

Asha Chennai Scholarships June2002- May 2003

A Report

The Asha Chennai Scholarship Project dates back to the Academic Year June 2000- May 2002 when 7 children received scholarships.

D.P.Prakash evolved the Asha Scholarship Questionnaire in March 2002 so that Asha Chennai team would have all necessary information on the background of the child. For the academic year 2002-2003 we started in May2003 with very few guidelines. The focus group consisting of Lakshmi, Chandravel, DP, Sekar, Anitha met the children and their parents satisfied themselves that the children were from families that were making both ends meet and finding it very difficult to pay for their children's education and yet they aspired to give quality education.

The nominators paid an important role helping with the understanding of the children's background. Home visits were also made. The team saw the need to help some parents with choice of schools where education was good and comparably inexpensive. These parents responded immediately and the children were also lucky to get admission to such schools. Marks were not given any special importance. Children were taken for the unfortunate family circumstances. Where parents came from better backgrounds they were not considered. The funding came through Berkeley looks like from one from just a single donor.

In July- August 2002 more students were taken up for scholarship and Princeton supported the efforts. Besides economic criteria, academic performance of the children also became an important factor in this batch especially for students of higher classes. The project was able to severely, physically disabled child from very poor circumstances. This is a source of joy for the team.

Through the year the focus group met most of the students at least three times to disburse money and talk to the children and their parents ascertain progress...Our understanding of the scheme is the children who were initially low in confidence seemed to improve with time. The results of many children showed improvement. Where change to English medium or the higher level of content had affected the academic performance they were helped with outside school support. What seems important to note is the level of care and mentoring that has been possible. An Asha volunteer family returned to Chennai from Berkeley has offered to do a study on this project, its impact on the children, the parents and also the quality of education the children receive. Some of the older children have participated in helping us in some areas- in assessment of written work in Tamil for assessment of candidates for candidates for Project Build, volunteers for the Vanavil event. They have expressed their readiness to be of service whenever required.

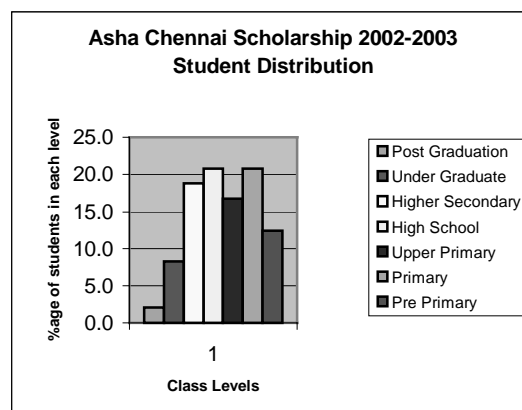
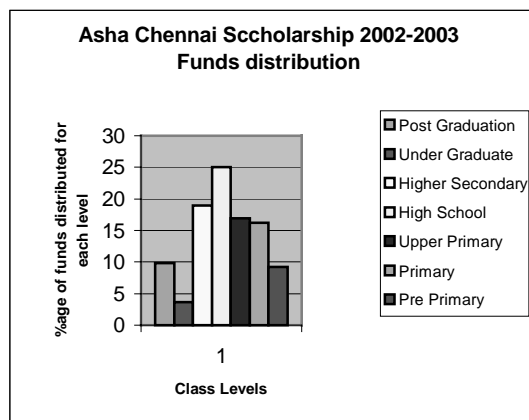
There are many things that we are learning from this project. There was a better understanding of the different fee structures in the different types of schools from the very small token fees in government, and corporation schools to very high in "Reputed Schools". As the project was adhoc there were no clear rules or guidelines. The exercise of formulating the rules and guidelines however is proving quite complex. We are constantly discussing how to create a fair and workable set of guidelines and the beginning of the Project 2003-2004 is expected to be very studied and well planned.

However, notwithstanding all the lack of a clear professional approach, what is very heartening is that majority of the volunteers see it as a very important and useful scheme for reasons of being able to support at least a small group through a meaningful education, that it give an insight into how good schools function, that it is training ground for promising youngsters into volunteerism and social service. We have received applications from different parts of Tamilnadu and Hyderabad for the next year. The job of selection this year will be easier in some ways due to rules and guidelines that have evolved but in some ways more difficult because of the large number of fresh applications and very many students of the year 2002-2003 doing well and continuing to qualify for continuation of scholarships.

The table below is worked out to show how the scholarships have been distributed.

Since this scheme is not a limited one the more donors we find the more children will benefit. We hope this will be the scheme from which our future Asha grass root volunteers evolve.

Class Levels	Class	Number of students	Amounts disbursed	Average per head/ class level	Range of fees max-min for the category	% age of total funds for the category
Post Graduation	MSc. Biotechnology	1	Rs. 20,000	Rs20,000	NA	9.8
Under Graduate (3yr courses)	BA, BSc, BCom	1+1+2=4	Rs. 7,250	Rs 1,813	2200 - 1300	3.6
Higher Secondary	(Plus one and two) 11 th and 12 th std	5+4 =9	Rs. 39,010	Rs 4,334	10,000 to 1200	19.0
High School	9 th and 10 th	3+7=10	Rs 51,105	Rs 5,111	8000 to 1929	25.0
Upper Primary (MiddleSchool)	6 th ,7 ^t and 8 th	1+4+3=8	Rs 34,595	Rs 4,324	5290 to 857	16.9
Primary	1 st , 2 nd ,3 rd ,4 th , 5 th	4+2+1+3+0=10	Rs 33,250	Rs 3,325	8200 to 677	16.2
Pre Primary	UKG and LKG	4+2=6	Rs 20395	Rs 3,399	7170 to 1500	9.2
		Total=48 students	Rs 2,05,605 Rs Two Lakhs five thousand six hundred and five	NA	NA	99.8%



Total funds disbursed = Rs. 205605

Total Number of students = 48

