



AID Austin

2001-02 Annual Report

Association for India's Development

President's Message
Introduction
Events
Projects
Financial Summary
Acknowledgements

AID Austin

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Dear friend of AID,

It seems only yesterday that AID Austin comprised half a dozen volunteers talking about changing the world over dinner. In fact that was a little over two years ago and that fledgling group has now become a thriving movement. We are now a diverse group of over 40 volunteers with different skills to enable us to pursue a variety of initiatives - ranging from exploring avenues for effective outreach to the local community to creation of science lessons and software to supplement our projects in India.

This increase in volunteer strength and enthusiasm has resulted in surpassing our annual financial target and supporting six projects in last year alone. We held regular fund raising and awareness activities in efforts to reach out to an eclectic Austin community. For instance we organized the popular Amjad Ali Khan concert, held a documentary film festival with HIMAL and invited Dr. Aruna Roy to counter the growing fears of communalism. During this time we also successfully collaborated with other like-minded organizations as NAAO.

September marks our new calendar year. It is a month of introspection and planning. We have a new executive board and ambitious plans for the coming year. The next year would be a year of consolidation. We intend to build upon the different initiatives we started this year and emerge as one of premier social organizations in Austin. Our main developmental focus will be the ambitious hundred blocks plan that you will read about later in this report.

All of the above could not have been possible without the support and encouragement of individuals like you. I look forward to your continued faith in our mission and us. This annual report summarizes our activities and financial statement of the year gone by. This report is an important artifact in maintaining our transparency and accountability to you - the donor.

Finally, as you can see that a lot has changed for us in a short time but one thing that has remained unchanged is our belief to change this world. Help us, support us, join us.

Sincerely,

Nishant Jain
President

***“Compassion wherever there is suffering
Conviction that the compassion is strong enough to eliminate suffering
Courage to make this conviction a reality”
This is AID.***

Association for India's Development (AID) is a registered 501-c(3) non-profit, voluntary organization that supports a wide variety of social service and development projects in promoting literacy, health care, rural credit, vocational training, women's empowerment and children's welfare. From its humble beginnings in a student's apartment a decade ago, AID has grown into a vibrant organization with volunteers from all over US and India. AID now supports projects in almost every Indian state.

Even as we continue to support more projects and expand our reach, we constantly explore the boundaries of development issues and never cease to question pre-conceived notions on what constitutes development. This involves a critical understanding of the causes of poverty and how ill-conceived developmental projects can themselves lead to destitution and deprivation. In addition, our notion of "India" includes marginalized communities whose voices often go unheard and whose fundamental right to a decent standard of living has not been fulfilled. We are not a charitable organization, nor are we trying to 'help' the poor. We support and participate actively in initiatives that tackle the cause of the poverty problem and not its symptoms. We believe that illiteracy, over-population and ill-health are symptoms of poverty and not it's causes.

We seek to generate new ideas in development and to learn why programs actually fail or succeed, so that we can refine our initiatives and better serve those people we are able to reach. For this reason we thoroughly review all projects we support. We evaluate each proposal for funding not only as an opportunity to support a good effort but also as a way to learn how such an effort makes an impact. We also visit and follow through the project for several years. As coordinators, helpers and activists, we then become beneficiaries ourselves.

AID is non-hierarchical in structure and inherently democratic, participatory and conducive to individual initiative. AID is divided into chapters. Each chapter is a local unit, which works fairly independently but is in regular contact with other chapters. Every chapter has weekly or bi-weekly meetings. Volunteers around the world remain in contact via e-mail and annual AID conferences.

Some Statistics

AID		AID Austin	
Founded	1991	Founded	1997
Chapters in the US	36	Number of volunteers	~35
Chapters in other countries	6	Projects supported	6
Number of volunteers	~400	Projects under review	1
Projects supported	150	Funds raised in 2001	\$25,000
Indian states represented	18		
Funds raised in 2001	\$800,000		

Barsana Mela: AID-Austin Spices up the mela

With impeccable planning and dedicated team work that would make a wedding planner proud, the volunteers worked hard to make the "Chat with AID" stall at the annual Barsana Dham Mela a grand success. Along with the Aloo-tikki-chole, Pani-puris and Nimbu-jaljeera the delighted customers were also served with a 3-minute introduction to AID by eager volunteers.



Gokul, Madhavi and Shail create chat plates with the efficiency of an assembly line.

Aarohi: Usteadji and his sons mesmerize Austin

The legendary Sarod Maestro, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and his sons, Amaan and Ayaan accompanied by Abhiman Kaushal (tabla) and Snigdha Mishra (tanpura) enthralled Austinites during AID-Austin's biggest fund-raiser on the 30th of March. Mr. Rinzing Wangdi, the Consul General at the Indian Consulate in Houston was the Chief Guest for the evening. The audience included senior faculty members from the University of Texas, leading members of the Austin corporate community, entrepreneurs, professionals and students. Aarohi commenced with a short presentation highlighting AID's activities and initiatives. Khan Saheb's delightful compositions were followed by equally talented Amaan and Ayaan. The grand finale to the evening was the composition 'Vaishnav Jan Tho' in Raag Khamas, during which the audience enjoyed the melodious exchanges between Usteadji and his sons.



