

Asha Darshan Annual Report April 2007 – August 2008

Asha Darshan is now 5 years old. Even as we look back with pride at the five years of trying to set up an organization, (not the easiest of tasks), we are reminded of the long road ahead, of the need to march firmly towards our goal. We are happy to share with you happenings on our side in the past one year. It has been an exciting time growing the different programmes and the team has learnt a lot. One achievement has also been getting our FCRA clearance (finally after a struggle of two years and refusing to succumb to the bribes culture!). This will make getting our funding faster and less complicated. As Asha Darshan completes five years and firmly into its sixth, we thank each and every one of you for your trust and support, without which surviving these five would have been tough.

Asha Darshan at a Glance	
No. of Hamlets working in	60
No. of Schools	11
No. of Teachers	35
No. of SHGs promoted	414
No. of Shanti Sena Groups	100
Full time Staff	15
Development Blocks Covered	4
District	Baksa and Dhemaji

1. Education Programme

a. Running Schools

Started in 2001, we are now running 11 schools across 3 development blocks of Tamulpur, Nagrijuli and Ghograpar Development Blocks in Baksa District. Seven of the schools are till the primary level of Class 4, three schools are upto Class 7 and only one is a balwadi or pre-school. *Asha for Education*, a voluntary organisation based in the U.S.A has been supporting the school programme from the beginning.

Main Activities this year:

1. **Running the Schools:** The 35 teachers run the schools for an average of five - six hours everyday except Sunday. Monitoring of the schools are done by the Asha Darshan staff who make an average of 3 surprise visits a month. Out of the 11 schools, 6 are running very well and 4 are running O.K. The teachers are regular, students are learning as much as they should, parents are involved and school management committees are active. 3 of the schools are in the Bodo medium and rests are in Assamese medium. One school at Garughutu is not up to the mark mainly because of the teacher have problem



having a language problem (being Adivasis the students with Assamese which is the medium of instruction).

Challenge:
infrastructure
community is
buildings,
(Garughutu)



they have got from the BTC government. Rest of the schools are functioning from *kaccha* (non-

permanent) bamboo-wall structures and get crowded when there are too many students. All of them have bamboo partitioning and some schools do not have space for even that as two-three classes are held in the same room. School furniture such as tables and benches where available is highly inadequate. None of the schools has enough desks and benches for students to sit on. This overcrowding does not make for a environment that is conducive for teaching.



2. **Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs):** All the 11 schools have VEDCs though some are more active than the others. Monthly meetings are held with the VEDCs and 7 of them are very active. Even in villages where monthly meetings are not regular, the committees' members visit the school and monitor it regularly. The Asha Darshan team goes to the village to conduct the meetings with them. This year we are focusing much more on capacity building of the VEDCs so that they can take on issues.
3. **Teacher Trainings:** 3 teacher trainings were held on 7 to 12 April 2007; 7 to 12 July 2007; 26th -31st July 2008. All the 35 teachers underwent all the three trainings which were on mainly on child-centered teaching methods. Some training sessions were also given on yoga.



Frame work of teaching:

1. Morning Assembly
2. Physical Exercise
3. Meditation
4. Prayer
5. Mahatlokar vani
6. Hathar
7. Local News Head line
8. Class

4. **Teacher's Meetings:** On the last Sunday of the month, all the teachers come to the Asha Darshan office at Tamulpur for a monthly review and meeting. The time is also used for short trainings and discussions, for developing survey formats and also for discussions on how to work in the village. Apart from this, 'kendra' meetings are organised once a month by the teachers themselves. Held by rotation in different kendras, this is a forum for the teachers to come together and bond. The school where the kendra meeting is held, the particular teacher and the committee members all get involved in organizing the meeting, which includes a meal for the teachers.
5. **Children's Library cum Play Centre:** Om Prakash Foundation based in the U.S.A has recently donated books for starting one library. We are planning to start a library cum play centre in the Bhutan border of Bogajuli (where Asha Darshan already has a small plot of land and centre). Though the books are in English, this will be a good opportunity to introduce the language as well as provide stimulation and teach the children something new. The Om Prakash Foundation will also send two volunteers to teach the children English for three months.



