

# INSAF Newsletter

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*INdian Schools Alumni & Friends  
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## **INSAF's TSUNAMI RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY AT HUT BAY, ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS**

On the morning of Sunday, 26 December 2004, a severe earthquake in the ocean off the coast of Sumatra caused tsunamis that devastated communities in the coastal areas of 12 countries in the Indian Ocean. These tsunamis swept people out to sea, and destroyed homes, roads, schools — a disaster of extraordinary proportions.

Similar to the events after the Gujarat Earthquake in 2003, the INSAF leadership recognized that the larger, international relief agencies and governments are better equipped to provide immediate relief, but that it was our duty to help with reconstruction after the media attention has turned to other matters. During the last 8-9 months, INSAF has searched for a suitable project through scores of consultative meetings, phone calls and e-mails. We are pleased to report that INSAF has agreed to collaborate with SISS (Shymprasad Institute for Social Service) to launch a project to be called AKSHARA in Hut Bay, the main settlement of 12,000 in the little Andaman. Hut Bay, which faces the open ocean and is only a few hundred miles from Sumatra, suffered considerable damage after the tsunami. Seven of the 11 schools were damaged. SISS, headquartered in Hyderabad, AP, has been working on a sanitation project in Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman & Nicobar islands.

Under project AKSHARA, about 304 high school students will be provided their text books. In addition, a modest library/career center will be set-up at the Government Senior Secondary School in Hut Bay. The library/career center will have some bookshelves and books, a few chairs and desks as well as one computer. A few community meetings will also be organized under the project to provide support, career guidance and health promotion.

The 2005 budget for the project is \$5,000. As of the date of this Newsletter, a total of about \$4,000 has been contributed by: Ashok & Darshan Mehan, Santosh Chokhani, P. & Shakunthala Harshavardhana, Ashok & Usha Sachdev, PK & Suresh Malhotra, Kumar & Sudesh Kapur, Soma & Parvathi Murthy, Raj & Padmeshri Lad, Bhav & Kaye Sharma. This means this project needs your help. Kindly send your tax-deductible contribution in whatever amount you feel comfortable with — as soon as possible — to INSAF.

Efforts are being made to see if internet access is affordably feasible for the proposed computer at the Hut Bay School Library/Career Center. Therefore, the 2nd stage of the project will be defined sometime in early 2006. Please feel free to e-mail the Newsletter Editor with any questions on this project.

**www.insafweb.org**

## INSAF PROJECTS

The following list is an important snapshot of INSAF current activities for both INSAF outsiders and insiders. Therefore, kindly let the Editor know of any errors and omissions. Also please verify the contact information.

