

## ASHA ZURICH 5-MONTH REPORT

The following five-month report follows the outline emailed (August 14,2005) by Mr.Chidambaram Narayan. I was not able to access the pdf file. If there is more information required please intimate.

### THE VSD-ASHA (Z) MOU

The MoU was confirmed on December 12, 2004 by VSD and ASHA (Z). It spells the beginning of a hopefully fruitful (for the adivasi learners involved and their communities) partnership between VSD and ASHA. VSD runs 25 learning centers in the project area of northern Shirpur Taluka, District Dhule, on the Satpuda foothills and unto the higher range itself (see map sent by post). Funds from ASHA (Z) reached VMD on February 24, 2005.

### ACTIVITIES OF THE PERIOD (March 1 to July 31, 2005)

March 2005: This being the last month of the academic year ending March 31, 2005, we planned the evaluation of the learning centers with the teacher-activists. Our supervisor Michael Rautela composed evaluation sheets based on teacher-trainings held in Mumbai with inputs from D.Ed. College staff. The teachers were instructed how to administer the evaluations taking into account the different age, aptitude and application of the learners in their centers. The evaluations were held by the supervisors and teachers together over the entire month so as to avoid hurry and have the learners' convenience in mind. The supervisors then tabulated the results of their evaluations. The graded questions that learners had to respond to enabled them to display the variety of learning achievements possible in the context.

April 2005: Community participation was specially assessed in this month. Specifically the contribution in cash and kind of adivasi parents to the education of their children was assessed. The minimum cash contribution of Rs.5 per learner was found to have been paid in most centers. In addition the supervisors and teachers compiled a list of community development activities that took place around the children's learning programme. Among activities promoted were forming credit unions, experiments in organic farming, women's leadership groups, seed bank, health awareness and micro-watersheds.

May 2005: The focus of this month's action was assessing the needs of the last year's learning centers as well as those of new learning centers. Teachers and supervisors visited hamlets and villages in their respective vicinities and held meetings with adivasi communities to assess the number of children who could become potential learners in the new academic year beginning from June 2005. In the case of 10 learning centers (refer to the Map) it was assessed that they would not be able to function further for the following reasons: - 1. The number of children left in these hamlets (Dukanpada, Juni Samryadevi, Khadkipada, Samryadevi, Sakliapada, Kalampada) after those joining Govt. Ashram Shalas had left their homes, or who were going into full time agricultural work, would leave too small a quorum (at least 8-10) for holding the learning programme. 2. In the case of Ambaduk and Chirkanpada there was a lack of common will to cooperate in the programme. 3. With Bhiklapada it was the problem of the backward class/caste community having to send its children to work frequently and irregular running of the class. 4. And in Samryapada the unavailability of a youth to take up the job as teacher stalled the class even

though local Govt. teachers requested VMD to restart the learning center as a help to the functioning of the zilha parishad school.

The final list of classes that began to run in June is as follows: -

Name of Village/Learning Centre	Teacher	Number of Learners
1. Vadpura	Rohidas Sursing	18
2. Vahanyapani	Ambaram Munga	15
3. Telyamulya	Ambaram Munga	18
4. Umarpada	Netram Pema	17
5. Navi Ugpudya	Rajesh Pradhan	20
6. Ugbudya	Rajesh Pradhan	19
7. Ambadapada	Virsing Bahadur	12
8. Junapani	Virsing Bahadur	18
9. Chundi	Bhaya Raila	13
10. Ranejeera	Bhaya Raila	12
11. Nimbari	Tarasing Chetram	20
12. Kalapani	Tarasomg Chetram	12
13. Palaspani	Dilwar Zeeksing	14
14. Kadaipani-Jamapada	Bharat Rumalya	16
15. Kadaipani-Kekdiapada	Bhrat Rumalya	16
16. Khajanaik	Sunil Nansing	14
17. Batwa	Sunil Nansing	20
18. Moida	Sardar Bhaila	20
19. Chakachaki	Karamsing Rupsing	16
20. Sevapani	Dilip Kuwarsing	15
21. Kuyakundi	Dilip Kuwarsing	16
22. Shapryapani	Dilip Kuwarsing	15
23. Piprapda	Sampat More	15
24. Mukeshpada	Sampat More	16
25. Roshnipada	Chunnilal Virji	12
26. Prakashpada	Chunnilal Virji	12
27. Bomliapada	Dilip Nanta	20

Note: -

- The location of isolated hamlets makes it impossible for little adivasi children to access a functioning school. Unless they are sent into boardings (Govt.ashram shalas) far from their homes. The apparently smaller numbers of the learners reflect the remoteness of their villages and hamlets from bigger homesteads.
- Payments of the teachers take into account both the number of children and therefore the hours needed per class-day as well as the distance that the teacher has to cover daily to get to his learners.
- Dropouts are not always final. Depending on the agricultural cycles and the migratory patterns of families learners take part or drop out. There's no necessarily final drop out. Hence it is difficult to categorically answer as to how many have finally dropped out.
- Some of our learners have been shifted into Govt. ashram shalas and so continue their formal education. However, it is a questionable education principle to remove

children from family environs in the interest of formal education. Our model of education in Shirpur challenges this trend. Little children need their homes. So education must reach out to them and not the other way around.

- You may ask why some names of teachers appear against two or three learning centers. This is because in remote homesteads it is not possible to find suitable teachers to reach a single class for the stipend offered. Hence the same teacher plans his day-long teaching schedule beginning from the morning and taking two hours of teaching time per learning center covers these remote learners.

