

## Message from the Faculty Advisor

Asha is a wonderful word meaning hope in many Indian languages. When a baby is born and as he goes through his first stages of life into childhood, he is hopeful. He lives in an innocent world where he can be whatever he wishes to be ... an astronaut, a music director, a super hero. But for some children in India, this hope is dashed by harsh reality, the reality of life where daily bread is a struggle and school is a distant luxury. Asha-Purdue is trying to bring that hope back in its own small way, one child at a time. How small is small? For just \$20 a month, we can support the entire educational expense of a child in one of our projects. In the grand scheme of things, in the scheme of 400 million children in India, our work means little. But for that one child who is getting educated, who is learning that life may have its deprivations, but is not empty of hope, that work means a lot.



Empowerment is a grand word and like many grand words, means little to me. But in this effort of Asha Purdue that we all have been a part of, I feel that we ourselves have been empowered. We do not have to passively read depressing stories about India any more. We can do something about it, again in a miniscule way compared to the magnitude of the issue. But we can be an active warrior in this effort, and we will continue to be. Be there with us, through your ideas and through your actions.

**Prof. Saurabh Bagchi**  
Advisor, Asha Purdue Chapter

## Projects we are supporting

### MANASA

Manasa is a non-profit organization located in Hyderabad, India working for the welfare and integration of the intellectually challenged by implementing various programs for their development. It all started in 1991 with the initiative of few responsible mothers with a vision to create an adoptive and inclusive society for the better living of the differently-abled. The main objective of this project is to provide necessary training and rehabilitation to children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, visual impairment, hearing impairment, slower learning capabilities and other physical or learning disabilities. They currently have 57 children and 10 teachers.

In 2011, we sponsored \$6000 to Manasa to help them meet their educational expenses. From conference calls and a site visit we were pleased to see the funds being properly utilized for construction purposes of the new school building. In 2012 our committee decided on further disbursement of \$6000 for supporting six months salaries of the teachers.

We visited the school in January 2013 and the experience was a memorable one; the students were very enthusiastic and excited to interact with us. They had varied inter-

ests like music, dance, photography etc. A group of 4 students performed a dance and their enthusiasm was infectious. One student recited shlokas, two others recited some rhymes and another student learnt to use a DSLR camera from us and took some photographs of the class.

Some of them knew to sign their names and they signed a "Thank You" card for Asha Purdue as a token of their gratitude. The teachers were very patient, well trained, well versed in the special teaching methodologies and highly motivated to make a positive change in the lives of these children. Manasa submitted another proposal for supporting the salaries of their four teachers for the academic year 2013-2014. Seeing the great progress made by this project Asha Purdue chapter approved the proposal and the first installment of \$3000 was sent in May 2013. The project's progress will be reviewed for the next six months before disbursement of another \$3000.



1. Manasa students reciting rhymes during site visit in January 2013.

2. Students and faculty participating in 5K run in Hyderabad, India.



# DIKSHA

Diksha KHEL (Knowledge Hubs for Education and Learning) Patna project, a joint initiative of Alok Charitable Trust and Diksha Foundation, came into being in December 2010. The project mainly caters to children between 6 to 14 years of age who belong to underprivileged communities, including those sidelined from society on basis of caste. Benefiting children who are either school dropouts for various reasons or who have never been to schools, Diksha prepares them with primary education and makes them ready to join government schools again. They are experimenting with usage of mass media through computers and tablets for classroom education.

Asha Purdue Chapter funded \$3350 to Diksha's Patna center in March 2012 for setting up a computer lab. In July 2012, we visited the facility and interacted with the children. Running in a 3 room rented house the facility appears small but is full of life. Activities involve basic literacy and numeric classes, sports, education regarding child rights and cultural activities. With the new computer lab, children loved spending time on the computer, and their favorite application was drawing on MS paint.

Diksha Patna center submitted another proposal to sponsor their recurring expenses for 2013. Our committee approved this proposal and the first installment of \$4000 was sent in April 2013 which will be reviewed after 6 months. Diksha is also actively participating in the Education Portal initiative of Asha Purdue.

There are two educations. One should teach us how to make a living and the other how to live.

