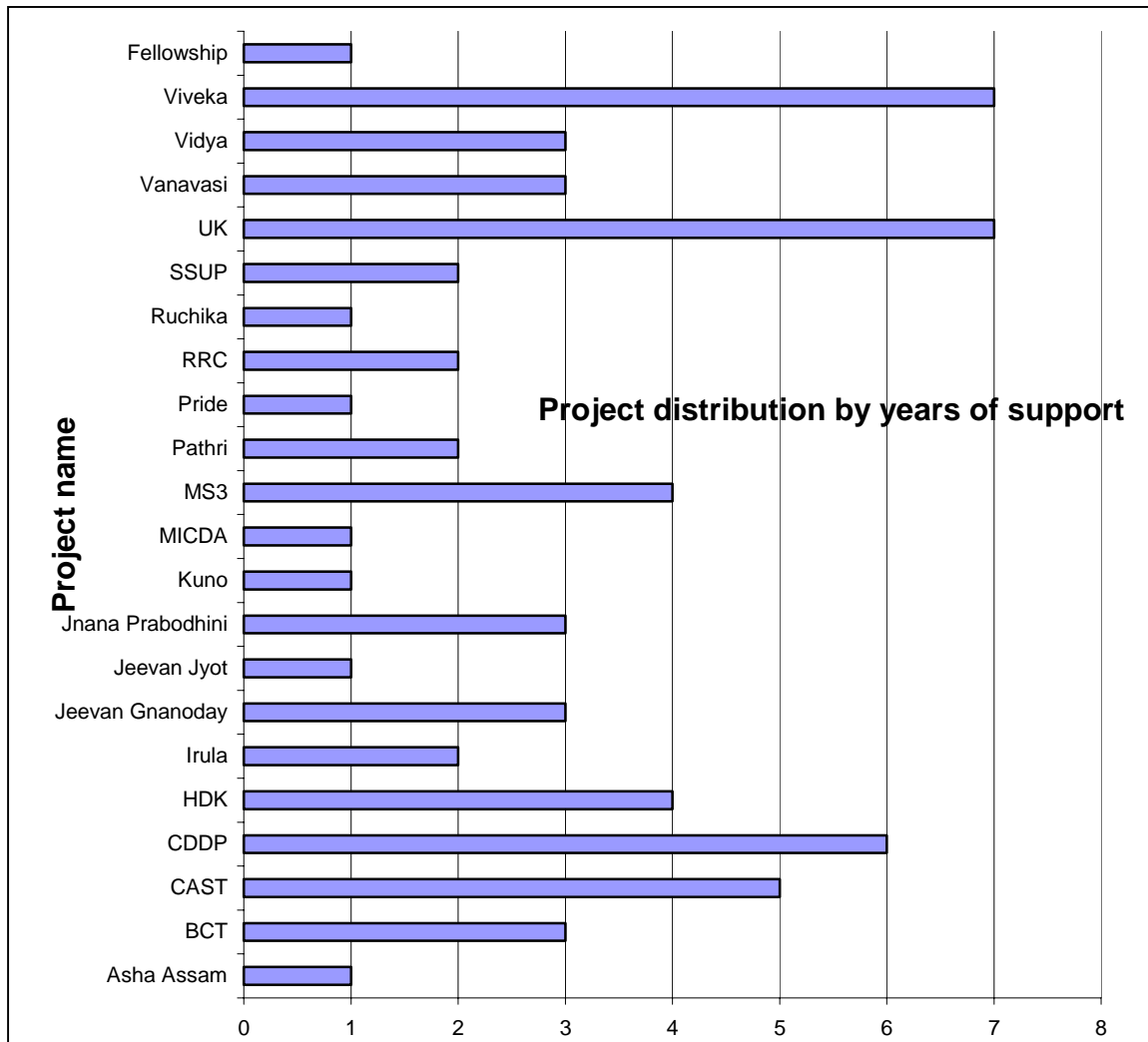


Chart 5: Number of years of collaboration with the project

Source of Funds	Amount
Marathon 2001	\$92,182.57
Asha Stars Program	\$20,524.00
Car Donations	\$29,808.95
Charitable Way	\$2,463.40
Concerts	\$2,525.00
Donors Choice Foundation	\$514.00
General Donations	\$19,646.24
Interest	\$3,978.65
Matching Gifts	\$19,452.89
Merchandise	\$336.00
United Way	\$2,846.13
<b>Total funds raised</b>	<b>\$194,277.83</b>

Marathon 2001 Funds Details	Amount
Individual Donations	96,225.97
Matching Donations Received	+ 10,300.00
Registration	+ 5,300.00
Expenses	- 19,643.40
Current Total	92,182.57
Matching Donations Awaited	+ 15,298.70
<b>Expected Grand Total</b>	<b>107,481.27</b>

