

IVCS**INDIAN VOLUNTEERS FOR
COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Registered Charity No. 285872

Patron: Robert Evans, Member of the European Parliament

Newsletter



GENERAL SECRETARY'S VISIT

After the success of last year's visit and my first extended stay for 22 years, I returned to Amarpurkashi in the first week of October, 2002 for a further three months. This definitely looks like becoming an annual event!

I settled in very quickly. It was much easier this time round as I knew the whole set-up for basic things like baths, food etc. I was soon back in a comfortable routine and feeling as though I had never left!

I quickly became very busy preparing the October issue of the IJRS, typing the entire journal up, correcting the articles that had been submitted and writing four of my own. As soon as that was done and at the printers, I started in earnest preparing the final report for the NLCB whose grant finished on 31st July 2002. I was very keen to submit a report that had a good chance of being accepted first time round, unlike the previous ones which had to be re-written as we had not given enough detail. I poured over all the health clinic registers, checking as well as compiling facts and figures and talked to all the staff involved in the clinic work. Some information was not available at APK and had to be sent from IVCS in London. Thank goodness

Kiran was able to do this for me. Finally, after two months of hard work, the report was sent off to London.

While doing this, I was also teaching every day. As soon as I arrived, Mukat handed over the responsibility for teaching English to the PGRRM students. This proved a challenging task as there was no syllabus or curriculum for the subject and no text book. Luckily, the nine students were all very keen and it was generally a pleasure to teach them. I spent quite a bit of time assessing their widely ranging abilities in English and based my lessons accordingly. I had to devote a lot of time every day to preparation and marking but the lessons were stimulating and the students soon began to make progress. They range from being barely able to communicate in English to being quite fluent so it is not easy to plan work to suit all of them.

Just before Christmas, I returned to London to spend 25th December with my children. Mukat decided to come as well for a short break. It is always good to get away from the project, even if just for a short while, as the trivia of day-to-day affairs, domestic quarrels and campus and village politics can get very tiresome after a while. Mukat was only able to spend just three weeks here as his brother-in-law died just after we arrived. His death was not unexpected as he had been suffering from tuberculosis for many years but it was a shock all the same. Mukat returned for the

funeral but I am here until the 16th February when I will go back for two more months to teach the PGRRM students, prepare the April 2003 issue of the IJRS and produce a publicity brochure for the project.

PGDRRM COURSE BEGINS!

At long last, the innovative Post-Graduate Diploma in Rural Resource Management course began at the end of August 2002. Nine students enrolled for the residential course, seven men and two women. Eight were graduates and one was a post-graduate. For those interested in reading more details of the first three months of the course, there is an excellent article in the October issue of the IJRS, written and researched by our September PVs, Penny and Lindsay.

As a completely new course, without any set textbooks or syllabus, the PGDRRM has involved a great deal of work but it has also been very interesting. The students have worked well and shown quite a keen interest in all aspects of the course. The practical work with village families has got off to a very promising start. Having two girls on the course has caused a few problems but fortunately nothing too serious. Most of the students are also living away from home for the first time and this new freedom and independence has caused some difficulties. Overall, however, the course has started well, the students have made definite progress and there are lots of exciting challenges ahead over the remaining 16 months.

DRIVE SCHEME

This year, enquiries for the DRIVE scheme have dropped to an all-time low. Terrorist activities such as the terrible disaster in Bali, plus the general fear the public have of possible future calamities, have meant that far fewer people are going to India than before. The Indian economy must be suffering very seriously as tourism had become a big foreign currency earner but now you see very few foreign faces in Delhi or any other popular tourist spots.

We had two PVs in September, both of whom did very well, followed by two more in October and then one in November. A second PV, due to come out in November, returned to the UK after some disastrous experiences in Delhi with lost luggage, being ripped off, given false information and – the last straw –

getting arrested as a suspected terrorist when collecting the lost luggage at Delhi airport!! Two more PVs are due to join in February.

Apart from the effects of international events, which we can do nothing about, our scheme is now facing the effects of increased competition. Ten years ago, our scheme was almost the only one that offered any sort of volunteering opportunity in India; it was also (and still is) the cheapest. Now, however, there are many similar schemes available to enterprising people, not only in India but in many African and South American countries. These schemes have the disadvantage of being much more expensive but the advantage of being highly structured and much more conventional in what they offer.

Nevertheless, the DRIVE scheme continues, even with reduced numbers, and hopefully, as international events are resolved, interest in the kind of opportunity we offer will revive to something like its former scale.

CONGRATULATIONS!

- To Kiran Patel (project visitor in 1999) and Pawan Kumar Singh of Amarpurkashi on their marriage on 27th July, 2002
- To Polly Robinson who is expecting her first baby at the beginning of May
- To Sue White on completing her B.A. degree and doing so well that she has been asked to convert to honours and then an M.A.

A.G.M.

The Twenty-first Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, 21st July, 2002. The Chairperson's Annual Report was distributed and some amendments recommended. The Treasurer's Report, in a new slimline version, was also presented. Five new members of the executive committee were elected and finally, the Field Director presented the Amarpurkashi Progress Report for 2001/2. Among matters discussed were the DRIVE scheme. Members suggested that overseas applicants be actively encouraged, especially now that there were not so many local applicants. One of the main concerns was accessibility to the web site. Members reported that unless our web address was known, it was almost impossible to access the

site. This was to be followed up at the next e.c. meeting.

E.C. MEETINGS

Two very successful meetings of the executive committee have been held since the AGM in July.