6. **School Visits:** A 14 member team from the Global Youth Network in Canada visited our schools in May 2008. They said that they were enriched by the experience and some of them have promised to come back and volunteer with the schools in the future. Apart from this, a senior Gandhian from Australia, Garvin Brown visited our schools in April 2008. He also went on a Peace Walk mission in Guwahati and Titabor which Asha Darshan took part in.

Main achievements of running the schools have been:

- Children attend school regularly as the school is now accessible to them.
- Children who were sent to work by parents have now started attending school.
- Reading and writing skills of the children have improved tremendously.

b. Supplementary Mid Day Meal

The supplementary nutrition programme for the children has been running in the eleven schools. 1196 children have been getting a nutritious snack of milk, flattened rice and Jaggery every day of school. We have spent an amount of **Rs 4.54** per child every day. From this year onwards, we are introducing cornflakes and milk and jaggery to the menu. This supplementary meal has been helpful as many children do not eat before coming to school and they find it difficult to stay for the entire school period. Now they are able to stay and also take interest in their lessons. Also children whose parents go for daily wage and other work do not get food to eat immediately after they return from school, hence, this has been helpful.

Flattened Rice:

Sl. No.	Particular	Quantity			Rate Per kg.
1	Flattened rice	100 gr. Per student	1.68	4.54 gr. Per student per day	16.80
2	Amul Milk	15 gr.	2.34		156.25
3	Jaggery (Gur)	25gr.	. 52		21.00

Flattened Rice:

Sl. No.	Name of School	No. of Student	Per day Exp.	Working day	Total Amount Exp.
1	Namati	90	408.60	40 day	98064.00
2	Garughutu	50	227.00	Do	54480.00
3	Singramari	50	227.00	Do	54480.00
4	Lakhinarayanpur	250	1135.00	Do	272400.00
5	Hajong basti	60	272.40	Do	65376.00
6	Shantipur	120	544.80	Do	130752.00
7	Satyanarayanpur	300	1362.00	Do	326640.00
8	Devinagar	70	317.80	Do	76272.00
9	Danswrang	80	363.20	Do	87168.00
10	Anthai bari	60	272.40	Do	65376.00
11	Nagapur	66	299.64	Do	71913.60
	Total	1196	5429.84		1302921.60

Cornflakes:

Sl. No.	Particular	Quantity			Rate per kg.
1	Cornflakes	50 gr.	1.45	4.32 student per day	29.00
2	Amul	15gr.	2.34		156.25
3	Jaggery (Gur)	25gr.	.52		21.00

Cornflakes:

Sl. No.	Name of School	No. of Student	Per day Exp.	Working day	Total Amount Exp.
1	Namati	90	388.80	40 day	93312.00
2	Garughutu	50	216.00	Do	51840.00
3	Singramari	50	216	Do	51840.00
4	Lakhinarayanpur	250	1080.00	Do	259200.00
5	Hajong basti	60	259.20	Do	62208.00
6	Shantipur	120	518.40	Do	12216.00
7	Satyanarayanpur	300	1296.00	Do	311040.00
8	Devinagar	70	302.40	Do	72576.00
9	Danswrang	80	345.60	Do	82944.00
10	Anthaihari	60	259.20	Do	62208.00
11	Nagapur	66	285.12	Do	68428.08
	Total	1196	5166.72		1240012.80

We are provide mid day meal items in six main Festival of the year.

c. School Health

This year, we decided to focus a little bit on health of the children in the schools. A one day health training was given to the teachers. They were also taught to dispense medicines for common illnesses of children and a medicine kit was given to them. The doctor from the government hospital in Tamulpur was the trainer. This has been a success and we find that even some guardians come to the teachers now to take medicines.

We distributed 1100 medicated mosquito nets to the students to prevent malaria, which is a killer disease in the area. A Rs.10 contribution was taken from every student for every net. Along with the net distribution, awareness regarding malaria was given to the parents and villagers.

Three of our school children died this year. One died of snake bite, one of dog bite and another one more student in Naamati School recently died of some sudden illness and the parents did not have any time to take to the hospital.