Financial Statement for the year 2001- Funds Received

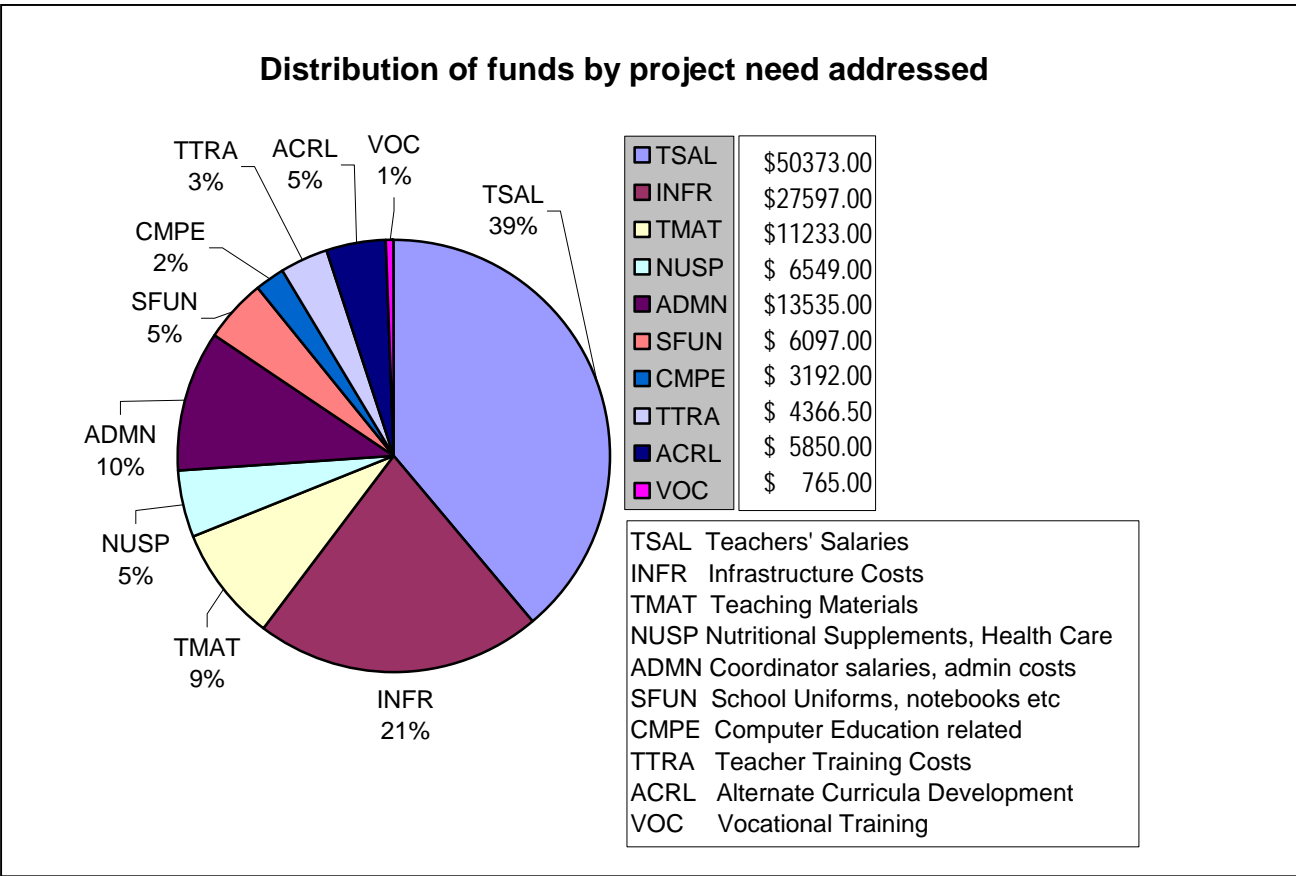


Chart 6: Distribution of funds by to different projects based on what aspect of project costs was met

### c. Streamlining of Project Process

Recognizing the need for better organizational processes and understanding of issues, Asha SV volunteers came together and held a series of discussions during the later part of the year. Volunteers actively participated and put forth their views. These discussions culminated in the creation of the following documents:

*Initial Project Selection Checklist* - items that must be satisfied before a project is chosen for discussion.

*Project Evaluation Guidelines* - guidelines that the volunteers should follow during the process of evaluation and approval.

*Site Visit Guidelines* - comprehensive list of items that site visitors to the projects should look for.

*Steward Responsibilities* - duties of the project steward

*Monitoring Schedule* – guidelines to ensure better communication with the projects and people running the projects, and the issues they struggle with, and to actively get feedback from the project and seek feedback on Asha.

### 4. Financial Summary

From the time Asha SV launched the marathon program as a fundraiser in 2000, the chapter has had more than \$100,000 to disburse on an annual basis. This trend continued last year as well. We raised about \$92,000 from the 2001 marathon, and are awaiting another \$13,000 in matching donations from various corporations. In addition to the marathon, we had several other channels through which we raised money. For details of the funds received in 2001, please refer to page 9.