Contact	Project
<b>Brij &amp; Shail Agarwal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>D. N. Inter College, Gulaothi, UP (Scholarship)</li> </ul>
<b>Ram Chaudhari</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Center for Science Culture, Bhulpur, U.P</li> </ul>
<b>Manju Chexal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OSDAV Public School, Kaithal, Haryana</li> <li>Late Sh. Milkhi Ram &amp; Shmt. Kesra Devi Gulla Award</li> <li>Late S. Bindi Chexal Award</li> </ul>
<b>Santosh Chokhani, Ashok &amp; Darshan Mehan, Ramesh &amp; Pratibha Paliwal, Bhav &amp; Kaye Sharma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SODHANA Charitable Trust, Chipurupalli, AP</li> </ul>
<b>Om and Veena Garg</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A.S.D. High School, Narnaul, Haryana</li> </ul>
<b>Shakunthala &amp; P. Harshavardhana</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India Heritage Project (with <b>Kapurs, Paliwals, Malhotras, Chokhani, Bajajs, Sharmas</b>)</li> <li>Government Model Primary School, Saneguruvanahalli, Karnataka</li> <li>Tsunami Reconstruction Project (with <b>Mehans, Chokhani, Lads, Malhotras, Kapurs, Murthys, Sharmas</b>)</li> </ul>
<b>Keshyap &amp; Abhilasha Joshi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blood Donor Council, Nawanshahar, Punjab</li> </ul>
<b>Kumar &amp; Sudesh Kapur</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AWB Food Bank, Albertson, NY</li> <li>SOS Children's Village Child Sponsorship, Rajpura, Punjab (w Sharmas)</li> </ul>
<b>Joginder and Meera Kundra</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Samanway Ashram Child Education, Bodh Gaya, Bihar</li> <li>Adivasi Child Education, Lathakhamhan, Jharkhand</li> <li>Arya Samaj — Telco &amp; Sonari School, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand</li> </ul>
<b>Raj &amp; Padmashri Lad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shree Samartha Education Society School, Mumbai (w Sharmas)</li> </ul>
<b>Aruna Marathé, Raj &amp; Padmashri Lad, Bhav &amp; Kaye Sharma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Aid &amp; Sponsorship Program, Pune, Maharashtra</li> </ul>
<b>Ash and Darshan Mehan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integral Education Mission, Dehradun (Uttaranchal), with the <b>Kundras</b></li> <li>SOS Children's Village Child Sponsorship, Rajpura, Punjab (w Sharmas)</li> </ul>
<b>Soma &amp; Parvathi Murthy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gov. Pre-Univ. College Battlahally, Karnataka (Scholarship)</li> </ul>
<b>Ramesh &amp; Pratibha Paliwal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shiksha Bharati Project, Hapud, UP (Education)</li> </ul>
<b>Ashok &amp; Usha Sachdev</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bal Niketan, Panchkula, Haryana</li> </ul>
<b>Bhav &amp; Kaye Sharma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary &amp; Middle Schools, Village Ramgarh (Patiala), Punjab</li> <li>D.D. Girls High School, Navsari, Gujarat</li> <li>Trees for Life, Wichita, Kansas</li> <li>Balabhavan Orphanage, Paduapuram, Kerala</li> <li>S. R. Arya High School, Patiala, Punjab</li> <li>Chem Eng. Dept Panjab Univ. Chandigarh (with 17 others from the Class of '69)</li> </ul>
<b>Ashok &amp; Sanjeevan Soni</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lions Club Eye Clinics, Midtown Jagraon and Raikot, Punjab</li> </ul>
<b>Vijay &amp; Laxmi Varma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sri Satya Sai Seva Samiti Public School, Alwar, Rajasthan</li> </ul>
<b>Ashok &amp; Hema, Sriraj &amp; Pushpa Varma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little Angels School, Hyderabad, AP</li> <li>Ramnath Inter College, Unnao, UP</li> </ul>
<b>Vijay &amp; Laxmi Verma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sri Satya Sai Seva Samiti Public School, Alwar, Rajasthan</li> </ul>

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## CHILD SPONSORSHIP UPDATE

Here is a report on the children sponsored by the various INSAF families (all are from disadvantaged families and our goal is to help them become educated and financially secure):

1. **Mohit Kumar Gupta, 20**, Panchkula, Haryana. Manju and the Late Bindi Chexal sponsorship during '99-'03. Success story — “graduated” out of our program — an engineering student now.
2. **Ram Parvesh, 20**, Panchkula, Haryana. Manju and the Late Bindi Chexal sponsorship during '99-'03. Success story — “graduated” out of our program — a Culinary School graduate.
3. **Sonali Kothawale, 19**, Pune, Maharashtra. Aruna Marathé sponsorship since '01. Finished High School and working. Padmashri Lad to assess in Dec. if Sonali needs further support.
4. **Amalapushpam, 16**, Paduapuram, Kerala. Bhav & Kaye Sharma sponsorship since '01. Amala is a 10th grade student, lives at a children's home run by the Sisters of Nazareth, and is said to be a good dancer and a singer.
5. **Amandeep, 13**, Panchkula, Haryana. Ashok & Usha Sachdev sponsorship since '02. Amandeep, a 7th grade student at a private school named Holy Child, is reported to have low grades, and is being provided a tuition to help.
6. **Shailesh Shinde, 13**, Pune, Maharashtra. Raj & Padmashri Lad and Bhav & Kaye Sharma sponsorship since '02. Shailesh is now an 8th grade student and likes to play cricket.
7. **Rutuja Khade, 12**, Pune, Maharashtra. Aruna Marathé sponsorship since '03. Rutuja is now a 7th grade student and a bright student.
8. **Arti Waikar, 11**, Pune, Maharashtra. Raj & Padmashri Lad and Bhav & Kaye Sharma sponsorship since '02. Arti is a 6th grade student in the Marathi medium school Sevasadan.
9. **Raisa Khurshid, 11**, Pune, Maharashtra. Raj & Padmashri Lad and Bhav & Kaye Sharma sponsorship in '04.
10. **Bhavna Sharma, 2**, Rajpura, Punjab. Kumar & Sudesh Kapur and Bhav & Kaye Sharma sponsorship in '05 at an SOS Children's Village.
11. **Shalini Kumari, 3**, Rajpura, Punjab. Ashok & Darshan Mehan and Bhav & Kaye Sharma sponsorship in '05 at an SOS Children's Village.

