



Towards fullness of life...  
an initiative of headstreams

# AALAMBA AT A GLANCE

## 2008-11

Activity	No. of participants			Details
	Total	Women	Men	
<b>Supporting formalized livelihood units</b>	117 entrepreneurs supported for 65 enterprises	96 (82%)	21 (12%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food and other eateries &lt;18 units&gt; (22 women)</li> <li>- Tailoring &lt;8 units&gt; (10 women)</li> <li>- Provision stores &lt;3 units&gt; (3 women)</li> <li>- Saree and garment sales &lt;18 units&gt; (18 women)</li> <li>- Trade &amp; services such as mobile servicing, beauty parlour, paper agency, artificial jewellery, etc &lt;12 units&gt; (10 women and 2 men)</li> <li>- Product manufacturing and value added services &lt;5 units&gt; (7 women and 7 men)</li> <li>- Dairy farming in Badami &lt;22 buffalos and 48 goats&gt; (26 women and 12 men)</li> </ul>
<b>Self Help Groups (SHGs)</b>	329 members from 24 SHGs	241 (73%)	88 (27%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9 areas of Bangalore</li> <li>- 4 villages of Badami taluk, Bagalkot district</li> </ul>
<b>Gramaabhidhhi Samithis</b> (Village Development Committee)	55 members in 2 villages of Badami taluk	26 (47%)	29 (53%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Village Development Committee (VDCs) in 2 villages covering over 200 households in Katharaki panchayat. The role of the VDC was to discuss and take up various activities for the development of the village, with special focus on health and sanitation.</li> </ul>
<b>Livelihood trainings</b> - Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP) & - Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP)	316 participants from Tumkur and Bangalore	296 (94%)	20 (6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 13 EAP trainings for 183 women (Kaggadasapura, A.Narayanpura, UdayaNagar, Tin Factory, Byappanahalli, Anandpuram, Seegehalli)</li> <li>- EAP for 32 sanitation workers in Tumkur (20 men, 12 women)</li> <li>- 11 EDP trainings for 101 women trainees for starting over 60 livelihood units</li> </ul>
<b>Employment and entrepreneurship skills (EES) training for youth/ women</b>	514 from over 20 locations in Bangalore, Mysore & Badami	341 (66%)	173 (34%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 06 from Drum shed slum (3 men, 3 women)</li> <li>- 13 from ECHO, Kammanahalli (13 men)</li> <li>- 08 from Malleshpalya (women)</li> <li>- 10 from Anandpura slum (men) &lt;Round 1&gt;</li> <li>- 14 Anandpuram slum (7 men, 7 women) &lt;Round 2&gt;</li> <li>- 06 Nellorepuram slum (women)</li> <li>- 05 from Ambedkarnagar, near Tannery Road (women)</li> <li>- 19 from Kaggadasapura (women)</li> <li>- 20 youth from across B'lore (15 women, 5 men)</li> <li>- 12 bamboo workers from across B'lore (women)</li> <li>- 20 from A. Narayanpura slum (13 women, 7 men)</li> <li>- 12 young women (tailoring school) in Katharaki village, Badami taluk</li> <li>- For 40 youth (men) from Doora panchayat, along with Srinivas Services Trust (SST)</li> <li>- For 329 members from 24 SHGs (241 women, 88 men)</li> </ul>
<b>Mentoring for slum youth/ women on business development</b>	40 in 30 different types of livelihood activities.	14 (35%)	26 (65%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 03 from Kaggadasapura tailoring group (3 women)</li> <li>- 05 from Sangam Foods (5 women)</li> <li>- 10 from Potter's Shop (7 men and 3 women)</li> <li>- 01 from Go Green bags initiative (1 woman)</li> <li>- 04 from Star Laundry (4 men)</li> <li>- 02 from Logos Carpentry (2 men)</li> <li>- 13 from ECHO (13 men)</li> <li>- 02 from women's health &amp; hygiene group (2 women)</li> </ul>
<b>Disaster Relief &amp; Rehabilitation</b>	Relief materials distributed to over 1600 households from 22 villages			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post-floods in October 2009. Badami taluk, Bagalkot district, Karnataka</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Sanitation</b>	Over 40 household toilets constructed with participation of Village Development Committee			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Badami, after awareness building in schools, SHGs and the community.</li> </ul>

