

## How Can You Help?

This large movement cannot be built up without small contributions from individuals like you. There are many ways you can help...

- ❑ **Donate Money for Projects:** The cost of all our programs put together comes to just \$10/month/village. This is a small amount. But we are working in 2000 villages and are expanding now to 3000 villages - so we need a total of \$30,000 each month! Your donation will help us reach out to the poorest villages. *Even small donations make a big difference.* You can adopt a block of 30 villages and contribute to its development or you can adopt a specific project (from the ones listed earlier) to which you can contribute.
- ❑ **Donate to Disha Revolving Fund:** This money will be used to give loans to poor women and to start village enterprises. You can also donate money for setting up the *Eureka Books Seed Capital*.
- ❑ **Non-monetary support:** You can adopt a project or a block. Visit the program and follow it up. You can collect and develop materials. Below are just a few ways in which you can help:
  - Send used computer parts to set up village computer centers.
  - *Collect and send educational materials:* science and health posters, CDs and videos that can be used in schools, science experiments, toys for children, camera for activists, books for village, block and NGO libraries. All these are extremely useful.
  - *You can develop materials yourself* – 2 page science and health pamphlets, posters, educational videos, software for villages, stories for libraries, and experiments for the low cost labs. These will require sustained work – but can be very useful and rewarding.
- ❑ **Visit villages and volunteer for some time:** If you can take off sometime and visit our villages, you can help in many different ways and also get to know the people and programs better. You can also contact friends in India to visit and volunteer.

## Contact Information

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## Hundred Block Program

Two years ago, AID and the People's Science Movement jointly launched the Hundred Block Program (HBP) - an ambitious program for integrated block development. The aim was to reach projects in education, health, literacy, women's empowerment and livelihood to several thousand villages spread over 100 blocks.

Today, in 1000 villages in Tamilnadu and 800 villages in Bihar, we have a strong intervention in children and women's health, and micro-credit (women's savings groups). In 200 villages in Tamilnadu we work on primary education. In 65 schools and slums in Chennai we have a science education intervention. In 20 villages, we have computer education and information centers. We recently started 1500 low cost village libraries all over Tamilnadu.

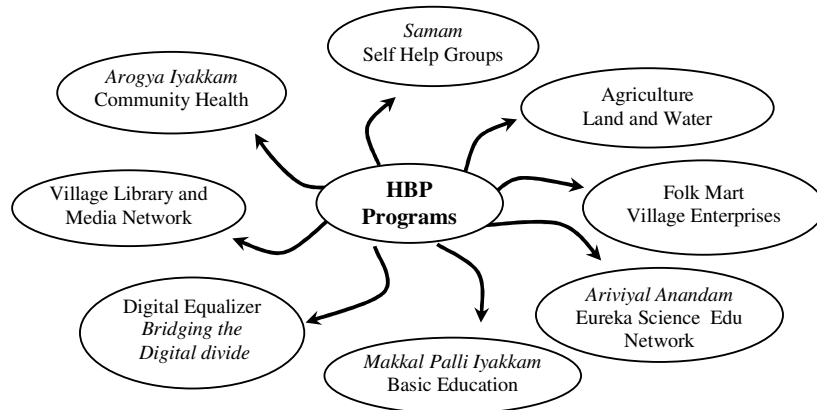
The HBP builds on an existing village volunteer base built up by the People's Science Movements. The PSM is a network of more than 30 statewide organizations. Each state organization (like the Tamilnadu Science Forum or Bihar Gyan Vigyan Samithi) works in several hundred villages. The PSM has a long history of social mobilization in villages and slums all over India. They organized the successful Mass Literacy Campaigns that drew in millions of volunteers and learners from the poorest sections in villages all over India.

The early 1990s saw the emergence of a number of young NRI organizations in the US – Association for India's Development (AID), Asha for Education, Vibha, India Literacy Project (ILP). Led by students and young professionals, these organizations quickly expanded all over the US – raising funds and supporting projects in education, health and development in India. During the late 1990s, several volunteers from this group returned to work with people's movements in India.

