ASHA ZURICH

ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Asha
for Education

Asha Zurich
zurich@ashanet.org
www.asha-zurich.ch

Editors:
Priyank Patwa
Srinjoy Mitra
Gregory de Souza

Photographs:
André Urech and Elia Marinucci

from "Bildung für Entwicklung", a photographic review of projects supported by Asha Zurich.

© 2005 http://indien.photoreport.net

except where noted otherwise.

Printed at:
Reprozentrale, ETH Zurich

11th August 2007

President's Message

It is my pleasure to introduce the Annual Report of Asha Zurich for the calendar year 2006, a year filled with new enthusiasm and opportunities.

In 2006, we started funding a new project in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. With this new project, *Jananee* and *Ma* (meaning "mother"), we support two day-care centres, which not only give shelter to children living in the slum areas, but also provide them basic education. Our two other projects *Akshardeep* and *Vishwamandal Sevashram* in Maharashtra have been a success over the years, and we are continuing to support them. Since the inception of Asha Zurich – i.e. over the period of five years - we have disbursed more than CHF 76,000 for our various projects, including support towards the Tsunami victims in 2005. Looking ahead, I believe that Asha Zurich's involvement in all the projects will bring significant change in the community we are working with.

The year 2006 also saw many new volunteers coming forward to work with us. However the number of permanent volunteers involved in the activities of Asha Zurich is still small, and we should focus our attention on involving more occasional volunteers in the general activities as well as in the decision-making process of Asha Zurich. Being located in Switzerland, where the mentality of volunteers, donors and the general public is different from the other operational chapters of Asha worldwide, compels us to develop unique strategies for continuing growth. One such unique method we adopted was the **Charity as Your Hobby** (CAYH)

2006: A Retrospective

Indian Association Zurich (IAZ) Food Festival
On 21st January 2006, IAZ arranged its annual Indian Food Festival at the Kirchgemeindehaus Witikon. Asha Zurich volunteers organised the drinks stall at this event. Special home-made *chai* was also served, and an amount of about CHF 215 was collected.

Nach Baliye! Bollywood Disco
On 4th February 2006, we organised our annual disco event. This event was a huge success. DJ Chilli and the Asha team had Zurich dancing to the latest Bollywood hits late into the night, raising more than CHF 2000.

***Bildung für Entwicklung* – a photo exhibition in Brugg, Baden and Zurich**
During February and March 2006, two young Swiss photographers, André Urech & Elia Marinucci exhibited photographs taken at the projects supported by Asha Zurich in Brugg and Baden. In July and August, the same was exhibited in Zurich at the Hotel Seehof. Many people attended the exhibition, which also included a flute and *mridangam* concert as well as a slide show.

A lecture by Dhan Foundation, India
On 25th March 2006, Ms. Raghini Mohan of the Dhan Foundation gave a talk at ETH Zurich on the tsunami-relief and developmental work being carried out by her organisation in South India.

An Indian Evening at Gemeinde Grünau
An Indian evening with a cultural programme and Indian food for the people of the *Gemeinde* Grünau was organised by the President of the IAZ and the *Gemeinde*. Asha Zurich was invited to give a presentation about our activities. Volunteer Priyanka Belawat presented our organisation and projects, after which people came to our desk to ask questions regarding the projects.

We collected approximately CHF 50 through the *Rappenkeller* and sale of greeting cards.

General Body Meeting:

The fifth General Body Meeting was held on 1st June 2006 at the ETH main building. About 15 volunteers and well-wishers of Asha Zurich attended the meeting. After the introductory talk by outgoing president Gregory de Souza and project reports from various project coordinators, elections were held to elect the new Executive Committee. Following is the list of people who were elected for the year 2005-2006:

President:	Vishweshwara Herle
General Secretary:	Ravikiran Chikatamarla
Treasurer:	Shyam Chikatamarla
Project Coordinators:	Baiju John, Chidambaram Narayanan, Agomoni Ganguli and Kirtimalini Gadre Bhattacharya
Editors:	Priyank Patwa and Srinjoy Mitra

Independence Day celebrations in Berne:

The Indian ambassador to Switzerland, Mr. Amitava Tripathi, invited the President and General Secretary of Asha Zurich to attend the Independence Day celebrations at the Indian embassy in Berne. The President of Asha Zurich represented Asha and presented the ambassador with the Annual Report and a copy of our newsletter *Zuriodhay*.

Baden sports event:

The Indian Association of Baden organised an inter-association sports event in Baden in August 2006. This is an annual event at which Asha Zurich usually participates to meet people from many other organisations. This year, Asha Zurich participated in badminton, table tennis, carom and cricket. Through this event many new volunteers were introduced to Asha.

