

MONTHLY REPORT OF THE SHIRPUR VISHWAMANDAL SEVASHRAM PROJECT P.A.L.A.S. (From July 2007 to December 2007 – 6 monthly report)

I The PALAS Programme In Shirpur District, Dhule

The Palas Shirpur educational programme entered its third year in June 2008 with funding support from ASHA Zurich. 22 learning centres were begun in the Satpuda foothills bordering Madhya Pradesh on the Maharashtra side of the border. The adivasi children attending the learning programme were primary school level learners. Their teachers were from their own community familiar with their language and customs. Their parents were eager to support their children's effort and offered their monthly support fee to the teachers. Free class room space was made available in each of the villages by the community itself.

In spite of the heavy monsoon and the difficulties of traveling through the hills and streams the PALAS teachers managed to reach their children and carry on the programme in heavy weather.

Some of the villagers observed to the supervisor that the PALAS teachers managed to reach their classes even as the government teachers found it near impossible to reach their classes in the same villages.

Supervision was regularly carried out of the classes to help the teacher deal with special challenges that face village learning programmes. There was every effort made to meet the teachers in their classes. To meet villagers in the villages of the classes and to discuss with them the progress of the learning programme.

II Positive Gains in the First Six Months

1. The network of PALAS learning centres was successfully set up once more in the hilly terrain of Shirpur.
2. The stores of teaching aids, learning materials for the children, were made available on time to the learning centres.
3. Monthly trainings of the teachers in which senior teachers also helped the new recruits to acquire skills in communication were regularly held.
4. New centres were explored.
5. The most positive development was the recruitment of women teachers after years of "male domination" of the teaching task.
6. Parents' contribution to the classes was fairly regular in cash, kind, or service to the programme
7. Parents' Days were begun to be held in the learning centres in which children displayed their skills and learnings.
8. Mr. Dilip Kuwarsing Pawara, a well experienced teacher was upgraded to the post of Supervisor cum Trainer. Dilip's skills were made available to the wider network.
9. In some villages village development issues were discussed with teachers.

10. Special midmonth trainings were organized in addition to the regular monthly inservice sessions for the training of the new teachers.
11. Three of our teachers are physically challenged having suffered polio in childhood. Two young women and one male have recovered their self esteem and play an active role in their villages as teachers and community leaders.
12. We have introduced new learning materials for English that have been designed by Fr.Godfrey and a team of educators and media professionals.

III Drawbacks that needed attention:-

1. Since Fr.Godfrey had been a well experienced hand (16 years) in Shirpur his move into Nandurbar left a vacuum of expertise. Fr.Augustine stepped in and in close consultation with Godfrey along with the dependable support of the teacher activists kept the programme going meaningfully. Later Assis a young Jesuit trainee joined him in an effort to improve quality and outreach of the programme
2. The young women recruited had to overcome inherent shyness and slowly develop confidence to interact with the senior teachers, all male. Assis made a special effort to encourage them in their tasks. These young women were the only capable teachers in some of the centres.
3. It was always a difficult challenge to reach the teaching learning materials, or teaching aids to the classes in time. The use of a jeep made this task a little less difficult but there were days when the weather would make reaching the remoter hamlets almost impossible.
4. The excessive cold wave in 2007-2008 had a negative impact on children's attendance. This inclement weather could not be easily faced. We had to wait for warmer climate for the classes to stabilise once more.

IV	<u>Month</u>	<u>No. of Classes</u>
	July	22
	August	23
	September	23
	October	25
	November	25
	December	23

V Contribution of Parents

An average monthly contribution of Rs.5 per child in cash or kind (farm products) was made by parents to the teachers.

Total amount collected from July to December = 6519.00

VI Expenses on the Project for the First Six Months (June to December 2007)

<u>Sr.No</u>	<u>Particlulars</u>	01.07.07 TO 31.12.07 (in INR)
1	LEARNING EQUIPMENT	536
2	LEARNING MATERIAL	60
3	POSTAGE AND STATIONARY	343
4	SOFTWEAR AND STATIONARY	2510
5	SUPERVISION AND ANIMATION	13500
6	TEACHER'S STIPEND	71500
7	TRAINING CAMPS	4200.00*
8	TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT	7140
	<u>TOTAL</u>	99789

* We have had a total number of 10 camps upto December. We received help from other local sources to sponsor some of these camps. That is why the amount on camps appears low.

VII The Way Ahead

As this report is being sent to ASHA Zurich we have moved ahead with the PALAS strategy improving step by step on the way. We always bear in mind the challenge ahead knowing that what we do on the micro level has repercussions on the wider scenario of Indian education especially education for the marginalized sections of our vast population,

Sincerely

Fr. Augustine and Assis

The Shirpur Vishwa Mandal Sevashram

Date: March 7, 2008