John Adams



1. Computers bought for DIKSHA Center with support from Asha Purdue: Children using MS Paint to draw.



2. A kid doing Google search on Kindle Fire.

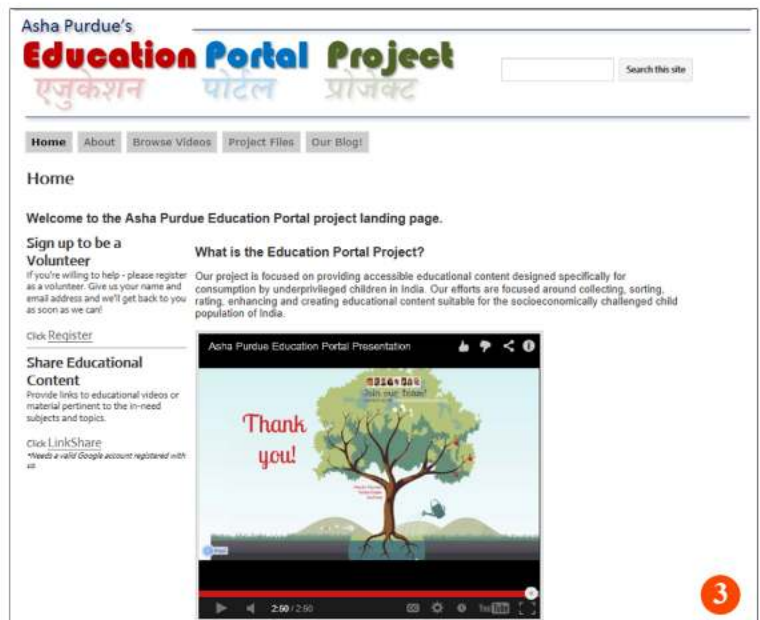
For more information : <https://www.ashanet.org/projects/>

# EDUCATION PORTAL

The Education Portal is a unique initiative of Asha Purdue Chapter which aims to supplement the educational needs of deprived children of India. With the Indian Republic now home to almost half of the world's illiterate, the vast majority of whom are children, there is an urgent need to expand the educational infrastructure of the country. However, the road to universal literacy is full of almost insurmountable obstacles, such as the inability of the nation to provide all its children with access to educational materials, and simultaneously ensuring that the educational materials they consume are tailored to their specific needs and are of a sufficiently high standard.

The Education Portal was started with the request made by Diksha in September 2012 for electronic educational content so that they could put their Asha funded computer lab to better use. Asha Purdue chapter enthusiastically took up the challenge and soon Asha Volunteers had a project team up and running to define and achieve the

project's objectives. The activities involve collecting, sorting, rating, enhancing and creating educational content suitable for the socio-economically challenged child population of India. The final aim of the project is to produce a portal where these educational resources could be easily searched, rated and shared. The project is to produce a portal where these educational resources could be easily searched, rated and shared.



3. Screenshot of Education Portal Project website.



An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.

Banjamin Franklin

For more information: <https://sites.google.com/site/ashapurdueeduportal/>



## TARANG

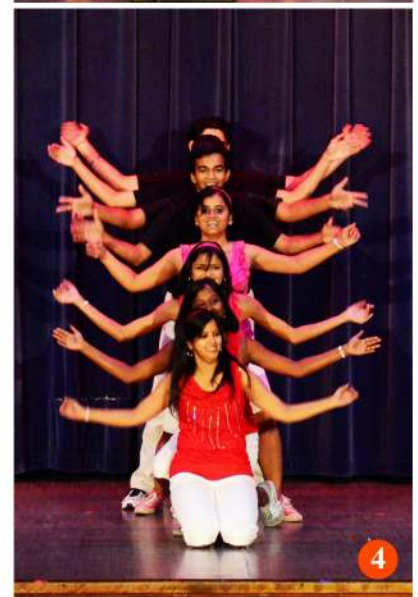


Asha for Education – Purdue Chapter put up a grand cultural show “TARANG” on 8th September. The show was based on the theme 'Asha Magic'- the tale of how a few committed people weaved magic into the lives of thousands of children and empowered them by providing education. The performances for the day comprised of a special blend of dances, skits, vocal and instrumental renditions to celebrate the realization of a child’s dream.

