

MSSO NEWS 2014

Annual Newsletter of Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization (MSSO)



Generous donors of Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization (MSSO),
with matching funds from
the Department of Foreign affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)
make a difference in the lives of many less fortunate

MSSO Vision

- To promote sustainable development, economic as well as social, of the less fortunate

MSSO Mission

- To create long term partnership of Canadian donors and hardworking, selfless, grassroots social workers for building the future and for responding promptly to emergencies
- To enhance the value of donations through careful selection of NGO partners and effective management of development projects
- To empower women to participate as equal partners in achievement of social justice and equitable development
- To promote balance between development and environment

Mauli Seva Pratishthan

Drs. Rajendra and Sucheta Dhamane care for mentally ill women deserted by their families and hence forced to live on streets. The couple started an organization called Mauli Seva Pratishthan for this purpose. The organization provides shelter, food, treatment and employment for seventy five such women. Once in a while a woman in their care dies of a natural cause. At that time the Government machinery, who never bothered to help the woman when she was living on the street, come rushing to know how the woman died and start harassing the Dhamane couple with a long list of questions. Rajendra laments "The Government machinery has more interest in the death of the woman rather than in providing support to her when she was alive. They harass us with questions – Why did she die? How did she die? Was she murdered? If not, what was the nature of the illness? What was her caste? What was her religion? Are there any relatives? What was the town she came from? What is her identity? Did she have a ration card? And so on. How can a woman living a horrible life on the street have an identity?" In spite of such harassment, Dhamane couple quietly keeps helping these women to live a decent life.

Many a times the helpless woman who is brought to the organization already has a child or she is pregnant on account of a rape. The organization has not only to care for the woman but also for her child. MSSO is undertaking to help Mauli Seva Pratishthan in providing care for the children of these women. For additional information on Mauli Seva Pratishthan, visit www.msp.org.in



In discussion - Dr. Wani, a resident & Dr. Sucheta Dhamane

Blindness Prevention among Rural Children, Dhule

Supported by MSSO and matching funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), now part of Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), the project Blindness Prevention among Rural Children (vision project) is in its second year. The progress has been excellent and the team has gone beyond the call of duty. During the screening process, the staff noticed that children were poorly clothed. They collected and distributed clothes to these children during the festival of Diwali.



The outreach team distributing clothes to rural students

As of August 2014, a total of 141,973 students have been screened, of which 75,202 were males and 66,771 were females. Allocated as part of the project budget, two mobile vans have been purchased that have sped up the screening process. The original target of screening 40,000 students is already 3½ times higher. In addition, the project targeted

training of 250 teachers on eye health whereas the actual number has already exceeded 4 times the target. Additional details of the project may be found in the interim reports submitted to DFATD which are available at:

<http://mssoonline.org/downloads/interim-reports/>

To accommodate the increased numbers in OPD, MSSO assisted the Trust to expand its facility using matching funds from the Government of Alberta's Community Initiative Program under International Development Grant.



Mr. Dhamne with his wife, and MSSO, Toronto Chapter members

Mr. Shashikant Dhamne, the treasurer of the K.S. Wani Memorial Trust, who is in charge of the financial matters of the vision project, visited Canada for two weeks in July and presented a detailed update on the progress of the project to MSSO members in Toronto, Calgary and Kelowna. MSSO members were keenly interested to hear first-hand accounts of challenges faced by the outreach team of the project and how they overcome these challenges. A fascinating example is evident in the difference between male children and female children using corrective eye glasses. More females decline to use the eye glasses and return these to the outreach team as compared to males. Some of the parents do not want their daughters to use eye glasses since it will jeopardize their chance of finding a suitable groom for them. The counselors from the outreach team provide counseling to these parents, but the success rate is not high.

Helpers of the Handicapped (HoH), Kolhapur

MSSO provided financial assistance to the group to construct the second floor of their integrated school, Samarth Vidya Mandir. This year the fourth batch of Grade 10 students appeared for the SSC Examination. The result was 100% success. All 17 students (8 boys and 9 girls) passed the examination. The students in the school receive special support and guidance from all the teaching and non teaching staff in order to help them exceed in their academic careers.

Discrimination against handicapped at Taj Mahal

In a grave violation of the People with Disability (PWD) Act 1995, social activist Naseema Hurzuk and 47 others on wheelchairs were not allowed to enter the Taj Mahal. The beautiful marble structure stands on a plinth. There are stairs and ramps to climb the plinth. But when the group started climbing, they were stopped by a guard saying wheelchairs were not allowed in the main building. The group then refused to move and insisted that they be allowed to bring their wheelchair over the plinth and to the main chamber. After waiting for three hours Naseema Hurzuk called the

Collector of Agra, who then instructed the guards to allow the wheelchairs inside. Acting on the complaint of PWD from Maharashtra, the Uttar Pradesh government has asked the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to make all heritage monuments disabled-friendly. Thanks to tireless efforts of Naseema to get justice for the handicapped.



Naseema Didi protesting the ban on wheelchairs at the Taj Mahal

Right to Free and Compulsory Education - AVANI

MSSO's continued support to AVANI's brickyard schools provides education for over 600 migrant children. Most of the migrant children living in the brickyards have been neglected by the government system. The Right to Education Act (RTE) dictates the importance of free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 and 14. AVANI and Child Rights Campaign demonstrated in front of the district education office demanding fulfillment of the Act as regards to education of the migrant workers' children.



AVANI's school in a brickyard

As a result of the peaceful demonstration, 118 students were given admission in government schools. They were also given school uniforms, books, backpacks and will be guaranteed a midday meal each school day.



