



muskaan

...A Smile Miles Away

A newsletter from Asha Colorado

December 2005

Editorial

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! May the holidays bring everyone joy and happiness. The past year has provided us with many things to be thankful for, as well as a few events to make us realize that life is too short. We at Asha Colorado look forward to the coming New Year with renewed hope to serve the underprivileged children in India...but this hope will not be a reality without your generosity and support.

Here's to a new year and the great things we will accomplish!

This edition of the newsletter brings to you some highlights of our accomplishments as a chapter as we strive to help the underprivileged children in India dream of a brighter future.

"Hope, deceitful as it is, serves at least to lead us to the end of our lives by an agreeable route"

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View from the Margins – Challenges of Globalization.

The best phrase to describe Dr. Sandeep Pandey's work is that it is pro-poor. His actions - from education to grassroots democracy to peace to promoting local ownership of resources - are all guided by that basic philosophy, and governed by an ideology that is Gandhian and humanitarian.



Dr. Pandey, the 2002 Magsaysay Award and a co-founder of Asha for Education, recently concluded a four week tour of the US and Canada. He visited close to 20 cities, where he spoke about his on-going work in India in three broad areas - Grassroots Empowerment and Right to Information; Water rights and the Anti-Cola struggle; and India-Pakistan peace initiatives and denuclearization of South Asia. The talks were very well attended by people from all walks of life, who showed a keen interest in the issues. Consistent with Asha's commitment to send 100% of donations to projects, all costs were borne using personal contributions from individuals who support Dr Pandey's work. No donor money was used for any expenses associated with this trip.

On October 26th, the Colorado chapter and the Institute for the study of Advancement of International Development (ISAID) co-hosted a forum for Dr. Pandey to share his experience on environmental impact of coke's practices in India and the struggle against it.

Jeevan Daan Samiti (JDS). *Uttar Pradesh, India.*

JDS provides basic education to the children of the migrant brick kiln laborers, who have no other source of education due to the migrant nature of their family's occupation.

Progress:

Prior to Asha's support for the project, there was no financial aid from any organization. Currently, Asha is the only organization supporting JDS. With Asha's support, JDS has

- Established education programs in five villages.
- 250-300 children between the ages of 3-12 years are directly benefiting from the program.
- Villagers who do not own land have started benefiting from their right to information and food.

A site visit in July 2005, confirmed that we are moving in the right direction with this project. Funding is an integral part of any program's success. See **Project in Focus** on Page 4 for a detailed description of the JDS project.

Mahatma Gandhi Residential High School

(MGRS). *Karnataka, India.* MGRS is a residential school for boys from 8th to 10th, who discontinued school after the 7th class to work in hotels. Asha is supporting one batch of students from 8th to 10th class. There are a maximum of 30 students in each class.

Progress:

Through the 'Support a Child' program Asha-CO has managed to find a sponsor for every child in the 9th class for the 2005-06 academic year. Contact Smruti Behera (nkekre@yahoo.com) for more information or to make contribution towards this project.

Samajik Navnirman Sanstha (SNS). *Maharashtra,*

India. SNS is a grass-root level community-based non-profit organization that conducts after-school education, computer literacy training and uses information technology for social development in villages populated predominately by the Dalit (underprivileged) community.

Progress:

After-school Education Centers: About 98% of the students attending the program passed the year-end exam. You can find more information on the above projects at http://www.ashanet.org/colorado/sebama_colorado/sebama_sac_july2005_visit.html

Use of Personal Computers for Social

Development: SNS has partnered with 1V1C (One Village One Computer) to train SNS volunteers and implement IT programs in villages. Computers are used to provide basic computer literacy. SNS also uses its personal computer center to earn income through data processing services.

Government Partnerships: With the help of SNS volunteers, technology awareness training in the field of water harvesting and use of JalChitra water management software was provided to 50 participants in 10 villages with all expenses paid by the government.