The show opened with an invocation by Navya Tarikere followed by a splendid dance performance by kids from Indian Women Association (IWA). The performance by Indian Classical Music Association at Purdue (ICMAP), carnatic vocal performance by Rohith Chandrasekhar, a solo piano performance by Atish Parekh and a musical fusion by a fresh Indian fusion band created an unforgettable musical extravaganza. TARANG also featured a scintillating dance performance by the Purdue Salsa club

and an energetic Bollywood dance fusion by the Purdue Indian Dance Club (PIDC). The audience was exposed to different styles of Indian dance from late 70’s to the present in a mesmerizing Bollywood dance medley by Team Asha. The event concluded with a musical skit performed by Asha volunteers throwing light on the issues faced by underprivileged children in India and how one can play a part in enriching their lives with education. The impeccably organized event was greatly appreciated by the audience with deafening applause as Team Asha bowed down to mark the end of the show!! TARANG was a resounding success with over 200 people coming together to enjoy a memorable evening filled with music, smiles and the sheer pleasure of bringing joy to the lives of others !!

1. Classical performance by ICMAP.
2. Performance by IWA kids.
3. Dance performance by Purdue Salsa.
4. Bollywood dance medley by Team Asha.



Follow our activities on Facebook: search 'Asha Purdue Chapter'

## Global Fest

Global fest is an annual event at Morton Community Center organised by the City of West Lafayette. This event is a celebration of West Lafayette's many cultures with ethnic food, imported handcrafts, free entertainment, and cultural booths. In this event, Asha Purdue organizes a food stall displaying traditional Indian food. This event is great fundraiser through food sales. Some of the most popular food items are mango lassi, tandoori chicken and veg biryani.





# 5K RUN

The 5K event this year was part of the larger Krannert 5K and started outside the Purdue Memorial Union. An estimated 21 team Asha members ran for the cause of underprivileged students in India regardless of the outside temperature of nearly 10 degrees celsius. The photographers were ready to take pictures and capture the event. There was a lot of excitement at the starting line, with people cheering for Team Asha. Slow but steady the runners made their way across the route. The fastest finishers for the Asha team were Ashwin Venkat, Kamesh and Sumeet.

There were free refreshments like coffee, doughnuts and bagels waiting for the finishers at the finish line. The event then followed the prize distribution and ended with a photography session by the Asha members. This event for the whole Asha team was true bonding experience, with runners cheering fellow runners who are gaining fatigue and the hugs at the finish line to have finished such an event, for some, without any prior training. Thanks to support of about 60 donors and IWA, Asha Purdue raised ~\$2,500 in this event.



1. Prof. Saurabh Bagchi smiles victory as he nears the end of the 5K run.



2. Team Asha Purdue in its vibrant hues at the 5K run.

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.

**Albert Einstein**

# PSUB EVENT



3. Astitva explaining the essence of Diwali to a visitor at the Asha booth.

4. Asha volunteers watch as Neha applies Heena on a visitor's hand.



Asha Purdue participated in "Holidays Around the World" event organized by Purdue Student Union Board (PSUB) which incorporated dance, food, crafts and music from different countries. Various Purdue student organizations including Asha Purdue lined the ballroom with booths, which included information about different traditions celebrated during the holiday season. Each booth that was representing a

different country or ethnicity had pictures and items which highlighted their different traditions. Asha Purdue showcased the festival of Diwali. Our booth included Diwali pictures, lighted candles and colorful diyas. We also had the Heena stall which was quite popular among the crowd. About 50-60 people got the Heena, or Heena tattoos as they called them, on their hands. The objective of participating in this event was to showcase Indian culture and tradition as well as creating awareness about Asha for education.

A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people.

**Mahatma Gandhi**



# JASHN

Jashn in Hindi means “celebration”. This event was organised by Asha Purdue at Fowler Hall in collaboration with Purdue Indian Dance Club (PIDC) to celebrate their 10 year anniversary at Purdue. Different student groups came together to celebrate this occasion as well as raise funds for education of underprivileged kids in India. The program of the event was a special blend of dances, skit, vocal and instrumental performances to celebrate the realization of a child’s dream.

The event started with Vandana by Bhavika accompanied by kids from Indian Women’s Association (IWA). Next, Bhavika gave a graceful Bharatanatyam performance for a Classical Bollywood medley. Then, 4th String band performed British Rock and fusion songs.



The boys and girls from IWA performed a Bollywood dance which was followed by a vocal medley by Indian Classical Music Association at Purdue (ICMAP). During the break, Gaurav and Aarti gave an overview of Asha Purdue followed by an presentation by Aditya and Suman about the Education Portal initiative. After the break, Team Asha performed a comedy skit, a satire called “Superzeroes”. This was followed by a break dance performance by Boilerbreakers. After that, Asha Purdue faculty advisor Prof. Bagchi shared his Asha experiences. Then there was a A Capella performance by Purdue Taal. The grand finale was the PIDC performance on the History of Bollywood. The complete show was hosted by Emcees Astitva & Nikitha.

