

Zuriodhay

Asha Zurich Newsletter, April 2006

Volume 4, Issue 1

Introduction to Asha

Fifteen years ago, a group of students came together with the purpose of helping underprivileged children in India. They believed that widespread education could lay the foundations for much needed social and economic changes in a country where primary education still remains a privilege rather than a basic right, particularly in rural areas. From that belief was born *Asha for Education*. An organisation which boasts today of over 66 'chapters' worldwide, Asha is supported by over 1,000 volunteers engaging in fundraising activities which feed various educational activities for underprivileged children across India. Since Asha is a zero-overhead organisation, all donations go only to the projects. Administrative costs are covered by volunteers or by a separate administrative fund.

Asha Zurich was founded in May 2002, by students from ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich. Our core group consists of around 15 active students and young professionals forming a close-knit and dynamic group of volunteers. Regular meetings are dedicated to discussing various opportunities for fund raising and to organising social and cultural events whose profits are sent to ongoing projects in India. We identify projects worthy of support through an exhaustive evaluation process, maintaining close contacts with volunteers in the field, both while choosing a project to fund and over its course. At every stage, Asha Zurich remains true to its concept of democratic decision-making. Our informal internal structure encourages close interaction and cooperation between volunteers.

Inside This Issue:

Introduction to Asha	1
Project Update	1-2
Editorial	2
Upcoming events	2
Latest news	2-3
Finances	3
Photo trip to projects	4
Asha worldwide	4

Project Update

Vishwamandal Sevashram:

The first year of Asha Zurich's involvement with the Vishwamandal Sevashram in Shirpur (Dhule, Maharashtra) is now coming to a close. A total of over Rs. 300,000 (CHF 8,000) has been disbursed. Asha's involvement in this project has been fruitful and the Sevashram has been successful in taking education to children who are first generation learners and to a place where such issues are not being addressed by the government. According to the latest reports, the project is running smoothly and we will soon be evaluating the annual report from Dhule.

Our collaboration with Fr. Godfrey, the project coordinator in Dhule, has further been strengthened by Andre Urech and Elia Marinucci's visit as part of their photography project. (see page 4). They have given us an encouraging report of the work being done at Shirpur. It has been tentatively agreed that Asha Zurich will continue funding this project.

President:

Gregory de Souza

Secretary:

Vishweshwara Herle

Treasurers:

Priyanka Belawat

Shyam Chikatamarla

Project Coordinators:

Vikas Mittal

Baiju John

Chidambaram Narayanan

Kirtimalini Gadre-

Bhattacharya

Editors:

Agomoni Ganguli

Srinjoy Mitra

Chanda Raj



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www.asha-zurich.ch
asha_zurich@yahoo.com
Asha Zurich
c/o Priyanka Belawat
Höhenring 8, 8052 Zurich.

Parivaar:

The Parivaar project in Kolkata aims at the total rehabilitation of orphan children and children of sex workers. Children are provided with shelter, food and education at the centre and Parivaar seeks to educate them in a manner that would enable them to become self sufficient in the future.

In 2005 Asha Zurich has funded eleven children at the Parivaar center. The future funding of Parivaar is being discussed by the Asha team.

Akshardeep:

Asha Zurich has been funding non-formal education classes in Pune, Maharashtra for the past two years and has recently decided to continue to fund a third year. Thanks to the relentless efforts of the teachers and project volunteers at Pune, Akshardeep has been successful in getting over 50 children admitted into regular schools. Various new activities at the centre are particularly worthy of mention. Mr. Badhav, annually appointed supervisor for the classes has been holding regular parent-teacher meetings to keep the parents informed of school activities. Mrs. Swati Naik has been involved in establishing new teaching techniques and changes within the curriculum. Ms. Shweta Thakur motivated the children of a class in Gandhi Nagar to paint their own classroom. Mrs. Nayak and Ms. Limaye have designed worksheets for teachers to grade the children according to their ability and learning skills. The children now wear red Akshardeep jackets instead of the T-shirts that used to quickly wear out. Overall the schools are gathering momentum with new volunteers and

