

MSSO NEWS 2013

Annual Newsletter of Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization (MSSO)

Editor: Vidita Pande



Generous donors of Maharashtra Seva Samiti Organization (MSSO),
with matching funds from
the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
make a difference in the lives of many less fortunate

MSSO Vision

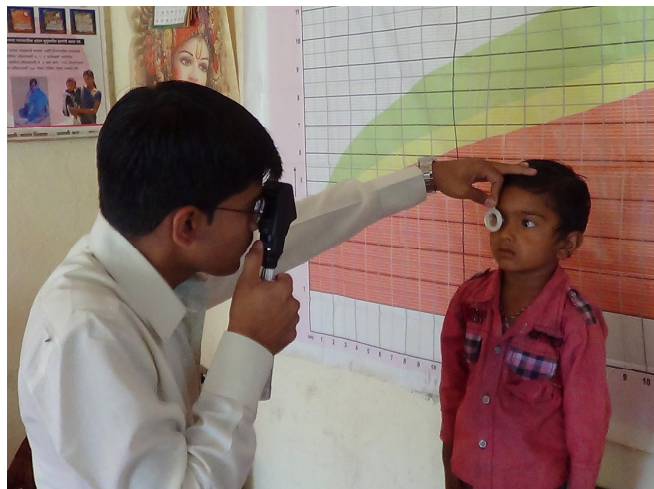
- To promote sustainable development, economic as well as social, of the less fortunate

MSSO Mission

- To create long term partnership of Canadian donors and hardworking, selfless, grassroots social workers for building the future and for responding promptly to emergencies
- To enhance the value of donations through careful selection of NGO partners and effective management of development projects
- To empower women to participate as equal partners in achievement of social justice and equitable development
- To promote balance between development and environment

Blindness Prevention among Rural Children, Dhule

Supported by MSSO and matching funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) the project *Blindness Prevention among Rural Children* is now in full swing. The original target of screening 40,000 students for vision deficiency over five years has already been surpassed. In less than two years of operation, K.S. Wani Memorial Trust has screened 42,968 students. At this rate, they will screen more than 100,000 students by the end of the project. By the end of September 30, 2013, more than 2300 students were found to have some kind of vision deficiencies; some needed eye glasses and the others required ophthalmic treatment at the charity eye hospital run by the Trust.



Vision testing of a rural student

The outreach team running the project is going beyond the call of duty in reaching out to dropout students. The team was shocked to find that the students who dropped out after grade eight did not know how to read and write. The team not only screened them for vision deficiency but also taught them how to read and write. Additional progress details of the project may be found in the two interim reports posted on <mssoonline.org/downloads/interim-reports/vision-project-march-2013>)



Eye-health education for school children

Besides students in the school system, the outreach team is also visiting playschools, kindergartens and special schools for mentally challenged, hearing impaired and others. Though the project envisioned screening students in age group of 3-16 years, the outreach team also accommodated screening of children below the age of 3. Additionally, the outreach team realized that there are many other reasons besides vision deficiency that are holding back children from attending school. Thus, counseling groups and awareness programs have been established in order to expand the potential of the project. These are unexpected, yet positive outcomes of the project.

The project generated large number of pediatric patients leading to over-crowding in the waiting hall. The patients and their caregivers have to sit in the passage on the floor and wait their turn to be examined by the doctor.

Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission approved funds for the urgently needed expansion of the waiting hall. The Alberta Government's Community Initiative Program also approved matching funds for this purpose. The expanded facility will be in operation beginning December 1, 2013.



Pediatric patients and parents in an overcrowded waiting hall

K.S. Wani Memorial Trust - Silver Jubilee

Hon. Theresa de Haan, the First Secretary, Political and Economic Affairs, High Commission of Canada, was the guest of honor at the Silver Jubilee celebration of our partner NGO K.S. Wani Memorial Trust (KSWMT) in Dhule on 23rd February, 2013. The Trust took this opportunity to felicitate Dr. Jagannath Wani on his appointment to the Order of Canada. Prominent journalist Aparna Velankar compered this dual celebration and also interviewed Dr. Wani chronicling his life and work. Social activist Medha Patkar launched the silver jubilee video CD *Possibilities Unlimited* which documents the work of the Trust over 25 years. It is available in two parts on the following links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-94u0yJPms>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vxtx3nJRjzw>



Releasing silver jubilee video CD *Possibilities Unlimited*
Medha Patkar, Jagannath Wani, Theresa de Haan, Chitra Phadke

Also present at the event were the representatives from all the organizations that Dr. Wani helped through the K.S. Wani Memorial Trust. Each of them gave a heart-warming account of the impact that Dr. Wani and K.S. Wani Memorial Trust has had, not only on their lives, but also on the countless individuals that have benefited from the good work being done by the organizations. A particularly notable account was given by Magsaysay awardee, *Neelima Mishra*, who is known for empowering more than 200 villages in

Maharashtra through her organization *Bhagini Nivedita Gramin Vigyan Niketan*. She expressed her feelings in the following words "I am Dr. Wani's adopted daughter. Not only he assists me in my social work at every step of the way, but he also cares for my well-being, often personally attending to matters concerning my health." The event had a packed auditorium with attendees not only from all over India, but also few from Canada. There was not a single dry eye in the auditorium by the end of the event. The extent to which K.S. Wani Memorial Trust has touched lives was evident at the Silver Jubilee celebration.