If you would like to sponsor a child in India, please contact the Editor. INSAF has good experience with at least 4 organizations for the above children. Costs vary depending on the location and whether you prefer to make an annual or a one time contribution.

## THANKS FOR REMEMBERING

Those of us who have elected to pay the membership dues annually are reminded that it is time to send in your dues in 2005 and 2006. Please use the last page of this Newsletter and send in your annual membership this weekend (unless of course, you have signed-up for a Life Membership once and for all — which earns you freedom from annual membership dues). Of course, it still is very important to send your contributions to support the project of your choice .

The following have become Life Members in 2005:

**Arun & Geeta Mehan, Dayton, OH**

**Jayaram & Shashikala Shetty, Pleasanton, CA**

**K. & Lalitha Vasudevan, Bartlesville, OK**

**Arun & Padma Cariappa, Cincinnati, OH**

**Gopal & Shibani Chotani, Cupertino, CA**

**A. J. & Thankamma Poulouse, Belmont, CA**

A very warm welcome to each of the above. We'll look forward to your continued involvement with the project(s) of your choice. We'll look forward to your comments or updates for the Newsletter as well.

The above names have been added to the Life Members List on the INSAF web site.

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## NEW PROJECT: VILLAGE ADOPTION

A small group of families in Northern California has been meeting over the past 6-9 months to consider what sort of a project they might like to sponsor. The group, which informally calls itself the “Palo Alto Group” because many of them work in Palo Alto, California, has decided that they would like to “adopt” a small village in India, and then work for the development of that village with a long term commitment.

The Palo Alto Group will be working with SODHANA, headquartered in Chipurupalli, Andhra Pradesh, to adopt a village in that area. Sponsors are: **Gopal & Shibani Chotani, Jay & Shashi Shetty, Manoj & Maneesha Shrivastv, AJ & Thankamma Poulouse, Raj & Padmashri Lad, Bhav & Kaye Sharma**. The budget is to raise \$1,200 by the end of 2005. The following activities will be sponsored initially:

- ◆ Introduce trained educated volunteers in the 1st and 2nd grade standards to improve the quality of education in the Government Primary School
- ◆ Conduct bridge classes in the evening for 3rd to 5th grade students.
- ◆ Conduct “Health Check-up Camps” twice a year
- ◆ Conduct group discussions with a select group of women and youth on health and general awareness topics.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A general observation and a question from Dr. Prem N. Bajaj is provided below.

1. A remarkable feature of INSAF's working is its low operating cost. Almost all of the donations go towards the projects. In most cases, the members pick up even the postage costs.

There is no paid position in INSAF. It is surprising to see an organization having functioned, exclusively by volunteers, for thirty six (36) years. Just look around and you will find that most non-profit associations have high operating budgets - 15 to 20 percent is quite common.

INSAF has no rental costs and no utilities to worry about. So wonderful, indeed.

2. So far we talked of life memberships for individuals/families only. If a business likes to be a life member, what will be the contribution ?.

Perhaps a donation of \$ 100 for a small business and \$ 150 for a larger one should be a good beginning. It gives us more exposure to the public and makes the business look good at the same time.

3. At times, I feel that we should give more publicity to the causes of INSAF. How ? May be, the executive committee can come up with some answers.

Sincerely  
Prem N. Bajaj  
Wichita, KS  
28 October 2005

(Editor's Note: Dr. Prem N. Bajaj has been a member of INSAF for over 30 years and has ably served on the Executive Team several times. For his point number 3 above, the current Exec encourages everyone to introduce INSAF to their friends. A tool for this is the INSAF website at [www.insafweb.org](http://www.insafweb.org).