We have also been active in disbursing the funds we raised. In the past year, we supported 22

projects in different parts of the country and disbursed \$130,000 towards the cost of school construction, teachers' salaries, teacher training, health care and nutritional supplements for children, computer education, teaching materials and vocational training.

No.	Project Name	Amount Disbursed (\$)
1	Asha Assam	5,870.00
2	Bhagavatula Charitable Trust	2,560.00
3	Bharathi Trust (Irula Project)	10,000.00
4	Center for Development of Disadvantaged People	10,000.00
5	Community Action for Social Transformation	3,300.00
6	Fellowship	800.00
7	Him Darshan Kutir	2,050.00
8	Jeevan Gnanodaya Trust	7,900.00
9	Jeevan Jyot Mandal	5,100.00
10	Jnana Prabodhini	2,400.00
11	MICDA	7,700.00
12	MS3	16,267.00
13	PRIDE	2,148.00
14	Ruchika Social Service Organization	5,850.00
15	Rural Rehabilitation Center	1,500.00
16	Samrakshan Trust (Kuno Project)	7,900.00
17	SSUP	912.50
18	Swami Vivekanda Youth Movement	2,000.00
19	The Friends of Doon Society (Pathri)	9,800.00
20	Udavum Karangal	15,000.00
21	Vanavasi Ashram Trust	6,500.00
22	Vidya Integrated Development for Youth	4,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>129,557.50</b>

*Financial Statement for the year 2001  
Funds Disbursed*

## 5. Fundraising

### a. Harbingers of Hope – A Marathon

Asha's Harbingers of Hope Program is an innovative fundraiser initiated in 2000 by the SV chapter. In this program, participants of all age groups come together and experience the unique challenge and inspiration of training for and running a marathon, while raising funds for basic education in India - a true opportunity for

tremendous personal accomplishment and a tangible contribution to the cause of education for the underprivileged.