II. SHGs Programme

a. Self Help Groups

414 groups have been formed are being promoted by us. They are followed up regarding their monthly meetings and savings and credit. The members take credit from their groups for income generating activities such as poultry, selling vegetables, mushroom farming, goat rearing, pig rearing, fishery, weaving, purchasing thela and rickshaw for their



husbands etc. Some of the groups are involved in group enterprises such as running weaving sheds and farming. The SHG programme is supported by AID (Association of India's Development), a voluntary group based in U.S.A.

b. Bank Linkages

400 of the groups have been helped to open their account in the bank. A 100 of the groups have got loans from the bank, some of them many times over. Upon getting the necessary grading, they get a subsidy from the government when they take a loan from the bank and hence we have been encouraging the groups to go for bank loans. Asha Darshan has to introduce the group and is also responsible for monitoring the loan return by the group.

c. Training

A lot of emphasis is given on training and capacity building of the groups. Every new group is given training on group management, book keeping and accounts maintenance. Senior groups are given training to build up their skills on income generating and enterprise development activities. Trainings are also given on group dynamics and problem solving.

d. Federation

In the year 2005, we had started the process of federating some of the groups but were able to strengthen the federation this year. The *Griha Laxmi Federation* has 31 groups as its members. Each member of each group has to invest Rs.250 to become a member of the federation. Rs. 200 is their investment which they will get back with interest and profit after a ten year period whereas Rs.50 is their membership fees. If they wish, there is also a facility for making monthly recurring deposits to the federation and then taking a loan at a monthly interest of 2% a month. Asha Darshan is hand holding the federation and monitoring its activities but they have their own management structure and we are happy to note that they are taking an active interest from this year onwards. We will be looking carefully into the federation building process this year and hoping to learn more from other's experiences before we get into making new federations.



III. Shanti Sena Programme

With support from TAGS, in the year 2002, we started forming Mahila Shanti Sena groups in the villages. This is part of the larger Shanti Sena (Peace Corps) movement in Northeast and other parts of India. 100 Mahila Shanti Sena groups in around 30 villages have been formed. New Shanti Sainiks are given training in their villages on various issues and some of the leaders are given a 3-day long intensive leadership training at TAGS.



Both members of our self help groups as well as non-SHG members can be called Shanti Sainiks. Formed into smaller groups of 5 or 10, these are like rapid response groups for conflict resolution in the village, especially in cases of violence and injustice against women. They have also taken action against selling of alcohol in the village and helping families who sell alcohol to get some alternate sources of livelihood. Mahila Shanti Sainiks also take part in rallies and demonstrations and meetings on larger issues. Last year, they took part in a rally to protest the killings of non-Assamese by militants.

On 2nd October 2007 (Gandhi Jayanti), the day was declared as an alcohol free day and we took out a rally on the issue.

On 8th March 2008, the federation members, our SHG members and Shanti Sainiks came together to celebrate International Women's Day. Over 2000 women took part in the day long programme which was held in Tamulpur. Apart from inspiring speeches and sharing of their stories, we had games and sports for the women which they enthusiastically took part in.

IV. Livelihoods Programme :

a. Supporting (IGA) Income Generation Activities of SHGs & Shanti Sena Groups

As we mentioned earlier, we are supporting income generating initiatives of the various SHGs and also promoting IGA among the



Shanti Sena groups. They have been given trainings on various skills such as detergent powder making, incense stick making and scientific livestock rearing.



But the groups have been more successful in livestock keeping as they are more familiar with the activity. Many members have supplemented their family income from their IGA and the group has also earned from the activity. Asha Darshan has been linking the

groups and also individuals to the banks and they have been getting loans from them for IGA.

