



AID Austin

2007 Annual Report

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2007 AID Austin Executive Body

Harish Sharma	President
Devashree Saha/Alaknanda	Secretary
Gayathri Manikutty	Treasurer
Kavita Karandikar	Projects Coordinator
Satchi Mishra	Fund-raising Coordinator

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Dear AID Supporter,

Thank you for your continued support to AID. 2007 was a record year for AID Austin in terms of annual funds raised. We took up 4 new projects and renewed our support to Utthan, LSS & Prayas and CEM as these NGO's (Non governmental organizations) continue their exemplary work to bring about meaningful development for the needy. We had the opportunity to listen to the experiences of several speakers working at the grass roots who accepted our invitation to travel to Austin.

AID's philosophy of Sangharsh (Struggle), Sewa (Service), and Nirman (Construct) are at the core of our work. In Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan, a struggle is in progress against bonded labor and the exploitation of the lower caste Bheels. In the Narmada valley, several needy families submerged by the large dams, yet to be rehabilitated, were provided with emergency relief in the form of food grains and medicines. In the tribal areas of Dahod in Gujarat, Utthan is working on livelihood generation initiatives that have resulted in fodder, fuel and seed banks, and organic farming methods that have enabled the local villagers to rebuild their lives through gainful employment. Former AID-Austin volunteers, Ravishankar, Madhulika and Chandrika who have been working full time at the grass roots continue to provide us with valuable insight into social issues. AID Austin is proud to be working with a select group of these highly committed partners.

In what has become an annual tradition, several volunteers took part in the Run For India campaign by training and running the Austin half and full marathon on Feb. 18, 2007. The aim of this campaign is to raise funds and spread awareness about our projects.

The past year posed several challenges, most notably the return of several dedicated AID Austin volunteers to India. We have been fortunate to have several new volunteers join our team in the past year. These volunteers have stepped up their involvement and shown leadership in coordinating projects and fundraising. Undertaking more projects and volunteer retention will be an important agenda for the chapter in the next year. A new executive body (EB) took charge last month and is full of enthusiasm to lead AID Austin in 2008.

All this has been possible because of encouragement and support from individuals like you. We thank you and would love to hear from you. 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,

K. J. Balakrishnan
Chapter Coordinator (2008)

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 15 years 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	40	Number of volunteers	15
Chapters in other countries	5	Projects supported in '07	8
Number of volunteers	1200	Projects in Review	3
Projects supported	379	Total AID Austin projects	38
Indian states represented	21	Funds raised in 2007	\$84,000

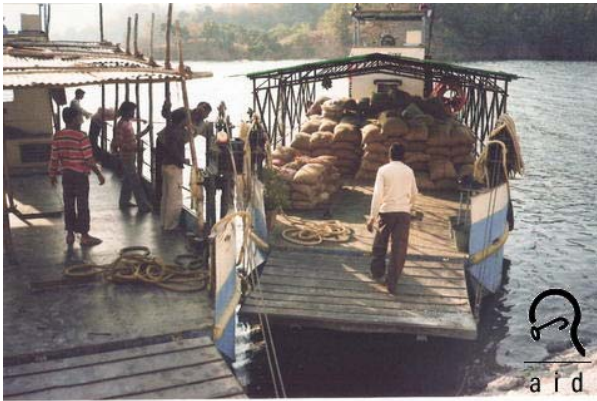
"Compassion wherever there is suffering
 Conviction that the compassion is strong enough to eliminate suffering
 Courage to make this conviction a reality"
 This is AID.

Relief For Namada Valley Villagers

In 2007, several chapters across AID (Austin, LA, Portland and Maryland) worked with Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship (BSF) center on the Jansahyog Project. Nearly 500 families in the submergence zone of the Sardar Sarovar Project were in dire need of food grains and medical supplies. These people, primarily the adivasis (tribals), are yet to be resettled by the Government. This is in spite of court orders to resettle people six months before dam construction. With nowhere to go and their livelihood destroyed due to agricultural lands coming under water, the people of the valley were facing acute food shortage.



All is not well in the valley



Food grains loaded to the boats

The Narmada struggle is one of the longest people's movement in free India lasting more than 20 years. As the construction on dam continues, thousands of people are yet to be rehabilitated as seen in this project. There is a happy ending to this project in that the food reached the villagers. But several questions remain. What happens to these people next monsoons if they do not get their rightful land? And at a broader level, is it development if a select few benefit at the cost of many poor people?

The Jansahyog project's goal is to provide basic food grains to the most needy families at the cost of Rs 7000 per family which would help them survive through this time of need. These families continue their peaceful struggle to get alternate lands promised by the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award and the Supreme Court. Following the release of funds BSF coordinated the distribution of grains from the shops in towns to the hamlets in far off villages.