In 2001, participants of all abilities completed the Royal Victoria marathon in October and raised more than \$100,000. The participants underwent a professional training program under the guidance of seasoned coaches Tony Fong and Mayank Chaudhary, who themselves are accomplished runners. For more details about this year's program, see the Asha Marathon home page: <http://www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley/marathon>.

The Marathon coordination team, Girish and Shobhana, provided schedules for every day training - a well-paced training program consisting of hard training days, easy training days and cross training program. Comprehensive information about fund-raising was also provided.



*Asha marathoners getting ready to run.*

Their unbounded enthusiasm and commitment towards the runners was a major reason for the great success of the program in 2001. Team Asha finished sixth overall in the Victoria marathon - a commendable achievement!

Here are a few comments from some of the participants:

"...Am looking back and thinking why I did this. Think it was, if Oprah can, so can I... The trip was great, the training wonderful and I have come back to California having made many new friends..

"...Personally, I am so excited that I finished the race!!! I just cannot believe it. Especially when I just could not sit in the plane on the way to Victoria and my knee was talking to me all the time!!! Once I get there I see all you guys all with

all the enth in the world. It just made me forget the knee injury..."

"We are done! I can't believe it!! I feel like a champ. Nice kind of ache in my legs, ready for softball tonight... Oh man! When are we running again?"

"Victoria was a great experience. The people were awesome in their support. The best part was however running for Asha along with the other runners. Getting to know all of you was a great experience."

Sri Priya, Asha SV's project coordinator was at the Victoria Marathon, and was our correspondent for the event. She interviewed the marathoners the night before the Marathon. She wrote very eloquently about the race, the runners and the cause. She wrote "...let me tell you that each and every person that ran that race or even walked it deserves our applause, our admiration and our gratitude. If you see a person that you know run the marathon, stop them and shake their hands, congratulate them. Shake it twice. Slap their backs. Slap their backs twice! "

Writing about the marathoners, she mentioned Sanjog, who like many other marathoners, tossed and turned the short night before in nervous excitement and anticipation, about Madhav, who finished under 3 hours, running as easily and gracefully as a gazelle to the delight of a spectator who remarked, "Its a pleasure to watch you run." She wrote about Abhay Bhushan and Geetha Hiremath, who at the 39 km mark were still going strong despite the fact that neither of them had run more than a few miles till 6 months ago, and specially Shobana and Girish, who not only ran that day, but who had worked hard coordinating for months to make the Victoria marathon possible. She specially mentioned Rama, whose knee injury acted up about 10 kilometers into the race, putting him in considerable pain. Did he stop? No, he limped his way to the finish line, 32 grueling kilometers later, half an hour after the official end of the race.

These are our marathoners, folks. They did us proud. They each deserve a hero's welcome. Making a difference. Raising awareness. A Victoria Marathoner made an unsolicited donation after being curious and impressed by the numerous

Asha for Education singlets he had seen during the race.



*On the way to the finish: Go Asha!*

From the funds raised by the runners, Asha-SV has so far funded the following projects:

- Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti - Mandhana, Kanpur
- Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement, near Mysore
- The Uthnau project, North West Birbhum District, West Bengal
- VOICE, Mumbai
- Kuno Education Project, Agra village, Vijeypur Tehsil, M.P
- Jeevan Jyot Mandal, near Pune
- SET-WIN Project, Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu
- Asha Center proposal, Bhuj, Gujarat

The details of each of these projects are provided in a separate report. Asha SV will continue to update the marathoners about new projects that will be funded from the marathon funds.

Asha SV wishes to thank all the runners, the coordinators, the volunteers, the coaches and all others who made the 2001 program a huge success.

## **b. Support A Child**

Asha SV launched 'Support A Child' in March 2002. It joins the Seattle chapter, which has been running this program for 5 years.