## EDUCATION & HEALTH PROMOTION IN RAIPUR, CHHATISGARH, INDIA

**Dr. Tarun and Dr. Kamal Kothari** from upstate New York have in the past supported Professor Ram Chaudhari's efforts at the Bhulpur, UP village. The Kotharis have turned their attention to improving the health and education of the disadvantaged in the Raipur area in Chhatisgarh.

Thanks to the Kotharis, \$10,000 is being sent to support this work in the Raipur area. We look forward to hearing about the progress of the efforts.

## BHULPUR SHIKSHA SAMITI, UP

One of the most exemplary and long-sustaining efforts for more than 20 years is the one led by **Dr. Ram Chaudhari**, Professor Emeritus of Physics, State University of New York, Oswego. Ram and his friends and family have been sponsoring the Bhulpur Shiksha Samiti in Bhulpur, Etawah District, UP, a small village of less than 1,000.

Ram and his friends took a near destroyed thatched middle school in 1986 and have transformed it into a high-quality intermediate college. The Shiksha Samiti has done a lot to promote the education of children and adults, especially girl children. A Rural Center of Science Culture has been set up to promote practical science.

As a result of the continued commitment by Ram, his friends and family, a total of \$5,100 has been sent this year to the Bhulpur Shiksha Samiti.

## "RIGHT TO INFORMATION" ACT IN INDIA

Corruption in India and other countries has been a major hindrance in the quality of life of a common person. A momentous law passed recently in India could have a revolutionary impact 10-20 years down the road. The Indian Right to Information Act was introduced to the Indian Parliament in July 2000. It came into effect on 12 Oct 2005. Under this law the information has become a fundamental right of an Indian citizen. Under this law all Government Bodies or Government-funded agencies have to designate a Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO's responsibility is to ensure that information requested is disclosed to the petitioner within 30 days, or within 48 hours in case of information concerning the life and liberty of a person.

Official information on the act can be seen at:

<http://www.persmin.nic.in/RTI/WelcomeRTI.htm>

Prior to this, 9 states (Goa, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and 2 more) had passed a similar law in recent years but now the all-country law takes over. A 29 page history entitled,

**THE MOVEMENT FOR RIGHT TO INFORMATION IN INDIA: People's Power for the Control of Corruption** By Harsh Mander and Abha Singhal Joshi can be found at

<http://www.foi-asia.org/India/AJfullreport.pdf>

A simple yet powerful example of the use of the Right to Information (RTI) act is from *The Hindu*, Oct 7, 2005 (Opinion Section) is of a slum dweller who applied for a new ration card.

(Continued on Page 6)

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## PROJECT AKSHARA IN MYSORE

Don't worry—you are not seeing double. This Project AKSHARA is an impressive and a very unique project in Mysore and separate from the Project AKSHARA in Hut Bay, Andaman & Nicobar mentioned on Page 1.

**Arun and Padma Cariappa** are supporting the Pratham organization in Mysore with the goal of educating children in the slums of Mysore. As a result of the fund-raising efforts of the Cariappas, a check for \$3,000 has been sent recently to Mysore to support this worthy effort.

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## SARASWATHY VIDYALAYAM, EANGANDIYUR, KERALA

**Vasu and Lalitha Vasudevan** have a wonderfully inspiring dream. They and their friends have a goal to raise \$75,000 over the next 3 years to complete a school already in operation and to grow the school into a "Kerala Nalanda". The school is located in Eagandiyur, which is about 75 miles from Kochi, and is managed by the Deenadayal Educational and Cultural Charitable Trust.

The Vasudevans would welcome any contributions from any of the other INSAF families for this future Kerala Nalanda. Please send a note to the Editor.

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## OSDAV SCHOOL, KAITHAL, HARYANA

This year's Late Sh. Milkhi Ram and Late Shmt. Kesra Devi Gulla Scholarship of Rs. 5,400 at the OSDAV School has been awarded to Ashima Gandhi, a student of class IX. Ashima cleared her 8th standard with 63.33% marks. Ashima was also the recipient of the same scholarship in her 8th grade. The scholarship was set up by **Manju and the late Bindi Chexal**.

As reported in an earlier Newsletter, a similar scholarship is being set up at the OSDAV school in memory of Bindi Chexal.