Overall, the show was a huge success. This was a good fundraiser through the event tickets and also generated good publicity about Asha among the student community.

1. Bhavika performing the Vandana.
2. PIDC performers dancing to a contemporary Bollywood track.
3. Purdue Taal mesmerizing the crowd with A Capella.



# TAMASHA

Tamasha is a fun and fundraising event which is a collection of games like quiz, dumb charades, pictionary and treasure hunt, where students participate together in teams. During the event, food is sold by Asha members for raising funds. Typically the net funds raised from this event is around \$300 and the turnout is around 50-70 students and a few professors. The events

are team based and the winners get coupons from Noodles and Co., Chipotle, Greyhouse, University Bookstore etc. During the food break, there is a Asha awareness presentation for publicising the various events and projects of Asha Purdue. Overall, this is great break for professors and students from their day-to-day routine!



4. PIDC reminisce Madhuri Dikshit’s hit-song of ‘90s.
5. Anup acts out movie names to his team.
6. Asha volunteers serving food at Tamasha 2012.
7. Tamasha 2013 at Matthews Hall.



Asha for Education-Purdue Chapter has supported several educational projects in India over the years. Some of the funds disbursed to projects supported by Asha-Purdue chapter in the past (before 2010) include \$2000 to Ashraya Home for disabled girls in Kollam, Kerala; \$1000 to Suraksha Crisis Center for girls in Neral, Maharashtra; \$1500 to Aikyavardhak Mumbai primary school for slum children; and \$6000 to Saheli Creche for providing non-formal education to children of sex workers in Pune, Maharashtra.

The more recent projects supported by Asha-Purdue include Manasa school for the intellectually challenged in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh and Diksha-KHEL learning center to provide supplementary education and vocational training to children of migratory workers and slum dwellers in Patna, Bihar. Asha-Purdue has disbursed a total amount of \$15000 to Manasa school since the beginning of the project in 2011, mostly directed towards salaries of teachers and staff members and is currently continuing support of this project. The Diksha-KHEL project has received a support of \$9600 from Asha-Purdue since 2012, directed towards salaries of teachers as well as purchase of equipment such as printer, scanner, computers etc. and is an ongoing project as well.

The volunteers at Asha for education-Purdue Chapter organize various events throughout the year in order to raise funds to support educational projects for underprivileged children in India. The two main sources of fund-raising by Asha-Purdue since 2004 have been the annual events: Global Fest and Tamasha. Global Fest is a community event organized by the City of West Lafayette, where the Asha volunteers take up a booth, prepare many delicacies and set up food stalls for the visitors, raising funds upto \$400-\$1000 per year. Tamasha, an annual event organized by Asha volunteers consists of various fun games such as Antakshari, Dumb Charades, Quiz etc. along with food sales to raise funds. Apart from these regular events, Asha-Purdue volunteers have also organized some new events since 2012, including cultural shows such as Tarang and Jashn, which raised funds of \$250 and \$800 respectively. One of the main events in the last two years has been the 5K run organized by the Arthritis Foundation of Purdue, in which a large number of volunteers from Asha-Purdue participated to raise funds. The amount raised in the 5K run was \$1900 in 2012 and \$2500 in 2013, including \$1000 raised by Indian Women Association (IWA) members for 5K run, 2013. A part of these funds (\$150 in 2012 and \$100 in 2013) was donated to the Arthritis foundation. An amount of \$1200 was also raised as part of the WAH fund raising efforts of Asha for education. More details about these events are described under the "Events" section of this newsletter. Asha-Purdue also donated an amount of \$100 in 2013 to Project Tribuunka, to aid in the construction of one school for the children of Tribuunka IDP camp in Mogadishu, Somalia. Apart from these events, Asha-Purdue also raises some funds through the sale of merchandise such as T-shirts and calendars. Asha-Purdue continues its dedication in organizing more fund-raising activities, planning and funding new educational projects in India.