This program makes it possible for an individual to not only sponsor the cost of education for one

underprivileged child in India, but also be a mentor. The aim is to support this child financially till he completes college or vocational education and is able to support himself.

Asha's role is to find a suitable education project run by a non profit organization in India which targets children who are unable to pursue education due to lack of funds. Then Asha endeavors to find sponsors for the children in this project and facilitates linking sponsors with individual children. Asha follows through by disbursing and monitoring the sponsors' funds. It works with both sponsors and the projects in India to obtain regular progress reports of the children and build a strong sponsor-child communication. The sponsor has the opportunity to become a mentor and friend to his sponsored child by writing letters. The sponsor can also arrange a visit with his child through Asha and the project coordinators in India.

Currently there are 75 children in the sponsorship program. These children belong to two projects in Tamil Nadu - Sowbhagya Educational Trust (Sowbhagya) and Center for Development of Disadvantaged People (CDDP).

In the CDDP project, the parents of most of the children are landless agricultural laborers. Hence the children are often compelled to work alongside their parents. A few typical jobs are sheep and goat rearing, agriculture work, household work and babysitting infants at home. Poverty, distance from regular schools and compulsion to work prevent these children from ever joining mainstream education. CDDP runs non-formal education schools, which provide the much-needed awareness to these children as well as their parents, and prepares the children academically to join regular schools.

In the Sowbhagya project, the children come from families of fishermen, seasonal construction workers and coolies. There is a local primary school that these children can attend. However without the finances to continue this education, the children end up doing what their parents do - minimum wage manual labor. Sowbhagya Educational Trust assists and motivates the children who drop out after primary school to rejoin mainstream education.



*Bookmark (front and back) sent to SAC sponsors*

It supports these children through high school all the way up to polytechnic or college degrees till they are capable of getting jobs.

The monthly contribution for sponsorship for children from these two projects is \$12. A sign-up form and more information are available at: <http://www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley/sac>.

There is also a detailed FAQ on the website which answers many sponsorship related questions. Questions can be sent to [ashasv\\_sac@yahoo.com](mailto:ashasv_sac@yahoo.com).

### c. Prayaas – An Attempt

In its quest for innovative ways to generate awareness and funds for its mission, Asha SV has undertaken a project that is path breaking from the typical fundraisers that Asha does. This collective endeavor, spearheaded by Pallav, is appropriately called Prayaas, meaning effort in many languages. The idea of Prayaas is simple, nothing more than

the familiar 'dabba' system (lunchbox system) in India, with the American penchant for convenience.

Prayaas arranges for the lunch, prepared by some restaurants, to be delivered to people who have ordered it the previous day. The one-time work required by the Asha volunteers was to create an infrastructure through which people can place the order. Once this was done the only work required was to compile the orders at the end of the day and send it to the restaurant.

After initial groundwork, clearing all the legal hurdles and getting approval from the chapter, Prayaas was launched on 11th of February 2002. Lunch packets were initially being delivered at three companies. With the collective effort of the SV team, the number of companies being served increased to 18, in two months.

The interest in Prayaas has been enormous. We have started receiving corporate and party orders. Each order means more publicity and more funds for education. We foresee a steady growth over next few months. More information can be found at [www.ashanet.org/prayaas](http://www.ashanet.org/prayaas).

#### d. Mallika Sarabhai Concert

In September, Asha SV in collaboration with Direct Relief International and Literate World Inc., organized another of its culturally oriented fundraisers hosting the world famous danseuse Mallika Sarabhai and her dance troupe Janavak. Janavak entertained the audience with wonderful traditional dances which included the dandiya, garba and other folk dances from Rajasthan, TamilNadu and Gujarat to name a few.



*A scene from the Mallika Sarabhai show*

Apart from spreading the word about Asha to an audience of 700 people, the money raised from the event is being used towards building a schoolroom in Gujarat and a computer center in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. The construction of the school-room in Gujarat serves as a model for an inexpensive earthquake resistant building technology using ferro-cement.

