



Asha for Education™

P. O. Box 322, New York, NY 10040-0322

www.ashanet.org

Asha for Education: About us

Asha for Education (Asha) is a non-profit, non-partisan, secular organization, committed to improving the access to and quality of education for underprivileged children in India. In the summer of 1991, a few students including V.J.P. Srivatsavoy, Sandeep Pandey, and Deepak Gupta got together to think of ways in which they could play a role in the development of India, the country of their origin. These young people shared the belief that education is a critical requisite and an effective catalyst for social and economic change in India. Education became the agenda for the action group that emerged from this gathering. The group was named **Asha** to represent the *hope* that had brought these individuals together, the hope that they aimed to bring into the lives of children in India as well as the hope felt by our volunteers, in being able to create an equal and just society.

Asha for Education's mission is to catalyze socioeconomic change in India through the education of underprivileged children. Asha primarily focuses on education in the belief that education is a critical requisite for socio-economic change. We collaborate with several non-governmental and governmental organizations in India to empower individuals and provide them with access to education, health care, equal opportunity, social justice etc. Asha for Education's interventions fall within different broad categories such as community based interventions, disabilities, formal schools, non-formal education, supplemental education, fellowships, orphanages, residential schools, resource centers, and curriculum development.

Asha was recently awarded the top 4-star rating by Charity Navigator (www.charitynavigator.org) in the area of International Relief and Development. Asha functions with less than 2% of all funds raised as operational expenses, all of which are borne by contributions from volunteers or bank interest. This way 100% of all donations go directly to projects in India. Asha for Education is federally registered as a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization in the United States and also in many countries and any donation to Asha is fully tax-exempt per the country's law.

Asha for Education is a unique organization in that it is 100% volunteer-driven, has no hierarchy and has zero overheads. Our volunteers span a diverse section of society and they all possess a spirit of service. Structurally, Asha functions primarily through geographically distributed chapters, but there are also focus groups within Asha, which are dedicated to the different aspects of the organization such as projects, publicity, fundraising, coordination, etc. Each chapter works individually toward the collective goal, by partnering with groups in India that work to improve the lives of people through education and empowerment. The chapters have a high degree of freedom in their activities including the identification, research, support, and ownership of various projects. However, there is also a great level of cooperation within Asha, as is evident by multiple partnerships on projects across chapters and international events like Work An Hour. Most of the Asha chapters in India work closely with our project-partners and have a strong understanding of grass-root level issues. Some Asha India chapters located in the metro cities have also started fundraising activities.

Asha for Education has come a long way since its inception in 1991. Asha had 15 chapters in 1995, 31 chapters in 1999, and over 63 chapters in 2003. Asha for Education now consists of 66 chapters in North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia and includes over 1,000 volunteers and several thousand supporters. Over the past 14 years, Asha has collaborated with nearly 400 project partners in India to disburse more than \$5,000,000. In 2004 alone, Asha worked with 147 project groups in 20 states disbursing nearly \$1,500,000. Perhaps more important than these numbers is the personal leadership that the volunteers take in carrying out Asha's activities. Further, Asha for education is more than a mere funding agency. Asha volunteers often get actively involved in projects and often help the projects by providing new ideas and resource materials. Involvement with Asha for Education has produced awareness about developmental issues in India and has inspired many volunteers to get involved in other social causes. Thus, Asha for Education, while making a difference in the lives of underprivileged children of India, is also preparing a group of more socially aware and responsible individuals.

We realize that there is still a lot to be achieved since there are millions of children in India who do not have access to education. Debates and discussions are constantly underway among the volunteers about how we can make a greater impact on the situation. As part of this learning process, we are working closely with our projects to evaluate our efforts over the past decade. In the end, we hope to be able to better understand the impact we have had, and where the focus of our efforts should lie. Thus, Asha for Education hopes that it will continue to play an important role in bringing about socio-economic development in India in the future.