

IVCS**INDIAN VOLUNTEERS FOR
COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Registered Charity No. 285872

Patron: Robert Evans, Member of the European Parliament

Newsletter



EXPERIENCE RURAL INDIA

So far, this has been a quiet but interesting year for our project visitors' scheme. In September we had a very welcome return visit from Greg Parker (pv from Feb. 2006) who delighted us all with his natural ebullience and infectious enthusiasm. Greg used his I.T. and training skills to give valuable assistance to the project.

Later that month, we had just one pv, a young woman from Northern Ireland, who settled in very well and spent all but a couple of days of her short time in India at APK.

In October, we had four pvs from IVCS and one from Affp. The IVCS pvs included one from Cambridge, one from Slovakia and two from Spain. They assisted in the primary school and the conversational English course for computer students.

Dial Sharma, the Affp volunteer, was a retired primary school teacher, originally from the Punjab. Fortunately, he spoke fluent Hindi and proved to be a very sociable

and conscientious volunteer who worked very hard with the primary school teachers. We were sorry to see him go.

In November, we only had one young man from Yorkshire who assisted in the primary school. However, we look forward to welcoming six pvs in January and four or five in March.

One of the changes ushered in at our September committee meeting was the decision to drop the name 'DRIVE', which members felt did not really mean anything and was not benefiting us in any way. Our website now simply refers to 'the scheme'.

NEW ORIENTATION FILM

In 1995, Nayan Shukla, pv from 1988 and IVCS Chairman, went to APK and made a film which we were using very successfully in orientations ever since.

However, a great deal has changed in the last 13 years and the film is now very out-of-date. We had been trying for the last few years to find someone ready and able to make a new film but none of our pvs or anyone else we knew was interested in this task and we could not afford to pay a professional film-maker.

Whenever a prospective pv was interviewed, the need for a new film was mentioned just in case anyone was interested in taking this on. Edward Symonds, who joined the October group, emailed me that he had an American friend, Tom, who made short publicity films for NGOs in developing countries; he offered to put us in touch. Tom was happy to make a new orientation film for us in return for board and lodging and essentials like film tapes. This was an opportunity too good to turn down!!

Tom arrived with the October pvs and spent one month working on the film. He had all the necessary equipment with him and dedicated himself to the task in hand. The end result is a brand new, up-to-date orientation film which has already been shown to prospective pvs and received very positive responses. Tom also took still photos of the campus and village which we intend to use on our websites. He has even made a short version of the film and put it on YouTube.

We owe Tom our most heartfelt thanks for all his unstinting efforts.

BABY NEWS!

- Congratulations to Peggy Melmoth (nee Fussell), pv from November 2005, on the birth of a beautiful baby girl, Rosa Emily, on 12th October 2007.
- Congratulations to Kiran Rawal (nee Patel), pv from October 1999, on the birth of her second child, a lovely baby girl, sister for Dylan, on 29th January 2008.

GENERAL NEWS

- Rajni, ex-pv co-ordinator, now married and living in Southall, has settled into life in Britain very successfully and is now working part-time in the Hounslow branch of Primark.
- Pawan, originally from APK and now married to ex-pv Kiran, is currently training to be a Corgi-registered gas fitter. He plans eventually to have

his own business as a plumber and gas fitter.

- Deepak Paretha, originally from Rajasthan, India and married to Fatema (nee Jiwajee, pv from March 2002), an architect now working for London Underground, recently went to India to do a short course in *Vasto Shastra*, the traditional Indian system of architecture, what one might call an Indian version of *Feng Sui*.

HEALTH CARE FUND UPDATE

Last year, our fund-raising efforts for the HCF raised nearly £4000 out of an estimated £6000 needed to build an extension to the existing clinic so that, in future, all cataract operations could be carried out at APK which would enable us to look after patients properly from start to finish and remove the necessity of a bumpy journey to the community hospital in Bilari.

We also have plans to get qualified doctors from the nearby towns to volunteer one or more days a month to examine villagers and advise/prescribe treatment.

At the end of July, the money raised was taken to India and building began. However, as is often the case, costs had been underestimated and money ran out in November. Even so, the basic extension has been constructed. What remains to be done includes fitting doors and windows and electricity, part-tiling of the walls and laying the flooring. We also need funds to buy the necessary medical equipment.

By Christmas, a further £1700 was received in donations which will be used to complete the building. This spring and summer all our efforts will be focused on raising around £1500 for medical equipment.

We would especially like to acknowledge Verena (Vreny) Samuel, pv from January 2001, and her family for their wholehearted support and unstinting generosity which has given the Health Care Fund a tremendous boost.

EYE CAMP

From 28th November until 1st December, 2007 we held a free eye-camp. This was made possible because of the generous donation from a U.K. organisation which our Affp volunteer, Dial Sharma, successfully applied to. 336 villagers came to have their eyes examined. Many of them received free medicine for their ailments.