## 6. Public Relations

The Silicon Valley chapter has also been active in raising awareness about Asha in the media.

### a. Television Interview for Echoes of India



*(L to R) Poornima, Jairaj, Anand and Netika at the "Echoes of India" Interview*

In December, the AT&T Community Channel aired an interview with the SV chapter in two segments of 30 minutes each, in the "Echoes of India" program. The first segment was spent mostly discussing Asha's objectives and the projects that SV supports, and the second half was spent discussing the SV Marathon program and other SV fundraising activities. The program was telecast to most of the Bay Area cities. Thanks to the team at Echoes of India for giving us an opportunity to talk about our work. A digitized version of Part I of the telecast is available at the SV Intranet site: <http://www.ashanet.org/repository/ashaDSL.wmv>

## b. Radio Interview with Voice of America

Voice of America held an interview with the coordinators of Asha's Support A Child program across chapters. This interview will be broadcast on Voice of America's Hindi Radio channel to audiences in India especially targeting the youth. Mona Sehgal from Asha-Washington D.C., Swati Sircar from Asha-Seattle and Satarupa Bose from Asha SV participated in the interview. The interview focused on the aim of the program, process of selecting education projects for Support A Child, background of the sponsored children, process of monitoring funds, and sponsor interaction with the children.

There was also interest in the typical background of an Asha volunteer, the reason for his/her joining Asha and involvement with activities.

## c. Presence at Local Events

At local events we try to spread the word about Asha and what we do, as well as sell some merchandise from projects that we support.



*Asha Booth at the FIA Mela, 2001*

This year we had a booth at the Independence Day Mela in Fremont (Federation of Indian Associations Mela), where we sold Asha T-Shirts, bugs and calendars.

## d. New Website for Friendly Online Presence

In October of 2001, a small group of Asha volunteers met over a potluck dinner. Among the

various things they discussed that night, was the design of the website that you see today at <http://www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley>. The goal of the web team was to design a website that was consistent with the look and feel of the main Asha web site while at the same time had its own unique identity. The focus was on simplicity and uniformity in content classification and presentation across the web pages of all the projects. The challenge lay in the fact that out of the total of 40 projects, only 6 had websites. The SV web team set out to do the task with the help of many volunteers and in the process demystified the making of web pages to the other volunteers. A hands-on workshop was held in which volunteers were walked through the various steps of creating a web page.



*A sample project page from the new SV website*

The web team is constantly working towards increasing the involvement of the project stewards to ensure that project details on the website are current and accurate. The highlight of the new website design is the ease of finding information. Almost all the information is at most 3 clicks away from the home page. The newly designed projects page that can be accessed at the projects website <http://www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley/projects.html> offers a convenient way of finding projects listed by alphabetical order or by name of the state or by location on the map.

Currently the web team has 6 members. The team has expertise in front-end and back-end programming and also has members who have closely worked with projects. Contact the team at [ashasv\\_webteam@yahoo.com](mailto:ashasv_webteam@yahoo.com).

## 7. Community Awards

Asha for Education was nominated for the Silicon India Community Leadership Award. The Silicon India magazine had invited Asha and other non-profits who garnered high votes for the Community Service Leadership Award to a awards banquet. The annual award is presented to a national level non-profit association created and run for, by and of the South Asian population in the US. The banquet was held on Friday March 29th, 2002 and K.B. Chandrashekar (CEO, Jamcracker) was the Chief Guest. Netika, Anand, Sripriya and Ramesh received a plaque on behalf of all Asha volunteers. Netika gave a presentation on Asha, which was generally well received, and according to the organizers was the best presentation. SiliconIndia promised to have a page on their website dedicated to non-profits and their work. Other non-profits present expressed a need for collaboration for shared best practices.