# Report of activities

2008-11



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## From concern to commitment

It happened in the summer of 2008. A group of professionals came together to discuss issues and challenges related to the life of the underprivileged in our society. The realities that were unveiled in the course of discussions challenged them to do something about it. They formed a Society and registered it under the *Karnataka Societies Registrations Act 17 of 1960* and named it *headstreams*. The name spelt out their deep concern in the areas of **H**ealth, **E**nvironment **A**nd **D**evelopment, and expressed their commitment to add to the streams of development by way of **S**upport, **T**raining, **R**esearch, **E**ducation **A**nd **M**obilisation <Society>, thereby forming **HEADSTREAMS**. The only capital they had was a genuine concern, passion and commitment to serve. The group which included social workers, educationists and counsellors started working among the homeless and neglected children in the market places of Bangalore by contributing their time and expertise. Pooling their personal resources, though limited, they also availed the services of a full-time social worker. The activities gathered momentum when MphasiS, an IT Company with its headquarters in Bangalore, joined hands with the group. Eventually the various initiatives to identify with the marginalised in their struggle to attain fullness of life were brought under one umbrella by the name **aalamba** meaning 'help & support'. The highlights of the activities under *aalamba* from 2008-11 are given in the following pages.

## Learning from the market place

Our experience of working with the youth in the market places of Bangalore gave us a deeper insight into the issues faced by them in their everyday lives. Our intervention was an outcome of our reflections on the gap between need and available services. We realised that there were several vocational training initiatives by the Government and NGOs which were largely under-utilised. The focus of our first year was on reaching out to the school-dropouts and the under-employed youth and women in Shivajinagar and City Market. We conducted group activities and training programs for such youth in an attempt to help them analyse their situation and to motivate them to make use of the available facilities for better prospects. Later, the program was extended to include the slums of Bangalore. A total of 133 participants from over 10 locations in Bangalore were covered through these trainings. Vinod, a 21 year old youth, is one among them. He says:

*"I was compelled to leave my education after the tenth standard as I had to contribute financially to my family. But I could not find any suitable job openings. Soon after the aalamba training, I found employment in a nearby private company. This instilled confidence in me. I continued visiting the aalamba training centre, put in extra time and improved my computer skills. I soon found a better paying job as a computer operator. With motivation from the aalamba team, I enrolled in an evening college. I never thought I would ever sit in a class again. By listening to the sessions conducted by the (aalamba) facilitators and through personal interactions with them, I regained the confidence to try and complete my studies. It also feels good that I am able to do it all by myself without waiting for anybody else's support."*

Our experience of working with the youth opened our eyes to certain realities:

- the existing training courses tried to fit the youth into the opportunities found in the market, often disregarding their interests, aptitude and skills.
- the interventions were aimed at the youth, who were seen as the 'challenge' and very little attention was paid to the environment in which the youth lived or in which they were 'placed' for employment after the training.
- interventions were largely individual-based and aimed at preparing them to face the job-market, with hardly any support system in terms of peer-group, or continued support from the intervening agency.

In light of the above, we changed our approach and focussed on organising groups as the starting point.

## **Self Help Groups with focus on livelihoods**

We used the concept of self help groups (SHG) which was familiar to the people, and organised them in different areas. *Twenty-four* SHGs with a total of 329 members were formed in 9 areas of Bangalore and 4 villages of Badami taluk, Bagalkot district.

In our work with the groups we found that:

- Unstable and irregular income was a major issue which ranked high among the challenges that the SHG members wanted to address. Discussion on other issues such as health, education, social security, human rights and so on, usually ended up with members describing how their unstable livelihoods were intrinsically linked to these issues.
- In recent years, in addition to private money lenders, Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) have also played a role in advancing loans. However, most of the loans availed have been utilised for consumption purposes and the repayment of loans often end up being a burden on the family's income. Further, the coercive steps taken by the MFIs to recover the loan with high rates of interest have compounded the problem.