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## ASD High School, Narnaul, Haryana

**Om and Veena Garg** are founding members of INSAF and have been long-time supporters of education at the ASD High School. Thanks to their sponsorship, a check for \$250 has been sent recently to the school.

## SAMANWAY ASHRAM, BODH GAYA, BIHAR

## ADIVASI CHILD EDUCATION, LATHAKHAMAN, JHARKHAND

This is an update on two educational initiatives being supported by **Joginder and Meera Kundra**.

Bodh Gaya, Bihar is the site where the quest of Prince Siddharth was fulfilled after years of seeking the truth and the saga of Buddha began. He attained the supreme enlightenment and became 'The Buddha', the enlightened one. In Bodh Gaya, a follower and friend of Shri Vinoba Bhave named Shri Dwarko Sundrani, 84, runs a program to educate 1,100 children with the support from the Kundras. A check for \$3,300 was sent recently.

In Lathakhaman, Jharkhand, Dr. Subhash Chandra, who is a 1967 Physics Ph.D. from Caltech and now retired from a long professional career in the US, runs an NGO named the Village Hope Foundation. The foundation is dedicated to the education of over 300 children. A check for \$5,000 has been sent recently with the sponsorship of the Kundras.

In addition to the above projects, Joginder & Meera Kundra have also sent a generous contribution of \$1,000 to Pratham USA.

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## FOUR MORE FAMILIES REACH SILVER LEVEL

A few years back, as a way of recognizing member's contribution to projects, the Exec designated "Gold Level" to represent those who contributed over \$20,000 towards projects (**Prof. Ram and Raj Chaudhari, and Jo and Meera Kundra**), and "Silver Level" to designate contributors above \$5,000. Joining the Silver Level members **Sunder & Vinod Bhatla, Manju & the Late Bindi Chexal, and Drs. Ashok & Hema Varma, Ashok & Darshan Mehan and Bhav & Kaye Sharma**, are the following:

- ◆ **Santosh Chokhani**
  - ◆ **P. & Shakunthala Harshavardhana**
  - ◆ **Raj & Padmashri Lad**
  - ◆ **Ravi & Sunita Manrao**
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SODHANA is a registered Non Governmental Organization headquartered in Chipurupalli in Viziananagaram district. Sodhana's Registered Number in India is 227/83. INSAF members have a 20 plus years history of steady support to Sodhana. In 2004, the support came from Santosh Chokhani, Ashok & Darshan Mehan, Bhav & Kaye Sharma. The following are excerpts from the 2004-2005 Annual Report from Sodhana.

### **Educational Activities**

11 talented students were paid Rs. 28,828 to continue their academic studies. Sodhana also organized celebration of national festivals such as the Independence Day. Gandhi Jayanthi, Children's Day on 14th November and Teachers Day on 5th September were also celebrated by Sodhana in a fitting manner. On Children's Day, the cultural troupes from all the schools in which we are involved will participate and exhibit their talent in their chosen field of songs, dance, or acting under the banner of "PALLE PILLALA VINODA VEDIKA" (which means Village Children Entertainment Platform). This expenditure was met from donations to Sodhana — particularly we thank INSAF for their generous donations.

### **Medical Aid**

Sodhana sanctioned Rs. 13,600 towards medical aid to the deserving on humanitarian grounds to meet medical expenses by them. This expenditure was also met from out of donations received from INSAF.

### **RIGHT TO INFORMATION IN INDIA** (from pg. 4)

He was told he would have to give a bribe of Rs.2000 to obtain it. Our friend — an RTI-empowered citizen — just went ahead and applied for the ration card without offering any bribes. His neighbors warned him he would never get his ration card. They also told him how he would now have to keep visiting the rationing office. Some well-meaning friends suggested he should approach some non-governmental organization to take up his case, so that ultimately he would get his ration card. Our citizen had decided to become an enforcer of good governance. He found out in how many weeks everyone who paid bribes got their ration cards. He waited for an extra four weeks after

*Education Activities support from INSAF*



*Dussehra festival celebrations at Ramalingapuram.*



*Talent tests conducted at Rickshaw colony*

The above pictures are taken from SODHANA Annual Report for 2004-2005. Picture at top shows the Dussehra festival celebrations at Ramalingapuram. The lower photo shows a talent test being conducted at the Rickshaw Colony.

*Now is a great time to become an INSAF Life Member.*