Sunday, 15th September, 2002

This meeting was well attended and we were particularly pleased to welcome two visitors, Fatema's mother and Daljit Bhogal who went out with DRIVE in October 2001.

Among issues discussed were: the pressing need to improve accessibility to our web site; updating the DRIVE leaflet with comments from past pvs; designing new posters; the new government Giftaid scheme; Kiran's success in getting £500 from her company, PWC with further expected from a private function; arrangements for the office from October to late December; and a brief introduction to the Art of Living, an organisation to which Fatema belongs and which she feels could help the project at APK.

Sunday, 12th January, 2003

Another well attended meeting, this one updated members on progress since the last e.c. meeting. There had unfortunately been no contact from Mark who was supposed to be investigating accessibility to our web site. However, other members were making progress with an updated DRIVE leaflet and new posters.

A wide range of matters were discussed.

- The private function that Kiran was involved with donated £1650 to APK, a truly magnificent amount. Fund-raising was very successful this year with another £1200 raised from just one Go-karting event.
- Kiran kept the office running during the General Secretary's visit to India and organised a mini-orientation with Mark's help.
- The Field Director presented a detailed report on APK covering August to December 2002. Members were especially interested to hear about the progress with the new Post-Graduate Diploma in Rural Resource Management.
- The DRIVE scheme was discussed, in particular the problems one of the November pvs had on arrival in Delhi and the unusually low number of enquiries this year.

- The project requested transfer of funds for the student hostel currently being built and three new computers and a printer. After a thorough discussion, it was agreed to widen the activities that the Children's Scholarship Fund could give money to. The CSF has done extremely well and currently has far more money than is needed just for scholarships and books. It was agreed that some money could legitimately be given for other educational projects such as the student hostel. The General Secretary will prepare a letter to be sent to all donors, updating them on the progress of this fund and explaining future proposals. If any donor is unhappy with our plans, they will of course be free to withdraw from the fund.
- The NLCB grant finished at the end of July 2002 and the final report was submitted in December. Our project co-ordinator at the NLCB accepted the report and agreed to our request for a six-month extension to allow us to use the underspend from the second year. We intend to produce a publicity brochure to use to recruit medical staff to the centre and for general publicity purposes.
- Shobhana Singh was co-opted onto the committee. With the termination of the NLCB grant, she is no longer employed by IVCS and has joined as an ordinary member.

IJRS and INTAF

The International Journal for Rural Studies is a twice-yearly publication with articles on a range of rural development issues. It is the official publication for INTAF (International Task Force for the Rural Poor), a network of organisations working worldwide in the field of rural development.

Subscription to the journal is normally £20 a year, which includes membership of INTAF. However, there is a concessional rate for IVCS members of £15 a year. Cheques should be made payable to INTAF.

Articles in the October 2002 issue included "Education and Economic Development in India", "A Sociological Study of Urban Impact on a Village of Eastern U.P.", "A

Grass-Roots Perspective on Aid” and “An Experiment in Education”. Back copies are also available for £5 an issue.

INTAF holds a tri-ennial international conference on topical issues in rural development. The last one was held at Konch in south-west U.P., India. The next will be held in London in July 2005. Please make a note in your diaries! Offers of help with the organisation, accommodation etc. will be most welcome.

BOOK REVIEW

“Unheard Voices” by Harsh Mander

This very readable book is a collection of true short stories about the dispossessed in India and their struggle for justice and a better life. Harsh Mander, who currently works as Director of Action Aid, India, was formerly a sub-divisional magistrate (an important local government post) and many of the stories are from his own experiences at that time.

The book presents many different types of injustice and discrimination, from Union Carbide's criminal carelessness to casteism within a small village community. It tells of the vulnerability and powerlessness of the poor. However, it also celebrates the courage and endurance of certain individuals who have struggled against their circumstances, and of the goodwill of those who have helped them. The stories are presented from the point of view of the poor people themselves: their "unheard voices".

The book is published by Penguin Books India (price Rs 250), and you can order it online in the UK from the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton. Go to the website <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/> and then select “bookshop”. (Janet Wilson)

RECIPE

GREENS/SPINACH, a la APK

Ingredients

1 kg fresh or frozen spinach/greens/kale
2 pieces garlic
3 small green chillies
1 large onion
1 teaspoon whole cumin seeds
a little cooking oil
salt

Method

Chop the green chillies as finely as you can. Press or chop the garlic very fine. Peel and chop the onion. Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan. When hot, add the cumin seeds and then the garlic and chillies. Lower the heat and add the onion. Stir well and leave to fry.

Wash the greens or spinach thoroughly, if using fresh. Chop as finely as you can.

When the onion is transparent and beginning to soften, add the fresh or frozen spinach and about a teaspoon of salt (or to taste). Stir very well. Turn the heat up for five minutes.

Stir again, keep the heat at medium, and leave to cook. It is not necessary to cover the pan. Stir every now and then. If a lot of water accumulates, turn the heat up to evaporate it. The final dish should be quite dry.

This is the most delicious way I know to cook greens and spinach.

FUTURE EVENTS

- Go-karting at Streatham Circuit in April/May. Contact Nayan at nayan.shukla@bt.com if you are interested
- Twenty-second A.G.M. on Sunday, 20th July, 2003 at 12 noon
- INTAF International Conference will be held in London in July 2005

IVCS MEMBERSHIP

Please remember to renew your membership – either £15 per annum or £50 Life.