"The need for peace and harmony among all communities, religions and nations has never been greater",
Ustaad Amjad Ali Khan, March 29, 2002.

Rang Tarang: A musical extravaganza

Dallas-based fusion and light music troupe, *Srishti*, performed in AID-Austin's Fall 2001 fundraiser. Exciting original fusion compositions demonstrated the versatility of this diverse group. The second half of the program consisted of film music from different Indian languages. AID-Austin donated a portion of the proceeds to International Red Cross for the 9/11 disaster relief fund.

A Prayer for Gujarat: Gujarat Earthquake relief

In the wake of the Gujarat earthquake, AID-Austin organized a fund-raiser for the relief operations. Renowned local artists Anu Naimpally, Ravi Srinivasan, R. Tara, Ganesan Devarajan and Seshatre Natarajan graciously consented to perform in a Carnatic music & Bharatanatyam concert. This was AID-Austin's first concert fundraiser.



Anu Naimpally

Double Wicket Cricket Tournament: Have fun with AID

October is the peak of the cricket fever in Austin and time for the annual AID double wicket tournament. For the past 3 years, AID-Austin has been organizing this popular version of cricket. More than a fundraiser, this event has popularized AID among the local Indian youth. 2001 saw a record high number of entries with over 20 teams vying for the top honors.

AID co-hosts Vruksha: The Mystical Tree

AID-Austin volunteers provided logistical support for the UT performance of *Vruksha: The Mystical Tree*, a world-renowned dance and music troupe. The program started off with an AID presentation by Rishikesh Ghare. The audience had an opportunity to interact with the volunteers at the AID stall during the intermission.

AID-Austin partners with NAAO and TRU

AID-Austin partnered with NAAO (Network of Austin Asian Organizations) and TRU (Trust for Reaching the Unreached) to provide mid-term rehabilitation to Gujarat earthquake victims in the areas of Khadir (Bhachau Taluka), Balasar (Rapar Taluka) and Maliya (North Rajkot district). TRU sought to address two areas of rehabilitation—(i) Health-primary care, referral service and training, (ii) Temporary shelters for the villagers. While AID-Austin (co-approved by AID-San Diego) funded \$10,000 towards building temporary shelters, NAAO funded \$16,500 towards the health component. Using this fund, TRU was able to build shelters in 200 villagers in the Siraani Vaandh village and provide medical and referral services to the affected victims. This was the first project that was approved by AID Austin.



TRU Temporary shelter

Training in Embroidery Empowers Rajasthan Women

The Banaskantha district in Rajasthan is world famous for the exquisite embroidery articles. Sarvodaya, an NGO in the area of Vav has implemented a cooperative with 20 women to market these products in various parts of India. The women work 6 months in one year (March-September) and from October to February travel from Delhi to Hyderabad to sell their wares in fairs. To check migration, the NGO will initiate training for 200 more women in 8 villages. Spanning over 2 years, the training will be done in each village comprising of 25 women per village. Due to the popularity of the work, the women in this area are already skilled in rudimentary embroidery. The training will help women acquire skills in more complex and specialized design. AID-Austin and AID-Portland approved \$10,000 from earthquake relief fund for this project.

Health Care in Remote West Bengal

Cyclones and hurricanes are common phenomena in the unique mangrove ecosystem of South Sunderban district in West Bengal. The nearest PHC (public health center) for the villagers is in mainland Raidighi, about 2-3 hour boat ride, be it for basic care or emergency services. AID-Austin approved \$4000 to the NGO, BTS (Baikunthapur Tarun Sangha) to provide a basic and referral health care services in the area. The fund will

- Establish a clinic with a full time doctor and 6 village health workers.
- Provide basic and preventive care to 2000 families.
- Establish a revolving medicine bank to provide medicines at cost price.

A Family health insurance plan of Rs. 24/month is also planned to make this project sustainable going forward.

Bilgaon Micro-Hydel Project

Volunteer labor from residents of Bilgaon and Maal, Maharashtra, the expertise of People's School of Energy and funding from AID Austin (and other chapters) made this unique micro-dam project a reality. The goal of this project is to provide one light bulb per household for 400 families using an innovative and environmentally friendly power generation scheme. The project will be owned and operated by a local committee of representatives. In addition to electricity, the project promises to provide a steady revenue stream for future community initiatives. This is the first micro-hydel project funded by AID.



Ladies from Banaskantha, Gujarat, proudly display their embroidery work.



Shram-daan (volunteer labor) is a key feature of the Bilgaon Micro-hydel project.

