

Zuriodhay

Asha-Zurich Newsletter, 2007



Kids at *Ma* day care centre

Latest News:

In 2006-07, various events have helped Asha Zurich gain fresh momentum. The aim of these events was to raise funds and to make ASHA and its work known to the wider audience.

Dhoom! Bollywood Party

As expected from last year's overwhelming response, our annual disco (May 2007) was once again a success. DJ Chilli and the Asha team had Zurich dancing to the latest Bollywood hits late into the night, raising over 1500 CHF.

Vada Pav, Chai and Chat in Zurich:

For the first time in Asha Zurich, we decided to use the Weltmarkt in Oerlikon as a platform to spread the word and raise funds for projects, by offering people a taste of Indian "*Vada Pav and Chai*", and on a later occasion *Chat: Golgappa/Paanipuri, Bhel, Papadichaat and Samosa*. The total amount raised from these two events was an impressive 1600 CHF.

Indian Association Zurich (IAZ) Food event:

In January 2007, IAZ arranged its annual Indian Food Festival. Similarly to 2006, Asha Zurich organised the drink stall at this event.

Indian Ball:

This spring, Asha Zurich was proud to have its home-grown DJ Chilli animate the disco at the Indian Ball organized by IAZ.

Baden Food Festival:

In March, Asha arranged a stall at the Baden food festival organized by the Indian Association Baden (IAB) to sell *Jalebis* and Patties. The stall not only helped raise modest funds but also attracted many individual donations, amounting over 400 CHF.

From the editors

With renewed energy and inspiration, we bring you the 2007 edition of *Zuriodhay*, the annual newsletter of Asha Zurich. It is with a sense of pride that we look back upon our success stories and various fund-raising initiatives undertaken since we last interacted through this newsletter. As a reinvigorated team of fresh new faces and seasoned volunteers, some of whom have been with Asha Zurich ever since its inception, we keenly look forward to the challenges of the coming year.

With much enthusiasm, we anticipate the success of a new project taken up at the beginning of the calendar year: extending partial financial support to two day-care centres-*Jananee* and *Ma*-catering to slum children in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. To add a new flavour to this issue, we decided to replace our annual project updates with original contributions from those closely associated with the projects. Mr. Salil Chattopadhyay from Jalpaiguri gives us an account of the early days of the Day Care Centres (crèches) *Jananee & Ma* and Fr. Godfrey D'Lima (*Vishwamandal Sevashram*) writes about *Adivasi* education in tribal areas. Given the inspiring and insightful contributions on one hand and our limited space on the other, we were faced with the difficult task of incorporating the articles without losing their richness. No doubt we have failed to do justice to the original contributions as space tends to be a ruthless editor. We therefore count on our contributors' magnanimity to forgive the liberties we have taken with their articles. The original articles can be found on their respective project WebPages. Should you wish to find out more about Asha Zurich's activities, you will also be pleasantly surprised to find our website undergoing a refreshing change, with the latest updates of our projects, news, minutes and much more at: <http://www.asha-zurich.ch/>.

Zuriodhay 2007 will also give you an insight into Asha Worldwide as well as the financial situation of our chapter. Finally, we take this opportunity to salute the dynamism of Asha Zurich members and extend our heartfelt gratitude to our faithful donors, sponsors and numerous well-wishers who continue to extend their help in more ways than can be acknowledged in these few pages.

The Editors

You can help change the life of a child...



Donate a small amount regularly

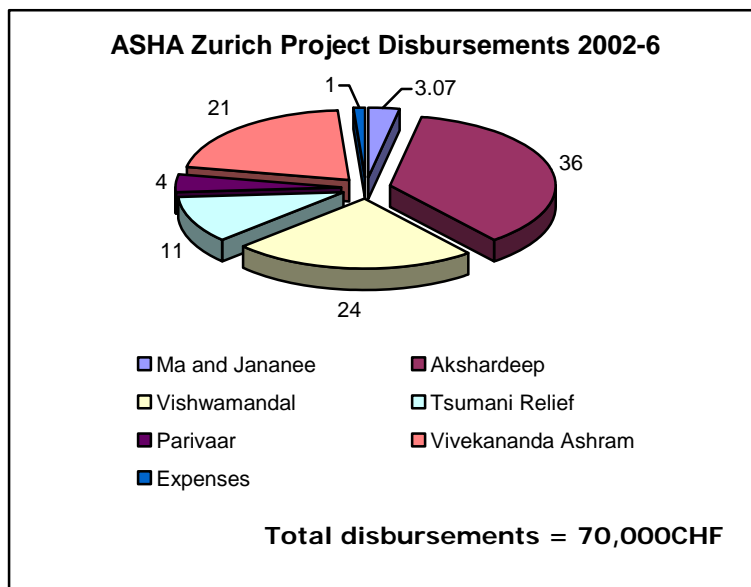
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Finances

Asha Zurich has had yet another successful year with a steady influx of funds from various sources. In 2006, Asha Zurich raised 18,424 CHF. The main contributing factor was once again the innovative concept of the CAYH monthly donations (8260 CHF). Also, a number of events arranged in 2006 helped to collect 3925 CHF. Donations from individuals and organizations amounted to 6182 CHF.