Cultural/Social Constructive Programs: Karate classes help people become physically strong to fight any physical atrocity. Through the local band, SNS organizes music performances and street plays to educate people about social issues such as dowry and girl child abuse.

Vocational Training: SNS provides training as well as seed money to youth interested in employment through vermiculture activities.

Contact Pankaj Jagtap (jagtap@yahoo.com) for more information or to make contribution towards this project.

Sebama Foundation. *Tamilnadu, India.*

Sebama Foundation runs a residential school for mentally handicapped, physically disabled and hearing impaired children on the outskirts of Dharmapuri in Tamilnadu. The school is the only one of its kind in the area.

Progress:

The Rosa Centre has had a tremendous year (Please refer to site visit report posted on the website:

http://www.ashanet.org/colorado/sebama_colorado/sebama_sac_july2005_visit.html

The number of children who are enrolled in this special education program has gone up from 34 children last year to 61 this current school year. This is reflective of the program's success. The Centre has expanded the staffing to support the new kids. Now there are two special education instructors and three assistance or Ayah's (nanny's).



Race Provides "Asha" for Indian Children

These were the headlines from one local newspaper covering Asha Colorado's 5K walk/run in the summer.

In many ways Saturday, July 17th 2005, was just another hot summer day for many Coloradoans, but it was anything but ordinary for those who participated in the Asha 5k run/walk. There were close to 200 participants in the 5K run, walk and 1K family walk. With every stride the participants brought 'Hope' to hundreds of children, who are aspiring for a better tomorrow, through education.

The event included fun for the entire family – with a family 1K, awards for the winning runner, raffle prizes, face painting and a very entertaining magic show.

The race participants, pledge supporters, and official corporate sponsors of the event are instrumental in raising funds necessary to benefit the life-altering mission of Asha for Education.

Thank you one and all for making this first Asha 5K for the Colorado chapter a successful one. See you again next year.



Top 10 Slam Dunk Charities

We are pleased to inform that Asha for Education has received a 4 star rating from Charity Navigator for the second consecutive time.

Charity Navigator ranked Asha for Education as the top charity, with a total score of 69.79 (out of 70) in the field of International Relief and Development.

Congratulations to all the volunteers for the hard work!

Support a Child: Make a Difference

Soda \$0.75, Coffee \$1.10, Bagel \$0.60, Taco Bell \$3.15.

BUT just \$0.50 a day will make a difference for an underprivileged child in India.

Asha's *Support A Child* program makes it possible for an individual to sponsor the cost of education and living expense for one underprivileged child in India.

Children of Sebama Foundation need your help. Rosa Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Mentally Retarded children is currently seeking new donors to support a child's education and boarding needs (please read an overview of this project on Page 2).

All it takes is \$14 a month!

Annual or bi-annual donations can either be paid online or send us a check for \$166.00 to

Asha for Education, P.O. Box 234, Lafayette CO 80026

"Giving connects two people, the giver and the receiver, and this connection gives birth to a new sense of belonging."

Deepak Chopra

Jeevan Daan Samiti (JDS)

Jeevan Daan Samiti (JDS) focuses on imparting basic education to children in Math Uchauri and surrounding villages in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh (UP), India. The project runs nine teaching centres where 250-320 children between the ages of 3-12 years attend classes.

Most of the people in these villages belong to the Musahar and Chamaar castes. They are among the poorest of the poor, usually worse off than the Harijans. Their main source of income is brick making in the dry seasons. This usually involves moving from place to place. In the rainy season, they make leaf plates and take on other low income jobs. The children work around the house or make bricks. There are very few educated people in these communities. They are considered untouchables and find little acceptance in the society.

JDS was started by Vishwesh Kumar, who worked as a reporter. He started the project with the help of a few friends and still remains the main force that is moving JDS forward.

Programs and Progress

The primary focus of JDS is to provide basic education to the children of the region. Second, it tries to spread awareness about alternate means of income for the people so that they can afford to send their children to school. JDS also runs a screen printing press, an apiary, and some tailoring centres. The third focus is making sure that the people are aware of their rights and benefit from government schemes.