Fundraising for Asha Zurich in a church in Ehrendingen:
During our last year's Baden photo exhibition, Ms. Monika Suter from a church from Ehrendingen approached us and wanted to raise money for Asha in one of their services. During the centenary celebration of their church and the subsequent Mass held at the church on August 27th, she requested people to donate for Asha. About CHF 800 was collected and donated to us.

Asha *apéro* - An event to bring in new people:
On 31st August 2006, we organized an *apéro* at the ETH Hönggerberg campus to inform students and other professionals about our activities. About 15-20 people attended and were interested in becoming members of Asha.

Participation in *Weltmarkt 2006*, Oerlikon, Zurich:
For the first time in Asha Zurich, we decided to use the *Weltmarkt* in Oerlikon as a platform to spread the word and raise funds for projects. Mr. Kamleshji was the main motive behind this and our volunteer Kirti took the idea very seriously. We organised a food stall for the first time in the month of October with *vada pav* and *chai* in the menu. This was a big success, and we decided to participate again in November 2006 but with a completely different menu: *golgappa/paanipuri*, *bhel*, *papadichaat* and *samosas*. On both occasions, Kirti and other volunteers managed the food stall. The total amount raised from these two events was an impressive CHF 1600.

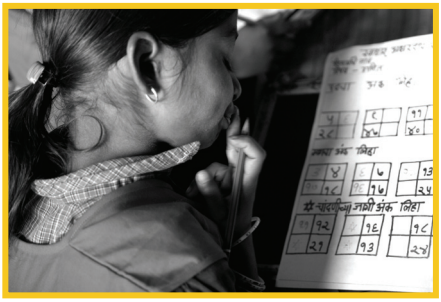
Some other news briefs are:

- Asha Zurich started funding a new project, *Jananee and Ma*, in West Bengal.
- The website has been revamped and improved.
- Kirti and Vishwa have accepted the stewardship of Manipur Silk Weaver's project, which will be funded through the Asha general funds.

Vishweshwara Herle

Our Projects: *Akshardeep*

Pune, Maharashtra



Akshardeep is an alternative school programme initiated by *Swadhar* in June 1998. This project is specially meant for children in the age group of 6 to 12. They run ten non-formal education (NFE) classes in the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) area and a further ten in the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal corporation (PCMC) area for the children of sex workers, migrant labourers and school dropouts. The main aims of *Akshardeep* are:

- To run *balwadis* for the children of commercial sex workers and HIV infected children.
- To run NFE centres for the children of migrant labourers and domestic workers.

One of the main aims of the NFE centres is to prepare the children for the Class 4 board exams of the Pune educational board and thus enable them to enter the formal education system. The centres also provide apprenticeship training to older children.

Asha Zurich has been funding this project since October 2003. By the end of June 2007, *Akshardeep* was able to put 117 children into regular school. If they are found unable to cope in the regular school, they will be readmitted into *Akshardeep*.

Swadhar has increased their number of classes in the PCMC area from 10 to 16, with a total of 377 children. Asha Zurich supports ten of these classes; the remaining 6 are supported by government aid. We intend to continue funding for the year 2007 to 2008. The approved budget is CHF 8500 per year, which funds the running of ten classes in PCMC area, salaries and provident funds for the teachers and the supervisor, and procurement of educational material for the children.

Baiju John
Project Coordinator

Swadhar is a registered organisation established in Pune on 1st January 1995. It helps women in distress and organises many activities for the development of women and children, such as counselling centres, family life education and the alternate education programme *Akshardeep*.

Our Projects: *Vishwamandal Sevashram*

Shirpur, Maharashtra

The Vishwamandal Sevashram (VSM) has been working with the *Bhil*, a tribal group, for the past twenty years. The *Bhil* live in the remote Satpuda foothills in Dhule district of Maharashta. Except for the few tribal settlements near the plains, most can be reached only by a one or two day hike through the hills. The *Bhil* speak Pawra and not the local language, making them not only geographically but also culturally isolated. Moreover, they have little or no access to basic services such as medical care or education.

Led by Fr. Godfrey D'Lima, VSM approaches economic development holistically, from introducing micro-finance schemes, to education on irrigation and agriculture, to organising medical care. One of VSM's programs is education of the tribal children, approximately 400 in twenty-five schools. Asha Zurich has been supporting this programme for the past two years. The funding includes teachers' stipends, training, educational workshops, teaching aids and supervision of the learning centres.