The graph shows the disbursements to various projects by Asha Zurich from 2002 to 2006. In all, approximately 70,000 CHF (including CHF 8000 for Tsunami relief funds) have been disbursed by Asha Zurich. About 700 children have benefited from these projects.



PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION IN ADIVASI AREAS- by Fr. Godray D'Lima

Indian Education like everything in this vast subcontinent is a fascinating adventure. An enterprise that humanizes even as it drains the spirit, that beckons to unlimited possibilities even as it reaches dead-ends, that has a wealth of human resources but fails to stimulate enough creativity to usher in a just social order. And these paradoxes are just a few of what we might articulate from an infinity of contradictions that mark this wondrous movement of peoples towards a (hoped for!) better future. Education in India continues the colonial consolidation of the State by promoting uniformity in learning and certification. It serves technological advancement through imitative mastery of mainly western inventions. It offers expensive specializations that help a fraction of its citizens to earn disproportionately large incomes in contrast with masses of workers who are engaged in low paid manual labour occupations. It offers the hope of upward social mobility to the poor since it is

structured in secular idiom ostensibly without caste-class bias. The reservation system gives positive support to disadvantaged caste groups. The formal and non-formal systems of education both have similar contributions in enhancing literacy, numeracy, general knowledge and above all self-image to learners. These and a myriad other characteristics give Indian education its flavour and scope. However, education of Adivasis and Dalit sections in India is affected by a culture of poverty. This implies that: The poor cannot afford a quality education needed to compete for high profit employment; the horizons of educational content and methodology are constantly shifting beyond the capacities of the poor to excel in since these parameters are generally set by elite sections for employment in capitalist economies. Such educational standards make education more and more unreachable for poor people. Since Dalits and Adivasis do not articulate any demand of their own for an education that focuses on their livelihood and occupations, a relevant education eludes them. Education for Adivasis (and all other peoples) must lead to positive social change. Progress with human dignity and equity is a non-negotiable goal of education even if it is not commercially over-rewarding. Would social change come more expediently from a coterie of well educated Adivasis? Or would it come from a spontaneous peoples' movement for human rights, justice, equality? Has education any significant role to play in social change? Such questions challenge those who work with Adivasi education with no water tight compartmentalized answers. Education, individual leadership, mass movements for human rights, economic equality, etc., all have potential to create

Vol nteer

Asha Zurich needs U.

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conditions of positive change for the Adivasi. Educationists must carefully utilize every individual and social ingredient to mould education into a force for emancipation, justice, wellbeing for all.

More than 50 million Indian children do not go to school.



It costs just CHF 35 to fund the education of one child at Akshardeep

A VENTURE: Towards a better childhood for the Deprived Children – By Salil Chattopadhyay

We were walking along the embankment of the Teesta as it flows by the Jalpaiguri town of West Bengal. Our purpose was to visit a centre for non-formal education for the primary-school drop-outs in the river-bed slum. As we proceeded we could see lots of very little children running or crawling along the embankment. They looked dirty, neglected and uncared for. We wondered who looked after these little ones. Apparently there was no one and they were roaming around like a pack of wild animals. We decided to conduct a survey and this area we found 114 families and 87 children. Of these, only two had their granny to look after them at home. Others were left alone or had slightly elder siblings, nursing them to the extent of their capabilities. All these families are daily workers. The womenfolk are mostly domestic workers and the male members are rickshaw-pullers, small vendors, hawkers etc. They needed the service of a *crèche* and those in town were far beyond their means.

