



AID Austin

2003-04 Annual Report

Association for India's Development

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2003-04 AID Austin Executive Body

Chandrika Ramanujam	President
Haripriya Sridharan	Secretary
Kavita Karandikar	Treasurer
Lasya Yerramneni & Sandhya Govindaraju	Web Co-ordinators
Madhulika Yalamanchi	Projects Co-ordinator
Sastry Vadlamani	Fund-raising Co-ordinator

AID Austin

info@aidaustin.org - (512) 248-0156

<http://www.aidaustin.org>

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Dear AID supporter,

It is that time of the year when the "old order changeth yielding place to the new.....lest one good custom corrupt the world". No, I am not alluding to a possible change of guard in the White House or the end of King Arthur's era that Lord Tennyson was referring to, but the close of an equally fulfilling year for us in AID-Austin. This year, we undertook the most challenging logistics nightmare, the Annual AID Conference and turned it into the best-organized AID event ever. Memories from the year also include stalwarts of Indian grassroots movements, Ms. Medha Patkar, Mr. Rajendra Singh and Mr. Chennaiah who spoke in Austin. Most importantly, this year, we approved six new projects covering diverse areas of alternative energy, women's empowerment, disaster relief, education and livelihood generation.

Our collaborations in various parts of India are making a significant difference. In Dahod district of Gujarat, 115 new self-help groups with savings of over Rs. 7,75,000 have started functioning, thanks to the efforts of Utthan, an AID-supported NGO. The health component of our Hundred Block Plan in Tamil Nadu has been adopted by the government as a model for Malnutrition Free State Program. Gana Chetna is creating infrastructure in a remote tribal community in Keonjhar district of Orissa to demonstrate livelihood generation schemes. In the Manpur block of Bihar, 482 children have progressed from various stages of malnutrition to normal health.

We can achieve much more if volunteers focused on project co-ordination rather than fundraising. This year's executive body has a new Donor Management Co-ordinator with a goal to transition from event-based funding to a more sustained donor-based funding. We plan to actively engage with regional Indian organizations and individuals for directed funding of projects we decide to support.

AID Austin has emerged as one of the most active chapters within the AID community. While continuing the chapter level initiatives, some senior volunteers will provide leadership and direction to AID-wide cells like Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, education, water and issues like the struggle for rehabilitation in the Narmada valley and the fight for justice by gas-affected victims in Bhopal. The projects we choose will support our involvement in these AID-wide cells and issues.

All of the above could not have been possible without the support and encouragement of individuals like you. We welcome your feedback. As we march towards our vision of sustainable and equitable development, I hope you will continue to support and join us on this journey!

Sincerely,

Srikanth Samavedam
President

Association for India's Development Inc. (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 the world. AID now supports projects in almost every Indian state.

Even as we continue to support more projects and expand our reach, we constantly extend 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 its 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	52	Number of volunteers	~35
Chapters in other countries	7	Projects supported	6
Number of volunteers	~500	Projects under review	2
Projects supported	365	Funds raised in 2003-04	\$27, 000
Indian states represented	18		
Funds raised in 2003	\$500,000		

"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.

Global Day of Action Against Corporate Crime

December 3rd, 2003, the 19th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Disaster, was observed as the Global Day of Action Against Corporate Crime. The week had a solemn start on the late evening of the 2nd, with a candlelight vigil on the steps of the Dr. Martin Luther King's statue on the UT campus. About 17 gathered in the memory of the 20,000 dead and 150,000 long suffering survivors, with some observing a hunger fast on that day. Everyone shared their personal thoughts in solidarity with the cause and renewed their pledge to continue fighting in the name of Bhopal. On the 3rd, the solemnness gave way to a vociferous action and theatrics involving dry ice, gas masks, posters, slogans and clipboards on a busy corner of the campus. The day saw 15 volunteers talk to several hundred students and faculty members about the issue. A formal divestment appeal against the President and the Regents of the University of Texas was also initiated.



AID Austin volunteer, Sreangsu convinces a fellow student to sign on Dow divestment appeal to UT President.



Ms. Medha Patkar spoke at the LBJ auditorium on Nov 4th, 2003.

Who Pays for Progress?

