

MSSO NEWS 2012

Annual Newsletter of Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization (MSSO)



Generous donors of Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization (MSSO),
with matching funds from
the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
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

MSSO Project visits to India, January 2012

In early January of this year a team of MSSO volunteers visited number of MSSO supported projects. The team included Eilish Hiebert, Cyrene Banerjee, Nimish Rathod, Chandrakant Lad and Pravati Lad. The following is a brief summary of the activities of the NGOs they visited.

Lokmanya Public Charitable Trust

Dr. Raja Dandekar and his wife Renu established the Trust in 1982. The Trust runs a school for over 450 children from Chikhalgaon village and surrounding area. The team was surprised to meet a highly intelligent bubbly 13 year old Atharva, who lost his leg in a road tar-roller accident while riding his bike along the road that was under repairs. MSSO is sponsoring Atharva's education from the funds donated by our generous donor Sadashiv Sane. Atharva aspires to become a world class chef in Chinese cooking.



The day at the school begins with a prayer assembly

Making the school the centre of development, the Trust has engaged in developing the potential of locals to set milestones of development in the field of education, health and agriculture. For details visit <<http://loksadhana.org>>.

Vanasthali Trust, Pune

MSSO provided substantial financial assistance to Vanasthali back in 1991 and 1992. Vanasthali was formed in Pune in 1982. MSSO team visited their Jejuri Primary School. It has a fully equipped library for the children and their parents. Last year the primary school was converted into a Semi-English medium school. This small \$10,000/year budget school is just one of the many projects of Vanasthali that stretches over a vast rural area in a 50 km radius of Pune. Vanasthali combines academic education with teaching of art, dance and drama giving expression to the talent of rural children. With generous support from our donor Sadashiv Sane, MSSO is funding this 'hobby program'. Vanasthali also runs women's development camps and advances microcredit loans to teachers for implementation of this creative program.



MSSO volunteers with the Vanasthali teachers

Jnana Prabodhini Trust, Pune

Jnana Prabodhini (JP) was one of the first two recipients of MSSO assistance in 1988. Since then we supported many of their projects. The visionary educationist Dr. Vishvanath Pendse, lovingly known as Appa Pendse, firmly believed that India needed motivated intellectuals for transforming it into a developed country. To achieve this end, he founded Jnana Prabodhini Prashala in 1962 for gifted students.

All social work and rural development projects of Jnana Prabodhini are issue based. JP encourages self-help amongst

the beneficiaries. They are guided to address issues facing them. All JP projects may be described as: by the people, for the people and of the people. MSSO is funding a small project of this huge organization. The project deals with traditionally taboo subjects: adolescent sexuality, HIV Aids, etc. Highly educated and dynamic leader Dr. Anagha Lavalekar is the coordinator of this project. As expected, delving into sexuality gender awareness was met with objections from many, but Dr. Lavalekar and her colleagues have changed the outlook of these people and changed the lives of the project beneficiaries.

AVANI, Kolhapur



MSSO volunteers with Anuradha Bhosale of AVANI

The name **AVANI** is derived from the first letters of the following three essentials of life: **A**nna (food), **V**Astra (clothing) and **N**ivara (shelter). Detailed information on AVANI is contained in MSSO NEWS 2011. As mentioned therein, MSSO is sponsoring total expenses for 15 students.



Jagannath Wani in conversation with AVANI students

While MSSO team was visiting AVANI, they were shocked to meet two sisters who were traumatized from the murder of their mother committed by their father just four days earlier. The team thus realized, first hand, the difficult work undertaken by AVANI. In such situations they have to deal with great emotional difficulties, provide counseling to these children and earn their trust and confidence.

K.S. Wani Memorial Trust

MSSO submitted a proposal to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for matching funds in support of the project *Blindness Prevention among Rural Children*. It is a five year project with a total budget of \$770,651. CIDA approved the project providing 3 to 1 match; MSSO has to generate \$192,663 over five years duration of the project and CIDA will match the amount with their contribution of \$577,988. CIDA had received 167 project proposals. Only 30 were approved for funding. Incidentally, this is the biggest project ever undertaken by MSSO.

