



Support A Child



Silicon Valley Chapter

SAC Newsletter Issue 4

Letter from the SAC Team:

Greetings from Asha Silicon Valley Chapter's Support A Child Program! We have had a very challenging and productive year. This newsletter highlights some of our achievements in the past couple of months and our goals for the next year.

The exciting news from our end has been finding sponsors for children in the Ankur Project in Maharashtra and National Association for the Blind Project in Gujarat.

We would like to share excerpts from dedicated sponsor Karthik Janakiraman's visit to Sowbhagya

Education Trust, as well as give you a first hand view of the Ankur project from our SAC Team member Rishi Sampat. Our featured project NAB has challenged and inspired us and we have learnt from it. In the coming year we plan to include visually impaired girls in our NAB project.

We are delighted to inform you that the workbooks that were mailed out to children earlier this year have all been completed and returned. The feedback we received is that the children found the workbooks to be a lot of fun and informative.

This being the "Year of the Sponsor", we are hosting a sponsor meet in the Bay Area to thank you for your generous contributions.

As you can see, the SAC Team has been busy behind the scenes working very hard in a number of areas. Please let us know what you have liked about the program and what you would like to see in the future.

We would like to thank you for your interest and support and look forward to our continued partnership in years to come.

Thank You!

Special points of interest:

- ✓ **Project visit Report: Sowbhagya – Mini Social Revolution**
- ✓ **Ankur: Leading Towards Formal Education**
- ✓ **Special Feature: National Association for the Blind (NAB), A Remarkable Story**
- ✓ **Sponsor Event**
- ✓ **Commentary: Education in India**

CDDP Update

The CDDP students of Nedumbaram and Arungulam are enrolled in government public schools. In addition, these students are given extra coaching in the Asha schools to help with their regular school syllabi. The students of Asha

schools at Nemili and Nallatur are in the process of getting admissions into government schools. Individual updates will be available soon.

Health checks were conducted for all the children by Dr. Mrs. Jayanthi, M.B.B.S. D.G.O. Medical specialists (ENT, Eye, Orthopedics) are consulted regarding

children's health conditions and treatment is provided as needed.

Earlier in the year Asha sent the children story and art books for leisure time activities.

Sowbhagya: Mini Social Revolution

The Sowbhagya Trust has added eight new children this year. Students in the Trust are going from strength to strength in their academic progress. All the students in Grade 12 passed their Tamil Nadu State Board exams. D. Naveena stood first in her class, with 5/6 other students securing ranks within the top 5. Each of the students has gotten admission into higher education, in fields such as Computer Science, Physics and Automobile Engineering.



"Mrs. Rajagopal, Sowbhagya and Asha were laying the foundation for a mini social revolution".

Excerpts from a sponsor's (Karthik Janakiraman) visit to Sowbhagya Educational Trust in June 2004.

"While in Madras, I set off one evening to meet Santhosh, a seventeen year old student who resided in Neelangarai, a fishing village on the outskirts of Madras. I was curious about Santhosh as I knew that he was different from the thousands of other students in the city. He had been adopted by the Sowbhagya Educational Trust, a wonderful organization that I shall elaborate on later. My tie to Santhosh was via Asha Silicon Valley's Support-A-Child program. I was his sponsor.

We met in Mrs. Rajagopal's house, the main driving force behind Sowbhagya. Mrs. Rajagopal had briefed me earlier about Santhosh. He apparently was a fast talker, full of questions and was very intelligent. The Santhosh who sat in front of me was the total opposite. He was quiet and did not want to make eye contact.

We stepped outside and I cajoled Santhosh into talking about the latest Tamil movie. I asked him what he thought about the "gaana" songs (fast paced folk songs with funny lyrics that are popular among young people) and this seemed to break the ice. We went on to talk about cricket, life in

America etc. Santhosh's ambition was to become a computer engineer. He felt that this profession was well respected and would allow him to become wealthy. In return he would be able to help more people. We also spoke about his routine. After school, Santhosh and all the other kids at Sowbhagya have a short break to freshen up before they get together for their evening tuition which lasts from 5 to 7pm. Sowbhagya has hired three teachers to help the children with their homework and other assignments. After tuition, these kids go back home, rest and come back to do it all over again. They have only one day in a week to relax.

All this hard work has definitely paid off. Mrs. Rajagopal and Sowbhagya have produced State rank holders consistently over the past few years. The lowest aggregate score among 67 students was 72%. Pretty amazing statistics consid-

ering the strata of society these kids are from.

On the drive back home, I experienced several emotions. I was amazed by the work that Mrs. Rajagopal and Sowbhagya were

doing. In ten years, the kids that I met would support at least two or three kids themselves. Mrs. Rajagopal, Sowbhagya and Asha were laying the foundation for a mini social revolution. I also felt happy to have seen so many smiling and eager young faces. Last but not least, I was happy and proud to be a part of Asha. I had been involved only in fund raising programs (Asha Marathon '02 and '04) and had never interacted with the other side of the organization. This unexpected site visit exposed me to the wonderful work that Asha was doing".



