

SmS Chair's Report 2013-14

It is with great pride and a distinct sense of achievement that I present the 10th Annual Report of SmS as a registered charity for FY 2013-14 and highlight the special developments at its various chosen projects. It fills me with immense joy and gratitude to reflect that the projects we chose to nurture as tender plants have not only become strong trees, providing holistic nourishment and climbing ladder to hundreds of underprivileged children and their families but have also been acknowledged nationally as some of the best in their fields. It is the vision, total selfless dedication and commitment of the project leaders that has made this possible and SmS feels honoured to be associated with such heroes.

From the Charity's viewpoint, the most satisfying achievement this year has been the progress made at our recent initiative, closer to home, under the title of Sahara Bereavement Care (name changed from Sahara Support). Thanks to the tireless efforts and dedication of Bedi sisters, we have trained 12 volunteers through the Harrow Bereavement Care (HBC) group, of which we are a member. Our volunteers are all committed professionals who are providing effective support to people through their difficult times. Several GPs have also started using our services to support their clients. Our General Secretary and Project Leader, Neena Bedi, attends the group leaders meetings called by the HBC. We are also a part of their Conference committee. For more details, please refer to Neena's report on page

Review of the Year

1. Promoting Health & Fitness in the local Community:

i) **Yoga classes** started for SmS in 2002, have continued in full swing with the usual six weeks break in the summer and eight weeks break in the winter. In addition to serving the local community, they also provide a regular income to the Charity.

ii) Promoting holistic healthcare through Ayurveda:

- On 22nd June, 2014, SmS sponsored a one day Ayurveda Healthcare and Wellbeing Conference at the Holiday Inn, Wembley, bringing the whole of UK Ayurveda fraternity together and giving the general public a rare opportunity to understand the importance of living in harmony with nature, taking responsibility for their own health by tailoring their diet and lifestyle according to their constitution and following appropriate daily and seasonal regimen. They also learnt how to treat common ailments with simple home remedies.
- From 23rd to 27th June 2014 we hosted an Ayurveda workshop where, in addition to providing useful training to some UK based Ayurvedic practitioners, more than 50 half price therapies were provided over the 5 day period by two high calibre specialists from India.

- On Sunday 6th July 2014, BAAAP conducted a double Ayurveda workshop, for the beginner and advance groups under the leadership of their Chair, Dr Indira Anand, at the **Sri Swami Madhavanandaji Ashram**, 133 Salusbury Road, QP, London.

2. Progress at our chosen Charitable Projects in India:

- A. Pardada Pardadi Educational Society (PPES), according to its founder, Virendra Singh, reached adulthood after 13 years of existence.** What started off as an experiment in providing education to village girls has turned into a mammoth task of holistic rural development under three main areas: Health & Hygiene, Community Development and Economic Empowerment. In the last 12 months two areas have expanded at the school level. A Science Wing has been added to enable their students to pursue a future in Medical and Information Technology degrees at reputable institutions. Also special attention is being given to Sports where they aspire to get their students to play at the national level in various sports.
- The two new ambitious projects, PPES embarked upon in the last fiscal year - **Self Help Group (SHG) for women** and **Rural Call Centre** are both progressing at a very impressive pace. Following the overwhelming response from the community to the **'Health and Hygiene Centre'** established at Madargate, where over 130 families are making use of the toilet and bathing facilities, a second community toilet complex was opened in June 2013 and is currently serving 26 families. The solar lantern programme is benefitting over 150 families and has been greatly instrumental in improving the overall academic performance of the girls.
- PPES is making ground-breaking progress on so many different fronts that it is impossible to cover them all even briefly in such a short report. I therefore urge you to visit their website: www.education4change.org.

B. Action for Autism (AFA)

AFA always has a very busy calendar packed with special workshops, conferences and training programmes. Their current slogan is spread some 'ANANDA'. This is because their latest project called 'ANANDA' is looking to provide 'Supported Living for Adults with Autism' in the form of group homes that will help adults with autism lead a productive and dignified future. This is in line with **AFA's Vision**: 'A society that views the interdependence of people of every ability as valuable and enriching and seeks to provide equal opportunities for all'; and **Mission**: 'To facilitate a barrier free environment; to enable the empowerment of persons with autism and their families; and to act as a catalyst for change that will enable persons with autism to live as fully participating members of the community.'

This project is truly remarkable as most services for autism in India as well as across the world are focused on younger people. Very few services look at adults and the aging population of individuals with autism.

C. Akshay Pratishthan

Akshay Pratishthan celebrated its silver jubilee last year. What started off as an experiment in inclusive education has now become a role model for educational practices in other schools. Amongst its recent achievements, it is worth mentioning that it has been made a Resource Centre for Avaz, an augmentative and alternative communication device for dynamic speech synthesis that helps in communication. Verbally challenged individuals and children with learning disabilities are benefitting greatly through the use of this device. In addition, it has won the Best School Award in SAIDE (Special Accredited Institutions for Education of the Disadvantaged) All India category. Furthermore, Akshay Pratishthan has taken a big step in offering professional Social Work courses (under and post graduate) through Indira Gandhi Open University Study Centre. Akshay has partnered with various overseas organizations to promote and enhance the learning experience of its students and make them more self-confident. For more info on Akshay Pratishthan visit their website: www.akshaypratishthan.org

D. Vatsalya Vatika, Haridwar: We visited Vatsalya Vatika on the 20th of December 2013 and were really impressed by the all-round progress being made by the children. However, the progress of their new three-storey building had been hampered by the unexpected withdrawal of a substantial sum of money pledged towards the building fund. The completion of this building is essential not only to provide accommodation to the children before they could refurbish the existing dormitory with a leaking tin roof but also to meet the strong demand to admit more homeless children. Our financial aid therefore continues to be targeted at this area.

3. New Initiative for the Year Ahead

- To carry forward our task of community service, we propose to start short courses in Ayurveda based Preventative Healthcare for the general public.

Finally, I would like to assure you that the SmS executives are totally committed to serve the local community here and support the underprivileged in India. Your ongoing moral and financial help is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.



Dr Indira Anand