The project will establish a full fledged pediatric ophthalmology unit with two mobile clinics and provide eye examination to at least 40,000 rural students followed by treatment for those who will be identified with impaired vision. Till now we were doing, and will continue to do, free cataract surgeries for poor people. These patients have a remaining life span of 5 to 15 years. However, if a child with impaired vision is treated then he has a very long productive life span as much as 70 years. This was the thinking behind this new project.

Additionally, as part of the project girls who dropped out of school due to the societal traditions will be traced, counseled along with their parents and encouraged to return to school.



MSSO Team with eye hospital volunteers

The project will be executed by K.S. Wani Memorial Trust in cooperation with Sundeep Foundation. On January 11, 2012, MSSO team visiting India had a meeting with the volunteers of the partners to explain the CIDA requirements in the execution of the project. Besides the group meeting Eilish Hiebert, Jagannath Wani and Cyrene Banerjee visited the project site personally and reviewed environmental requirements with the staff at the hospital. They were impressed with the State-of-the-art diagnostic and surgical equipment and the caring attitude of the staff. Cyrene had an interesting encounter with a beneficiary of the eye hospital. A champion athlete had treatment at the hospital and had regained his sight. He had personally come to thank Jagannath Wani and the doctors at the hospital for providing superb facility for the less privileged people of Dhule and surrounding areas.

Helpers of the Handicapped (HoH)

As reported in earlier newsletters, MSSO with matching funds from CIDA sponsored the project *Integration and Rehabilitation of Physically Challenged* executed by the Helpers of the Handicapped. Promoting integration of physically challenged with normal students was the main aim of the project. This major three year project was completed on schedule on August 31, 2012. The project cost was \$484,000. CIDA provided generous match of 3 to 1 for the total cost.

With reference to the baseline year 2008-09 the number of physically challenged students increased by 289% compared to 163% for physically normal. The overall percentage of physically challenged students increased from 6% to 10%. Eventually the partner would ideally like to increase this percentage to 15%.



MSSO Team at the prayer meeting of HoH school

CIDA is particularly insistent on gender equality. HoH organized 12 awareness meetings to encourage enrolment of female students. Their number increased by 180% compared to 166% for male. Overall the number of female students increased from 35% to 37%. The percentage of female students amongst all physically challenged is also 37% which is consistent with the overall enrollment figures. Ideally this should be 48% as reflected in the general population. This is going to be a slow process due to social beliefs and circumstances in the general population.



The school building of HoH

To create overall awareness about education amongst the rural population, HoH organized 9 meetings with the parents with the average attendance of 55 mothers and 36 fathers. It may seem from these numbers that mothers generally are more active and enthusiastic as regards the education of their children. However, one also has to take into account the fact that the fathers have to be at work during daytime and hence cannot attend these meetings. Similar attendance figures were observed for the meetings organized for creating

awareness about the education of females. Specifically, the average attendance for these meetings was 62 mothers and 34 fathers.



Naseema turned 60, would you believe?

As a result of MSSO and CIDA assistance, HoH created ideal school facilities and also appointed well qualified staff. This has helped in establishing a thriving educational institution.

News from Toronto Chapter

Nachiket Rural Children's Libraries project sponsored by the Toronto Chapter provides benefit to over 5000 children in twenty libraries in rural areas of Amravati district. The project is expanding its scope by adding new centres. Nachiket's reading and storytelling program for preschool children operates in 15 centres. It brings mothers and grandparents into libraries and is making a significant impact in the communities. The libraries form a focal point for programs such as essay writing competitions, storytelling, performance of short plays, telling jokes, general knowledge quiz and word games.