Year 2012	Funds raised	Disbursed
Starting funds	15,160	
Manasa		6,000
Diksha		3,350
5K run	1,900	
WAH	1,200	
Tarang	250	
Tamasha	270	
Other fundraising (merchandise sales)	600	
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,380</b>	<b>9,350</b>

Year 2013	Funds raised	Disbursed
Starting funds	10,030	
Manasa		3,053
Diksha		6,275
5K run	2,500	
Jashn	800	
ICMAP Thyagaraja Aradhana	300	
Other fundraising	150	
General Funds split from central Asha for Education	7,450	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,230</b>	<b>9,328</b>

*All financial figures shown in the tables are in USD*

**Asha for Education is a non-profit, zero-overhead organization registered with the IRS. All donations are tax-exempted under section 501(C) 3. We have no administrative costs and every penny of your contribution goes directly to the projects.**

Support Asha for Education through monetary donations. Even \$20 can fund a child for a month in India. You can donate online at: <http://ashanet.org/purdue/donate>

Cheques can be sent to our mailing address: Asha – Purdue Chapter, Purdue University  
Stewart Center, Box # 750  
128 Memorial Mall  
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2034



# WAH - Work an Hour

WAH is Asha for Education's annual online fundraiser that highlights the issue of illiteracy in India to donors worldwide. WAH symbolically requests Asha patrons and donors to donate an hour of their salary towards education of underprivileged children in India which can bring about the much needed socio-economic change. A team of dedicated volunteers verify projects in WAH to ensure that their sites have been visited regularly by one of Asha volunteers, & records have been maintained, so that 'you' as a donor can be assured that your money will be put to right use. When you make a donation, you can decide the project(s) where you would like Asha to channel your funds.

In 2012, Asha Purdue actively participated in WAH publicity and fundraising and ended up being in top 5 among all the Asha chapters in terms of participation. Asha Purdue raised \$1,200 with the support of 36 enthusiastic donors and overall the campaign raised \$130,158 to support 13 high quality and high impact projects in India. This year our project Diksha KHEL Patna has been selected for WAH and we hope to continue the momentum and involve more donors and volunteers in supporting quality projects in India.

For more information : <http://www.ashanet.org/workanhour/index.html/>

## Collaborations

### IWA

Indian Women Association (IWA) is a not-for-profit charitable (501(c)(3)) organization located in Lafayette/West Lafayette, Indiana. IWA's goal is to provide social, cultural, educational, and charitable activities to unify the Indian community in the Greater Lafayette area. Asha Purdue Chapter is very happy to collaborate with IWA in various different areas. IWA has helped Asha Purdue Chapter in organizing and fundraising for different events such as Jashn, and 5k run. In collaboration with IWA, nine middle school and high school students from IWA have been working with us on



1. IWA kids performing at Jashn 2013.

2. Middle-school and high-school students from IWA in the midst of an event organizing meeting during summer of 2013.



the Education Portal and other events during the summer of 2013. IWA also plans to help some of the projects supported by Asha Purdue Chapter monetarily and intellectually.

For more information : <http://www.myiwa.org>

### ICMAP

Indian Classical Music Association of Purdue (ICMAP) is a non-profit organization run primarily by a group of students with a goal to bring Indian music to diverse listeners of the Greater Lafayette area. ICMAP conducted the Purdue Thyagaraja Aradhana in Spring 2012 and 2013, where three of the five Pancharatna kritis were rendered in the traditional style by their performing



group. This was immediately followed by around twenty individual performances by some children and graduate students. At the end of the event Indian snacks like sev puri, pav bhaji, veg puff, vada pav, rasmalai, gulab jamun, mango lassi and chai were

sold to an audience of more than 70 by Asha Purdue Chapter. Through this event Asha Purdue Chapter raised \$220 in 2012 and \$310 in 2013. ICMAP has also collaborated with Asha at other events such as Holi Mela and Boiler Gold Rush.