## 8. Coordination Team for 2002

We are fortunate to have a dedicated team of volunteers who are committed to make education accessible to more underprivileged children in India. The list given below only mentions people who have formally committed to be in charge of a few positions, but there are many other volunteers who play an active role at chapter meetings, at events and at fundraisers. Equally important is the work of those who are stewards for projects because they interact with project coordinators in India and complete the learning experience for projects we help to fund and for us.

### *Chapter Advisors:*

Netika Raval, Poornima Kasaragod

### *Chapter Coordination team:*

Jayakannan Jayapalan, Anand Raghavan

### *Projects Coordination Team:*

Subashree Rajagopal, Raja Sivaramakrishnan, Ramesh Dodamani, Padmarani Subbaraya

### *Treasurers:*

Rama Jupalli, Sirisha Machiraju

### *Fundraising & Publicity Coordination Team:*

Naren Ravula, Mamta Rani, Rajitha Pappu

### *Website Coordination Team:*

Deepali Halepete. Chumki Bhattacharya, Chirag Shah, Venkatesh Iyengar

### *Marathon 2002 Coordinators:*

Anand Rao, Geetha Hiremath

### *Support A Child Program:*

Satarupa Bose, Shachi Patel, Jay Swaminathan

### *Prayaas Lunch-Box Program:*

Pallav Pandey

### *Asha Stars Program:*

Rajiv Iyer

### *Corporate Sponsors and Donor Relations:*

Jairaj Sounderrajan, Poornima Kasaragod

### Contact Information for Asha SV:

*Website:* [www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley](http://www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley)

*Email:* [ashasv-info@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ashasv-info@yahoogroups.com)

### *Postal Address:*

Asha Silicon Valley  
P.O.Box: 641741  
San Jose CA 95164-1741

### *Contributions:*

Checks can be made out to **"Asha for Education"** and sent to our postal address. Asha is a registered non-profit organization under section 501c(3) and all contributions to Asha are tax deductible. Our Tax ID No. is 77-0459884.

## 9. Concluding Remarks

2001 was a successful year for Asha SV. We grew in strength and spirit on all fronts – volunteers, fundraising, publicity and projects.

Currently there are about 300 volunteers associated with the chapter. We continued building on our innovative fundraiser like the Harbinger's of Hope marathon by starting Prayaas and Support A Child.

In publicity and awareness, we made our presence on TV, radio, community events and publications.

In addition to supporting 22 projects, Asha SV took a proactive approach in understanding educational issues. On an ongoing basis, we talk to one of our projects every week over a telephonic call. These calls help to bridge the distance and build stronger communication. It gives Asha volunteers a valuable opportunity to learn from the achievements and mistakes of the project.

Asha SV is working in active collaboration with Asha Centers in India. We are proud to have been able to contribute towards both the primary Asha Centers in India, in Lalpur and Kanpur, as well as initiate one in Assam to reach out to more projects in the Northeast.

We recognize that a lot of work needs to be done in states where the literacy rates are still alarmingly low and there is huge disparity between male and female literacy rates. Keeping this in mind, Asha SV has decided to select Bihar as a state to focus on for the year 2002 and to make active attempts at identifying credible organizations to work with, in that state.

We look forward to your continued support.

You may ask why we do what we do? The answer is simple – it is a chance to affect change. Asha SV volunteers are heartened and reaffirm our resolve when we receive messages like this one sent by Mr. Devaraj of Jeevan Gnanodaya.

*To our Asha friends:*

*When we were born  
We were woefully unknown  
With insults and sorrows  
Our hearts were bruised and torn  
But you came one morn  
And the seeds sown  
For our stable tomorrows  
You've been drying our tears  
Driving away our fears  
Helping us cross woods so dense  
Giving us hope and confidence  
Your milk of human kindness  
Makes life a rich experience  
May all your dreams come true  
May the year prove marvellous to you*