VSM's focus is to offer education that is relevant by incorporating subjects that will help the children in building occupational skills and improve their quality of life. To this end, in January 2007, VSM introduced the Learning Tent, a coloured flex panel showing a village scene, bordered with commonly-used *Devnagiri* alphabets. The children match the alphabets with the scene and learn about

local geography, agriculture, *Gram Panchayat* issues and more. The plan is to create a series of such panels depicting various scenes to teach subjects like organic farming, environmental conservation, health and other subjects.

Overall, the communication with VSM is frequent and good. Our requests for information, site visits and clarifications are promptly responded to. A site visit has been being arranged for July 2007. The site visit report along with the annual report from VSM will help determine our plans for future funding.

Ashwini Gillen & Chidambaram Narayanan
Project Coordinators

Our Projects: *Jananee* and *Ma*

Jalpaiguri, West Bengal

In the autumn of 2006, Asha Zurich began to review a project proposal by *Samagra Uttarbanga Loka Kalyan Kendra*, an NGO based in the Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal. For some years now, the organisation had been working for the underprivileged communities in the area, through the establishment of sanitary marts, self-help groups and informal education centres. One such centre, *Jananee*, had been set up for children of the Teesta riverbed slum. About 25–30 children between the ages of 3 and 7, whose parents worked as day labourers and who were usually left to the care of siblings hardly older than themselves, had been taken into part-time day care in *Jananee*. There, the children had been receiving a warm meal daily, some winter clothes and medical attention when the need arose. Moreover, the children had been engaged in pre-school education, games and cultural activities. The centre ran mostly on irregular donations as government funding was scarce and intermittent. Nevertheless, the organisers and volunteers had managed to establish a permanent structure; a small house with a playground where children would come regularly.

Cultural programme at *Jananee*.

In the meantime, due the increased demand for the care of young slum children, another centre, *Ma*, was established with meagre means in the shack of a day labourer. The conditions for *Ma* were less than satisfactory as the slum was flooded many times a year and children could not be offered any warm food. Due to the lack

of regular funding, the situation could hardly be improved and even the nominal fee paid to the teachers and carers had to be suspended for a few months. At this point, the organisation applied for funding to Asha Zurich. The project was accepted in due course and funding started in January 2007. Asha Zurich is to contribute towards the establishment of permanent infrastructure for *Ma* as well as towards some recurring costs for both *Jananee* and *Ma*.

Construction of the permanent building for *Ma*.

We visited both centres in December 2006 and were overwhelmed at the dedication of the local communities and the enthusiasm of the children. At *Jananee* we were greeted with shrieks of "*namaskar*" by the little ones who had been told of our visit. Their interest in us died down rapidly as warm food was served and we had the pleasure to observe them quietly. On our second visit, *Ma* had closed for the day but children still gathered to meet us. One of them ran home to get a board with the name of their school, which she quickly put up under the thatched roof of the shack. Another offered to gather all the children so we could meet them. Their excitement and happy faces suddenly seem to make our modest contribution all the more valuable. Since Asha Zurich has started funding the centres, land has been bought for *Ma* and the construction of a permanent building has been completed. By September 2007, *Ma* and *Jananee* should be able to welcome up to 100 children.

Agomoni Ganguli
Project Coordinator

Financial Report

Three projects were funded in 2006. The fund balance as on 31st December 2006 stood at CHF 37,448.01. In this report, the main features of financial transactions in the year 2006 are presented.

Balance sheet for the year 2006 (CHF)	
Opening Balance, A/c 1	22,070.61
Opening Balance, A/c 2	8,043.10
Receipts	21,312.15
Disbursements	13,977.85
Closing Balance, A/c 1	28,499.21
Closing Balance, A/c 2	8,948.80
Fund Balance	**37,448.01**

The fund balance as on 31st December 2006 was CHF 37,448.01, up from 30,113.71 in the previous year. This is due to discontinuation of funding to the *Parivaar* project. In the year 2006, Asha Zurich has funded two regular projects and has also executed, as per the donor's request, a special food project at Bastar in the state of Maharastra, India. Asha Zurich has reviewed and approved the funding of another project, *Ma and Jananee* in 2006, the funding for which has been initiated in early 2007.

Income:

Charity As Your Hobby (CAYH) is a scheme that Asha Zurich started in the 2002. In this program, donors contribute a small fixed amount of money on a periodic (usually monthly) basis. This ensures a constant flow of income and allows Asha Zurich to plan projects in advance. The CAYH program has been the biggest source of income for Asha in the year 2006.