Snehalaya, Ahmednagar

Started in 1989 Snehalaya ("Home of Love") serves the most neglected and exploited class of our society, primarily women and children who are Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking. They seek, rescue, support, empower, rehabilitate and re-integrate oppressed women, deprived children and distressed HIV/AIDS afflicted families through direct intervention. Snehalaya works in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra and neighboring districts of Solapur and Nashik.



Children enjoy playing lezim

The victims originating from various parts of the country are provided free-of-cost food, clothing, shelter, medicines, counseling, legal aid etc. Snehalaya has initiated several unique pioneering measures to bring joy into the lives of under-privileged children, including curbing female feticide, rescue and rehabilitation of discarded new-born babies. With zero tolerance, Snehalaya has effectively curbed coerced prostitution of minor girls in Ahmednagar district. By supporting Snehalaya through financial assistance, MSSO hopes that Snehalaya can expand its potential and add more accomplishments to its impressive list of achievements.



Sewing for livelihood of rescued girls

SAPTARANG, Toronto

MSSO promotes understanding amongst persons interested in the Marathi language. This objective is consistent with that of Saptarang Radio program started eight years ago as a not-for-profit activity by Dr. Ravi and Meena Jategaonkar. It broadcasts Marathi music, news and views every Saturday at 8:00 AM (EDT) for half hour. Running a radio program is expensive and requires financial assistance. Having a common objective, MSSO decided to sponsor Saptarang. Anyone interested in supporting Saptarang may send earmarked donations to MSSO. Being a registered charity, donations to MSSO will receive tax benefits.

AVANI, Kolhapur

The name AVANI is abridged from the first letters of Anna (food), VAstra (clothing) and NIvara (shelter), the three essentials of life. AVANI fights against exploitation and trafficking of children as well as the prevention of female infanticide. Anuradha Bhosale, once herself a child-laborer, founded AVANI. She is a renowned women's rights and anti-child labor activist based in Kolhapur where more than 35,000 children are involved in daily labor for local industries. MSSO is providing financial assistance to AVANI to help achieve their goal.



Justice Mrudula Bhatkar presenting ZEE TV award to Anuradha

AVANI rescued 541 child laborers and established a home for migrant children. It also provides health care and education to 5,604 nomadic migrant children and school dropouts and runs schools inside brickyard labor camps. Recently ZEE TV Marathi awarded the "Unch Mazha Zoka Puraskar 2013" to Anuradha. The award recognizes the outstanding work of women working tirelessly and fearlessly for the downtrodden. The award is in memory of women's rights activist the late Ramabai Ranade.

Parivaar, West Bengal

Founded by Vinayak Lohani, Parivaar, based in 24 Parganas (S), West Bengal, is engaged in overall development of impoverished tribal children and orphans who are highly vulnerable to exploitation, victimization, and trafficking. Parivaar's Residential Institutions have 805 resident children. Parivaar provides Education Excellence Program for 1500 meritorious rural students, 24 hours Ambulance service for the population in the adjoining rural areas and Monthly Foodstock Scheme benefitting more than 700 old

and ailing villagers. MSSO is providing assistance for construction of student residence facility.

Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad

MSSO donated \$7,450 to the Blind People's Association (BPA) to purchase a new autoclave to sterilize equipment and supplies. BPA provides employment opportunities to people with disabilities. During the last five years, it successfully provided employment to 1500 people in public as well as in private sectors. They also run regular eye-camps to reach out to people who do not have access to hospital facilities. Every year up to 1,000 people come to these camps to get their eyes checked. BPA plans to cover more and more villages so that the poor people can benefit from the new technologies and have a better vision and thus a better life.

Student's Welfare Association, Pune

Pune based Students' Welfare Association provides lodging and boarding at a nominal cost to students from rural areas coming to Pune for higher education. They have four hostels – 2 for boys and 2 for girls - which accommodate 712 students. MSSO is assisting to set up a medical clinic at one of the hostels. The medical clinic will provide treatment for minor illnesses. Each student also undergoes a medical checkup once in a year.

Memorial Gift

What this world needs is a new kind of army-the army of the kind.

~ Cleveland Amory

Dr. B.V. Paranjape generously donated \$25,000 in memory of his mother, Anandibai Paranjape. Shreevani Printing Institute in Dhule is part beneficiary of this donation. They purchased computers, new furniture and air conditioning equipment for the lab. The generous help from Dr. Paranjape is recognized by naming the laboratory as "Anandibai Paranjape Computer Laboratory". The institute offers a Diploma in Printing Arts recognized by the North Maharashtra University. The institute receives no grant from the government and is the only institute outside Pune and Mumbai offering education in printing. This provides benefits to the rural students who cannot afford to go to urban cities for education in printing.