Food reaches the needy after a long journey on water and land

Shobana Concert

AID-Austin held a sold out Indian classical fusion ballet on September 30th, 2007, titled “Maya”. India’s leading dance proponent Shobana and her troupe treated the audience to delightful fusion dance. This concert was attended by 500 people and was a huge success. We raised \$12,500 to support AID-Austin projects in addition to spreading awareness about AID in the Austin community.



“Maya” - Sold Out Show by Shobana and her troupe



AID Dinner with a twist -“Halloween Party”

AID Dinners

AIDers continued the dinner tradition with almost one every other month. For the uninitiated, AID dinners are events where 4-5 volunteers prepare a sumptuous dinner for about 20 people. The Oscar for best dinner of course went to the Halloween AID Dinner! Attendees contribute \$10 towards the AID Austin administrative fund. In addition to being mini-fundraisers these events are great to learn about our activities and more importantly have a fun-filled evening! We encourage you to attend our upcoming AID dinner in February.

Marathon 2007 and One For India 2007



Eight AID-Austin volunteers, Anitha, Kavita, Devashree, Kishore, Ashish, Bala, Srikanth, and Harish ran the grueling AT&T half & full marathons on Feb 18th, 2007 to raise money for AID-Austin projects. This marathon run was part of the “Run for India” fund-raising campaign. We raised \$25,000 from more than 100 donors. We thank all our generous donors for their continued support and trust in our work.



Runners raised \$25,000 for AID projects by reaching out to friends and



Nov 5th 2006: Balaji Sampath - AID Jeevansathi

Balaji Sampath is a central figure in AID. He has made several vital contributions in planning and executing large-scale campaigns in health, literacy and improving quality of education in India. During this talk, Balaji discussed key education issues in India and highlighted the severe shortcomings in reading abilities of middle school children and the work done in this field by AID Tamil Nadu.



May 19th 2007: Geetha Dharmarajan, Director-Katha Foundation
Katha is a Delhi based not-for-profit organization that has been working in the literary to literature continuum since 1988. Katha has published a wide variety of education material in multiple languages that are currently used by many NGO's in the education sector. Katha works to reduce injustice and poverty through education. Geetha shared her experiences on how Katha started, where they are today and their future plans.



August 18th, 2007: Rajnish Jain & Rashmi Bharti, Avani, Kumaon
Mr. Jain and Ms. Bharti work in the Kumaon region of India's northern state Uttaranchal, where they co-founded 'Avani' in 1997, an organization that works on developing sustainable and appropriate technology and livelihood for the people of the region. The speakers talked about their work in Kumaon and how Avani was founded.



Sep 16th, 2007: Leo Saldanha & Bhargavi - Environmental Activists
Leo Saldanha heads the "Environment Support Group", a non-profit, public interest research, training and advocacy initiative focusing on environmental and social justice issues. Leo & Bhargavi's talk was focused on the deteriorating quality of environmental reforms in India. They also talked about recent amendments to pollution acts.

**NREGA Implementation Monitoring
NGO: APVVU, Andhra Pradesh**

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a landmark act passed by the Indian Government recently. This project promotes livelihood rights of agricultural workers and marginalized farmers by effective implementation of this act in 7 mandals (village clusters) of Chittoor district, AP. The project aims to create awareness about this act, facilitate obtaining of job cards for villagers, identify appropriate works for employment and undertake social audits and public hearings to ensure that workers get minimum wages.



NREGA Audit in progress

2007 Education Summer camp NGO: LSS and Prayas, Rajasthan

We continued support to Education Summer Camp project aimed at reducing the drop-outs to zero in Chittorgarh district for the second year. This year nearly 100 children attended, a significant increase from 76 in 2006. In addition to formal subjects like English, Science, Maths and Hindi, the camp featured vocational training, yoga classes and cultural activities in the evening.



Students on a day trip to the city

KALPAVRIKSH



**Environmental
Action Group**

Environmental Compliance Tracking

NGO: Kalpavriksh, Project scope is country wide

This project will assess adherence to environment clearance conditions by monitoring 8 projects spread out across several northern states. Relevant documents will be obtained through the use of the Right To Information act from the Ministry for Environment and Forests and other governing agencies, and their monitoring process will also be assessed. This project will provide a better understanding of how much compliance there is to the environment impact assessment guidelines, and how well the Ministry tracks compliance to the clearance conditions. The case studies thus obtained can be used by other regional groups to conduct such assessments in the future.

Jan Sahyog - Relief For Villagers in the Narmada Valley NGO: Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Center

The Jansahyog Relief Project aims to provide food-grains, fishing nets for livelihood and medical aid to needy families. These families have not received any rehabilitation from the government after several years of displacement due to the Sardar Sarovar Project. Please read more on page 4 to learn about this AID wide initiative.