**The HBP is the result of a unique collaboration has emerged between the People's Science Movements and these NRI development groups – and it consciously builds on the strengths of both the organizations.**

## The Main Projects under the HBP

The HBP has 8 different program categories – as shown below.



## Basic Primary Education Intervention

*The main aim here is to ensure all children go to school, learn well and do not drop out and to improve the quality of government schools.*

**Makkal Palli Iyakkam (People's School Movement):** A central fact of our education system is that more than half the children in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> std cannot read or write! We organize support centers run by village volunteers that provide these children with individual attention – helping them read and write, add and subtract. As part of the program we also do a host of in-school activities to improve quality of education through activity based teaching techniques. We also try to build community support for the school by organizing a number of community education activities – including libraries, adult literacy, classes, shows, melas and games for adults and children, magic shows, slide shows and health classes. *With financial help from Vibha, Asha and AID, this program is running today in 250 villages and slums.*

**Teacher's Network:** Improving education cannot be done without teachers. The teacher's network brings together interested teachers, provides a platform to share experiences and to discuss pedagogical and

lessons that we have learnt from our projects. Most materials are produced for our programs. But they can also be sold to a larger audience – to schools, to NGOs and to lay people. To produce these materials systematically we have set up Eureka Books – an independent unit that produces materials, finances the production and recovers it through sales. We are raising a seed rotating capital that can help us scale up this unit.

**Disha Foundation:** As our work expands, we realize that there are many projects that need loans and not grants – for example loans to women's self help groups, to village enterprise projects, to village volunteers for emergencies, etc. Disha Foundation has been set up for this purpose – people deposit money (at zero or low interest) or make revolving fund donation. This money is loaned for specific projects and after recovery is reused for new projects. The money is also loaned to self help groups and the interest from the loan used to support specified projects.

**People's University:** We train village volunteers on health, education and science education. What our volunteers have learnt by doing programs is often much better knowledge and understanding than is provided by college and diploma courses. We also train many of our volunteers in presentation skills, in computer skills, web design, DTP, photography and poster designs, etc. We are now setting up an Institute that offers a low cost but good quality Diploma course with both theory and practice.

## Philosophy of the HBP

### *Role of Campaigns, Studies and Policy intervention*

We work on both constructive action and agitational campaigns that fight to change state policy and action. In the area of health we organized a large campaign on the impact of globalization on the health of the poor. We have been fighting at the village level for better PHCs. In education, we are running campaigns against communal textbooks and against corporal punishment in schools. We are running public campaigns on water issues, against nuclear weapons, against war and against anti-poor economic policies. Demonstrating good models for development go hand in hand with struggles against wrong policies and actions. Constructive action and agitational campaigns are two sides of the HBP coin.

## **Agriculture, Land and Water**

*The aim is to make agriculture for the poor peasant remunerative – by cutting down input costs and building village institutional structures that make agriculture a more collective operation.*

Our Pondicherry group (CERD) has formed Kanjiyam - a network of farmers who experiment with agriculture practices in a part of their farms. The aim is to shift to organic farming without causing an intermediate loss to the farmer. We are also working in 20 villages on irrigation tank rehabilitation. In Ramnad, we are developing low cost technologies for tank management. In Sedapatti we have a small wasteland development project which combines equity with technology. A small external investment in infrastructure and revolving fund for wages is used to get landless women to work on rehabilitating wastelands – building assets for the poorest families. Our work in agriculture is still in the early stages.

## **HBP – Building Systems and Structures**

The HBP is not just another project. The HBP is building a system that can systematically generate a lot of good quality projects. These projects piggyback on the voluntary spirit of a people's movement and in their turn help the movement grow. To understand the HBP, it is not enough to understand the projects. One must also look at the structures being set up.

***HBP State Coordination Centers:*** In Chennai we now have a state team with fulltime state project coordinators and a large number of part-time volunteers who help this team. This team works on project conceptualization, planning the implementation, training, developing materials, field visits and monitoring and volunteer motivation. This team is now critical to the HBP in Tamilnadu. Such a team in each state can not only help initiate HBP kind of a program, but can also network with other organizations working and provide them with support and direction.