It is in this context that we launched a program to equip our SHG members to take up micro-enterprises as a livelihood option. The program included training, equipping and monitoring of livelihood activities. The SHGs provided a platform for sharing of livelihood needs; identification of interests, aptitude and skills; and a centre for training and equipping the members for various livelihood units. This was coupled with the usual practice of micro-savings and internal lending. In addition, the groups also dealt with social issues and problems within the community. This program was further extended to the members of SHGs organised by other agencies.

- In one of the SHGs, the women faced difficulties in accessing the Public Distribution System (PDS). The *aalamba* team supported the SHG representative in visiting the Civil Supplies Office and lodging a complaint with the Food Inspector who in turn took immediate action to settle the issues. He also gave his mobile number to the SHG members, so that they could call him in case of any problem in the future.
- The problem of irregular water supply in one of the areas was taken up by the SHG. They contacted the concerned officials who visited the area and ensured regular water supply.

We developed two **modules for training SHG members** before they started their enterprise – the Entrepreneurship Awareness Program (EAP) and the Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP).

The EAP was designed to help the participants analyse their economic situation and to identify the role that livelihoods occupied in their given situation. This was done by providing them with tools of analysis through which they made a clear assessment of their needs and identified whether they needed to modify/ expand/ supplement their livelihood patterns. Through sharing of experiences, they were then given insights on how other people in similar contexts had dealt with the situation.

The EDP equipped the participants to initiate a suitable livelihood unit by imparting insights on the various aspects of running a small enterprise. The results have been very encouraging. Participants with no experience in running a business have come up with ideas for new businesses, while others have come up with ideas for expanding the existing. A total of 316 participants have attended the different livelihood training programs conducted by *aalamba*.

Our team helped the participants in preparing detailed project proposals. Wherever necessary, we made arrangements for making the capital available from the SHG funds or banks. In case the SHGs did not have sufficient funds, the required amount was provided as an advance to the SHGs from the revolving fund of *aalamba*. The SHGs in turn disbursed the amount to the members as a loan. Special care was taken to ensure that each individual entrepreneur puts in an initial investment according to their capacity, to start their enterprise. The interest on the capital given as loan was used by the SHGs for their activities and the amount advanced by *aalamba* was returned without interest, in instalments. Close monitoring by our team as well as the members of SHGs ensured proper functioning of the enterprises. An incentive was offered to those who completed the repayment on time.

### **Details of the livelihood units set up by the SHG members as on June 1, 2011**

<b>Type of livelihood enterprise</b>	<b>Number of units</b>	<b>Number of people involved</b>
Eateries	18	22
Tailoring	8	10
Provision stores	3	3
Saree and garment sales	18	18
Trade & services (mobile servicing, beauty parlour, paper agency, artificial jewellery, etc.)	12	12
Product manufacturing and value added services	5	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>79</b>

The income from the livelihood program ranges from Rs.1,000 – Rs.15,000 per month. While some of them are engaged in it on a part-time basis to supplement their income, for others it is their primary source of income.

## **Livelihood school**

By the second half of 2010, an evaluation of the various aspects of *aalamba* was conducted with the help of an external consultant. One of the suggested recommendations for the sustainability of the livelihood program was a school for small business enterprises in the informal sector. Different modules were developed for different types of livelihood units. People engaged in similar types of enterprises were called together for sessions. They were given practical training in maintaining their accounts in a simple manner and in analysing the market and profit margin. Further, they were equipped in exploring ways and means for augmenting their enterprise. Attempts were made to connect them to the formal market and the banking system.

## **Social security, health care and education**

The findings of the evaluation led us to take a closer look at the socio-economic details of our group. We conducted a family survey to study their needs and challenges as well as their strengths and opportunities. The areas of social security, health care and education specifically attracted our attention. We identified two schemes – one related to social security (New Pension Scheme – Lite) and the other related to education of the children (*Vidyabhivrudhi*).