An example is Binodini Rajbongshi of the Sanghamitra SHG of Koliapur who took a loan of Rs.5000 from the bank and started a fishery last year. She earned a profit of Rs.5000 in just three months and returned her loan. She has now got a second loan from the bank. Another example is *Mother Teresa Group* of 2 No. Jamuguri village who took a loan of Rs.3000 from the bank to start oyster mushroom farming. They got a profit in a month and were able to return the loan.

b. Weaving

Under the guidance of Asha Darshan, 25 weavers have started weaving as an economic activity from their homes. Another 4 weavers are



employed at a central weaving unit run by us at Tamulpur. Centrally, they are provided the yarn by Asha Darshan and they are paid a piece wage for their fabric which Asha Darshan takes back. Products like gamocha, mekhala-chador and churidar material is being sold at the Asha Darshan shop at Tamulpur.



c. The Asha Darshan Shop at Tamulpur

Since 2003, we have been running a small store in Tamulpur. Housed in a rented premise, we sell products made by our SHGs and associated members. We sell woven products, pickles made by women from the groups, detergent powder and also products such as honey, mustard oil and sesame (til) oil from TAGS, the khadi institution. A trainer also sits in the shop to train girls on cutting and embroidery and we have 3 tailoring machines there. We also took part in local exhibitions and also an exhibition by CAPART in Guwahati.

d. Tailoring Unit

With the help of SSB (Shashatra Seema Bal), Rangiya Branch we set up a tailoring unit at our centre at Bogajuli. 8 tailoring machines (two given by AID) are there at the centre and 15 girls have been trained at this centre on cutting and embroidery. But they have not been able to start their own enterprises due to lack of start-up capital. We now plan to turn the training centre into a full fledged production unit and hopefully will employ some of the trainees in it.



V. The Asha Darshan Team

We now have a team of 15 full time paid staff, including a small administration team. With a small support from ICA (Indians for Collective Action), U.S.A, we got trainings for our team. Our staff has been trained in gender analysis, rights based approach, health, money and group management and proposal



development. In the month of November 2007, the entire Asha Darshan team went for an exposure cum training programme to Uttaranchal. We visited the Laxmi Ashram in Kausani and Himalaya Foundation, Latika Vihar and Karuna Vihar in Dehradun. It was a great time for the team to be together and learn together.

Status of Teachers:

Sl. No.	Name of Teacher	Name of School	Name of D.V.Block		Sex
				M	F
1	Kamal Kishor Sarkar	Namati	GhograPar	M	
2	Jadab Das	Do	Do	M	
3	Saiful Islam	Do	Do	M	
4	Kabiraj Mardi	Garughutu	Tamulpur	M	
5	Bhadreswar Munda	Singramari	Nagrijiuli	M	
6	Preeti Das Panika	Do	Do		F
7	Dillip Mondal	Lakhinarayanpur ME	Tamulpur	M	
8	Brajamohan Baisya	Do	Do	M	
9	Dillip Baisya	Do	Do	M	
10	Dulal Ch. Mitra	Lakhinarayanpur LP	Do	M	
11	Chandan Das	Do	Do	M	
12	Suman Upadhyay	Do	Do		F
13	Champawati Hajong	Hajong Bosti	Do		F
14	Prajwala Hajong	Do	Do		F
15	Dillip Khandka	Shantipur	Do	M	
16	Sabitri Devi	Do	Do		F
17	Mamani Sarkar	Do	Do		F
18	Naresh Sarkar	Satyanarayanpur	Do	M	
19	Bimal Kumar Barman	Do	Do	M	
20	Prabhat Barman	Do	Do	M	
21	Geeta Devi	Do	Do		F
22	Bed Bahadur Basnet	Do	Do	M	
23	Chandra Kanta Upadhyay	Do	Do	M	
24	Sailendra Baisya	Do	Do	M	
25	Sankar Subedy	Do	Do	M	
26	Shantiram Mushahary	Danswring	Nagrijiuli	M	
27	Jaleswar Baro	Do	Do	M	
28	Trilochan Goyari	Do	Do	M	
29	Birala Narzary	Anthaihari	Do		F
30	Sumitra Mushahary	Do	Do		F
31	Dipak Basumatary	Do	Do	M	
32	Dillip Mushahary	Nagapur	Do	M	
33	Dhanen Brahma	Do	Do	M	
34	Hena Narzary	Do	Do		F
35	Lakhiram Saren	Devinagar	Tamulpur	M	