***Eureka Books:*** We are developing a host of materials for primary and science education, village libraries and health – books, videos, pamphlets, slides, children's progressive comics, experiment kits, etc. Apart from these, we are also publishing books and materials that bring out the key

academic questions. The network also trains teachers in activity based teaching methods. *About 600 teachers are part of this network today.*

***Other programs:*** We are running 4 model activity based schools – to demonstrate what can be done even within a lot of financial constraints. We are running a few non-formal education centers for working children in Sivakasi and Kanchipuram. We are also producing low cost educational materials for use in schools.

## **Children and Women's Health**

*The main aim here is to bring about a significant and measurable change in the health status of women and children and to improve the utilization and quality of government health services.*

***Arogya Iyakkam (Community Health Movement):*** This program identifies, motivates and trains a village volunteer (typically an 8<sup>th</sup> std drop-out from a very poor family) to go house to house counseling mothers and pregnant women on preventive and curative health – advising on feeding, nutrition, delivery care, and simple illnesses like ARI, diarrhea, worms and primary complex. This counseling is very intensive and the activist spends 1 hour with each family trying to understand the nitty gritty of feeding patterns, illness history and social causes leading to malnutrition and ill-health in the family. Analyzing these multiple factors, the activist provides her critical and individualized advice for the child or the pregnant woman. Studies showed that we are able to significantly improve the nutrition status of 30% of children through our work. UNICEF judged this as one of the ten best programs in the world. The village activist also pressurizes the Govt health staff to deliver their services – like immunization, Vit A syrup, iron tablets, deworming, etc. *With financial support from AID, this program is today running in 900 villages in 23 blocks Tamilnadu and 800 villages in 14 blocks in Bihar and Jharkand.*

We have recently also started a more holistic program on women's health – providing curative and preventive help to women. As part of this program we are forming adolescent girl groups in villages and schools and organizing regular classes for them on understanding their body, their health and providing life skills training.

**People's Health Movement:** To bring about larger changes in the public health system, a number of NGOs came together in 2000 to form the People's Health Movement. The PHM struggles for specific health policy changes and monitors government primary health centers (PHC watch) and private health providers. On one hand the Government is pushed to improve services and provisioning and on the other the community and local health staff is mobilized to improve utilization of existing services.

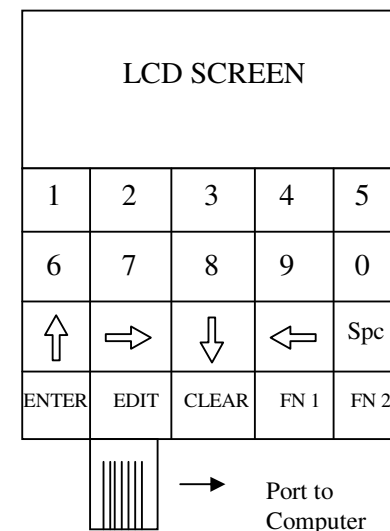
### Women's Empowerment and Self Help Groups

*The main aim is to organize women – through SHGs and adolescent groups – and to empower them economically, socially and politically.*

**Women's Self Help Groups:** A sad fact of rural life is that most poor women (and men) can only access loans at an interest rate of 60%-120% per annum! Once they face an emergency where they are forced to borrow at such exorbitant rates, they are forever repaying the interest and remain in debt. SHGs help poor women cope in poverty – helping them with access to loans at much lower interest rates and also offering them a safe avenue to save money. Many good NGOs today have started women's SHGs. Our groups in addition are also completely self-reliant right from start. 20 women form a group, save and give out their savings as loans to group members at an interest of 24%. Half of this interest is used to pay the women an interest of 12% on their savings and the other half is used to run the SHG network. There is no need for external funding! Our SHGs are more than just a monetary support system – they help educate the women, provide health awareness and support for victims of domestic violence. In many of our groups, women have stopped wife beating, have thrown out illicit liquor sellers, started libraries and literacy projects and fought with government PHCs for better services. *Today we have 4000 SHGs in Tamilnadu and a few hundred SHGs in Bihar. This helps us reach out to one lakh poor women – providing them basic savings and credit support and also literacy and educational support!*