### **New Pension System (NPS) - Lite**

NPS-Lite is a very low cost pension scheme of the Government for the economically weaker sections of the society. In this scheme an individual can invest an amount ranging between Rs. 1000 - 12,000 per year. The fund management will be taken care of by government appointed agencies. The individuals will start receiving pension when they reach the age of 60.

This scheme has incentives from both the Central and State governments. The central government contributes Rs. 1000 per annum for 5 years in the individual's pension account. The State of Karnataka currently contributes a matching grant (equal to the person's annual contribution) subject to a maximum of Rs. 1200 per annum for workers in 6 trades (tailors, *dhobis*, head loaders, drivers, workers in automobile workshops and hotels).

None of the SHG members knew about this scheme. In addition, the procedures for accessing the scheme were difficult. Nobody knew whom to approach to get the scheme implemented. The *aalamba* team contacted the registrars of the Scheme, and prepared promotional materials in local languages. We conducted awareness sessions for SHG members and other NGOs and made arrangements for the interested members to join the scheme.

### **VIDYABHIVRUDHI – a savings scheme for education**

It was found that most of the self help group (SHG) members would seek a loan during the months of April/ May to pay for their children's educational needs. However, since the money in the SHG was not sufficient to provide loans for all the members, they were forced to take loans from private money lenders at high rates of interest. Sessions were conducted in all the SHGs to encourage members to put aside a certain amount every month, throughout the year, so that they would not have to seek a loan to pay their children's fees. Each family was helped to project how much they would need to pay at the beginning of the school/ college year and in the subsequent terms. Based on the amount required, they set saving targets for each month. This amount was pooled together in the SHG account and deposited monthly in a Recurring Deposit scheme with the bank.

**Training Materials:** By trying to plug gaps in knowledge, *aalamba* has prepared and compiled customised resource manuals.

- Career Guidance Module
- Health and Hygiene for Food Handlers (manual and posters)
- Basic employment and life preparation initiative
- Manuals on Life Skills for Vocational Training and Personality Development
- Module on Business Development
- Entrepreneurship Awareness Program (EAP) module
- Entrepreneurship Development Program (EAP) module
- Financial Literacy for Micro Enterprises
- Base-line survey formats for SHGs (urban and rural)

## Support for medical and educational needs

Deserving candidates for medical and education support were identified by the SHGs. *Four* persons were supported for their medical needs, and *ten* students were supported for their education.

Basamma was a child with developmental impairment and epilepsy. Her parents are migrant construction workers from North Karnataka who live in a shack near the railway line, close to one of the SHGs formed by *aalamba*. The SHG members brought her to the *aalamba* team and requested for support. Basamma was taken to NIMHANS and helped in securing medical treatment. She was being supported on a regular basis for her medical treatment.

As part of *aalamba* education support, eight children and two persons with disability from poor families were supported for their education.

Salman Ali is a boy with speech and hearing impairment. He had discontinued studies after his high school. With motivation and support from the *aalamba* team, he decided to continue his studies. His father was one of the street-vendors who were displaced from Shivajinagar.

## Awareness building on health

*headstreams* is a member of the All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN) and the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) for Tobacco Control.

To create awareness on issues pertaining to prices of medicines and to promote a conducive policy environment for a people-friendly medicine policy, a policy brief on Drug Pricing was prepared under the auspices of the All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN). The Policy Brief on Drug Pricing was released in the Press Club of Bangalore on March 30, 2009, by Shri. H. S. Doraiswamy, freedom fighter and human rights activist. It has been translated into different Indian languages.

The *aalamba* team distributed pamphlets and held an open-air event on the occasion of the Sunfeast World 10K Run Bangalore 2009 outside Kanteerava Stadium. The event was held to create awareness on the ill-effects of tobacco and to engage people in a discussion on the need to strengthen tobacco control legislation.