Jagannath Wani, Swami Supradiptanand and Devendra Kotwal with students of the Ramakrishna Mission, Arunachal Pradesh

Ramakrishna Mission School, Arunachal Pradesh

MSSO plans to support the Ramakrishna Mission School located in the Tirap district, which is the southernmost district of the North-East Frontal Agency (NEFA), in Arunachal Pradesh. The school has been functioning for more than three decades (since 1972) in this neglected area extending its activities on various levels. Dr. Jagannath Wani, President Emeritus, visited the school whose motto is to provide an education “by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one’s own feet”. This is a fully residential school, preparing boys for the All India Secondary Examination and Senior Secondary School Examination of the Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi. For additional details you may please visit: <http://www.rkmnarottamnagar.net/home.htm>

Painting Therapy Project at SAA

Maya Pandit, an undergraduate student from New York, desires to be a psychiatrist. She wanted to volunteer in India. Dr. Jagannath Wani suggested her to volunteer at the rehabilitation centre of the Schizophrenia Awareness Association (SAA) in Pune. (The centre was built with assistance from MSSO and CIDA in 2006.) As Maya has painting as her hobby, she wanted to help patients with painting as a therapy. Devendra Kotwal, a commercial artist and long-time friend of MSSO, conducted painting session for the patients for a month prior to arrival of Maya.



Painting therapy in action around Devendra Kotwal

Most of the patients showed improvement in their social interaction, concentration level, patience to sit and work at one place continuously for two hours, better management of their thought distraction, and team work skills. Amongst all the activities conducted at SAA, this activity proved to be the most popular and all patients looked forward to it every day.



Maya giving practical tips in painting

On the farewell day, the patients were in tears and took a promise from Devendra that he would continue taking weekly sessions and from Maya that during her next visit to India, she would again spend a few days with them.

Parivaar, West Bengal

Vinayak Lohani holds degrees from two premier institutions - Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur and Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Calcutta. Just a degree from any of the two institutes would have procured lucrative offers from the big names in the corporate sector. Unlike all his batch-mates Vinayak with degrees from both the institutes turned his back on the corporate sector in favor of serving the humanity and founded Parivaar, a non-denominational, humanitarian organization based in West Bengal, India.

For over 10 years, Parivaar has worked toward the total care and overall development of children who are highly

vulnerable to exploitation, victimization and trafficking, including orphans, street children, abandoned children, and extremely impoverished children from tribal areas. The organization provides residential living, education, and physical activity in a loving and caring atmosphere for boys and girls. With over 930 children, Parivaar is one of the largest free residential homes for kids from destitute backgrounds in Eastern India. By supporting Parivaar through financial assistance, MSSO hopes that Parivaar can expand its potential and add more accomplishments to its impressive list of achievements. For details visit <www.parivaar.org>.



Dr. Wani concluding the Parivaar visit

Samata Pratishthan, Yeola

They run Maiboli Residential School for the Hearing Impaired students from deprived sections of the society. There are 105 students in the school. After schooling these children need help in acquiring vocational skills to be self-supporting. MSSO is assisting the Pratishthan in providing training in various occupations including weaving paithani sarees (specialty of the region), tailoring, embroidery, carpentry, screen printing and many such vocations.



Dr. Wani felicitating hearing impaired athlete

Snehalaya, Ahmednagar

MSSO NEWS 2013 covered detailed activities of Snehalaya. They have started an elementary school for imparting quality education to 165 orphans, children from red light areas and from low income families. MSSO is assisting them in setting up a playground equipped with various sports facilities so that these children will excel in sports activities.

MSSO Board Members

The general meeting on March 16, 2014, unanimously elected the following to the Board of Directors.

Jivan Kayande	President
Ramesh Aggarwal	Vice President
Vidita Pande	Secretary
Chandrakant Lad	Treasurer

Dr. Jagannath Wani continues to be the President Emeritus.

Toronto Chapter – Annual Fund Raising Dinner

Margaret Joshi, her family and the chapter executives ably coordinated the annual fund raising dinner of the Toronto Chapter on April 6, 2014. More than 120 persons attended. The event raised \$4855 earmarked for various projects of MSSO - Gift of Vision (Sharda Netralay), Gift of Knowledge (Nachiket Libraries), and Gift of Education (AVANI).

Heartfelt “Thank You” to Volunteers

Krishan Chawla and Rohit Desai organized volunteers for fundraising on 16th and 17th February 2014. The proceeds totalling \$76,917 will be utilized for the vision project.

Ramesh Aggarwal	Renu Narang
Magan Chavda	Savita Patel
Krishan Chawla	Jitendra Patel
Jagdish Dalal	Daksha Rajani
Kusum Dalal	Hasmukh Rajani
Dilip Dasmahopatra	Vijay Sawhney
Bhavana Dave	Pramod Shah
Rohit Desai	Anil Sharma
Shobhna Desai	Ashok Sharma
Balvant Gandhi	Dilip Sharma
Taru Gandhi	M.P. Sharma
Prashant Hayatnagarkar	Sanjeev Sharma
Swati Hayatnagarkar	Tushar Sharma
Suresh Jani	Vishal Sharma
Paulin Jani	Subhash Sikka
Krishan Katyal	Ashok Singh
Prem Kharbanda	Rajeshwar Singh
Yogesh Kumar	Hansa Thaleswar
Chandrakant Lad	Ishwar Thaleswar
Vinod Marwaha	Jagannath Wani

MSSO appreciates the contribution of all volunteers and the coordinators for the planning of the fundraising event.

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4 Strathbury Circle SW

Calgary, Alberta T3H 1P7

Phone: (403) 288-0048

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