

Mr. Chidambaram Narayan
Coordinator, Asha Zurich

Dear Mr. Narayan, when we spoke on phone I thought email was impossible. Now Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas, Principal of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, comes to my rescue. On my current Mumbai visit he allows me access to email. He is willing to receive your email communications and reroute them to me in Shirpur. I too can route my replies through him to you to speed up communications. Besides I can always fall back on the traditional post. I received your letter of Feb. 19 on Feb. 27, 2004. I respond to your questions rightaway. Hope you've a copy of them for reference.

1. VSD is a registered organisation. P.T.R.No.F – 1705 (Bom);
Soc.Reg.No.Bom.163/68 GBBSD. FCRA No.083820020. Our bank is State Bank of India, Shirpur, A/c No.01100005195 in the name of: THE SHIRPUR
VISHWAMANDAL SEVASHRAM.

2. Current Funding Sources:-Local Mumbai based donors: Rs.60,000 (General
Development and Literacy)

German friends: Rs.4 Lakhs (Literacy and Nonformal
Education)

Italian friends: Rs.5 Lakhs (Watershed Development)
Drought relief carry over: Rs.1 Lakh (Watershed Works)

Govt grant for 20 adivasi boys in boarding: Rs. 1 Lakh

Note: The above figures refer to the current financial year April 2003 to March 2004 and will be revised when the final accounts are audited after April 2004. But they give a reliable estimate of what we received for the current financial year and which monies we have been spending for the purposes given in brackets.

Our funding is on an ad hoc or year to year basis. There is no automatic assurance that the donors will help us in the following financial year, ie: April 2004 to March 2005.

3. If your question about "systematic inculcation of Xtn values and beliefs" implies a one track conversion drive I say a clear NO. If you mean that the humanitarian principles of religions like Xtianity influence our ethos my answer is YES!

4. Anand Sadn is across the road from VSD.

5. The funding we are asking for is primarily to facilitate the current work with greater effectiveness and efficiency. In the case of our health and agricultural development components it will raise the quality of our intervention besides the quantum.

6. To directly attempt at improving state education is to court Govt. and Govt. Teacher wrath. Loud publicity will amount to frogs croaking to scare a maneater! Advocacy is better handled by the more powerful. Our fragile institutions have to keep alive the hopes of the poor in the possibility of at least some education reaching their children through campaigns like ours.

7. The 25-30 learning centres we work with are in a rough triangle each arm being about 25 kilometres in length. The maximum centres operate on the Satpuda foothills on the Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh border

BUDGET RELATED QUESTIONS

1. Annual Teachers' Exposure Trips:- 2001: To Mumbai. Elephanta Caves, Puppet Workshop; Museum, Science Centre. 2002: Ambatha, Nashik District – Vermicompost units, soap making unit, Khadi Village Industries Centre. 2004: Visit to the works of neighbouring NGO – Gayatri Shikshan Sanstha, Nandurbar District. Also Mumbai for communication skills training; maths and science workshops, etc.

2. Why agricultural inputs? Because we are working with poor farmers. The educational programme leads to awareness of other community needs. Sustainable agriculture, promotion of savings and credit, health and watershed development are other important community development programmes.
3. The workshops will be based in VSD. Field demonstrations will be undertaken to give participants practical know how. Resource persons will include Govt. Agricultural officials, experts from AFARM, AFPRO, which are based in Pune and Ahmednagar respectively. MPSM, Nashik can also be relied upon.
3. Teachers salary is low but compares with the Govt. rate for auxiliary teachers who are hired on contract. Moreover we cannot sustain teachers only on this stipend which depends on whether or not we get annual funding. Our teachers must retain their traditional occupations along with their teaching commitments so if the project stops they will not be stranded. Motivation does not depend on salary alone.
What we can do for our teachers is to provide them with facilitating assets like a bicycle for commuting, rainproof clothing, a taperecorder-radio for self-learning.
5. Our office infrastructure has been partially provided by the Jesuit Society. However we need help for running costs.
6. After 3 years we hope that both the children who do not proceed with formal education and those who do with the support of their learning in our programme will be better citizens of their little villages and of the world. ASHA 's help will have not gone in vain.
8. We will report through audited statements, qualitative and quantitative data. If there is some particular format ;you want us to answer to we will cooperate.

Thank you for your interest. I do hope ASHA finds it worthwhile to help us.
Fr. Godfrey D'Lima (Shirpur)