## AALAMBA IN RURAL KARNATAKA

### Floods

In October 2009, eight districts (including Bagalkot) were severely affected by floods. The people suffered severe loss of lives and livestock; houses were damaged; acres of fertile land were inundated and tonnes of food grains were spoiled. Most people were housed in schools. Many had to go without food, potable water, cooking materials, bedding and other basic needs for over a week. Infants and their mothers were in severe distress; breastfeeding mothers were forced to put newborns to sleep on cold, wet floors. The *aalamba* team responded to the needs in Badami taluk of Bagalkot district.

### Distribution of relief materials

After a survey of the affected areas, the *aalamba* team prepared a list of those who had been left out of the relief process by various agencies. Over 1600 households from 22 villages were covered in the distribution of relief materials like food items (wheat flour, dal [lentils], rice, oil and salt), utensils (plates, vessels, tumblers and ladles), clothes (children's clothes, sarees, warm clothes), and bedding (bed-sheets, blankets, rugs, mattresses).

The *aalamba* team found that most of those who had not received relief materials invariably belonged to the *dalit* families. When we tried to reach out to the families who were left out, we were stopped, locked up in school buildings, man-handled and our vehicles stoned. Citing existing village practice or other excuses such as lack of roads, the relief materials were most often not allowed to be sent to the *dalit* area (called *kaeris*). In one of the villages, a *dalit* youth was fined by the village leaders and made to apologise for preparing a list of those households who were left out of the relief distribution. In another village, the *aalamba* team found 30 *dalit* families, whose names were not on the beneficiaries' list, even though they had been affected and had been living in the relief shelter for over a month after the floods!

### An irresistible call

After the initial work of relief distribution, the *aalamba* team could not withdraw because of the overwhelming request by the people to stay on and support them in dealing with issues of rehabilitation, unemployment, ill-health and so on. Most of them were landless labourers and used to migrate to Mangalore or Udupi for work. After a lot of thought, it was decided that the *aalamba* team would continue to work in those villages and livelihood support would be the primary focus. The *aalamba* team focused its work in four villages – Budihala, Thaminala, Katharaki and Khyada.

## Mobilising people's power

The work with the marginalised communities revealed that a large proportion of the people were unaware of the existing Government schemes and were cut off from formal institutions such as banks, co-operative societies, local bodies and so on. Even if information was available, accessing them became a challenge due to corruption, lack of transparency and lack of organised power. The *aalamba* team focussed on organising the people to address issues concerning them.

### a) Gramaabhivridhi Samithi (Village Development Committee)

*Gramaabhivridhi Samithis* were formed to discuss and take up various activities for the development of the village, with special focus on health and sanitation. The *Samithis* which covered over 200 households had representation from SHGs, *panchayat*, school development and monitoring committees and other village-based groups. This created a platform where women and men, especially from marginalised communities, got an opportunity to present their views. They were able to voice their demands regarding utilisation of resources meant for the village. The *Samithis* mapped the resources available for the village and prepared a people's plan for the utilization of the same. These plans, which included action points for environmental hygiene were then shared with the *panchayat* members and officials.

The results of the *Samithi's* action process were immediately visible:

- The *panchayat* accepted the plans submitted by the *Samithi* (for road-side drains, washing areas and tree planting) and incorporated it into the *panchayat* action plan.
- Though the Total Sanitation Campaign of the Government had been in existence for very long, none of the families in the area had got any benefits from the scheme (or even knew about its existence). The *Samithi* members sought information from the *panchayat* and got the amount (Rs. 5375 per toilet) sanctioned to construct 32 toilets.
- The plan for construction of a toilet for the *anganwadi* which was pending for very long was completed.
- The compound wall of a school was repaired and a new gate installed to protect the saplings planted by the students. In another area, the ground around the school which was used by people for open defecation, was cleared and saplings were planted.
- A sub-centre constructed over 17 years ago was not functional despite repeated complaints by the local community members. It was being used as a cattle shed and sheep pen. The fans and other electrical systems were broken. The community members supported by the *aalamba* team represented the matter to the District Health Officer (DHO) and Taluk officials. A video documentation of the unused Sub-Centre and its impact on the community members was filmed and shared with the officials. Soon an Auxillary Nurse Mid-wife (ANM) was posted to the area and the Sub-Centre revived.
- When concerned agencies turned a deaf ear to affected *dalit* families in the relief process, the media (TV9) was approached to air the issue. The interviews with the affected persons were telecast. The following day, the families received compensation.
- Under the Special Component Plan (SCP), people who completed training in leather works received worker kits from the Government.
- A subsidy of Rs. 10,000 each was given to two widows through the *Amrutha yojane* to pursue dairy farming.
- The *aalamba* team supported community members who had availed of work under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), but had been duped by the local

