

Funding Requests for Navjyothi

Navjyothi Swawalamban Sewa Sansthan (NJSS) is situated near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. In this region, the people are involved in manufacturing Banarasi silk saris through handlooms. Due to poverty, the children of these families were employed in making saris and were not attending schools. Nandlal Master, an ASHA fellow and his colleagues had since then started educating the children through night schools. The project then grew from these humble beginnings and is now running primary schools to organizing health camps.

The following are some of the activities of the project:

- (a) 2 primary schools in Nagepur and Harsos
- (b) 6 Kishori Kendras
- (c) 2 Non Formal Education centers and
- (d) Over 50 Self Help groups

A major component of the ASHA Navjyothi is the Kishori Kendras that provides education and guidance to the adolescent girls (Kishori). The average age of these girls is around 15. Most of them have never had any kind of schooling or education. Therefore these centers aim to first provide them basic reading and writing skills after which it then aims at providing other vocational skill such as sewing. Some among these girls who attend these centers are married at a very young age when the legal age for marriage in India is 18 for women. Apart from these Kishori Kendras NJSSS also provides education to the Women's Sewing Center at Benipur and provides both education and financial support to the sewing center at Mehdiganj. These centers not only provide education and vocation skills but also provide the young girls with advice on health related issues through regular visits by Urmilla Patelji and Urmila Vishwakarmaji. Very often the NJSSS promotes events in which several qualified people from Varanasi and other nearby cities come together and disseminate information related to women health.

Another important goal of the NJSS is to raise awareness among the people of the villages. To this end, Navjyothi runs Kalamanch (theatre), and holds regular RTI (Right to Information) / RTF (right to food) camps and health camps.

The following are some pending budget and new issues for Navjyothi 2008 and are related to the above said activities:

(a) **Kishori Exposure Visit (Request: Rs 12,000)**: There are 6 Kishori Kendras in Navjyothi and in each of these centers there are around 25-30 young women, in total there are around 200 women. Some of the women haven't ever gone beyond their villages. Therefore Navjyothi organizes an exposure visit to some of the local historic places such as Varanasi and Sarnath. The current proposal is to hold this visit around Nov-Dec.

The major expenses that will be incurred for this are through travelling. 2 Buses are required for this purpose and each the travel expense of each bus includes Rs5000. Therefore around Rs 10,000 is for transportation and the remaining is for food.

(b) RTI/RTF Two days training (Request Rs 7,000) : Under the RTI act, one may request information from the local governing bodies and it is the duty of the local governments to respond to the query within thirty days. This ensures greater transparency and also ensures accountability thereby attempts to address issues such as corruption which are among the deep rooted problems in India. Unfortunately a large number of people are not aware of such acts (see also NREGA, employment guarantee act). Through organizing workshops and training Navjyothi, would like to spread awareness among the villagers.

The major expenses here are incurred for the setting up of tents(shamiyana) and speakers, distribution of pamphlets regards the RTI/RTF rights. Also Nandlal Master plans to invite some members of the RTI, NREGA monitoring committees for these training centers. Therefore some amount will also be spent for the purpose of transportation of these members.

(c) Learning Kits (\$250) : These kits are based on Montessori system with inset puzzles and other mathematical kits. The idea behind these kits is that children work with their own hands and minds and explore these material and active construct concepts in their minds. (more info about these kits is available from <http://www.puvidham.net/>). I have spoken with one ASHA Bangalore volunteer Mr Ram Chandar and he has also apprised me that in these regions of Rajatalab and Balia which he had visited is also a scarcity of proper education material and such learning kits would be of great value to the children.

Funding Request	Cost Estimate
Kishori Exposure Visit	Rs 12,000
RTI/RTF	Rs 7,000
Learning Kits	\$250