To read a detailed account of Karthik Janakiraman's site visit please visit the Sowbhagya Project page at:
<http://www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley/sac/projects.html>

Ankur: Leading Towards Formal Education

As a recent addition to the Asha-SV SAC team, I have been contributing in my capacity as steward towards the Ankur project by helping evaluate the project, interacting with the Ankur team and finally getting the project approved by the Asha-SV team. Naturally I was quite excited to make a site visit during my vacation to India in July.

I spent quite some time interacting with Mrs. Madhuri Deshpande, Mrs. Sadanand Bapat, Ms. Imroz and other staff. I was struck by their dynamism, administrative skills, creative ideas and their intent to make a significant difference in the lives of children.

For starters, the school is nestled in a quaint setting within the Fergusson College campus. They have a reasonable amount of space amidst an invigorating setting.

The students seemed very enthusiastic and involved. Schedules of staff and location of classes were resourcefully managed, thereby optimizing staff time and campus space. The teaching methods were convincing and encouraged student participation. Students were motivated to express themselves because of the support and encouragement the teachers lent to them. Student ideas and reasoning were tempered, broken and mended. The

teachers have well laid-out processes of obtaining and calibrating student feedback and thereafter working on an individual student weaknesses and further honing an individual student's strengths. Often teachers from other schools volunteered to teach a niche sub-

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ject like Sanskrit. Also equal focus is laid on group-activities and games that involves communication and effective interaction with others.

At that time, the main concern of the administration was safe transportation of kids between their homes and school. Rickshaw as a means of transportation was presumed

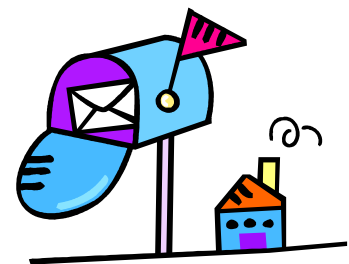
dangerous, given that they are often overloaded and more so because July is the onset of the monsoon season. They, however, eventually resolved the same after they negotiated a better deal to obtain a bus to transport students.

Another concern the administration faces is that sponsors support the children through the completion of their education and not back out. Asha-SV SAC team has time and again alleviated these concerns by reassuring them that they have alternate means of funding the students even in the worst-case scenario.

Going ahead, we hope to share their teaching methodologies with other

organizations who we support and vice-versa. These best practices would further help the administration in leveraging effective and more efficient process methodologies that would result in a better child education.

I left that afternoon particularly pleased that not only this project was putting sponsor donations to effective use, but also with the great hope that these citizens of tomorrow will create a better future for themselves and others.



Coming Soon in the mail: Workbooks completed by your sponsored child !!!

National Association for the Blind: A Remarkable Story

The National Association for the blind is a relatively new addition to the ASHA-SV SAC project portfolio. I have been trying to contribute my time to understand the working of that organization and coordinate effort in enabling it to expand and maximize its capacities.

All the students in NAB are visually impaired, but that doesn't stop these boys and young men from going to school, using the computer, or excelling in sports. 16 year old Jitendra stood first in his class in the 10th Standard Board exams. Several students in Standard 12 are planning to pursue higher education.

Establishment of the NAB organization at Valsad itself is a truly inspiring story. The National Association for the Blind was set up in Valsad and headed by Rambhai, who had lost his eyesight when he was in college. That incident inspired him to be instrumental in shaping the lives of many blind children in and around the Valsad district. Many times, I sense his restless

eagerness of see the NAB children flourish, when he says, "These children can do so much more, they take up every opportunity they have to go out and prove themselves".

The children at NAB have proven this many times in the past years. NAB children are represented in the National Blind Cricket Team. Some NAB children have got together and have made a NAB chess team. This year itself, 4 children at NAB passed their 12th std and are going to study Arts in college. Each of these children have the option of leaving school and helping out in the farms or get an hourly job, but they aspire to study further.

Recently, major floods hit Valsad. That caused the schools around Valsad to stop functioning for over 2 weeks. Some children at NAB decided to leave the hostel and be with their parents during those stressful times. Since most of the children have parents working in the field, the floods could profoundly affect their farms and their lives. In those conditions,

one of the NAB boys - Prमित Patel, decided to let go of the education he was getting at NAB and decided to stay back with his parents, which he thought was his duty and responsibility. Coincidentally, that was the same time that NAB received a letter for Prमित Patel from his sponsor. And in that letter the sponsor had encouraged Prमित to study further, to dream and advance in life. After reading his letter, Prमित's family insisted that he get back to education. So, Prमित is back in NAB now.

Having a blind child in your family is still seen as a taboo in the villages surrounded Valsad and in India, in general. Families are not very forthcoming about trying to get an education for their blind children and this is even worst if the family has a blind girl. The teachers and officials at NAB regularly go out into the villages around Valsad district to find families that have blind children. The teachers try to convince the parents about the worth of education and persuade them to send their children to study at NAB.

Children at NAB learn vocational training in typing, computer skills, chair weaving, pottery, drawing, telephone operation, etc. These children are ever excited to keep in tune with upcoming technology. Having an expanding library, NAB children are kept abreast about the world, its developments and its opportunities. These children and their parents are a representation of people who want to shun old taboos of handicap and age; and believe in education and hope for a better tomorrow.

