

# ASHRAYA

Non-Profit Organization providing Assistance to the Physically Challenged in India for Education and Income Generation



*Hey Look! The pine tree is bending  
Over the rocks like a frail old man blessing  
A burly child with his stick.*

*The scorching sun whips its back  
And the heat smacks its branches  
Shaking off crumbled leaves of shade*

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## ASHRAYA ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY 2003

### I. MISSION

ASHRAYA is a non-profit organization based in the US, established in 1991 with an aim to provide technological assistance to the physically challenged student community in India towards education and employment generation. We leverage the advancements made in **assistive technologies** towards education, employment generation and on-the-job assistance for people with various impairments. ASHRAYA started by providing the services listed below to select India-based welfare organizations working in the visually challenged sector: NAB-Bombay, NAB-Chennai and BPA-Ahmedabad. Since last year, we have started extending the same services to other smaller organizations in India working towards education and employment generation for the people with the following impairments: visual, hearing, mobility and learning.

1. Supply educational aids for end users (e.g. Braille typewriters, low vision aids, speech enhancement devices)
2. Supply assistive-technology related hardware and software towards the following
  - a. Talking Book Production centers for the visually challenged (duplicating machines, recording systems)
  - b. Centers of education (e.g. PCs, scanners, screen reader and speech recognition software)
  - c. Employment generation programs (e.g. computer training workshops)
  - d. Extracurricular activities (e.g. music equipment for the visually challenged)
3. Provide consultative assistance in the following (using services of Indian professionals in the US)
  - a. Setting up manufacturing cells for production of educational aids (e.g. Braille books production)
  - b. Setting up education and employment generation programs focused on the usage of assistive technologies
  - c. Setting up training programs in collaboration with US-based organizations
4. Provide liaison services towards obtaining project-specific funds from US-based funding agencies
5. Provide beneficiary organizations access to our interactive website to post project information and solicit project-specific funds directly from our sponsors

### II. SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FY 2003

1. We raised funds worth \$10,650, of which \$8,200 were project-specific contributions (as opposed to pass-through contributions). This has been the highest we have ever raised since inception in 1992, and represents a 15% increase with respect to FY2002.
2. We added 4 new members to our roster of donors: Dr. K.T. Ramesh, Dr. Asha Gopal, Mr. Vivek Jetley and Mr. Apurva Varma. ASHRAYA welcomes them, and thanks them for their trust in us.
3. We added two new members to our roster of beneficiary organizations, each with diverse missions and focus, thus helping us to expand our scope. Shakuntala Foundation based in Kolar (Karnataka), focuses on

providing rehabilitation and vocational training to 25 mentally challenged residents. Vidnyanvahini based in Pune (Maharashtra) runs a mobile science lab in different villages of southern Maharashtra, and provides supplemental education to rural high school students through lab experiments and educational videos. NAB-Gujarat based in Ahmedabad, provides education, vocational training and rehabilitation to the visually challenged in Gujarat state. In total, we now have seven organizations in our roster, two of them focused on the visually challenged (BPA-Ahmedabad, NAB-Gujarat and MPWA-Indore), one on the mobility challenged (Mobility India-Bangalore), one on the mentally challenged (Shakuntala Foundation), and one on the rural poor (Vidnyanvahini). Even though Vidnyanvahini does not currently focus on any physical challenges per se, we are working with its founders to extend the scope of beneficiaries for their unique service to include physically challenged students in rural areas. Appendix 1 shows the details on our current beneficiary organizations.

4. In accordance with our stated intent at the end of FY2002, we have extended the scope of our projects from education to vocational training and income generation, since the latter are more sustainable and have long-lasting value. We worked actively with our beneficiary organizations in defining the goals, modalities and success metrics for such projects. As can be seen from the list of funded projects in Section IV, two of the four projects we funded in FY2003 are focused on vocational training and income generation.
5. We are in the process of establishing a working relationship with America-India Foundation (AIF), one of the largest US-based fund raising agencies focused on development in India. AIF is based in New York and California, and has many luminaries on its board such as Rajat Gupta, Latha Krishnan and Former President of the US, Mr. Bill Clinton. We presented ASHRAYA's missions and goals to AIF's management committee in Dec 2003 and are currently in the process of defining and writing a joint MOU, in which ASHRAYA would provide seed funding for income generation projects and AIF would fund the growth phase in each project.