**Samam Microcredit:** Our SHGs rotate their own savings and help each other in need. But the need for loans is much higher. Through the Samam Microcredit System, we collect revolving fund donations and zero-interest loans from friends and also get bank loans. This money is given as loans

developing an electronic data card. This calculator sized object has no processing ability, and has a small memory with a calculator type input key board. A 2 line LCD displays the name of the woman and field being entered – the group coordinator enters the amount and keeps moving down. Once the village data is entered, she takes it to the district office where the card is connected to a computer and the data downloaded. Our volunteers from IIT have made a prototype and are working on finalizing this product. The cost of this card comes to only Rs. 500 and there are many applications that can use this.



### Village Enterprises and Folk Mart

*To help women and unemployed youth to start small enterprises and to establish a good marketing network for village products.*

**Block Enterprise Network:** Our Deepam team in Madurai has created in Sedapatti an enterprise network that now has more than 360 enterprises running successfully - agri-based enterprises, soap and washing powder, terracotta, etc. The project involved market studies, identifying people with potential, training them, arranging bank loans, organizing marketing and a lot of management and handholding. Only with such dedicated support, does it seem possible to create an enterprise network.

**Folk Mart:** In Chennai we have created a marketing team that sells products made in villages and by self help group women. To run these marketing centers self reliantly, we combine a large portfolio of products – combining village products with books and other educational materials.

**Other programs:** We have started an email network for teachers to ask questions and get answers from resource persons across the world. We are also setting up a post card based system for teachers without email access. We hope to expand this network to a larger teachers network for teachers to share experiences and ideas. We also have a material production group that is developing science videos, slides, posters, dialogue books, toys, science magazines, concepts cards etc.

## Digital Equalizer

*The aim is to develop low cost technologies and structures that help the poor and weak utilize the electronics, computer and IT revolution.*

**Ganini:** We are running 20 village level computer education centers. These centers run on an entrepreneur model – providing jobs to unemployed youth and also providing computer education in rural areas. The course is designed in the local language and local teachers are trained. Collecting used computer parts from volunteers and companies, assembling these into functioning computers has been the key in starting these centers and we need to do this more systematically. We have also developed some software and information packages for use in these centers. There are support software for the health and savings program and information packages on agriculture, health, education, bank schemes, etc which local people can use.

**Electronic Data Cards:** There are data entry needs in a village that one can easily identify. For example, let's consider our own Self Help Groups in Kanyakumari. There are 2000 groups here. Each month the women save Rs.20-30, they take loans and repay the installment and interest. They also take bank loans. The group coordinator has to process about 10 items for each woman – for 20 women it is 200 items every month. At the district level with 2000 groups, a total of 400000 number have to be processed every month – a daunting task! At this scale a computer is definitely affordable and accounting software can help process this information. But how to enter so much data into a computer – before the computer is used for processing this data? Similar questions come up for our health data, government primary health center data, village school data, etc. To address this demand for simplifying data entry, we are

to savings group women – who return 24% interest on the loans (the norm for SHG loans). Half of this interest supports programs in the village. The other half is used to help sustain the state level programs.

**Other programs:** Gender sensitization is a part of all our programs. Through camps, games, activities, poster exhibitions, talks, seminars and books, we sensitize men and women on gender equality. We have also been producing simple reading materials on women's rights and equality and starting low cost women's libraries. In a few places we started Sahodari Maiyems – legal aid and support centers for women victims of violence. In villages around Madurai and Kanyakumari we have helped start over 350 successfully running small scale enterprises.