Medha Patkar, the leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, delivered an inspiring address to a gathering of over 500 people on Nov 4th in the LBJ Auditorium on UT Campus. She discussed the ongoing struggle against large dams on the Narmada river and connection between such movements and the large issue of corporate globalization. She discussed the World Commission on Dams study and its conclusions about the negative impact on local ecosystems and inadequate assessment of the social impact in most large projects. She described her vision of a society based on equity, self-reliance and sustainable living. She exhorted the audience to believe that an alternate world is possible and urged them to increase their awareness about alternative development paradigms.



Guitar Prasanna

Be the Change

Prasanna on the lead guitar, Rodney Holmes on drums and Mike Pope on the bass guitar treated the audience to delightful fusion and jazz music in an AID fund-raiser concert on April 18th, 2004, at the Helm auditorium in St. Stephens high School.

World Bank and Health Care

With her talk subtitled "A Death Certificate for the Poor", Dr. Vineeta Gupta of *Insaaf International* spoke on the human rights violation and corruption in the World bank funded private healthcare system in Punjab. This event was co-sponsored by Third Coast Activists on September 13th, 2004.

Reverberating The Change

On the Memorial Day weekend, AID-Austin played host to the 6th annual AID conference. The theme of the conference was the role of people's movements and activism in development with the slogan "Reverberating the change". About 164 volunteers from 25 different chapters gathered to discuss topics like equitable land and water management, role of activism, new methods of intervention and reaffirm AID's philosophy, commitment and direction.

The conference featured two keynote speakers, Mr. Rajendra Singh and Mr. P. Chenniah. Mr. Singh, commonly referred to as the "Water Man", is a Ramon Magsaysay Award winner and the founder of Tarun Bharat Sangh. He discussed water harvesting successes that Tarun Bharat Sangh has demonstrated in arid desert villages in the Alwar district of Rajasthan since 1985. He has mobilized the rural communities to rebuild and revive over 4500 traditional water harvesting structures to collect rainwater in 1050 villages and in the process effectively drought-proofing them. He spoke about the National water policy and how current development policies are alienating local communities from their water, land and forest resources.

Mr. Chenniah, who is the founder of Andhra Pradesh Vyavasaya Vritidarula Union - a federation of agricultural labor unions, spoke about the status of land reforms in India. He contrasted the booming high-tech economy in urban India with the plight of poor farmers, 3727 of whom had committed suicide last year. He spoke at length about their grassroots efforts to educate farm workers about their rights and the impact of globalization on the indigenous farming economy. His group has successfully managed to acquire and distribute 150,000 acres of land to poor women laborers.



Mr. Rajendra Singh's keynote speech. Prof. Bhagat (standing right) translated from Hindi to English.



The audience has several questions after Prof. Bob Jensen's talk on media outreach.

Other speakers and invited guests included Dilip D'Souza (political and social activist, author/journalist), Balaji Sampath (AID Jeevan Saathi), Prof. Bob Jensen (UT Journalism), Prof. Sharmila Rudrappa (UT Sociology), Arvinda Pillalamari (AID Jeevan Saathi) and Kalpana Karunakaran (TNSF). Some of the newer and more popular sessions at this conference were discussions on spirituality, issue and region based cells, public speaking, the AID audio-visual presentation and the *Shayari* session. After months of planning and three grueling days and sleepless nights it was a bitter-sweet end and a highly satisfying event for AID-Austin volunteers.

Livelihood generation through Solar Lanterns

NGO: ICJB, Bhopal

AID-Austin furthered its support for the Bhopal struggle by approving an income generation scheme to help families of victims of the gas tragedy. AID partnered with International Coalition for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) and The Other Media to buy solar lanterns and rent them out to the hawkers on a daily-rental basis. With the guidance of a Chennai group, which had successfully implemented this concept and under the able leadership of our Jeevan Saathi, Rachna Dhingra, this project is expected to be self-sustainable in 3-5 months.



Shahid and other survivors rent out solar lanterns to street hawkers.

Village Libraries

NGO: Tamil Nadu Science Forum, Chennai

Tamil Nadu Science Forum in partnership with AID-India designed a cost-effective and easily scalable village library system. With a cost of just Rs. 4 lakhs per year, the project proposes to run effective libraries in 2000 villages at a total cost of Rs. 16 per village per month. The stories are contributed by volunteers from TNSF, AID-India and AID-US. AID Austin approved funds towards the village library initiative. Austin volunteers also committed to contribute stories to these libraries.

