

# Vidya News

[www.vidya.org.uk](http://www.vidya.org.uk)

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*Vidya is a U.K. registered charity (number 1084436) which raises funds for the education and training of children from disadvantaged communities in India. We currently support work in three areas: a school for tribal children in Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu (in conjunction with NAWA); projects in conjunction with Aseema's Education Centres for Street and Underprivileged Children in Mumbai (Bombay) and Maharashtra; and a science project in a remote part of Arunachal Pradesh. For more information on Vidya's work, please e-mail [ramesh@vidya.org.uk](mailto:ramesh@vidya.org.uk) or visit [www.vidya.org.uk](http://www.vidya.org.uk).*

## **New Science Project for Vidya!**

Vidya has recently launched a new science project in Roing, a remote part of Arunachal Pradesh, in the north-east of India. In isolated rural areas, the teaching of science is often very rudimentary and based on textbooks, with a lack of equipment resulting in few opportunities for practical experiments. Children often find this boring and make slow progress. They lose interest because the descriptions in textbooks are not particularly meaningful to them, and subsequent enrolment for advanced-level school science subjects is very low.

To help address this issue, Vidya has started a small new project to sponsor a science teacher to give practical demonstrations of scientific experiments in various rural schools. Materials are also being supplied, together with training to teachers on how to use the equipment so that experiments can continue all year round. Most important is that the work is first-hand – the scheme is designed to ensure that children are involved in conducting the experiments.

Though the centre for the project is Intaya Public School, Lower Dibang Valley, the sponsored teacher will work in many rural schools in the area. Roing is a very remote area, taking almost a day to reach from the nearest airport, and so Professor Sudhakar Agarkar, an Indian educationalist who works at the world-renowned Tata Institute for Fundamental Research, is planning to visit to evaluate the project for Vidya.

## **Aseema Launches an Education Centre for Tribal Children**

Sixty years after independence, urban India is surging forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But nearly three-quarters of Indians still live in the villages, often in remote areas, and invariably missing out on the fruits of India's recent economic boom.

With this in mind, Aseema has recently launched a rural education centre for tribal children in Igatpuri, Maharashtra. As you may have read in previous newsletters, Vidya funded an earlier Igatpuri project run by Aseema to train existing teachers in the area. But, with support from other donors, Aseema is now constructing the first phase of a new education centre. Four months ago, an Aanganwadi or pre-school was started – this was formally inaugurated on 15 July 2007 and has about 30 children.



*Aseema's New Aanganwadi*

In Mumbai, Aseema's work with street and slum children continues to go from strength to strength. In a great testimony to their success, one of their older students now conducts computer classes for younger children. And Aseema students continue to excel in both academic work and extra-curricular activities.

Meanwhile, with Vidya support, Aseema is now running a 'Balvikas' for children aged between five and a half and six and a half who are not quite ready for school for various reasons. This aims to equip the children with skills that ease their entry into Standard 1. Vidya also continues to support Aseema's educational social worker and contributes towards a daily meal for all their children. For more information on Aseema, please visit [www.aseema.org](http://www.aseema.org) or take a look at their 2006-7 Activities Report on Vidya's website.

### Visit to VAMS: January 2007

I visited the school early in the New Year so it was rather cool in Kotagiri. Sadly, Mr Vijayakumar, director of NAWA was rushed to hospital for an emergency operation on the day I arrived so I visited him briefly. Fortunately he has now recovered.

The Victoria Armstrong Memorial School (VAMS) continues to progress well and I met some of the children who are being sponsored: each sponsor should have received an annual report. Despite long journeys for many, the children visibly enjoy coming to the school. Generally, the children are progressing reasonably well, though creative work can sometimes be limited. In English, handwriting is good and the children are developing better vocabulary. The emphasis in maths is on arithmetic, so that pupils make progress in learning tables, which are often chanted. But the children's understanding is clearly improving as they move through the school – LKG used numbers to ten, UKG numbers to 100, while Standard 5 were using algebraic

formulae in the context of simple interest, if rather mechanically.



Standard 1 at work in VAMS

The crucial step of obtaining government registration was achieved in 2005 and there is a public notice to that effect at the school entrance. The school has grown to almost 100 children and currently goes up to Standard 5. All the rooms in the bungalow are now being used but, in an exciting new development, VAMS has recently acquired some more land adjacent to the bungalow where further classrooms can be built. Their plan is to build five classrooms on the ground floor, each holding up to 40 children, with a further five rooms to be added on a first floor in a few years time.

Vidya is currently raising money to donate towards the building project next year once the foundations have been completed. Each classroom costs approximately £3,000: we are already able to fund one classroom but hope to raise funds for two more classrooms over the course of the next year.

Ramesh Kapadia

#### Support Committee for Vidya

Are you interested in helping Vidya with its work? If you would like to join a support committee to help with our activities, please e-mail Ramesh Kapadia ([ramesh@vidya.org.uk](mailto:ramesh@vidya.org.uk)).

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