## People's Library Movement

*The aim is to create libraries for children and adult neo-literates and to use the libraries to initiate a host of educational activities in each village*

We recently started 1500 low cost libraries in village across Tamilnadu. The total cost of each library is just Rs. 20/library/month! Basically a village volunteer's house is used as the library location. She is given a set of 16 story sheets each month. One page, color printed with cartoons on both sides forms one story! The stories are written in very simple neo-literate language so that even children and adults with minimum literacy skills can read them easily. The volunteer circulates the library story sheets to women and children each month. They read it and return the stories, which are then distributed to other women and children. In this phased manner, the 16 story cards are read by 50-100 people in each village, each month. To ensure these sheets are not torn on handling, they are inserted into 16 plastic covers before circulation. When the next month's stories come in, the volunteer removes the existing stories from the plastic sheets and inserts the new sheets and then circulates them. The volunteer also maintains an extremely simple library register. *Keeping the library and the librarian's work simple is the key to success.* The arrival of new material every two months generates periodic excitement to sustain interest in the library.

Apart from the basic library stories, we also add in one or two low cost books (Re 1 books!) every couple of months. We also add in laminated sheets on health, education, agriculture. We can also add in inspirational stories of activists and women, analysis of news items and current events.

This basic library involves very little work at the village level – but has a lot of impact. These libraries can be organized independently in a village or as add-ons to an existing program – health, SHG, MPI, tuition centers, etc. We can work with other NGOs to get them to start these libraries in their areas.

We have started producing a number of low cost books. We are also producing low cost children's comic books. These will be provided to the libraries to increase their bandwidth. At the next stage, we hope to set up block level libraries with about 800 good quality books. The village libraries can borrow 10 books at a time from these block libraries – helping them access a number of more costly materials. We have started one such block library in Chennai as a test. Around these village libraries, we are also starting village activity centers. A volunteer visits the library twice every month and organizes a fun activity for children and adults – science experiment shows, slide shows, talks, magic shows, video screening, slide screening, book-reading, dramas, adolescent classes, debates on social issues, low cost toy making, science melas, festivals, etc. We are now doing this in Chennai in 100 libraries. To do this in all the libraries in villages will require the setting up of block resource centers - to stock the block center with VCD players, posters, slide projector, camera, slides, VCDs, experiment kits, toys for children and sensitization materials. We will also need to train the block volunteers on doing these activities.

*There has been a lot of excitement about these libraries and another 2000 villages want to start these libraries. Since the basic cost is only Rs. 20/month/library, we can really expand these libraries to 5000 villages all over Tamilnadu. We have also set up a separate book production unit called Eureka Books and are trying to raise a revolving fund which can be used to produce a large number of books and posters.*

## Science and Social Science Education

*The main aim is to improve the quality of middle school science and social science education and to foster scientific and rational thinking*

**Arivial Anandam (Joy of Science):** *A large part of the science-teaching problem lies in the shaky foundations of our teachers. Our education system does not offer our teachers a way to improve their understanding and to learn more. In this program, we train 5 volunteer resource persons in each block who work in 6-10 schools each – working with the children and teachers on a specific topic each month. On each topic we have a questionnaire that measures the children's current understanding level. A set of low cost experiments that children can try out easily is also introduced. A two-page concept sheet (with cartoons) explains the fundamentals of the topic. The volunteer conducts a detailed dialogue and discussion session with the children to help them get a deeper understanding of the topic. In addition, we have a video CD on the topic and slide shows and poster exhibitions. The volunteer also provides to the teachers more detailed reference material on the subject. All these together expose the children and teachers to multiple ways of looking at the same subject – helping them understand the subject thoroughly.*

**Nested Science Lab Packages:** Most rural schools do not have a lab facility – because labs are too costly (min Rs. 2 Lakh). So we are developing a series of low cost upgradable lab packages. A Rs.5000 lab, Rs.10000 lab, Rs.20000 and Rs.50000 lab. Schools start from the Rs.5000 lab. This has a lot of low cost but interesting and exciting experiments – illustrating science principles kids learn in school. Successive lab upgrades build on this initial lab in steps of Rs. 5000, adding more measurement tools – helping children move to more refined experiments and measurement techniques. Our nested lab hopes to be a fun and educational experience – reaching out to the poorest children.

**Mobile Science Vans:** This van visits schools without lab facilities and conducts a science mela and demonstrates science experiments for a day. Teachers are introduced to the low-cost lab option and if they are interested a low cost lab is set up in the school itself. We are trying to arrange funds for 3 vans for Tamilnadu.