Quiz

Here is a list a list of famous people, (some real and some fictional) who lost their sight but are famous for their accomplishments and contributions to the world rather than being known for their disability.

See if you can match the Name with the accomplishments:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Louis Braille | a. American author and philanthropist |
| 2. Homer | b. American singer and composer |
| 3. Helen Keller | c. French painter |
| 4. Oedipus | d. Inventor of Braille |
| 5. Steve Wonder | e. Indian poet, saint and musician |
| 6. Claude Monet | f. Mythological Greek King |
| 7. Surdas | g. Greek poet |

Answers to the Quiz:

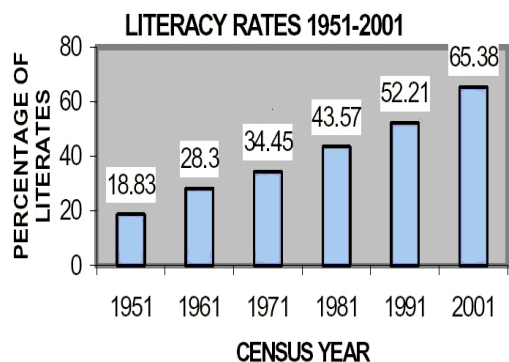
1-d, 2-g, 3-a, 4-f, 5-b, 6-c, 7-e

Starting next year 12 female children will be enrolled in the NAB program

Commentary: Education in India

India is home to 17% of World's total population accommodated in an area of 2.4% of the World's total area. As against 2820 languages in the entire world, over 800 languages are spoken in India alone including the local dialects changes. The country has witnessed phenomenal educational development - both in quantitative and qualitative terms, since independence. However, the national goals of universal elementary education and total eradication of illiteracy have still remained elusive. The Government is committed to achieving these national goals and has been steadily increasing the budgetary allocation for education. The country has also made significant strides in higher and technical education. India spent 4.11% of its GDP on education during 2000-2001 but about 44% of its adult population still remains to be made literate. The literacy rate for the country as a whole in 2001 was 65.38 percent for the population aged seven years and over. The corresponding figures for males and females were 75.85 and 54.16 percent respectively.

The adult literacy rates have improved in India in the last decade; however, as noted by UNICEF in 2000, even the Sub-Saharan Africa region had higher literacy rates - 69 and 53 - as against 68 and 45 in India, for men and women, respectively. Focusing on education, President APJ Abdul Kalam said in his speech to the nation on the eve of Independence Day "...We will give equal importance to male and female children in providing education and rights for growth of our society....We need to tell our children about the importance of education as learning gives knowledge..."



Education Statistics Snapshot - India	
• % Urban population in total population	27.78 %
• % Literates in population >7 years	65.37 %
• % Literates in Female population	54.16 %
• Child population 6-11 yrs	138 M
• Child population 11-14 yrs	62.6 M
• Children out of school	59.0 M
• Pupil-teacher ratio Primary School	1:43
• Pupil-teacher ratio Upper Primary	1:37
• % Children of primary school age enrolled in primary school	92.1 %
• % Children of primary school age attending primary school	70.0 %
• % Children entering class I who reach class V	57.6 %

Sources: For tables of educational statistics

<http://www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/edusta.htm>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics, including the Education for All 2000 Assessment. "The State of The World's Children 2004"



*Asha Silicon Valley
Support A Child
Program*

SponsorEvent



*We would like to
extend our invitation
to our
Dear Sponsors to join us
for a fun filled evening!*



*Thank You
Asha Silicon Valley
Support-A-Child Team*

The Support A Child newsletter is produced bi-annually to improve and sustain communication between us and our sponsors and donors.

We look forward to presenting on a regular basis an informative newsletter with an interesting mix of articles, project updates, announcements.

We particularly are eager to receive your feedback, input and comments.

Write to us at:



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Or

Email us at : sv-sac@ashanet.org

Visit us on the web at:

www.ashanet.org/siliconvalley/sac

Muthu says "I want to become a Policeman. I will catch thieves and will get them punishment. Policeman's duty is to secure our country."

R.Nikhila dreams "I will become a teacher. I will teach lessons to children. I will work hard and support my father, mother and brother."

*"School education helps me to support my family. It will earn me good name and make me proud. After completing 12th grade I would like to go to college."
- S. Sutha*

Vaishnavi says "I like my sister Vanmathi. She studies in second grade. She studies well. I learn obedience to elders from her. We both play pretend cooking."

Making ours and your life easier

- Remember to update us with your current contact information: addresses, phone and email.
- Check that sv-sac@ashanet.org and ashasv_sac@yahoo.com are not blocked by your spam filters and you can receive our email messages.
- Check the "Announcements" section of your **My Account** page for updates on your sponsored child.
- Visit the projects link on our website for latest project updates.
- Save the electronic receipts that are emailed to you for tax purposes.

In the coming year we plan to do the following:

- Send fun and informative Educational Kits for every child.
- Add and expand our projects.
- Send you frequent updates about your sponsored child.
- Create alternative educational and learning materials for children.

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