

Vidya News

www.vidya.org.uk

Issue 2

Summer 2003

Vidya is a registered charity which is raising funds for the education and training of children and students from disadvantaged communities in India. We are currently supporting projects at two charities: Aseema in Mumbai and NAWA in Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu. For more information on Vidya's work, please e-mail ramesh@vidya.org.uk or visit our website at www.vidya.org.uk.

Update on VAMS

After the news that NAWA's Victoria Armstong Memorial (VAMS) had begun its work, we were keen to see it for ourselves. Beryl Pratley was able to visit in April, and was impressed by what had been done in a short time.

Mr Shanmugam, the head, and the three teachers, have got to grips with the difficult task of teaching children in three languages – English, Tamil, and the children's own tribal language. The school is providing a good educational opportunity to children who, at best, would otherwise only have access to very basic state provision in remote villages. The children are happy, and are working

hard. There is time for play and music, and a good supply of textbooks.

Beryl helped with a forward plan, which shows that the school will need its own building within three years. Running costs will grow with the school, to over the £2,000 per year which had originally been estimated by NAWA.



Also visiting in the spring was Susan Bullough, whom some of you met at the House of Commons lunch meeting. Susan and her partner, Ranjir, are consultants in community development, and she ran some training sessions for the teachers to help improve displays and encourage use of music and dance. Susan and Ranjir were also impressed by the speed of the children's progress.

Beryl Pratley

Visit NAWA?

There is a possibility that we could arrange for a small group of supporters to visit NAWA during the spring of 2004. A two week trip, with a week in the Nilgiri hills, visiting NAWA, and a few days on the coast, relaxing, would cost about £1,400, of which a large share would contribute to Vidya's support for the school.

If you are interested, please e-mail beryl@pratleyg.fsnet.co.uk to discuss.

Ramesh Kapadia writes:

I had to go to Mumbai for some personal work in February. It was a packed trip for just six nights. Although I did not have time to visit, I contacted the organisers of both projects.

Dilbur Parekh, Chair of Aseema, came to see me in the centre of Mumbai to thank Vidya for its donations and tell me about current work. Aseema have made contact with the Wharton Institute in the USA. Together they are helping to explore ways in which Aseema can become self-sustaining and therefore move on from being reliant on donors. The feasibility study sounds very exciting and could permanently ensure much-needed educational provision for some of the poorest children in Mumbai, who live on the streets and in terrible conditions.

Aseema continues to make products from the beautiful artwork of the children: this time, I bought a set of six mugs, decorated with various designs, including ducks and tortoises. In April, a range of these products were again exhibited at the Harmony Show, a prestigious art exhibition held annually in Mumbai. Meanwhile, Aseema have also recently completed an animated film promoting children's rights, based on the UNICEF charter. Further information about all of these things is contained in Aseema's activities report for 2002-2003. This is now available on Vidya's website. You may also like to visit Aseema's website at www.aseema.org.

I was able to speak on the phone with **Mr Vijayakumar, Director of NAWA**, who some of you heard on his visit to us at Alexandra House, London, in 2001. He told me that the school was going well and that the District Collector had visited and was supportive of its work. He also promised to send Vidya a progress report for each child at the end of the school year. On the day we spoke, an in-service session was being run for the teachers by Susan Bullough (see above). Another recent visitor was Mrs Rosaleen Mulji, whose family have been involved with NAWA for many years, providing substantial financial support.

Harlow Rugby Club Comes Up Trumps!

Harlow Rugby Club recently hosted a social evening with dinner, on an Indian theme. A local restaurant provided a sumptuous meal and a Vidya trustee put up a display of the charity's work, and invited contributions to support our work. Club members and friends were generous in their donations and, as a result, Vidya's funds are now £53 better off!

If you know of a club that is hosting a similar social event and would like us to put on a display to raise money for Vidya, please contact us.

Maggie Hollingsworth

Forthcoming Vidya Fundraising Events

We are currently organizing a fundraising event to be held in London in the Autumn. In addition, there is also likely to be an event in Oxford in November. The latter would be held in conjunction with Zindagi, a charity which is supporting the construction of a primary school in Uttaranchal, North India. Further details of both of these events will follow on our website.

*****Aseema Greetings Cards For Sale*****

Greetings cards based on the designs of children at Aseema's Centre for Street Children are currently available for sale through the Vidya Trust. Prices are £3 for one pack of twelve cards, £5.50 for two packs or £10 for four packs. Postage & packaging costs an additional 50p per pack. The designs may be viewed on the website at www.vidya.org.uk/projects/aseema/cards.htm If you would like to purchase any cards, please e-mail cards@vidya.org.uk.