Dear Reader

As spring begins to point its head timidly behind the snow caps of Switzerland, our Asha team has been busy preparing the latest issue of Zuriodhay, the Asha Zurich newsletter. Zuriodhay allows the team to stay in touch with members, volunteers, other Asha chapters, donors and various well-wishers of the organisation. This issue's highlights include reports of the various fundraising activities and events in which Asha Zurich has participated. You will find information on upcoming events and as well as an updated overview of the finances. We are pleased to present a new feature of our newsletter: "latest news from Asha Worldwide." Our thanks go to the various people who have taken the time to contribute articles for this issue and we do hope that readers will enjoy our spring issue of Zuriodhay.

The Editorial Team



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new ideas. An area in which Akshardeep needs to make further progress is deeper and more active community involvement. However, encouraging steps are being taken in that direction.

Latest News

Nach Baliye:

Nach Baliye was a disco evening filled with fun, music and dancing. The publicity was carried out by Asha and it received an overwhelming response. The disco went on until the early hours of the night with non-stop dancing. People rocked 'til they dropped, wanting even more! Two young DJ's, Chilli and Spice played Bollywood and Indian pop music. The profit from the bar and ticket sales were substantial (around CHF 2500) and will go to projects funded by Asha.

IAZ Food Festival:

Asha Zurich also took part in the Indian Association Zurich (IAZ) food festival this year, thanks to the enthusiasm of IAZ president Mr. Arun Amirtham. Held at the Gemeinschaftszentrum in Witikon, the main

Upcoming Events

India in pictures

Look out for André Urech and Elia Marinucci's photo exhibition in Zurich on Asha's projects in India

Tickling your taste buds

Asha Zurich will soon be organising Indian cooking classes

attraction of the evening included over 60 different dishes from various regions of India, as well some cultural programmes. The Asha team, in charge of the beverages, prepared 13 liters of *chai* and these along with other soft drinks were sold at the stall. The evening yielded the modest yet meaningful sum of 214 CHF.

Vol nteer

Asha Zurich needs U.

Donate your time and skills to support the education of underprivileged children.

Volunteer with Asha Zurich.

www.asha-zurich.ch/volunteer

Finances

Asha Zurich's diverse sources of funding have proven successful in 2005:

- Total donations: **CHF 22, 638.65**
- Of which: **CHF 9,356** from 'Charity as your Hobby' (CAYH).
- Other sources of income include Asha events and various donations
- **CHF 18,550** disbursed to the three projects in India.
- Over **CHF 8,005** disbursed to three projects in India for tsunami relief and rehabilitation.

Asha Zurich now enjoys a healthy cash reserve to look for new projects which are promising enough.

IAZ Indian Ball:

An Asha information desk was present at the Indian Ball, 2006, the premier event organised by Indian Association Zurich. Asha Zurich volunteers took turns in giving information on Asha Zurich to people attending the ball. Interest in the desk was moderate. Asha volunteers also helped in selling IAZ merchandise and the money generated from the sales (176 CHF) have been donated to Asha Zurich. Music for the bollywood disco was played by a member of the Asha team: DJ Chillii.

Photo Exhibition:

In the autumn of 2005, Andre Urech and Elia Marinucci, two Swiss students, visited India to document and photograph our ongoing projects. Their main aim was to organise photo exhibitions following their tour, presenting India's art and culture, as well the work of Asha Zurich to the Swiss community. They traveled at their own costs and Asha volunteers helped in finding sponsors for their expenses as well as in organising the photo exhibitions, which were held in Baden and Brugg in February and March, along with a music performance and a disco.



many drops of water make a mighty ocean!

Donate small amounts regularly
Make a big difference!

Asha Zurich
Bank: UBS AG
Account Number: 206-259021.40Q

participate in
CAYH
Charity As Your Hobby!