## KEY FEATURES OF THE SHIRPUR VISHWAMANDAL SEVASHRAM MODEL

The VMD (Vishwamandal Sevashram, Dhule) Model of educational assistance to adivasi children is based on the following principles:

### 1. Principle of Attraction

Children and especially adivasi children must find education attractive. It must make sense to them even at a young age. Because, unlike the case of elite learners, whose education is a system for outcompeting others to claim jobs or seats in institutes of higher learning, the adivasi cannot hope to get employment as a class by virtue of her or his formal education. Hence it is absurd to discipline the child by force alone to attend any kind of learning activity which might be a strategy necessary for the survival of elite class learners.

The VMD programme offers learning content that adapts to learning capacities of the most remote tribal learner and in a flexible system of attendance using the mother tongue – which is not the State or National Language.

### 2. Principle of Productive Education

The content of education cannot afford any superfluities of information or complex numeracy. Education must have a life supportive content. This cannot be easily found by just adopting the formal system. Hence we have introduced in the content elements of productive education. Which means perspectives and possible activity on dealing with natural resources (see our flipchart series), human rights, health, agriculture, women's issues. Education begins in classrooms but flows over into community contacts for development of credit societies, organic farming inputs, microwatersheds, etc. Even children can participate in productive education activity through tree planting, vegetable patch gardening, herbal learning, etc.

These activities are important to the VMD learning process.

### 3. Principle of Community Support

Both the teachers who spearhead this learning process and the local community have to use the maximum of their own resources to further learning. The teachers may not be academics but must make the best of the various training modules VMD offers and develop their abilities even if the stipends may not be matching the Govt. teachers'. Further the community has to make purchases of the individual learning materials of their children and offer to their teacher in the line of "gurudakshina" a stipend in cash or kind for his support.

### 4. Principle of Multiple Achievements

Learners are capable of different achievements. Some achieve a marked socialization. They grow in confidence to stand in class and speak or recite. They improve their habits of cleanliness. They learn to enter routines and to correlate their efforts with those of other learners. They become familiar with topics that they may later explore further. They learn reading and writing not as the sole obsession of the educational process but as part of many achievements that education furthers. Hence we assess the progress of the class in terms of participation and varied achievement.

#### 5. Principle of Pedagogical WellBeing

The child's home and family is not considered by VMD as hostile to learning. The now popularized perception of sections of the public especially the lobby promoting the Govt. Ashram Shalas has resulted in hundreds of little adivasi children being transported far from home and village to be confined to the shabby environs of ashram shalas, there to be fed free, somewhat clothed, and cursorily looked after. The VMD programme gives primary children a chance to learn from home. To be loved and cared for by their parents. To attend if possible a nearby Govt. school with the support of the VMD learning programme. Since only a minority of adivasi children can get admission to Govt. ashram shalas it is important that educational facilities are set up in accessible areas to the children. Otherwise they will have no education at all. VMD has demonstrated the possibility of a relatively low cost educational system that can reach nearly 500 adivasi children right where they live. So they can enjoy the well being of a home nurtured child as well as access basic education.

#### EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

The following expenditure has been incurred under the project from the month of March 2005 to July 2005. (All in Rupees)

Month	Teachers' Stipends	Teaching Aids (Stationery)	Coordinators' Stipend
March	14,500	200	4460
April	14,272	36	4310
May	4,200	835	4380
June	19,790	335	4380
July	19,235	884	4450

Total            71,997            +            2280            +            17,600            =

Rs.71,997 + Rs.2280 + Rs.17,600 = Rs.91,877

(Rupees Ninety-One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy Seven Only)

Explanation: -

1. While ASHA's support was being negotiated after visits by ASHA's representatives we had to ask for other help to incur expenses till as such ASHA's grant came in. This shows in the less than budgeted expenses we have incurred till now

2. Since April marks the end of the academic year 2004-2005 the Teachers' Stipends ("salaries") reflect the old scale we have been paying. From June the stipends reflect an upward revision.
3. The 2 Supervisor's stipends have been included in the item of Teachers' Stipends since they sign as teachers although they do not confine their services to a single class but offer their services to all the classes.
4. I have enlisted the additional services of one more local youth to assist in the task of Coordinator given the spread of the Classes over a range of 35 Kms. (see Map sent by separate post). Hence the Coordinator's stipend has exceeded the allocation.
5. The low expenditure on teaching aids is primarily because the children bought their individual learning materials while the stock of teaching aids that we had before ASHA gave us the first donation did not warrant heavy expenditure on that score yet.
6. I do hope ASHA does not withdraw support even though we have spent less in this period than the budgeted figure.  
If ASHA would allow us we would like to make more provision for the travel expenses of our Supervisors and Coordinators in order to reach the farflung learning centers. We would also like to make a purchase of a Solar electric unit for our training center to ensure electricity in the current national shortage of power.

#### IN CONCLUSION

We are very grateful to ASHA ZURICH for the powerful and simply conveyed support to our project for the education of poor adivasi children on the Satpuda Range in Shirpur, District Dhule.

We endeavour to provide a creative syllabus, profusely illustrated teaching aids, and intense support to the teachers through visits and trainings.

We use our educational foothold to draw the village community into small steps of self-development with programmes of organic farming, microwatershed, credit groups and women's initiatives.

We appreciate the trust you place in our efforts.

May our partnership grow.

Thanks to everyone of you who helps us and others like us in children's education unto the least and last!

Fr. Godfrey D'Lima, S.J.

Director

The Shirpur Vishwa Mandal Sevashram

Shirpur Dt. Dhule

425 405

INDIA

PHONE: 02563 2 55561

email: vishwamandal@sancharnet.in