Women's Empowerment, Water Management

NGO: Utthan, Dahod, Amereli & Bhavnagar districts, Gujarat

AID-Austin partnered with Utthan to ensure gender equity in access and ownership of water resources in a few districts in Gujarat. The project aims at building an institutional framework that would foster gender equity in all major civic institutions such as Panchayati Raj bodies, educational, economic and community organizations. Utthan took up access to safe drinking water and sanitation, health and hygiene for women and other weaker sections and fostering communal harmony as the main issues. They have made significant progress in creating self-help groups, pani samitis and health worker training.

Alternate Energy

NGO: Jankibai Trust, Dhule, Maharashtra

AID Austin approved an experimental project that aims to demonstrate eco-friendly alternative cooking using solar energy in rural areas. The cost of solar cookers is the main hurdle in promoting this technology in rural areas. Through awareness drives and subsidies, Jankibai Trust aims to popularize parabolic solar cookers among Aanganwadi workers and reach to village communities through them.



The parabolic solar cooker is more efficient than the conventional solar cookers

Hundred Block Plan (HBP)

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 out with projects in education, health, literacy, women's empowerment and livelihood to several thousand villages spread over 100 blocks. Towards this effort, AID-Austin has been supporting Vembakottai block in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu and Manpur block in Gaya district of Bihar since June 2002. Both the blocks have shown tremendous progress in the last two years.

Vembakottai block, Tamil Nadu

NGO: AID-India & TNSF, Chennai

The number of women's self-help groups has grown from 86 to 162. Due to the health intervention focusing on improving health of women and children and increased utilization of primary healthcare centers, 271 children have moved to normal health from different grades of malnutrition. People's library movement, started earlier this year, which aims at creating libraries for children and adult neo-literates and initiating a host of educational activities in each village has been established in 20 villages. Enrollment rallies to ensure all children go to school, support centers to help children learn well and not drop out and efforts to improve the quality of government schools are ongoing. In 20 villages there has been an improvement of over 60% in the reading levels among children.

Manpur block, Bihar

NGO: Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Patna

In addition to women's and children's health, the health program here has a special focus on control of TB. In the last two years, 482 children have progressed from different grades of malnutrition to normal health. Regular TB camps and Jan Sunwais are being conducted and have helped identify 134 TB patients and obtain treatment for them. There are 31 SHGs in the block now where there was none two years ago.

The amazing progress on HBP is the result of the unique collaboration that has emerged between the People's Science Movements and the NRI development groups like AID - and it consciously builds on the strengths of both the organizations. We hope to continue building on this and truly bring about a measurable change in the lives of India's poor.

Livelihood Generation through Farming, Pisciculture, brick-making, etc.

NGO: Gana Chetna, Keonjhar district, Orissa

Gana Chetna works with the tribal community in Orissa providing technical guidance and awareness building in different areas related to agriculture, forest protection and income generation.

Narmada Jan Sahyog

NGO: Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Center, Mumbai

The Sardar Sarovar dam at a height of 110m has displaced more than 45,000 adivasi and marginal farmer families. The relief program supports food-grains, temporary shelters and medical assistance for the families in Manibeli, Maharashtra, while the struggle for rehabilitation goes on.

AID-Austin Projects Web Page: <http://www.aidaustin.org/projects/projects.html>

Caravan Centers

NGO: Society for Promotion of Rational Thinking, Gujarat

The communal violence in Gujarat brings to forefront the need for rational thinking and harmony among people. Society for the Promotion of Rational Thinking (SPRAT) believes that education leads to rational thinking and tolerance. Towards this goal, they have established a network of "Caravan" centers at Vatwa, Himmatnagar, Mehsana, Surat and Shah-e-Alam. These centers act as focal points for information about employment opportunities, education and self-development. These centers serve about 150 people everyday. SPRAT also conducts basic literacy classes to provide basic reading and writing skills to the poor. In addition, SPRAT also strives to spread the message of communal harmony by organizing meetings, satyagrahas and petitions.