The other major source of income was one-time donations from well wishers of Asha. These donations also include contributions

raised by individuals, clubs, churches, schools etc. at their personal or social gatherings. At times, the donors request their funds to be used for a particular kind of project. Asha Zurich helps them locate such projects in India and manages their projects with the help of its pool of volunteers - for example, the Bastar food project which was executed in 2006.

In the year 2006, Asha Zurich has attracted a number of new, active and enthusiastic volunteers. With the added enthusiasm of the new volunteers, Asha Zurich organised a number of small-scale events in this year. These included the Bollywood Disco *Nach Baliye*, which generated a profit of CHF 2,718 and food stalls at the *Weltmarkt* Oerlikon (profit of ca. CHF 1,578). In all, an amount of CHF 6,815.55 was raised from such events. Bank interest amounted to CHF 56.95.

Receipts (CHF)	
CAYH	8,260.00
One-time donations	6,182.65
Events	6,815.55
Interest	56.95
Total	**21,312.15**

Expenditure:

Funds were disbursed to the two supported projects in multiple installments over the course of the year. While our support to the *Akshardeep* and *Vishwa Mandal Sevashram* projects continued, the *Parivaar* project in West Bengal was stopped due to lack to good communication and the minor role that Asha Zurich was playing in the project. The *Parivaar* project itself is now self-sustained, with funding from other sources. Apart from these two regular projects, the Bastar food project was executed with a budget of CHF 1,000.

In all, CHF 10,350 was transferred to projects in the year 2006. This amount was lower than the project expenditure of previous years. Asha Zurich has reviewed and approved another project, *Ma and Jananee*, which requires funding of around CHF 8,000 for the year 2007. Apart from the project expenditure, other expenses include printing (New Year cards and Asha newsletters), buying of Asha T-shirts from US chapters, and banking charges. These expenses were all covered by our separate administration fund, maintained through contributions from some volunteers.

Disbursements (CHF)	
Projects:	
– Akshardeep	5,200.00
– Vishwamandal Sevashram	4,150.00
– Bastar Food Project	1,000.00
Events	2,887.15
Asha T-shirts	215.00
Printing & Banking charges	525.70
Total	**13,977.85**

Shyam Chikatmarla
Treasurer

Comment: *Educational intervention in tribal (adivasi) areas*

Indian education, like everything on this vast subcontinent, is a fascinating adventure. An enterprise that humanises even as it drains the spirit, that beckons to unlimited possibilities even as it reaches dead-ends, that has a wealth of human resources but fails to stimulate enough creativity to usher in a just social order. And these paradoxes are just a few of what we might articulate from an infinity of contradictions that mark this wondrous movement of peoples towards a (hoped for!) better future. We begin this reflection on perspectives relevant to *adivasi* education with an overall perspective derived from our question: What has education contributed to India as a developing nation?

I. The multifaceted contribution of Indian education

Education in India continues colonial consolidation of the State by promoting uniformity in learning and certification. It serves technological advancement through imitative mastery of mainly western inventions. It offers expensive specialisations that help a fraction of its citizens to earn disproportionately large incomes in contrast with masses of workers who are engaged in low paid manual labour occupations. It offers the hope of upward social mobility to the poor, since it is structured in a secular idiom, ostensibly without caste or class bias. The reservation system gives positive support to disadvantaged caste groups. The formal and nonformal systems of education both have similar contributions in enhancing literacy, numeracy, general knowledge and above all self-image to learners. These and a myriad other

characteristics give Indian education its flavour and scope. We next take up educational perspectives more specific to the *adivasi* community.

II. Influence of the culture of poverty

Education of *adivasis* and *Dalit* sections in India is affected by a culture of poverty. This implies that:-

a) the poor cannot afford a quality education needed to compete for high profit employment.

b) the horizons of educational content and methodology are constantly shifting beyond the capacities of the poor to excel in, since these parameters are generally set by elite sections for employment in capitalist economies. Such educational standards make education more and more unreachable for poor people.

c) since Dalits and *adivasis* do not articulate any demand of their own for an education that focuses on their livelihood and occupations, a relevant education eludes them. Or, perhaps, these communities have sufficiently indigenous and spontaneous systems for orienting their learners to function in their life-survival and subsistence economies.

d) *adivasis* – like most other sections of the Indian people **-** look to education for certification and hardly anything else.

Yet, whatever the minimum achievement of Adivasis in whatever form of education open to them, be it formal or nonformal, education enhances self-image and makes for better articulation of rights and responsibilities in the wider community. Along with education, the experience of democracy, equality before the law, awareness of national and world development, reduces the stunting effects of economic deprivation that *adivasi* suffer.

III. Education for sustenance

What type of education would help *adivasis* shift away from the deprivation they generally experience and improve living standards?

