

## People's Science for Social Change

We seldom have doubts about the role played by science and technology in shaping our lives, but how can science be used as a tool in the hands of poor people to help improve their living conditions? The 9th All India People's Science Congress, held in Chennai from Dec.19-22, 2001, set out to address this and other questions pertaining to development.

The Congress is a biannual conference of the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN), and was attended by about 400 volunteers from people's science movements across India. I was one of a handful of AID volunteers who were present, eager to gain valuable knowledge and insight on development issues.

The conference began with a keynote by Prof. K.N. Panikkar, Vice-Chancellor of the Sri Shankaracharya Sanskrit University, on "cultural action and social transformation". He stressed the need to form local communities with an ability to intervene intimately in the cultural life of local peoples. Renowned journalist P. Sainath spoke at a public session on "Globalization and the living conditions of the people".

Plenary sessions on each day addressed broad topics like Health, Education, Environment and Natural Resource Management. In the session on education, Vinod Raina (who spoke at various AID chapters last year) presented a position paper on the work of the science movements to education and literacy. The afternoon sessions consisted of parallel workshops on specific themes relating to the plenary sessions. Several case studies and development models that had been experimented with in different states were presented. For example, Tamilnadu made a presentation on "*Arogya Iyakkam*", a programme for addressing the problems in mothers' health and endemic child malnutrition. AID is presently reviewing a proposal to support this programme in 40 blocks in Tamilnadu, Bihar and Maharashtra.

The conference also featured an exhibition of books and resource materials, and products made in villages by women's savings groups. AID also had a presence and we sold a few "Inspiring changes" calendars, among other articles.

--Ravishankar Arunachalam (AID-Austin)

## AID India Conference in Vizag

The coastal city of Vishakhapatnam was host to the AID-India conference spanning four days and bridging two years (Dec 30<sup>th</sup>01-Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>02). The opening day saw the sharing of experiences across different AID India chapters. Successful practices and action items for more efficient operation and a rewarding volunteer experience were discussed. The AID Bangalore chapter will co-ordinate the launch of the inaugural issue of a half-yearly AID-India newsletter. Several inspirational accounts of successful activism by different AID-India chapters were presented. The moral and volunteer support extended by AID India to local NGO activities and people's movements has helped foster a strong fraternity in the volunteer community across the country. AID India planned the following focus agenda campaigns for the year 2002. **Hand-made soaps:** a model for livelihood creation, self-reliance and personal development; **Eliminate Corruption At All Levels:** use of the zero rupee note, and the **anti-dowry campaign:** to raise awareness to a ubiquitous problem in the Indian diaspora.

The highlight of the second day was *Mundadugu*-the first step resolution adopted by the villagers of Appalagraharam in Srikakulam district. Satyanarayana of GRASS, a local NGO, guided the conference attendees as they traveled to different villages where GRASS works. The collaboration with GRASS

in these villages is especially rewarding for AID volunteers who have been involved since the inception of the project. A recent gift of 1.5 acres of land to GRASS has opened up exciting potential for new AID collaborations in organic farming, water conservation, etc. In Rapaka village, the volunteers were welcomed with a display of beautiful jute bags, coasters, etc. that were hand-crafted by women of the Bibi Fatima Savings Group. AID and GRASS are working out a system to plough back profits from the sale of jute products, to increase the minimal daily wages of these workers. In Appalagraharam, the conference attendees were introduced to the libraries run by children with minimal adult supervision. Discussions on respective roles in development followed by some science experiment demonstrations, marked the last few hours of 2001.

After a morning session of Yoga on the beach on New Year day, the volunteers gathered to hear AID *Saathis* and *karyakartas* from other NGOs talk about their work. Wide-ranging topics revealed nuances in ground reality and it was an insightful session for anyone contemplating full-time volunteering. The reminder of the day consisted of a critique of the AID-USA project review process and NGO feedback. For a detailed report of the conference, please visit [www.aidindia.org/hq/publications/proceedings/india2001.htm](http://www.aidindia.org/hq/publications/proceedings/india2001.htm)

-- Ravi and Aravinda (AID-India)

### "Inspiring Changes": AID 2002 calendar

Participate in the Inspiring Changes Donation Drive by making a donation of \$10 or more to AID, and receive a copy of the AID Inspiring Changes 2002 India Calendar! A preview of the calendar is available at: <http://www.aidindia.org/calendar>. You can donate online at <http://www.sulekha.com/aid>.

