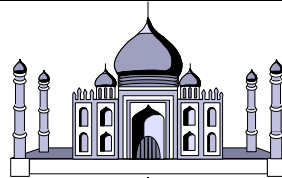




Patron: Robert Evans, Member of the European Parliament

Newsletter



INTAF WORLD CONFERENCE

Preparations are currently in full swing for the Sixth World Conference of INTAF (International Task Force for the Rural Poor) which will take place in London on 2nd and 3rd July, 2005. The theme of the conference is "Investing in the Rural Poor".

Speakers include Lord Dholakia, Robert Evans (our patron and MEP), Gareth Thomas (our local MP), Meera Tiwari from the University of East London and Andrew Sumner from South Bank University.

Applications have been received from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria and Armenia and we are now waiting to hear how many applicants have been successful in getting visas for the UK.

Anyone interested in attending the conference should contact Jyoti by email (jan_singh2002@yahoo.co.uk) before 20th June .

DRIVE

This was a very successful year for the DRIVE scheme. In 2003/4 we had 30 pvs but

this year there were 39 project visitors who went out to Amarpurkashi for an orientation into rural life and development work. As usual, the number of women far exceeded the number of men (30 women and 9 men)! This year was a truly international one too, with pvs from Canada, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Argentina and Zimbabwe. Five of the six batches did extremely well, with just one batch having difficulty settling in. Overall, there were no major problems and people found the experience both rewarding and enjoyable.

Among the highlights of the DRIVE scheme were the two major festivals, Diwali and Holi. At Diwali, pvs were taken around the village in the evening to see the beautiful lamps shining in the dark, while at the end of March, pvs returned to Amarpurkashi especially for Holi festival and had great fun dousing each other and project staff with brightly coloured water. They also enjoyed *gujiyas*, the sweet pastries only made at Holi while male pvs joined the villagers in the vigorous, rhythmic folk Holi dances of the region.

Tasks that pvs undertook included conversational English sessions with the college students, writing articles for the

journal, painting murals on the classroom walls, preparing teaching aids for the primary school, an artist's impression of the campus site and a litter campaign. October pvs also assisted in the Science Fair and the INTAF preliminary conference meeting.

Of all the tasks that pvs undertake, the most beneficial for local people is English conversation. Where pvs work with college students at Amarpurkashi on a one-to-one basis, there is some quite astonishing progress. From September 2005, we hope to make the PGRRM course residential again, and this will open up more opportunities for pvs to interact with local students. It is wonderful to see young men and women who initially can hardly string three words of English together, after a few weeks talking enthusiastically and quite fluently, if not always grammatically, with project visitors.

AMARPURKASHI NEWS

- The new junior high school in Jafarpur opened in July 2004 with 110 students and 4 teachers. IVCS donated £1500 pounds to build a permanent classroom which is currently under construction. October pvs thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the school and the opportunity to speak to the students.
- Sponsored by IVCS' Rural Development Fund, training for the Self-Help Group scheme began in September '04. By March '05, six batches had been trained in confidence-building and dealing with bank and government officials.
- On 31st Oct. and 1st November, Amarpurkashi hosted a PrepCom meeting for all prospective conference delegates and India INTAF members. Participants discussed the conference theme and agreed on a common declaration and recommendations to be presented to the conference in London.
- In November, the General Secretary and Field Director were invited to village Karia Mayee to unveil a memorial at a new primary school, founded by Munna Singh, science teacher at the Amarpurkashi

Intercollege. He built the school and memorial in memory of his wife, who died last year after a long illness.

- In the first week of February, the primary school teachers attended a three-day training session.
- In the last week of February, India INTAF members went to Bihar to participate in a three-day conference on rural poverty.
- From 16th to 21st March, a free eye-camp, sponsored by a UK donor, was held at Amarpurkashi. Over 400 villagers were examined by an eye doctor from Moradabad and given free medicines. 38 had successful cataract operations.
- On Sunday, 20th March, pvs were taken to Budaun to attend a cultural show which proved an extraordinary experience for all concerned.
- From 1st to 3rd April, Amarpurkashi hosted a visit from students of the Global Studies Programme run by Jawarhalal Nehru University in Delhi. Under this unique programme, students of 15 different nationalities were studying in three countries – India, South Africa and Germany. At Amarpurkashi, they were able to complete an essential area of primary research for their social science projects.
- In mid-April, the General Secretary and Field Director were invited to be resource persons for an international workshop on sustainability held at the Dehra Dun Institute of Technology.

E.C. MEETINGS

The first E.C. meeting for 2005 was held on 9th January. The Field Director presented a mid-year report from Amarpurkashi as well as a detailed account of the INTAF conference prepcom meeting.

The next E.C. meeting was held on 22nd May. The Field Director gave an account of money transferred to Amarpurkashi in 2004/5 and presented an estimate of money needed for 2005/6. Members discussed the IVCS and PGRRM websites and fund-raising. One exciting piece of news was that Pushpa, pv co-

ordinator at Amarpurkashi, has been successful in getting a visa to study in London for a year.

At the AGM in July, several vacancies will come up on the committee when members' terms of office expire. If you live in or near London and would like to be on the executive committee, please contact Jyoti. The committee meets three times a year and is the key body behind all our activities.

LOCAL INTAF MEETNG

Following the EC meeting on 22nd May, there was an informal meeting of members assisting with the arrangements and preparations for the conference.