Asha
For Education

www.asha-zurich.ch/cayh

CAYH - pledge a monthly contribution to help underprivileged children in India get basic education

A photo trip to Asha's projects

by **André Urech**
(translated from German)



News from Asha Worldwide

From drizzly Zurich to warm and sunny India. We were picked up from Mumbai airport by Gregory de Souza and dropped at our hotel. Just three days later, we were off to Pune to visit the charitable organisation Swadhar. In the slums, where a large part of the project is being conducted, we were warmly received by the children and their teachers. The women at the council centre were also happy to hear that Swiss students were taking an interest in their projects. From Pune, we took a bus to Dhule, in northern part of Maharashtra. Father Godfrey, who extended his hospitality during our five day stay showed us the work being carried out in villages. These include schools for children living in the small neighboring villages who receive basic education from the centre. We were fascinated by a film on organic farming that Fr. Godfrey has started with his team of co-workers.

Back in Pune we set off for a long 36 hour train journey to our next destination, Kolkata. At the children's home Parivaar, Vinayak and his team showed us around the new centre. Over the next ten days, we lived with the children, took their photographs, played with them and observed them at school. Our visit to the *Durga Puja* festival in an overflowing jeep will forever remain in our memories. Next, a supervisor from Parivaar accompanied us to Hooghly, another project funded by Asha Zurich. Many children had left over the holidays to visit their family in the countryside. Nevertheless, we enjoyed driving around and playing music.

Back from India, we organised photo exhibitions of about 65 photographs in Brugg and Baden in February and March. An exhibition in Zurich will take place at Restaurant Seehof from 2nd July:
<http://indien.photoreport.net>



© André Urech and Elia Marinucci

Today, there are over 66 Asha chapters worldwide: 45 in the US, 14 in India, and 7 in Europe, Singapore and Australia. The organisation has more than 1000 active volunteers and several thousand supporters around the world. Asha has supported more than 385 different projects spanning 24 states in India. In terms of project funding, almost \$4,000,000 has been disbursed to these projects since Asha's inception. In 2004 alone, Asha chapters raised over \$2,000,000 and disbursed nearly \$1,500,000.

Automatic Project Approval:

Many deserving projects proposed by volunteers in India are waiting in the Asha-wide (collective Asha chapters in India) pipeline with

delays exceeding two years. An open discussion to automatically approve projects below \$2000 is taking place. If accepted, this would empower Asha-India to unleash small grass-root projects at the six-monthly gathering.

Asha Elections, 2006-2008:

Although every Asha chapter is an independent entity as far its projects are concerned, a world-wide election is held every two years. This is to select a central coordination team. The 2004-2006 team will soon end their term and

a new team is needed to take over Asha for Education world wide activities. The election spans three months (March to May) and will be conducted in various phases.

Indian Govt. praises VOICE:

Voluntary Organisation of Community Enterprise (VOICE) is a non-governmental organisation working towards the overall development of the street children in Mumbai. It is supported by WAH (Work an Hour), Asha's flagship event round the world. VOICE's effectiveness in reaching out to street children has been recognized by Indian government. The government's plan to introduce VOICE's methods will hopefully replicate its success elsewhere in the country.

Asha Hyderabad rewarded:

Asha Hyderabad stood second in the National Social Impact Awards, organised by the S.P.Jain Management Institute. About forty teams (NGO and corporate) sent entries across India. The prize included a cash award of Rs. 11000, along with a trophy and a certificate. The panelist included eminent people such as Kiran Bedi (IPS), Govind Nihlani (film director) with the head of S.P.Jain Institute and a senior executive from Crisil (India's leading rating organisation).

More fund raisers:

Delta Phi Omega (A South Asian women association in US) is proud to announce Asha for Education as the 2006 "Literacy Through Unity Week" Beneficiary. This philanthropic week is dedicated to raising awareness about children's education and literacy, as well as raising monetary funds through a week of events in February - March 2006 by each chapter or colony at their respective universities.

Other contributors: Priyanka Belawat, Vishweshwara Herle, Shyam Chikatamarala, Chidambaram Narayanan, Kirtimalini Gadre Bhattacharya.