

# November in AID

Association for India's Development (AID)  
Monthly Newsletter

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## The Joy of Learning

What can be done for the 11,000 children who work in abysmal conditions in the carpet industry of the Garhwa district in Bihar? *Alternatives for India's Development's* has faced up to the district authorities who deny the existence of child labour, by organizing rallies and submitting reports and evidence. In addition, they have set up schools where these children can learn and have some fun. "Alter-AID" also seeks to provide health education, reactivate existing government schools and raise parental awareness, all with the ultimate objective of eliminating child labor.

The primary motivation for Alter - AID volunteers is the joy that literacy brings to children. This in turn reinforces their efforts to make a difference.

AID has supported 3 schools in the past and has now approved \$5,600 for 7 more schools. Two visits apiece by Priya Ranjan to Bihar and Alter-AID coordinator Ravikumar to AID-MD, have set the tone for a promising long term association between our organizations.

## Growing with Aranyika

When I last visited India, Dr. Parameswara Rao of BCT insisted that we should meet Malini from Chintapalli. Dr. Rao was following up a request from Ravi Kuchimanchi for contacts of small, promising groups which can benefit from AID's support. After 4 years of leadership role in an NGO in the tribal area of Chintapalli (AP), Malini and some colleagues have moved to the even more remote Madugula block to start *Aranyika*. Aravinda, Ravi and I spent a day visiting with her the villages where they planned to work. Now, AID has become the first group to support them financially. This project is being jointly coordinated by AID Maryland and Raleigh.

In an area where the female literacy rate is 8%, *Aranyika's* first project will set up 10 schools for village girls where, apart from learning Telugu and Math, they will be trained in vocations such as leaf-plate stitching and pot-painting. The education itself will be geared at preparing them to be leaders in the community. To help their core group of five local volunteers to establish themselves, AID is providing independent support of Rs. 66,000 to them, apart from Rs. 1,30,000 for the schools. AID is also arranging for their exposure tour of the MALAR savings program in Tamil Nadu.

We are excited to share the experience of a starting effort and hope to build a lasting community initiative.

Kirankumar Vissa (MD)

## Sustainable Living: AID Mumbai Explores

AID Mumbai volunteers are seeking alternatives to the dominant and unsustainable practices in our modern world.

Solar energy: using materials and skills available in any

small town, Prakash Ashtunkar and Ramesh Borole, electrical engineers, have developed a solar concentrator at a cost of Rs. 3,000 per square meter. The team plans to design parts made of steel, wood and bamboo. The electronic controllers can be mass produced at low-cost by several small scale manufacturers in India. Pushpa and Venkatesh, who visited Bhusawal, expect solar power systems to reach all parts of India within a few years. Says Venkatesh, " We all complain about the heat in India. Now maybe we can be thankful."

Health: Can we maintain our health and beauty without using heavily advertised soaps, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics? Jacob Vadakkancherry, a graduate of Sampurna Kranti Vidyalaya, is making it easier for urban dwellers to live naturally through *Aruvi* and *Kurivi*, a natural hotel and an eco-shop, at Ernakulam, Kerala. *Aruvi* serves organically prepared whole grains and vegetables, renewing the public's link to healthy eating and sustainable agriculture. *Kurivi* sells books and products that help people cultivate the skills to sustain a healthy body, mind and society.

Moving the people: Can we communicate important developmental issues without access to mainstream media? While returning from the Narmada Sahayog Yatra which met with President K.R. Narayanan in Delhi, the folks from Kerala went straight to Uzhavur, the President's hometown Ravi and I joined them, speaking on Narmada in every coach of the train and also on the streets of Uzhavur, where a signature campaign has begun to voice the Kerala people's desire for true development.

Aravinda (Mumbai)

## NEWS & NOTES

Former Water Resource Secretary Ramaswamy Iyer, in the 1999 AID India Conference, stressed the need for community participation in water resource planning. He also emphasized that policy must be improved in that direction. In a meeting with Rajinder Singh of Tarun Bharat Sangh (Rajasthan) AID Mumbai volunteers learned that the **revised version of India's Water Policy opens water to the global market**, leaving even less room for people's participation.

