

## **First Round of Questions & Answers, February 2004:**

### **General questions**

**1. Is Vishwamandal Sevashram, Dhule (VSD) a registered organization? Does it have a board of Trustees? Does it have FCRA clearance?**

*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. What are the current sources of funding for VSD, how much and for what purposes? What is the annual revenue of VSD?**

*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. Is there any attempt at systematic inculcation of Christian values and beliefs in the tribals?**

*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. Where is Anand Sadan located vis-a-vis VSD (Shirpur)?**

*Anand Sadn is across the road from VSD.*

**5. It seems that the requested funding is for on-going activities. If so, will the funds only allow for an easier, more efficient implementation of the current work or will it also raise the quantum of intervention?**

*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) Will any attempt be made to make the Government teachers do their job? Attempts such as writing letters to newspapers, government offices etc.**

*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) What is the total area of coverage of the project? 25 sites how far apart?**

*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 teacher's exposure trip: Can any examples of previously conducted tours be given? Locations etc.?**

*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 have the 6 workshops on agricultural development been included in the proposal as otherwise the proposal is about primary education?**

*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. Are the 6 workshops planned at 6 different locations such that the attendees will be different? Who will be the resource person?**

*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.*

### **4. The teacher's salary is very low (Rs. 525/month). Will it be enough to motivate them?**

*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. Funding for office supplies: How does VSD manage its requirements currently?**

*Our office infrastructure has been partially provided by the Jesuit Society. However we need help for running costs.*

### **6. What happens after 3 years? (In the sense of a funding agency, will there be a lasting impact after we fund for three years)**

*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.*

### **7. What kinds of regular reports can we expect from VSD? What would be the deliverables of the project?**

*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.*

## **Second Round of Questions & Answers :**

The following points need further clarification and consideration for the Dhule project:-

**1. The sources of own cash contributions to the project being only 44,000 over the entire project period.**

*Sundry donations from private sources through friends, mostly Mumbai based. This source can provide more but needs much time and effort to activate.*

**2. Are they considering any other sources of funding the project--any other organisation involved?**

*I hope to have contact with German charities through a personal friend. However, if a single source provides enough, why stack donations and get taxed?!*

**3. I feel the teacher's salary should be directly linked to their attendance, to stop absenteeism and provide motivation.**

*Yes, teachers' attendance matters for monthly stipend. If found negligent, not just salary cut but termination of service is promptly done.*

**4. After 3 years of Asha funding-- how will the project manage to run--in terms of finance?**

*After Asha? We've worked 12 years at this programme, so we will look for other funding when Asha tires of us. The programme needs to grow and answer the changed needs of the time. We have projected just the needs of the next few years.*

**5. What is the certainty of children turning up regularly at school?**

*Certainty is not found in any human system. But 12 years experience shows that children do come when motivated and supported. There is awareness today among tribal communities, of the benefits of education. It just needs to be brought within their grasp.*

**6. Father Godfrey no doubt seems to be a man with passion for social justice-- but he is the sole man behind this--nobody to take charge--so will it really continue after he retires?**

*After Godfrey? After Nehru? After Kennedy? Someone will follow on. The organisation that I belong to, which has assigned this work to me, will assign someone else, equally or more committed. The commitment to the tribals is organisational.*

**7. I feel the educational workshops and the annual teacher's exposure trip to the industrial and historical centres for gaining perspectives are not necessary.**

*Regarding annual trips. These also include visits to projects for tribal development. The teacher, at least, must know both urban and rural worlds, to gain insight into PALAS. If we do not build up the worldview of these gatekeepers of knowledge, how can we expand those of the tribals in the remote villages?*

### **Questions Raised At Asha Meeting, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2004:**

1) Father Godfrey said, "After Asha? We've worked 12 years at this programme, so we will look for other funding when Asha tires of us. The programme needs to grow and answer the needs of the time. We have projected just the needs of the next few years."

**AshaZ:** We would like to know a bit more about the basic vision of your intervention. How long do you think such work will be necessary? Or is the situation of the tribals such that one can easily envision necessary intervention for a long time to come, making the above question moot? Would there be some local institution building process that could evolve enough to make intervention redundant in the near future?

**Godfrey responds:** *My basic vision of NGO educational intervention is to sustain a campaign that checks and balances lacunae in the official State system of primary education. It is therefore not a once-and-for-all programme but a studied strategy that appreciates what the State is trying to achieve in education but constantly applies remedial measures to overcome lacunae in the State systems. Our interventions should be need based, especially focussing on poorer sections who may not have the apparatus to take care of inadequacies in State education. In the Indian scenario education like all other foundational areas of development we cannot think of NGOs like ourselves pulling out of education and development leaving masses of poor peoples to suffer the intentional or unintentional neglect of the State systems. The period of projected need for NGO action cannot at present be prescribed. Hence I cannot prophesy what other local institution will evolve without NGO vigilance and active involvement with education of the poor.*

2) "Someone will follow on. The organisation that I belong to, which has assigned this work to me, will assign someone else, equally or more committed. The commitment to the tribals is organisational."

**AshaZ:** There is some confusion in our minds as to which is the organisation you are referring to. Is it Vishwamandal Sevashram that has assigned you to this work? In that case, does it offer other services too? Can you tell us more about Vishwamandal Sevashram: when was it founded, by whom, and its goals? Was it started with a specific focus on tribals, etc.?

**Godfrey responds:** *Vishwamandal Sevashram is the registered Trust (with Govt.) set up by the Jesuits of Mumbai for the development of tribals. The Vishwamandal Trust has assigned me to apply attention to issues and problems facing the tribal world of Shirpur. I am free to identify what areas of intervention we should engage in and to pursue the relevant goals and objectives as best judged by the person on the spot – at present myself! Vishwamandal is now more than 30 years in the field. I have been 15 years working in Shirpur. The Trust fully approves of my assessments of needs and strategies for tribal uplift. The present project PALAS incorporates early initiatives of the Trust to provide an integrated development model with its focus on primary levels of education. This is because we believe that education is foundational for social development and transformation.*

3) Some pictures would be nice!

**Godfrey responds:** *I will be sending you photos courtesy Fr. Frazer by email.*

4) "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!"

AshaZ: Can you elaborate on this a bit more? Asha has absolutely no issues with religious affiliations/beliefs of individuals and respects the right of individuals to have

their own beliefs. The only issue at hand is the influence of that on the beneficiaries. As long as the intervention (say in terms of educational curriculum and activities) is secular and inclusive in nature, we do not see any problems. Eventually if AshaZ decides to fund this project, we would be requiring something in writing to this effect.

**Godfrey responds:** *Evidence of undue influence on local tribals, thus displacing their own beliefs, culture and traditions, because of interactions for development with Vishwa Mandal Sevashram, is not in the least forthcoming. As an undertaking requested by AshaZ in this regard, I will categorically state that our educational and whatever other development services or programmes have a secular and humanistic character. They include the best traditions of religious tolerance and positive values of fraternity, social justice and equality.*