Those present discussed and finalised the menus for both days and delegated various tasks to willing helpers. A preliminary visit will be paid to the conference venue early in June.

PGRRM COURSE AND WEBSITE

There are many post-graduate courses in international development and rural studies at universities in the UK but most of them are either totally academic or any practical fieldwork is based in local areas.

The PGRRM offered at Gramodaya College and Research Institute, Amarpurkashi gives overseas students an exceptional opportunity to study both the academic theories of rural development and in particular, resource management, and to carry out on-the-spot field work and research with poor families in the area. To get round the problem of language, students from abroad will be paired with local students for all practical work. An important part of the course includes projects based on the problems of selected rural families and their possible solutions.

The Post-Graduate Diploma in Rural Resource Management is open to international students from September 2005. A website has been set up at www.villageindia.org to publicise the course. We would welcome feedback from IVCS members on the general layout, presentation and content of the site. Our IVCS website is

very successful and we get excellent and very positive feedback from those who visit it. It also comes up on the first page of all searches for volunteering in India. The PGRRM website has not yet reached that stage; it needs a lot of work, both on the site itself and on getting it onto the search engines. Any help would be most welcome.

CONGRATULATIONS !

We are pleased to announce

- the birth of Edward Thomas, baby brother for Beatrice and son for Polly Robinson (nee Abbott), pv in January 1995
- the engagement of Mark Rochester, pv in September 2003 and his wedding this summer in Israel.

HEARTFELT THANKS!

Polly Robinson (nee Abbott) joined the committee on her return from India in 1995 and has worked tirelessly for IVCS ever since, attending committee meetings, running orientations and preparing DRIVE leaflets, to mention only a few of the jobs she has done. Her term of office expires in July and with a toddler and a new baby and a move to St Albans, she has decided not to continue on the committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our most sincere thanks to her for her support and hard work and wish her and her family all the best for the future.

SCHOLARSHIP SUCCESS

Over the last eight months, Pushpa, pv coordinator at Amarpurkashi, has been working on her plans to come to London to study, improve her English and see a bit of the world. Samta Patel, pv from September 2004, encouraged and supported her in this and indeed, without Samta's tireless efforts and generous help, Pushpa's dream could not have come true.

IVCS assisted by offering her a scholarship, the money for which came from donations from past pvs who wanted to help Pushpa. In May, a visa was issued and Pushpa will now fly to London on 18th July. She will do a

short summer course in English in central London and then join Lambeth College in September for a year-long course in computing.

Many thanks to all those who contributed to her scholarship and made this possible. If you would like to contact Pushpa, please email her at pushpa_singh90@yahoo.com

IJRS

The International Journal of Rural Studies is published twice a year from Amarpurkashi. Annual subscription to the journal is £20 and past issues can be obtained at £5 per copy.

In the Oct./Nov '04 issue, articles included:

- *Working with the Rural Poor – report of a project in Orissa*
- *A detailed account of the PrepCom meeting held at APK and the declaration and recommendations*
- *Environmental Education*
- *Perspectives on APK by project visitors*
- *Biogas*

In the April 2005 issue, articles included:

- *Cultural Revival, by the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize*
- *Agrarian Change and Rural Poverty in Pakistan in 1990s*
- *Indian Agriculture towards a New Culture*
- *The Truth about Globalisation*

FILM REVIEW

In January 2005, Mukat, Jyoti and Shobhana Singh went to see “Swadesh – we, the people” in their local cinema. This proved to be a definite cut above the usual Bollywood fare and Shobhana, who does not normally watch Indian films, found it very enjoyable and worthwhile.

Shahrukh Khan plays the hero, a young man who migrated to the USA and worked there as a space engineer for NASA. He decides to pay a short visit to India and in particular to his childhood *ayah* or nanny, whom he remembers with great fondness. His aim is to persuade her to come with him back to the States where she can live her remaining years in comfort.

He hires a campervan to go to her village and stays in the van to give himself ‘a bit of space’. But he soon becomes involved in the villagers’ lives. What he finds is that his former nanny is living a happy and fulfilling life and none of the villagers wants her to leave. Neither does she. She is the motivational force behind the villagers’ efforts to develop their local area.

Eventually, Shahrukh Khan decides to give up his western lifestyle and stay in the village and work with the villagers. There is, of course, a love interest in the form of a pretty teacher.

The film is lively, well-directed and manages to consider a serious issue in an entertaining way.

FUND-RAISING

- a most enjoyable rounders event in August 2004 raised £150
- go-karting, as exciting and competitive as always, raised £1350 in October 2004
- a quiz night in January 2005 raised £145 for the Tsunami appeal

COMING EVENTS

- INTAF conference on 2nd and 3rd July
- Annual General Meeting of IVCS on Sunday, 10th July at 12 noon.
- Orientation on Saturday, 23rd July from 2.00 until 6.00 pm
- Rounders in August – date to be confirmed
- Orientation on Saturday, 3rd September from 2.00 until 6.00 pm
- Orientation on Saturday, 1st October from 2.00 until 6.00 pm

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

Annual membership of IVCS is still only £15 and Life membership is a mere £50!

It is easy to forget about renewing your membership but IVCS relies on your continued support. Please ensure that your membership is up-to-date or simply become a Life member.