people in-charge of the program. Misappropriation of funds, manipulation of records on job cards, muster rolls with wrong names/ names of deceased/ names of those employed elsewhere and so on were exposed and brought to the notice of the authorities. When approached, the concerned persons tried to silence the people, attempted to bribe activists and community members, threatened to cause physical harm to the community members, and went back on promises. But due to the persistence of the community, with the support of the *aalamba* team, the people were able to claim and receive what was rightfully theirs.

### ***b) Agricultural Labourers Federation***

A federation of agricultural workers has been formed to highlight issues concerning the workers, including NREGA. The federation called GRAKOOS (*Grameena Koolikarmikara Sangha*) was facilitated by Shri. Abhay from Raichur. The *aalamba* team has been supporting all the activities of GRAKOOS since its inception.

- A list of workers who needed the job card for NREGA was submitted to the authorities in 14 *panchayats*.
- In Thaminala, 8 days' work was arranged for 35 households through the intervention of the federation.
- A meeting was organised demanding proper implementation of NREGA in January 2011 in front of the Bagalkot *Zilla Panchayat* (ZP). Thirty people participated and met the ZP CEO and sought a written letter from him assuring proper implementation. As agreed upon, the CEO held discussions on the complaints. After the CEO's intervention, things have improved.
  - ❖ The job cards which were unduly delayed were issued immediately.
  - ❖ Payment for work done was released and all dues cleared.
  - ❖ As the *Panchayat* Development Officer (PDOs) was in-charge of more than one *panchayat*, it was difficult for the community members to meet him. After the intervention, the PDOs program list was put up on the notice board in the *panchayat* office and also communicated to the villages in advance.
- There was severe unrest in Nagara *Panchayat* after 400 NREGA workers were not paid their NREGA wages. The intervention of the State Director for NREGA, on the request of GRAKOOS resulted in labour payment of over rupees five lakhs.
- Over 250 NREGA workers from Bagalkot attended a state level rally held in Bangalore on March 2011 at their own cost. The workers met the minister for Rural Development, *Panchayati Raj*, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Shri. Jagadish Shettar, who promised all support in ensuring that the workers got the benefit of the NREGA without any hindrance.

### **Organising SHGs for livelihood promotion**

The *aalamba* team conducted meetings and facilitated the formation of self help groups, with special focus on livelihood programs. Thirteen SHGs (five men's and women's groups, 2 youth groups and 1 group for persons with disability) were organised in these villages.

***Dairy farming:*** Thirty eight flood-affected, landless/ marginal farmers' families (26 women and 12 men) were supported in dairy farming through the *aalamba* program. Twenty two families purchased buffalos, while twenty four families were supported to buy goats, through means of a revolving fund.

### ***Reviving the KMF Society***

A milk society affiliated to the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) was dysfunctional for a long period. This resulted in marketing problem for the participants of the *aalamba* livelihood (dairy farming) program. The participants supported by the *aalamba* team dialogued with KMF, who reopened the Society on the condition that a minimum of 100 litres of milk would be supplied every week. In addition, KMF promised a grant of Rs. 25,000 if the revived society functioned properly for a year.

**Tailoring:** Twelve young *dalit* women in Katharaki village are being trained in the tailoring school set up by *aalamba* on request of the SHG members for training in some productive livelihood skill. The space for the tailoring school was provided by one of the SHG members.

**Food processing:** There is a lot of demand for processed food products, but the SHG members were hesitant to take it up as an enterprise, because the risks involved in it. Three members from our SHGs were encouraged to participate in the training program (fruits and vegetables processing) organized by STEP in association with CFTRI (Central Food Training & Research Institute), Mysore.