### **III. FY2003 REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES**

The table below shows ASHRAYA's revenues and expenditures for FY2003. We raised \$10,650, out of which \$2,450 were organization specific contributions. We disbursed \$7,129 towards projects. All overhead expenses (\$563) were absorbed by the founders, ensuring that all contributions were used towards project-specific or organization-specific disbursements.

Parameter		Value (\$)
<b>Balance on Dec 31, 2002</b>		<b>1,341</b>
<b>Contributions</b>	Chief Patron	2,000
	Founders	2,500
	Donors & Patrons	3,700
	Organization Specific Contributions (to BPA)	2,450
	<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>10,650</b>
<b>Organization-Specific Disbursements</b>	To BPA, Ahmedabad	2,450
	<b>Total Organization Specific Disbursements</b>	<b>2,450</b>
<b>Project-Specific Disbursements</b>	NAB - GSB, Ahmedabad: Integrated Education Project	2,189
	Shakuntala Foundation, Kolar: Candle Making Project Phase I	1,568
	MPWA, Indore: Telephone Operator Training	1,974
	Vidnyanvahini, Pune: Educational Videos	1,398
	<b>Total Project-Specific Disbursements</b>	<b>7,129</b>
<b>Overhead Expenses (Absorbed by Founders)</b>	Wire Transfer for Money Sent to India	47
	India Commission Charges	17
	Site Registration Fee for www.ashraya.net	100
	Hosting Fee for ASHRAYA Web Site	99
	NJ Organization Certification Reinstatement Fee	300
	<b>Total Overhead Expenses</b>	<b>563</b>
<b>Balance on Dec 31, 2003</b>		<b>2,412</b>

#### IV. FUND DISBURSEMENTS FOR FY 2003

We have been increasing the mix of vocational training and income generation projects over the last two years. In FY2003, we funded one project each on rehabilitation, income generation, vocational training and education. Also, two projects under current consideration for FY2004 are on income generation and one on education. Over time, we would like to maintain a 60:40 ratio of projects on income generation/vocational training and education. The following are the projects we funded in FY 2003.

1. Integrated Education Project for NAB – Gujarat State Branch, Ahmedabad (\$2,189): We purchased and delivered physiotherapy equipment for the rehabilitation of the blind as a key component of integrating students into the common education program. Equipment included keratometer, slit lamp, visual drum and ophthalmoscope. All equipment were sourced and purchased in India by our Indian liaison.
2. Candle Making Project for Shakuntala Foundation, Kolar (\$1,568): This project will provide vocational training to 25 mentally challenged resident adults and provide them income generation opportunities in the long run. We purchased equipment used in the production of candles as well as raw materials (wax) for one year. Equipment included candle moulds, storage racks, heaters and vessels. All equipment were sourced and purchased in India by our Indian liaison.
3. Telephone Operator Training for MPWA, Indore (\$1,974): This project will train 20 visually challenged users per year so that they can be placed as telephone operators in telephone booths and/or exchanges. We are currently in the process of purchasing an ACCORD PBX key system with 25 ports which can be expanded to up to 500 ports as the project increases in scale over time.
4. Education Videos for Vidnyanvahini, Pune (\$1,398): This project involves providing science education to rural high school students in Maharashtra through educational videos. We purchased 5 educational videos in the US related to physics and chemistry. We have identified a video dubbing service in Mumbai and are currently getting these videos dubbed into Marathi. This project has very good scope for expansion into other branches of knowledge and other parts of India.

#### V. LEARNINGS

1. Defining the initial scope and a sensible growth path is critical to the success of vocational training and income generation projects. A case in point is the project we funded last year for telephone operator training.

The beneficiary organization, MPWA-Indore made an initial proposal to buy a PBX system with 500 ports for \$20,000 that would train up to 100 users at any given time. Given that the organization had never taken up this kind of project before, and also that they did not have government funding for operational expenses to simultaneously train 100 users; we worked with the organization over a 3 month period to reduce the scope and finally settled on a 25 port Key System with an expansion capability of up to 500 ports. We were thus able to bring down the capital expenditure to around \$2,000 and also ensure that the government funding would suffice for operational expenses involved in training 20 users. Once the project is proven to be successful in its incubation phase (6 months), we intend to fund the growth phase through collaboration with AIF.