AID Fellows

Jeevan Saathis and Saathiship program by AID promotes volunteering in individuals in India and recognizes the tremendous role played some of our key partners and AID volunteers by supporting their work through a honorarium. AID-Austin supports Ms. Rachna Dhingra and Ms. Chandra Anil as Jeevan Saathis. Rachna works with the Bhopal gas tragedy survivors and Chandra leads the education component of Hundred Block Plan in Tamil Nadu.

Project Site Visits

AID-Austin volunteers - Anitha, Bala, Chandrika, Kamala, Madhulika, Nishant and Sandhya took time off to meet with NGOs and partners and review programs during their visit to India. If you are traveling to India and have a few days to spare, do visit one of our projects.

Partnership with local organizations

Over the last year, AID Austin has worked with organizations like Saheli, Post Collective, Third Coast Activists and PODER to build local community partnerships in Austin. Saheli provides counseling, legal and advocacy support for victims of domestic violence especially from South Asia. Post Collective is a new organization that has promoted awareness of youth to social and cultural issues through workshops. Third Coast Activists promotes awareness of issues about American foreign policy. PODER which stands for People Organized in the Defense of the Earth and her Resources works on issues of environment and social justice. AID Austin has actively worked with these organizations through supporting volunteer meetings, co-sponsoring events and participating in fundraising events. These organizations also conducted seminars on local outreach, media workshop and session on peace at the Annual AID conference this year.

Water Study Group

Water resources around the globe are threatened by climatic changes, misuse and pollution. All around the globe, and especially in developing countries like India, governments are looking at the privatization of water as the panacea for this problem. Water privatization has sparked explosive debates. The AID-Austin water study group is working with local organizations such as Save our Springs alliance (S.O.S) and Sierra Club to increase public awareness about the various aspects of this complex issue.

Funds Raised (September 2003-August 2004)

<i>Be the Change</i> Concert	\$7000
AID Dinners	\$1000
Recurring Donations (Credit card, EFT)	\$4000
General Donations	\$1000
HEB Gift Cards	\$2000
One for India	\$12000
Total	\$27,000

Projects Approved (September 2003-August 2004)

ICJB: Livelihood Generation Through Solar Lantern Rental	\$2364
Gana Chetna: Technical Guidance in Agriculture & Income Generation	\$2800
BSFC: Narmada Valley Submergence Relief	\$3000
Jankibai Trust: Alternate Energy Use Through Solar Cookers	\$1500
TNSF: Village Libraries	\$4500
Utthan: Water Resource Management & Women's Empowerment	\$5000
Total	\$19,164

Upcoming Events

- Gujarat Week: A socio-cultural economic perspective (Nov 1-5th '04)
 - Nov 1st: Garbha Dance, Talk on "Gujarat: Culture, economy & technology. East Mall, UT, 6pm.
 - Nov 2nd: Lecture by Harsh Mander, CPE 2.212, UT, 6.30pm.
 - Nov 3rd: Screening of "Final Solution", CMA A2.3200, 7.30pm.
 - Nov 4th: Talk by Nafisa Barot, CPE 2.218, UT, 7pm.
 - Nov 5th: Film screening and discussion. "We are Indian and African", EPS 1.128, 7pm.
- AID-Saheli World Beat Party (Nov 6th '04)
- *One for India* Fundraising Campaign (Nov '04-Jan '05)
- Bhopal Awareness Week (Dec 1-5th '04)

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<p>Thank you for your support!</p>	<p>Individuals</p> <p>Anton Roger Bulhof Dee Leekha Dr. Vijay Mahajan Jordan Phillips Kalvi & Jayashree Mani Glenn Rexach Krishna & Raka Srinivasan Dr. Robert Jensen</p> <p>And all friends of AID</p>
<p>Organizations</p> <p>Asian American Cultural Center Austin Kannada Sangha Bengali Association PODER ICA ICMCA IFA KMFA 89.5 KUT 90.5 KVRX 91.7 India Community Center Saheli Surabhi (KOOP 91.7) Texas Public Radio Third Coast Activist UT South Asia Institute UT Department of Anthropology UT Department of Communications</p>	<p>Businesses</p> <p>360 Primo Coffee House Austin Strings Fiesta ICICI Minerva Mr. Natural Peet's Coffee Renaissance Hotel Satay Restaurant Group Semiprecious.com Sulekha Taj Grocers University COOP Veggie Heaven Vulcan Video Wheatsville Coop</p>