33 patients were selected for cataract operations. They were taken to the community hospital in Bilari for this purpose but returned to APK for convalescence and after-care.

PGRRM

This course in Rural Resource Management has always been a difficult one to recruit students for. In a country where education still follows the outdated system of learning notes by heart and reproducing them in the exam, any course which required students to attend lectures regularly, hand in homework, apply analytical skills and carry out field research was bound to have a hard time.

There is no question that the course is a very good one. All the students from the first batch have done brilliantly. Subsequent batches have not been quite so successful but nevertheless, those who complete the course have benefited significantly from it.

Last year, however, no one applied to do this course. We have decided to give the PGRRM one more year and then, if there are still no applicants, we will close the course.

KOPAL II

In our Summer 2007 newsletter, we reported on a programme called KOPAL II which is funded by Plan International, an American organisation.

KOPAL II has two aims: to raise awareness of the evils of female foeticide and to encourage people to register births and deaths.

In November 2007, I attended a number of meetings and two demonstration marches organised by our KOPAL II co-ordinator, Adil Hussein. The marches, one in Bilari and one in Moradabad, were very successful and widely reported in local newspapers. In one of the meetings, awards were given by the local Lions' Club, recognising the work done by those supporting the programme.

I also attended another meeting of Moradabad's women doctors, similar to the one I attended last year.

This time, these women could not deny that ultrasound technology is being flagrantly misused to detect the baby's sex and, if female, abort the foetus. Once again, they insisted that no qualified doctor in Moradabad would do or ever had done any such thing. They blamed the horrific figures on quack doctors.

Nevertheless, the figures speak for themselves. In Moradabad district, there are 870 girls for every 1000 boys while in parts of the Punjab, there are only 700 girls for every 1000 boys.

The root cause – the dowry system - remains unresolved.

CONFERENCES

- In November 2007, Mukat and I were fortunate enough to be invited to a conference in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. The theme was Satyagraha (non-violence) to mark 60 years since Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. The chief guest and speaker at the opening ceremony was the Dalai Lama who charmed everyone with his warm personality.
- At the beginning of March 2008, there will be a two-day conference in Bihar for members of INTAF (International Task Force for the Rural Poor).
- In mid-April, there will be a meeting of INTAF convenors in Delhi.

BOOKS TO READ

If you haven't already read the 2006 winner of the Man Booker prize, then you have a treat in store.

"The Inheritance of Loss" by Kiran Desai is a brilliant novel, full of delightful touches, wry humour and sharp observations. Kiran Desai's style is very different from that of her mother, well-known writer, Anita Desai. If she continues to produce novels of this calibre, she will certainly outshine her mum!!

POEM

Before Peggy Melmoth (nee Fussell), pv from November 2005, left India, she wrote the following poem about her experiences.

A Day at APK

Cold sunrise, yoga, shawls,
Mandala classroom walls,
Breathing, concentration,
Pranayama, meditation,
Nibu garum pani hai?
Semolina, sunny day,
Mud-brick oven heating water,
Must remember wear *dupatta*,
Bucket washing clothes and wring
It out and tie with string
To stop the monkeys stealing them.
Say *Namaste* to Ian again.
Assembled children, sing and pray,
School bell starts the teaching day.
Greeting children, meeting teachers,
Learning Hindi words for creatures.
English teacher going to Delhi
For a marriage celebration.
Would we teach the next three days
Of his English conversation?
Lalaji makes lunch for all,
Soneil serves it with a smile.
Sono brings the spicy veg,
Mohit brings chapatti bread.
After lunch in yard below,
School boys counting *ek* and *do*,
Exercise and stand in lines,
Repeat the routine several times.
Hindi lesson starts at four,
Mukesh will teach the Pvs more.
Your father's name, name of your brother?
After forty-two thalis I can't eat another!
At the dance competition we are 'visiting celebrities',
At the yoga competition we are 'foreign dignitaries',

And introduced to the crowd as 'distinguished personalities'.

Off to Bareilly to visit some galleries,
Graduate artists give a guided tour,
We join them for a picnic on the gallery floor.
We march with two thousand students to the paper mill and back again

To raise awareness for the Eradicate Polio Campaign.

Four men on an elephant just passing through

Need a place for the night, the schoolyard will do.

Discussion at six with Babuji,
Development and poverty.

But what did we learn at APK?

Hum India ko piyar kurte hain!

(We love India.)

COMING EVENTS

- Orientation for prospective pvs on Saturday 2nd February
- Next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held at the IVCS office on Sunday, 18th May 2008 at 3 pm. All members are welcome, especially those interested in becoming a trustee.
- The summer meeting of the Executive Committee will be held at the IVCS office on Sunday, 27th July at 3 pm.
- The A.G.M. (Annual General Meeting) of IVCS will be held at the IVCS office on Sunday, 21st September at 12 noon. All members are most welcome. Lunch is provided.