2. Actively sourcing suppliers and equipment instead of handing over funds to beneficiary organizations continues to yield results. Our Indian liaison, Mr. Dattatreya was able to save close to \$500 in sourcing equipment for the NAB-GSB project (physiotherapy equipment for the visually challenged) and the MPWA-Indore project (Key System for telephone operator training)
3. Many a time, we find that funds chase problems that have not been fully formed! A case in point is the carpentry workshop project for Mobility India. We defined the scope of this project in the middle of last year, and it seemed very promising at the outset, with intent to train at least 4 users at any given time. However, by the time we were able to raise funds and were getting ready to buy the equipment, the initial set of identified users were no longer looking for help from Mobility India. To the credit of Mobility India, they decided to put the project on hold till they were able to identify beneficiaries and establish a long term need. We are planning to fund this project in Q1 2004 if the organization is able to meet its promises. This penny savings exercise would once again have not been possible if we followed the traditional approach of disbursing funds directly to organizations.

## VI. CHALLENGES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

### 1. Disbursement Related Challenges:

- a. Limitation in size, scope and type of projects we take up for funding (typically \$2,000-\$3,000).
- b. Inability to fund operational expenses to ensure that projects are successfully deployed
- c. Do not follow up on first year's funding to grow the project beyond initial scope, thus not being able to ensure sustainability and scale
- d. Inability to propose and execute projects that need a minimum scale to be successful (e.g. training the blind for medical transcriptions)
- e. Not been successful in taking a funded project and applying it in other contexts
- f. Help beneficiary organizations in identifying channels for selling their wares (applicable only to income generation projects)

If we are successful in forging a partnership with AIF, we would be able to meet these challenges as follows.

- a. Increase scope of projects to be taken up for funding
- b. Create a well-defined multi-year project growth path
- c. Consider innovative projects for funding that need significant long-term investments (i.e. influence beneficiary organizations to take up projects that are beyond their current scope)
- d. Fund operational expenses to ensure project success
- e. Take "seed" projects and apply it to larger contexts over time
- f. Provide channels for selling items produced by the beneficiaries in income generation projects

### 2. Organization Related Challenges:

- a. Raising funds from our private donors need to be sustained and increased to meet our disbursement goal. Our goal is to fund 6-8 projects per year of \$1,500-2,000 each, leading to a total funding requirement of \$9,000-\$16,000. Given last year's contributions of \$8,200 (from founders, the chief patron and other donors), we still have a fund deficit in the \$800-7,800 range. To help partially bridge the fund deficit, we would like to encourage our donors to set up donations through their companies and leverage matching contributions. If you need help in this regard, please do contact us.

- b. We continue to need volunteers who can help in targeting alternate sources of funds (e.g. internet-based advertising, direct marketing, companies run by Indian-Americans) and managing relationships with beneficiary organizations.
- c. We need donors and patrons who can visit our beneficiary organizations during their visits to India.
- d. Our Indian liaison is overworked and can't devote any more time than he is right now (he has a full time career) to visiting organizations and conducting due diligence. We would like donors and patrons to help us in identifying other liaisons who can work as volunteers in India.

## APPENDIX 1: ASHRAYA Supported Beneficiary Organizations

Name of Organization	Location	Beneficiary Focus	Program Focus	Annual Budget, Rs. Lakh	Number of Beneficiaries	
					Total	On Site
Blind People's Association	Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Blind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education (Residential, Integrated and CBR)</li> <li>Rehabilitation</li> <li>Vocational Training</li> <li>Hostel facilities</li> </ul>	380	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential: 226</li> <li>Education: 980</li> <li>CBR: 5750</li> <li>Talking Books: 250</li> </ul>	226
Mobility India	Bangalore, Karnataka	Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitation</li> <li>Income Generation</li> <li>Bridge Schools</li> </ul>	337	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rehabilitation: 10,000</li> <li>Bridge Schools: 200</li> <li>Income Gen: 20</li> </ul>	None
Madhya Pradesh Blind Welfare Association	Indore, Madhya Pradesh	Blind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education</li> <li>Rehabilitation</li> <li>Training &amp; Employment</li> <li>Low Vision Care</li> </ul>	124	172	160
Shakuntala Foundation	Kolar, Karnataka	Mental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical Camps</li> <li>Special Education</li> <li>Vocational Training</li> </ul>	5	25	25
Vidnyanvahini	Pune, Maharashtra	Rural Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Science Education through Mobile Lab</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural HS Students: 10,000</li> </ul>	None
NAB-Gujarat Branch	Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Blind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated education</li> <li>Placement &amp; Employment</li> <li>Braille Book Production</li> </ul>	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education: 1000</li> <li>Braille Books: 5,800</li> <li>Employment Placement: 120</li> </ul>	None