3. ICMAP performing during Jashn 2013.

For more information : <http://www.purdue.edu/icmap>



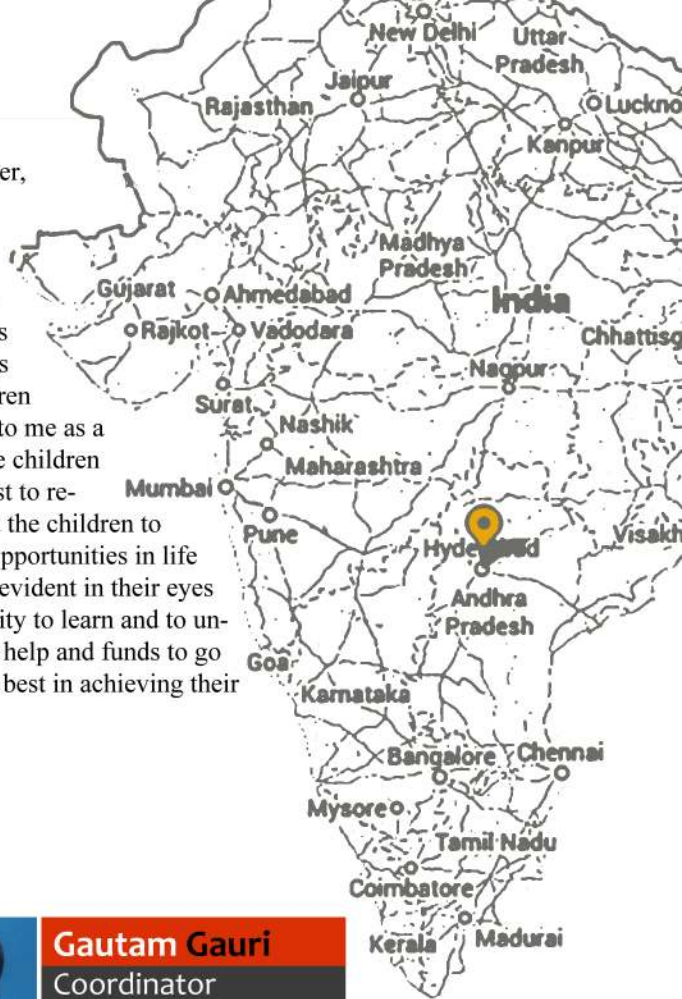


I came to Diksha Foundation as a volunteer, thanks to Asha that introduced me to the NGO. I spent six weeks in Patna, working with Diksha team and offering my experience to help them in their efforts to improve children education and conditions of life. I learnt a lot from the team and was really impressed by the atmosphere: children trusted these adults and they all appeared to me as a big family. Adults working there knew the children and their needs perfectly, and did their best to respond to their necessities. They motivated the children to learn more so that they could have work opportunities in life

and live decently and safely. These children have learnt a lot at Diksha and it was evident in their eyes and behavior. Despite their hard living conditions, they had a will to study, a curiosity to learn and to understand the world they are living in. I hope Diksha and Asha can always get more help and funds to go on with their good and generous work towards children in need. I wish them all the best in achieving their objectives.

## Laurence Altet

Early childhood teacher and cooperation specialist  
France/Spain



## Q&A with GAUTAM

### Q. What motivated you to take this initiative?

We(the founding team of Diksha) had a deep interest in the area of education for a long time.

But the major catalysts have been two people - Prof Anil Gupta, Founder, Honey Bee Network, who has worked extensively in the area of grass root innovation. He motivated and mentored us to take a leap into the unknown.

The other person who has mentored us is Mr Ravi Gulati, Founder, Manzil. we started the

center in Patna after seeing what Manzil is doing in Khan Market, Delhi. We keep reaching out to him and the Manzil team for inputs .

**Gautam is an engineering and management professional who comes from a middle class family in Patna. Inspired by an IIM Professor's initiative in creativity and innovation, Gautam quit his 4 years corporate job to pursue his longstanding passion to engage with education. He is a Fellow for LLJ Programme of Youth Collective.**

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### Q. How did ASHA-Purdue contribute towards your project?

Asha- Purdue is a major donor for the Patna Center. Volunteers from Asha are also in-

### Q.What kind of challenges did you face while working on this project?

Initially the major challenge was attendance and drop-outs, Now both are in control and