Most *adivasis* sustain themselves in the following ways:-

a) The predominant occupation is agriculture and forest based economic activity.

b) Wage-labour in urban and rural areas is the next widespread occupation sometimes seasonally engaged in, but for the landless among the *adivasis* a full time source of sustenance.

c) A few *adivasis* live off reserved Government jobs.

d) Still fewer will be found in white- or blue-collar employment.

Government educational institutions reserve quotas for *adivasi* students. This enables some to qualify for Government and private employment. Hence earning sources c) and d) become accessible after formal education. Wage-labour, for which no special training is undertaken except apprenticeships, can be found in urban and rural areas with hands-on opportunities to learn. Earning sources a) and b) lack adequate educational investments in order that such activity becomes more productive.

Since the bulk of the *adivasi* population is occupied under a) and b), there must be ways to educate this section so that their efficiency is increased. Capacity-building courses in such areas as organic farming, watershed development and use of tools or machines for enhancing labour skills need to be promoted. These courses may not draw participation through academic or classroom learning; they must be imparted through field demonstration or, better yet, in the context of projects that promote learning while earning. Such courses will result in real assets being added to rural development while skill development takes place.

In India, many educational possibilities are being explored through formal and nonformal systems. The challenge in education is to raise the productivity of every sector, using an environmentally sustainable approach, with equity in compensation for every type of labour. Respect for labour will enhance *adivasi* self-esteem, and

promote a healthy pride in performance. Education must take care of this emancipating principle.

IV. Education for social change

Education for *adivasis* (and all other peoples) must lead to positive social change. Progress with human dignity and equity is a non-negotiable goal of education, even if it is not commercially over-rewarding.

The danger of improving quality in education at the cost of spreading education to the masses is that such quality segregates a wealthy minority of the population, causing social inequality and generating unrest, which in turn will act as a detriment to progress. One of the potent ingredients of social equality and economic advance in India is the capacity to use the English language. Today, the post-Independence fervour for ousting English has turned into a avid pursuit of English-medium educational institutions by both rich and poor, nationalists and humanists. Apart from knowing their mother tongues, it is considered strategic to educate *adivasis* and other discriminated castes in English. This will give them a much needed competitive advantage with elite sections who, while professing native cultural superiority helped themselves to proficiency in English and accessed western technology, whilst the masses were left to vernacular education. Should not greater efforts be made to educate *adivasis* in English for social change and economic advance?

Would social change come more expediently from a coterie of well-educated *adivasis*? Or would it come from a spontaneous peoples' movement for human rights, justice, equality? Has education any significant role to play in social change? Such

questions challenge those who work with *adivasi* education with no watertight compartmentalised answers. Education, individual leadership, mass movements for human rights, economic equality, etc., all have potential to create conditions of positive change for the *adivasi*. Educationists must carefully utilise every individual and social ingredient to mould education into a force for emancipation, justice and wellbeing for all.

V. "Inconclusion"

Every effort needs to be made to change *adivasi* education from dysfunctional systems into effective processes that yield positive results in thinking, skills, social commitment. There are factors within and beyond the control of institutions or individuals working at educational change for the *adivasi*. Even so, we have to take imaginative risks. For instance, we have to increasingly turn to the mass media to overcome literacy deficiencies required for effective learning among *adivasis*. We must also incorporate the mass movement strategies to involve *adivasi* communities in the educational processes.

A million strategies are needed. A further million answers will emerge. With hope that sometime in the history of our planet, the poor masses such as *adivasis* who labour on the most vital of human occupations like agriculture, forestry, and building infrastructural assets of economic activity, may have an education that does justice to their capacities and gives them parity in compensation for a life of dignity and hope.

Fr. Godfrey D'Lima
The Shirpur Vishwamandal Sevashram, Dhule, Maharashtra

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Asha Zurich.

Contact Asha Zurich

Asha Zurich
c/o Shyam Chikatamarla
Ackersteinstrasse 133
8049 Zurich, Switzerland

www.asha-zurich.ch
zurich@ashanet.org

Donate to Asha Zurich

Bank:	UBS AG, Zurich
Organisation:	Asha Zurich
Address:	Ackersteinstr. 133, 8049 Zurich
Account Number:	206-259021.40Q

I would like to:

☐ Become a member of Asha Zurich

☐ Volunteer time for Asha Zurich

☐ Visit Asha projects in India

☐ Donate to Asha

☐ Be informed about events organised by Asha Zurich

☐ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Affix
required
postage

Asha Zurich
c/o Shyam Chikatamarla
Ackersteinstrasse 133
8049 Zurich