Children at Nachiket Library in a tribal area

The Toronto chapter held its annual dinner on May 7, 2012, to raise funds for the blindness prevention project and for the Nachiket Libraries. The event is supported by over 40

Marathi volunteers in Toronto. They prepare and donate food, volunteer to decorate the hall, present an entertainment program and sponsor a raffle by donating gift items. St. Johns' Presbyterian Church provides their facility for the event at no cost. Next annual dinner is planned for April 6, 2013.

Three new members - Prakash Date, Sanjivan Bhole and Nikhil Sathe - joined the core committee of Sudhir Joshi (President), Ajit Bapat (Secretary) and Harish Athale (Treasurer).

Sankurathri Visit

MSSO volunteers Chandrakant Lad, Eilish and Murray Hiebert visited Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh to see first hand the outstanding social work carried on for last twenty five years by Dr. Chandrashekhar Sankurathri for the benefit of the less privileged in and around Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh. The activities include a charity eye hospital, a school for less privileged students and a vocational training program for the local farmers. The Hiebert couple volunteered at the school for two weeks.



With Chandrashekhar Sankurathri

Dr. Sankurathri visited Calgary in the last week of October. MSSO members had a meeting with him on October 28, 2012. Dr. Sankurathri's presentation of his social work motivated few MSSO donors to contribute to support his noble work. Another Calgary organization SHINE also planned a fund raiser for Dr. Sankurathri.

Interim Changes in MSSO Board

The general meeting on April 14, 2012, unanimously elected the following to the Board of Directors.

Eilish Hiebert	President
Jivan Kayande	Vice President
Chandrakant Lad	Secretary
Nimish Rathod	Treasurer

Soon after the election, for personal reasons Eilish resigned from the Board effective May 31, 2012. Due to work load at the office Nimish resigned his position effective July 2, 2012. Both Eilish and Nimish offered to help MSSO from time to time if mutually convenient. Both resignations were regretfully accepted in the Board Meeting on July 24, 2012. As per the MSSO Bylaws, Ramesh Aggarwal and Cyrene

Banerjee were appointed to fill the vacancies with reshuffling the positions as follows.

Jivan Kayande	President
Ramesh Aggarwal	Vice President
Cyrene Banerjee	Secretary
Chandrakant Lad	Treasurer

Heartfelt Thanks to Volunteers

Jivan Kayande, Rohit Desai and Rajiv Ranjan organized the following team of volunteers to help MSSO in its fundraising activity, on 8th and 9th April 2012. The proceeds from this event, totaling \$76,714, will be utilized for the *Blindness Prevention among Rural Children* in Dhule and Nandurbar districts of Maharashtra.

Arun Bakshi	Nimish Rathod
Aruna Mehta	Niru Channan
Balvant Gandhi	Palavi Patel
Cyrene Banerjee	Pramod Shah
Deepak Sharma	Puna Devangan
Dilip Patel	Ramesh Aggarwal
Hansa Thaleshwar	Ramesh Khullar
Ishwar Thaleshwar	Rasik Kothari
Jagdish Dalal	Rasik Shah
Jagannath Wani	Reena Khanna
Jitendra Patel	Renu Narang
Jivan Kayande	Renu Sharma
Kiran Tawade	Rohit Desai
Krishan Chawla	Savita Patel
Kumud Acharya	Shivali Rathod
Kusum Dalal	Simon Manandhar
Mahendra Mehta	Surendra Sisodia
Moloy Sen	Tara Kothari
Mrudula Mehta	Tilak Sharma
Munawar Chaudhari	

MSSO sincerely appreciates the contribution of everyone who volunteered and the trio that coordinated the planning of the fund raising event.

MSSO gratefully acknowledges assistance of the following in the production of MSSO News.

Canadian International Development Agency
200 Promenade du Portage, Hull, Que., Canada K1A 0G4
Polyphase Engineered Controls Ltd.
3555 - 93 Street, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6E 6N6

Donations to MSSO are eligible for tax credit
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