1. *Gaurav Nanda during DIKSHA site visit in July 2012.*

2. *Aarti and Vinod with MANASA committee during site visit in January 2013.*

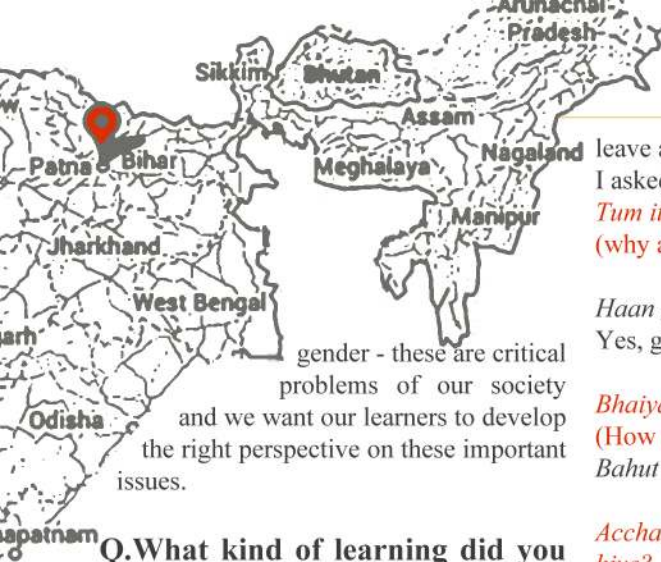


**Gautam Gauri**  
Coordinator  
DIKSHA Foundation  
KHEL, Patna

children inform us when they are taking leaves, so we have accordingly tweaked our system to offer more holidays around the festivals of the community. We don't have summer/winter holidays -so we are able to make up later. We do feel limited at times because of the higher morbidity and low nutrition levels in the community which impacts the growth and well being of the children. Another challenge which we are facing (and would like to seek inputs for) is how to develop sensitivity in the children towards issues of religion and







gender - these are critical problems of our society and we want our learners to develop the right perspective on these important issues.

**Q.What kind of learning did you achieve as a manager of this project?**

My biggest learning in the past three years and specially engaging in this project has been the realization of the need to focus on holistic education and not be confined to literacy alone. This has created a change in the offerings at the center and our approach towards our work .

**Q. Please share any personal thoughts/ interesting experiences about your project.**

In the past year we have focused our efforts on making the center an open space. This has led to a change in the traditional hierarchical teacher student roles and relationships. I am sharing a conversation which i had today

Its wedding season here and many children are going to their native villages to attend their relative's weddings. Neha -one of the little ones (5 or 6 years old) is going off for a longish period . She had submitted her

leave application.

I asked her :

*Tum itnay lambay samay ke liye ja rahi ho? (why are you going for such a long period?)*

*Haan , ja rahe hain , bhaiya ka shaadi hain*

Yes, going for elder brother's wedding

*Bhaiya ka shaadi - Bhaiya kitne bade hain ? (How old is your brother?)*

*Bahut barre hain !! (He is quite old)*

*Accha, shaadi ke liye kitna umar hona chahiye?*

(Ok, what is the legal age for marriage?)

Her friend joined at this time , both said:

*18 saal hota hain.*

(its 18 years)

*Haan ladki ka 18 saal aur ladke ka kya hota hai ?*

(Yes, for a girl it's 18 years, how many years for a boy ?)

*21 saal. (21 years)*

*Kaha se pata chala (From where did you get to know?)*

*Bas pata hain (We just know)*

(The children had enacted plays on the issue of child marriage - it is a problem which exists within the community, especially in the case of girls )

*Kaise hoga, parhai choontega, mat jao itna lamba. (Oh, how will it work out? You will miss out on your studies, Don't go for so long.)*

*Nahi, jaana hain (No i have to go)*

I again playfully said:

*Mat jao (please don't go)*

*Aap Dilli jaate hain, toh hum aapko kuch bolte hain*

I dont question you so much when you go to Delhi

(We work on a project in Bulandshahr for which i travel to Delhi frequently. )

I smiled - non- hierarchy is one of the open space principles. Neha's remark is an indicator that we are moving in the right direction.

**Q. How would you summarize your experience to motivate others interested in volunteering in your project?**

We had a wonderful experience with Laurence Altet, Volunteer from ASHA for Education. She stayed in Patna for a month and taught children dance, creative arts, geography and basic French . Its been a year since she was here, the children still practice the songs taught by her, there have been letter exchanges between her nursery class in Barcelona, Spain and children here. There have also been skype calls between her family and the children here. I am reminded of a quote by a South American educationist - " In a maths class the child does not learn maths, s/he learns how to be with a maths teacher." When children spend time with a motivated teacher/motivator they learn the same values and learn to set high aspirations for themselves.

# A Letter from MANASA

The organization "Asha for Education" comprising of young Indian students is playing a vital role in the field of education by supporting poor & needy students in India. The concern, care & commitment shown by the young members of Asha towards the poor Indian students since 1991 is highly commendable. Asha is not only supporting education in India but also entered the field of special education through it's Purdue Chapter by supporting MANASA since 2011.