Food Grains Distribution

Water Stops

NGO: Lok Samiti, Uttar Pradesh

This project supports programs creating awareness about conserving water, rights and access to water, and water at the 'pani ka thela' at ten busy locations in Varanasi district. These water stops provide free water to all during the hottest summer months. The NGO also organizes street plays to emphasize rights to water, education and employment.



Free Potable Water in Public places

Table Project Phase III

NGO: LSS and Prayas, Rajasthan

This project aims to create awareness among the tribal and dalit population of the area (Chittorgarh Dist. of Rajasthan), especially people whose land has been illegally taken over (land-alienation) and bonded laborers. Previous work has included emancipation of bonded laborers, awareness against the flawed below poverty line assessment and campaigning for payment of minimum wages in Government sponsored projects. This year the NGO plans to increase awareness about NREGA and ensure that the rural employment guarantee act is implemented properly in the district.



Training at an Organic Farm

Gender Equity & Natural Resource Management

NGO: Utthan, Gujarat

Utthan continues its work with multiple initiatives in livelihood generation that has resulted in fodder, fuel and seed banks in the tribal area of Dahod, along with setting up of demonstration organic farms. Along the coastal areas, they are working with the fishermen and salt pan workers to organize and press for their rights and secure their livelihood. Two villages have been named 'zero tolerance villages' with villagers' commitment to prevent/ stop violence against women.

Community Environment Monitoring (CEM) Project

NGO: The Other Media, Tamil Nadu

AID-Austin continues its support as the project enters the third phase. In addition to training villagers in the science of pollution, the CEM initiative involves villagers in the fight against pollution by engaging them in environmental and health monitoring and sustainable livelihood activities. The NGO has been actively engaged in researching, testing and deploying simple and inexpensive tools in communities to allow them to monitor their own environment. The NGO also networks with pollution-affected communities in other parts of the country by providing them training to monitor and document pollution in their communities.

Bharathi Trust Resource Center

NGO: Bharathi Trust, Tamil Nadu

In the second year of this project, progress has been made on multiple fronts - They have been successful in getting a good yield of sunflower crops from which they hope to extract sunflower oil using organic techniques. The school building is the final stages of completion and classes are expected to start very soon. The cattle shed is complete and resource center is coming up quickly. Most importantly there is increasing interest among the people in the region to learn about organic farming.

AID Jeevansathis (Fellows)

Ex-AID Austin volunteers, Ravishankar (Ravi) Arunachalam and Madhulika Yelamanchi continue their role as Jeevansathis of AID. Ravi’s focus has been on improving reading and other learning skills for middle school education and technology development for the masses. He has also been a key member of the team that has developed the Eureka science kit, a learning tool for children. In the other corner of the country, in Rajasthan, Madhulika has been working with LSS & Prayas on initiatives like Below Poverty Line Struggle, Summer Education Camp and demand for minimum wagers. The enthusiasm and dedication of AID fellows is an inspiration to all of us.

Funds Raised

MAYA - Concert	\$ 12,153
Recurring Donations (Credit card, EFT)	\$ 3,041
General Donations	\$ 3,513
Company Matching Donations	\$ 7,203
One for India	\$ 33,472
Run For India	\$ 25,000
Others	\$ 1,307
Total	\$ 83,000

Projects Approved

Mehendiganj Water stops	\$ 1,900
Education camp, LSS & Prayas	\$ 4,300
TABLE, LSS & Prayas - Phase 3	\$ 9,500
Utthan Phase 3	\$ 5,200
Environmental Compliance Tracking	\$ 5,000
Community environment monitoring - Phase3	\$ 5,000
NREGA Nisarga APVVU	\$ 8,000
Jan Sahyog	\$ 4,000
Total	\$ 43,000

Acknowledgements

<p>Thank you for your support!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Individuals</p> <p>Raja Malkani Dr. Vijay Mahajan Anton Roger Bulhof Krishna Srinivasan & Raka Satish Kulkarni Sivagami Natesan Satish and Anu Rao Dr Robina Poonawala</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And all friends of AID</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Organizations</p> <p>Asian American Cultural Center Austin Kannada Sangha ASHA Bengali Association Pragathi 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 TIE UT South Asia Institute UT Department of Anthropology Vibha</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Businesses</p> <p>Dell Austin Ventures Silicon Laboratories National Instruments Sulekha Taj Grocers University COOP 1 World Realty Ambica Foods Asianet Bombay Express Cholas Indian Restaurant Desai Law Firm Indus realty International wellness foundation Kids Dental Smiles KUT Nicole Casanova, RMT Satyananda Yoga Center The Khazana TransTravels</p>

“Be the change you wish to see in this world” - M.K Gandhi