**Live from India: Proceedings of the 1999 AID India conference**, held in Chennai, are now available. Please contact Ravi M at [ravi@cisp.neu.edu](mailto:ravi@cisp.neu.edu) for a copy.

During the recent 20th Anniversary celebrations of the Tamil Sangam of Metropolitan Washington and Baltimore, a new idea was implemented. As always, at the end of the function, Tamil Sangam volunteers served food. Dr. R.C.Saravabhavan said, " We are pleased to inform that there were more than 200 people at the function; nearly 140 persons donated \$2 each for the food prepared and served by five or six of our members." This amount was donated to AID. Please join us in thanking the volunteers and donors, especially Dr. Devika Krishnan and Dr. R.C.Saravanabhavan.

AID-Austin joined AID Boston in collecting computers for TNSF. Computers, printers, modems and a hand-held scanner await shipment.

- AID-Durham had a great fund-raiser by selling food donated by a local Indian restaurant during their *Oktoberfest*. A good publicity move for both!
- AID-Minnesota screened "Gandhi" on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> netting a small profit but lots of publicity.
- As part of their efforts to build synergy with other local organizations, AID-Milwaukee assisted the India Music Society in organizing a **concert by Ronu Majumdar** on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> this year. They found it a great way to raise some money and increase awareness among the 70 attendees.
- Mahesh Panchagula conducted a workshop titled "Gandhi's Ideals in Action" at AID-Columbia on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>. He talked about managing one's time and money with Gandhian principles.
- AID-San Francisco hosted a talk by Patrick McCully, coordinator of the International Rivers Network (<http://www.irn.org>). The theme of the talk was big dams and their ramifications.

## Helping Grama Vikasa Achieve Self-Sustenance

This project in villages near Kakinada (AP) by Maharshi Sambamurthy Institute organizes women's Self Help Groups to participate in the government's DWCRA scheme. The SHGs save money regularly and members take loans for income generation activities. AID has approved \$1,850 for the third year of funding for this project. Two years after they started, groups have common funds of about Rs. 45,000 each, and have been able to upgrade their handlooms, construct new lime kilns after they were destroyed by cyclone, and start some new enterprises. AID has been supporting the village guides and quarterly training sessions - both key components of developing the groups. The results so far have been very encouraging and its hoped that after this year, the project will become self-sustaining.

### More Submergence and More Arrests

Once again the people of the Narmada Valley have gotten only more suffering, submergence and police action. In mid-September, a second round of submergence confronted them, with rain lashing Madhya Pradesh and the dams upstream of the Sardar Sarovar releasing their waters. Between the 17th and 20th the satyagrahis stood in the rising waters of

*not move*". Only this time, there were no govt. officials or police in sight.

The police arrived after the Maharashtra govt. officials were alerted to the situation by continuous calls of concerned citizens in India and abroad. By the time the police arrived, the water had reached above the shoulders of some satyagrahis. The "rescue" was conducted with forced arrests and brutality. Over 375 satyagrahis were detained for 13 days in Dhule jail, and released only after they undertook an indefinite fast. The waters have now subsided and the satyagraha called off on October 12<sup>th</sup>. However, the larger struggle for justice and true development continues.

Aniruddha Vaidya (State College)



Satyagrahis face the waters  
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(AID US volunteers continue to play a role through letters, faxes and calls to govt. officials. For info & updates, visit [www.narmada.org](http://www.narmada.org) and [www.aidindia.org/nba/](http://www.aidindia.org/nba/)).

### Grapevine

AID - Boston is planning a trip to the Narmada valley in mid-December. To join them contact Mora at [mora\\_oommen@harvard.edu](mailto:mora_oommen@harvard.edu)/ 617-623-6364

Around Diwali, watch out for some cool T-shirts from AID Columbia. The theme is India's progress and the millennium. Contact Deeptha ([thattai@geol.sc.edu](mailto:thattai@geol.sc.edu))

Also available, Diwali cards by women from BCT villages in Andhra Pradesh. For details visit [www.aidindia.org](http://www.aidindia.org)

AID - Austin's fund raiser for Fall 1999 is a double-wicket cricket tournament in November.

the Narmada to protest with the resolve "*We will drown, but will*

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