Project Site Visits

Last year, AID-Austin volunteers, Bala, Chandrika, Karunesh, Nishant, Ravi and Shailja found time in their busy schedules during their trips to India to visit AID projects in Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

The Hundred Block Plan (HBP)

Several organizations in India that pioneered literacy campaigns united under the banner of All-India People's Science Network (AIPSN) in the mid-eighties. This federation of non-government organizations (NGOs) gradually diversified its efforts into areas of health, education, women's organizations, micro-credit, assistance to small farmers, etc. Because of the spread and cumulative experience of these efforts, their potential is now tremendous.

Today, the AIPSN has thousands of experienced volunteers all over India. Its activities span 300 districts. AIPSN conceived HBP. The goal is to eliminate poverty through local initiatives in 100 blocks. (A block is a subdivision of a district containing about 150 villages). Essentially a series of programs in 6000 villages, conducted over 5 to 7 years by local volunteers is the 100 Block Plan. They will focus by turns on health, education, women's organizations, credit and savings, adult education, vocational training, computer skills, and so on. With each program, volunteers will develop new skills. AID with its philosophy of holistic development, is an active participant in this plan. (<http://aidindia.org/aipSN/>). AID-Austin has taken up the funding and coordination of the Vembakottai block in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu and the Manpur block in Gaya district of Bihar.

HBP-Vembakottai block, TN

The HBP program is currently being implemented in 30 villages in this block. Most of the people are match factory workers, due to its proximity to Sivakasi. The primary goal of the health programme is to reduce the incidence of child malnutrition by effective monitoring of their weights and taking timely preventive measures. Each village has one or more women's savings groups (called Tuligal in Tamil) that are used to drive the health program. These savings groups, besides encouraging women to save money, also serve as avenues for speaking out on common issues that affect them. The village health coordinators also use the savings groups to talk to the women about maternal and child health issues. The district level co-ordinators conduct training camps on a periodic basis to train the village health activists. As of September 2002, the health survey in all 30 villages is complete and the weighing of children to monitor their health has also commenced.

HBP-Manpur block, Bihar

Today the land of Buddha is the most underdeveloped state in India. AID is collaborating with Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS is a member of AIPSN), which has an excellent volunteer base across the state. The 68 villages in Manpur block display a wide spectrum of developmental consciousness. There are villages that are still mired in caste issues and drinking water problems while others are already thinking of vocational schemes and initiating saving groups. This gap has been largely a result of inconsistent programs by BGVS due to lack of resources and external support. With the increased support of AID and other organizations under AIPSN, the coming year will see an increased level of activity in a majority of villages. There have already been state wide training camps organized for block level coordinators to train them in planning and sustaining health and saving schemes. AID Austin will be closely following the progress of the block. We will assist in documenting and analyzing the data from each village. We also hope to communicate lessons from other blocks and provide non-monetary support like the creation of science lessons and other teaching aids.

Funds Raised (September 2001-August 2002)

Rang Tarang	\$1600
Double Wicket Cricket Tournament	\$300
HEB Grocery Cards	\$750
AID T-shirt and Merchandise sales	\$170
Credit Card Donations	\$2800
Aarohi-Ustaad Amjad Ali Khan Concert	\$10,500
Barsana Dham Mela Chat Stall	\$1300
AID Dinners	\$730
Vruksha Concert	\$330
Individual Donations	\$1350
2002 AID Conference Prize	\$500
Total	\$20,330

Projects Approved from AID-Austin Funds (September 2001-August 2002)

BTS Healthcare, West Bengal	\$4000
HBP, Vembakottai block, Tamilnadu	\$2500
HBP, Bihar	\$6500
Bilgaon Micro-hydel, Maharashtra	\$4000
Red Cross 9/11 Disaster Relief	\$250
Total	\$17,250

Upcoming Events

- Diwali Dinner (Nov '02)
- One for AID (Dec '02-Jan '03)
- AID Bhangra Night (Jan '03)
- Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma and Ustaad Zakir Hussain Concert (May '03)

<h1 style="text-align: center;">Thank you</h1>	<p style="text-align: center;">Individuals</p> <p>Anton Roger Bulhof Arun Khurana Kalvi & Jayashree Mani The Kaushiks Rinzing Wangdi Snigdha Mishra Dr. Vijay Mahajan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And all friends of AID</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Organizations</p> <p>Austin Children’s Museum American Telugu Association Austin Kannada Sangha Bengali Association CRY-Austin ICA ICMCA ISA India Community Center India Fine Arts Netip Saheli Sulekha TCA UT Center for Asian Studies</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Businesses</p> <p>Bombay Grill Clay Pit DISH Network IBM Ideal Time Travels India Info Kala Fine Arts Kismet Café Little Bombay Madras Pavilion Pho Restaurant Price Water House Coopers Quality Corals & Gems Raagini School of Classical Music Remit2India Roshan Beauty Salon Sarovar Skypass Travels South Asia Bazaar Taj Grocers Taj Palace Tara’s Beauty Salon & Skin Care Yoga Yoga</p>