Some of the achievements of the project are:

- Opened seven teaching centres where 250-320 children between the ages of 3-12 years attend classes. The children are taught counting, Hindi alphabets, and other basic subjects. A few children have started attending formal government schools, but the drop-out rate is high.
- Initiated a tailoring program to enable women to have a secondary source of income. Other income generating schemes include bee-keeping and soap-making.
- Started a campaign for Right to Information and Right to Food. Most of the poor people, being illiterate, have no idea what government

schemes are available in their area and thus never benefit from them.

Some of the key challenges the program faces:

- Absolute poverty has forced most children to work
- Awareness about education is pretty minimal in the community
- Being “untouchables”, they find it hard to get acceptance at school
- There are no permanent school buildings. Classes are held in mud huts or under trees near the brick kilns.
- Health care facilities are non-existent.

So far the response from the people about JDS has been positive. Demand for JDS centres has been growing in the neighbouring villages. One child has reached class X and is being encouraged by JDS to go to college.

JDS tries to engage the villagers using cultural programs. The annual Jeevan Daan Mahotsav is well attended. They also enact plays on contemporary issues. JDS is also trying to spread environmental awareness and the need for trees.

JDS and Asha

Asha-Colorado has been supporting JDS from 2002. Asha-Kaithi is also involved with JDS at the local level. For 2006 the project needs about \$4200.

How you can help?

- Become an Asha-Star by donating \$15/month (Company matching makes it \$30)
- Support the operation of one (or more) of the teaching centres
- Visit the Project
- Monitor the project progress and be part of the future of this project

For more information regarding site visits, proposals, photos:

<http://jds.ashacolorado.org/>

Project Contact:

Satya Narayan Mishra

satya_nm@yahoo.com

970-481-4274

December 31st is Fast Approaching!

This means you are in the holiday spirit and also have a short time left to make a charitable donation to get a deduction on your 2005 taxes.

Corporate matching donation: What if for every dollar you donate, another dollar was given? If your company has a corporate matching policy, double your donations! Just inform us (contact amit_gupta_in_kl@yahoo.com) about your company and we will work with you!

Donate online: Your donation to Asha-Colorado will go towards one of the educational projects supported by Asha-Colorado.

Donate to ASHA-Colorado Projects: Asha Colorado is also looking for project specific donations for **Jeevan Daan Samiti (JDS)** in *Uttar Pradesh* and **Samajik Navnirman Sanstha (SNS)** in *Maharashtra*. See **Projects at Glance** on Page 2 for detailed information and progress of these projects.

Your donations will specifically go towards meeting the goals of the project you select.

Asha is trying to reach out to as many children as possible to help them dare to DREAM - of going to school...of a better tomorrow.

Please take the time...

Make secured online donations now
(https://www.ashanet.org/colorado/asha_donation_drive.html). **OR**

Fill out the pledge form below and mail your check to the P.O. Box on the form. To make a project specific donation v us on the web at <http://www.ashanet.org/colorado/chapter-projects.php>.

Pledge Form. No amount is too small

Yes, I would like to donate to help educate the underprivileged children in India.

\$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____ **Phone:** _____

Email: _____

Asha for Education is a non-profit organization with 501 (c) 3 status. Your donation is tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law. Our Federal Employee Identification number is 77-0459884.

Please make your check payable to "**Asha for Education**" and mail it to:
Asha for Education, P.O. Box 234, Lafayette, CO 80026

A newsletter from Asha-Colorado

**Newsletter Writer
and Editor:**
Nandini Vasan

Asha means Hope.

Hope for a chance to go to school

Hope for dreams to come alive

Hope for a better future

Our Mission

**To catalyze socio-economic
change in India through education
of
underprivileged children.**

From,

Asha for Education

Colorado Chapter

P.O. Box 234

Lafayette, CO 80026

Web: www.ashanet.org/colorado

Email: colorado@ashanet.org

Affix Stamp