Entrance to Anandibai Paranjape Computer Laboratory

A part of Dr. Paranjape's donation will help Baba Amte's Maharogi Sewa Samiti to cover partial cost of a tractor for their agricultural project spread over 1200 acres at Somnath. It provides food grains and vegetables to the leprosy colony

in Anandwan and to 600 tribal students in the hostels of Lok Biradari Prakalpa in Hemalkasa.

Nachiket Libraries

MSSO Toronto Chapter is supporting Nachiket Libraries for many years in addressing the needs of rural children for availability of quality books to enhance their educational horizons. Prashant Kukde, a program-coordinator for Science with *Pratham* Educational Program, praised the excellent library services of Nachiket libraries. Mr. Kukde surveyed fifty villages for the participation and reading habits. He thinks that we need a Nachiket in every village.

Darshana Joshi, a social activist from Mumbai, with special interest in primary education and Gender Equality was impressed with large proportion of girls and mothers participating in Nachiket's activities. According to her, the literary environment provided by Nachiket is in alignment with UNESCO's policy that identifies access to a "literary environment" as one of the critical factors in supporting literacy development.

Nachiket encourages mothers to read or to tell a story to their toddlers. There are 20 "Storytelling" and "Read Aloud" groups. Remote rural areas do not have playschools. Nachiket is helping poor families in these areas to prepare their children for entering primary schools. Vidita Pande, Nachiket's volunteer from Toronto, believes that the story telling programs should be promoted as Nachiket's unique selling point.

MSSO under new Not-for-profit Corporations Act

The Government of Canada enacted a new Not-for-Profit Corporations Act to replace the old Canada Corporations Act. All organizations registered under the old Act need to obtain a continuance certificate to transit from the old act to the new one. MSSO completed the necessary legalities and obtained the necessary continuance certificate. The new Act will improve the reporting procedures to be followed by the registered organizations.

MSSO Board Members

The general meeting on April 27, 2013, unanimously elected the following to the Board of Directors.

Jivan Kayande	President
Ramesh Aggarwal	Vice President
Vidita Pande	Secretary
Chandrakant Lad	Treasurer

Vidita is the youngest ever member of the Board of Directors. Besides her role as the secretary of MSSO she will also look after the editing of MSSO NEWS and keeping track of donation receipts.

Toronto Chapter – Annual Fund Raising Dinner

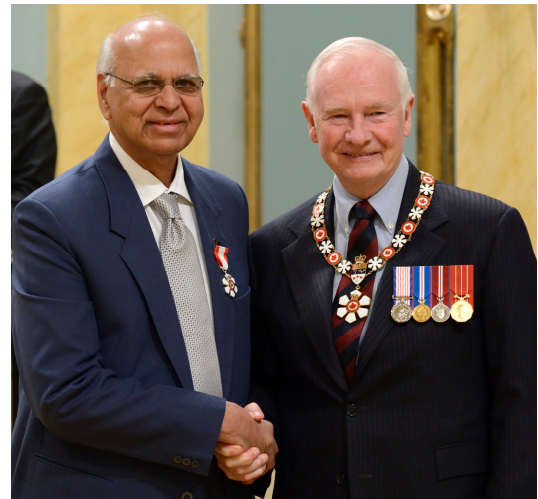
Margaret Joshi, with help from family and the chapter executives, ably coordinated the annual fund raising dinner of the Toronto Chapter on April 6, 2013. More than 120 persons attended. The event raised \$5,000 earmarked for various projects of MSSO - Gift of Vision (Sharda Netralay), Gift of Knowledge (Nachiket Libraries), Gift of Education (AVANI) and Gift of Health (Jan Kalyan Samiti).

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3555 - 93 Street, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6E 6N6

Order of Canada for the Founder President

In recognition of his longstanding commitment to building bridges between the privileged of Canada and the underprivileged in India, Dr. Wani was conferred the Order of Canada, the highest Canadian civilian honor, by the Governor General of Canada on behalf of the Queen Elizabeth II. The investiture ceremony took place on May 3, 2013 at the Rideau Hall, the palace of the Governor General. The Order of Canada is awarded in recognition of a lifetime of outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation by Canadians who have made a major difference to Canada through lifelong contributions in different fields. A professor emeritus of Statistics and Actuarial Science at the University of Calgary, Dr. Wani has spent his whole life raising funds for social, cultural and educational causes in India and Canada.



Governor General congratulating Jagannath Wani

Dr. Wani was also honored with a Lifetime/Outstanding Achievement Award by the Indo Canada Chamber of Commerce (ICCC) at their Annual Awards and Gala Night on Saturday, June 8, 2013, at the Metro Toronto Convention Center. ICCC's marquee event recognized the achievements of the 'Best of the Best' Indo-Canadians from across Canada.

Donations to MSSO are eligible for tax credit
(Charity registration No. 10765 4410 RR 0001).

You may send your donations to:
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