## News and Notes

### GBM in Bay Area

AID-Bay Area chapter conducted its annual General Body Meeting on Dec 15, 2001 at Stanford University. The chapter's activities for the year 2001 were reported in four different presentations. The "State of the Chapter" presentation outlined the chapter's overall growth and identified the strengths gained over the year. The chapter has an average of over 20 volunteers participating in its fortnightly meetings. In addition to the projects and treasury reports, a presentation titled "Inspiring Changes: New Endeavors and Challenges for AID" highlighted the varied activities of AID and the chapter. It included details of the AID *Saathi* program, the talks hosted by the chapter, and the chapter's association with the other organizations in the Bay Area. The GBM presentations are available at [www.aidsfbay.org/archives.php](http://www.aidsfbay.org/archives.php). -*Aarshi Rishi (AID Bay Area)*

AID-Minnesota and Indian students at the University of Minnesota present

### **Aksharotsav : The Festival of Letters**

A Cultural Extravaganza of Indian Dance and Music featuring artistes from the Twin Cities area. Come and see

### **"Lagaan - The Untold Story"**

on Feb 16<sup>th</sup>, 2002, at 6:30 p.m. at the St. Paul student center theater. Tickets can be purchased at the venue. For more information about the program, please contact Haritha Donthi ([haritha\\_donthi@hotmail.com](mailto:haritha_donthi@hotmail.com)) or visit the web-site [www.tc.umn.edu/~aidmn](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~aidmn).

### Recently approved projects

- Support for displaced victims of Bargi dam
- Support for two projects aimed at rehabilitation of the survivors of the Gujarat earthquake.
  - a. Support to SEWA in the construction of earthquake resistant houses.
  - b. Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS). KMVS assists rural women in selling their homemade products and improving the overall village economy.
- Support to Environmental Support Group for evaluating the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the Bangalore Mysore Infrastructure Corridor.
- Continued support to Abhiyan for administering food for work program in the flood-stricken areas of Bari and Barchana in Jajpur district in Orissa.
- Continued support to Ushagram Project in Nadia District, West Bengal for providing rehabilitation to flood affected villages of Chandandaha and Barakulla.

Do you wonder how your friends and relatives in India can share your excitement of volunteering? Wonder no more! Contact AIDers Balaji ([kb@eth.net](mailto:kb@eth.net)) or Abhirami ([abi\\_krish@hotmail.com](mailto:abi_krish@hotmail.com)) or visit the AID India office at: AID India, 132 (Old No.), Avvai Shanmugam Salai, Gopalapuram, Chennai-600086; Ph: 044 - 8113630 (TNSF)

### Na Dena, Na Lena - Neither Give nor Take

Corruption is an issue most of us complain and criticize about, but somehow reconcile to in the absence of an alternative. Eliminate Corruption at All Levels (ECAAL), is a campaign initiated by AID to understand the nature of corruption, its foundation in economic and social insecurities, and our own complicity in preserving the systems we decry. Is corruption personal as well as social? At different levels, do we each make choices that support a corrupt society? Do more acceptable alternatives to those choices exist? The answer to the question "What can be done?" may lie within each of us.

Corruption may often seem to be a social malaise but individuals can choose not to participate in the corrupt system and expect these individual choices to have an impact on the whole society. To symbolize an individual's resolve to neither accept nor give a bribe, AID has designed a zero-rupee promissory. By using it, and displaying it at home and work, each of us can take a definite step in the right direction.



### *A zero rupee promissory note for the ECAAL campaign*

Ten thousand 'zero rupee' ECAAL notes were released at the AID India conference on January 2002. The bearer of each note promises to "neither give nor take" and carries a vision to "Eliminate Corruption At All Levels". The zero rupee note is something that everybody can instantly relate to, and keep as a reminder of his or her ECAAL pledge. The conference participants acknowledged that the notes could prove useful in conjunction with the anti-corruption campaigns launched by Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan led by Aruna Roy, Jayaprakash Narayan of Lok Satta, and Anna Hazare.

You can join the campaign! Get your Zero Rupee note! Make the pledge, and spread the word. For details of the campaign, please contact the ECAAL team at [ecaal@indiattogether.org](http://ecaal@indiattogether.org). -- *Sreelakshmi Ganesan (AID-Boston)*

Email: [info@aidindia.org](mailto:info@aidindia.org)

Phone: 1-888-TALK-2-AID

Web: <http://www.aidindia.org>

### MAKE A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO AID

- By Credit Card, please call (301) 209 0511
- By Check, please send in favor of AID to:  
**THE ASSOCIATION FOR INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT**  
**PO BOX F, COLLEGE PARK, MD 20741-3005**

AID relies solely on your contributions to fund development projects in India. AID volunteers work hard to put funds to optimal use in project and awareness work. All contributions to AID are tax deductible. Our Federal Tax Id. No. is 52-1863480. To obtain a copy of the current financial statement, please write to AID. Documents and information pertaining to AID can be obtained from the Secretary of State for the cost of copies and postage.