We then decided that set up a *crèche* or day-home for these children. We had workers available but no fund to support the project. However, we decided to go ahead. A small room 6` x 8` was lent to us by a resident of the slum and we started our *crèche*, which we named *Jananee*. It started with only 12 children of immediate neighbourhood. Donations did not come easily. Rich people, important persons were brought to see the centre. We organized small cultural programmes and celebrations. Of those

who ultimately visited the centre, some donated small amounts. But *Jananee* ran mostly from the donations of our workers. Help eventually came from abroad. The International School in Geneva and Friends of India Society of Geneva together contributed nearly 1,54000/-INR. This was a big amount. Some of our patrons donated the fund to purchase a small plot of land. We started the construction of our own place for *Jananee*. After much hardship, we had one class-room, a small office, kitchen, store room, latrine, bath and a covered veranda. We planned a grand opening for our *crèche*. The District Magistrate and the Divisional Commissioner came at the inauguration. Not only had they appreciated our effort, *Jananee* was recommended for an annual grant from the National Child Welfare Council.

The mothers on their way to work in the morning around 7.30 or 8, would drop their children at *Jananee*. We had two workers there, whom we named Mother and Nurse. Nurse would receive the child, help the children to get clean, brush their teeth, cut their nails. Mother would then take them to the class-room. There she would teach songs, dances, group games and also alphabets and numerals. Our idea was to prepare the children until the age of 5 years, who would then be admitted to a primary school. Lessons were planned accordingly.

After some time the State council for Child Welfare promised us an amount of INR 1500/- per month towards the salary of our workers and snacks for 25 children. Previously we would give the children biscuits or bread slices. Now we decided to give cooked food, a plate of 'Kichdi' (rice and lentil boiled with some vegetable). We knew once we started giving cooked food there would be no going back. And that came to be the biggest burden as the fund supposed to come from Government proved to be very irregular and erratic. Nevertheless, within 5 to 6 months there was an appreciable improvement in the general health of the children. By this time request started coming from other areas to open more centres. But we were hard pressed for funds. We ran into debts with the grocer. Donations came in meagre amounts, yet we took over another slum area comprising mostly of migrant workers from outside the state. This centre we named *Ma* and started with practically no resources. Within a few months enrolment shot up to 25 but we did not have even the sitting space for 15. Now ASHA has come forward and we have started consolidating our work with their financial support. We have formed Self-





Lunch time at Jananee

Help Groups with the mothers of the children enrolled in our Centres to give financial support to these women. Extension of such groups may strengthen the economic ability and may ultimately lead to a better climate for promoting basic education. The need for centres for the underprivileged children is acute. We can't meet the need fully but we are fighting in the small area that we have taken up and we promise to continue the fight.

ASHA Zurich: Committee '06-07

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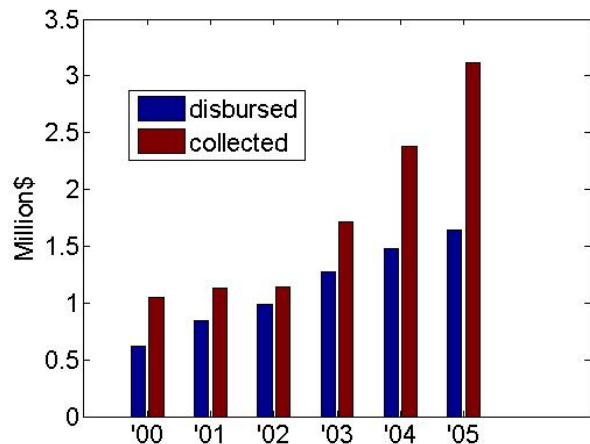
Agomoni Ganguli

Srinjoy Mitra

Asha wide

In line with all Asha chapters around the world, Asha Zurich is an independent organization, solely responsible for all its commitments and decisions regarding funds and projects. In this issue we decided to present the collective effort from all chapters (66 at present) around the world and to illustrate how Asha's identity is gaining visibility. The volunteers from different chapters keep in touch with each other via regular email exchanges and web group discussions. New projects are often discussed across chapters to get relevant information and to overcome problems of limited accessibility. Project site visits are sometimes carried out by Asha volunteers belonging to chapters other than the one funding the project. This sense of camaraderie between chapters with no organizational binding is a strong drive towards fulfilling the Asha ideology.

It is not a constitutional requirement that all Asha chapters fund projects independently and are free to join hands to fund bigger projects. Global volunteers are elected biennially to form a coordination team that is responsible for the communication between different chapters. Asha as a whole has a very impressive balance among charitable organizations. The US based *Charity*



Revenue collected and amount disbursed (since 2000) by all Asha chapters taken together.

Navigator, an independent non-profit organization that has gained accolades from TIME and FORBES, recently listed Asha in two of their top 10 lists. Asha was regarded highly because of its extremely low administrative expenses and high disbursement ratio across all chapters world wide. Asha Zurich, while being a much recent phenomenon has nonetheless climbed uphill and can now be considered as an active chapter committed to the cause.