We have interacted with Aarti, Vinod, Aditya & Aditi personally during their short visit to Hyderabad. Aarti & Vinod interacted with students & staff of MANASA Special School on 09-01-13. Aditya & Aditi have noted all requirements for the completion of the construction of the MANASA building at Kothapet & other details about the students & their classes. All the volunteers have shown interest in knowing the full details about MANASA & its projects during their interaction either personally or in conference call. We have noticed that the volunteers of Asha are very young , energetic , devoted & working with full Zeal for the CAUSE of their organization. The social responsibility taken by Asha team at a very young age is noteworthy. MANASA will ever be grateful to Asha for the timely help during its crucial period. we could see a very bright future of MANASA through Asha.







## MY ASHA STORY: ASHPIRATION

I didn't hear about Asha prior to my arrival in Purdue. Last summer, 2012, I was playing tennis in Purdue University Schwartz tennis center while noticed someone playing on side court was wearing a deep blue T-shirt saying 'Asha for Education' on it. On the backside of tee, some smiley-face children were reading books. Upon asking my friend, 'What's that. Asha?', he briefed, 'Oh, a charity organization. They send money to India'. Without continuing further on Asha, he shouted, '60-40, you need to work on backhand'.

Few months later, I was introduced to one Asha volunteer looking for newly admitted students to Asha Purdue chapter. That Fall evening I went to meet Asha Purdue members, they were busy preparing 'Tarang', an annual fund raising event. Some enthusiastic go-go students were practicing dance medley. Against odds and my inherent images of serious, somber, tightlipped people; president, vice president, secretary, treasurer - all were playing and dancing in skit! They were looking for someone, who could store up their moves, memories. So my Asha volunteering started as a photographer.

I used to take pictures of Asha events and post them on Facebook. After working for Asha over nine months, attending meetings and covering different fund raising events, I felt most promising characteristics of Asha are incessant effort, headlong exertion and trusting on their own ability to bring changes, however small it is.

As a grad student I dream about career, internship and publications. When I have time I think about changing India too. I sometime receive an email asking to donate money, and sometime I respond. Most of the time, there are very little follow up procedure from both ends, information on what happened to my contribution. Sitting in a country 8000 miles away from homeland, I console myself, 'What else can I do other than donating money to a charity?'. We all love the results part, but the part that bring results, all those small step by step efforts - I feel that is where Asha holds its nerve. Asha organizes fundraising events to support projects in India. Organization with such intention doesn't necessarily mean we have to confine ourselves with long talks, rumbling ideas. So Purdue Asha group performs dance, drama skit, medley and even dumb charade. All for a noble cause, to save money to fund projects in India.

**If you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for ten years, plant trees. If you plan for hundred years, educate your children. - Chinese proverb**

Initially, I was little cynical about their way of collecting money - selling food, arranging events, running 5k. But there is no magic trick, other than dedication, hard work and commitment. Currently funded projects, seeing their site seeing photos (yes, Asha members do visit India to see progress of their funded projects), I strongly feel, slow but steady, wins the game. After working for Asha, charity is not a process of 'black box' to me anymore. I can see, hear, feel the mechanism inside.

But this is not the end of story. Asha educational portal is under construction, an e-learning facility to millions of children across the globe. We have a faculty advisor, numerous Asha student Alumni, an ex-president from another Asha chapter, few Purdue-info-wizard - there are so much knowledge bank and support, feels lot safer and home-free during work.

I do Asha, because it's a noble cause, it's cool, it's philanthropic and above all, the munificent feeling, that my 15 minutes can change something. Asha goes by as a 'non-profitable' charity organization, but I feel investing time to such organization was the most 'profitable' work I ever did. And I believe people who consider in hundred years plan would admit that too.

**Sayan Biswas**  
Graduate Student  
Purdue University

Asha for Education is a nonprofit organization which aims at catalyzing socio-economic change in India through the education of underprivileged children. The organization, formed by student volunteers and faculty at Purdue University organizes various events throughout the year in order to create awareness and raise funds for its activities and projects. For more details on events organized by Asha, projects supported by Asha; to donate or be a part of Asha Purdue chapter, please visit our website:

<http://www.ashanet.org/purdue/>

: search for Asha Purdue Chapter

Contact Us:

**Aarti** : achigull@purdue.edu  
**Suchismita**: ssarang@purdue.edu  
**Phone** : 646-409-2360  
408-348-6931

**Asha – Purdue Chapter, Purdue University**  
Stewart Center, Box # 750  
128 Memorial Mall  
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2034