A young woman trainee who was forced to discontinue studies after her tenth standard, has started making pickles, *puliyogare* mix and potato chips under the brand name '*Jawari Food Products*', with the support of *aalamba*. She hails from a landless family. Her parents used to migrate to Mumbai in search of work. She now wants to use the income from her business to support her parents and to continue her studies.

**Trainings:** Several training programs were conducted in SHG management, book keeping and dairy farming. Health camps for persons with disability were held in the area.

### **Power of information**

The two day workshop on Right to Information (RTI) for *dalit* SHGs in Badami had outstanding results. Forty five applications were filed with various government departments at the end of the second day on issues related to flood relief work, NREGA, PDS, etc. It was found that while some government agencies had no idea of the process involved in replying to an RTI application, some others resorted to threats to force applicants to withdraw their requests for information. However the applicants pursued the matter and the information was received in response to all the applications.

### ***Swachha Grama Programme***

A significant intervention in Badami taluk has been *aalamba's Swachha Grama* program – a health and sanitation initiative.

- A demonstration toilet was built in the houses of one of the youth SHG members using materials contributed by him. The technical assistance was provided by *aalamba*.
- Awareness campaigns and village level training programs were conducted in schools and village centres. Two villages, Budihala and Thaminala were taken up for this program.

- Information about the available schemes for village sanitation was collected from the respective *panchayats* and the same was presented during the SHG meetings.
- A total of 42 toilets have been constructed with support from the revolving fund of *aalamba* in Budihala and Thaminala villages.

## Other health related activities

**Public health system:** A public hearing on health issues was conducted by *aalamba* in partnership with Janaarogya Andolana Karnataka (JAA-K), in Bagalkot. A study on Primary Health Centres (PHC) was conducted where the condition and services of three PHCs were documented. The findings of the study were furnished to the respective departments, to the press and were also presented at the public hearing. Cases of negligence in health care were presented at the public hearing held on February 19, 2010 at Bagalkot. Various organizations working in the district attended the hearing, including Antyodaya from Mudhol, DSS, Sarvodaya from Jamakhandi and Samvada. Around 600 people had gathered. The event received good media coverage. The lacunae in the health systems were discussed and a comprehensive campaign to improve the system was prepared at the event.

Another study was carried out in 40 sub-centres functioning under 10 PHCs. Data for 20 sub-centres were analysed and the improper functioning of the sub-centres was exposed. The District Collector promised to take action to revive the sub-centres.

**Primary health charter:** Before the *panchayat* elections in Karnataka, the *aalamba* team attended an exchange program organised by Community Health Cell (CHC), Bangalore. A primary health charter (a village health manifesto) was prepared and all the candidates of the *Gram Panchayat* election were approached to support the manifesto. Seven contestants of the *Gram Panchayat* elections signed the manifesto with a promise to implement the same if they came to power. At the same time, pamphlets containing information on the manifesto were distributed among the community members.

**Access to medicines:** A seminar on “Medicines and the Lay Person” was organised in Bagalkote by *aalamba* and JAA-K in November 2010. The topics covered were essential medicines, the effect of patents on patients and the Novartis legal battle. Over 40 participants attended the seminar. Dr. Sharada, the Health Officer from Hole-Alur attended one session and answered questions regarding the functioning of public health system.

**Health Policy:** In December 2010, the *aalamba* team in Badami organised a discussion on the Karnataka Promotion of Public Health and Prevention of Diseases Bill, 2010. The *aalamba* team along with JAA-K members, had earlier attended a meeting organised by the Karnataka Health System Development and Reform Project (KHSDRP) and Karnataka Institute of Law & Parliamentary Reforms (KILPAR), who are involved in drafting the Bill. The team presented concrete recommendations regarding the Bill.

**Health camp:** As a part of community-based rehabilitation programs, *aalamba* in association with Spandana and Jagruthi organized a village health camp for persons with physical and mental impairment. Fifteen children upto 12 years of age with serious impairments were brought for the camp and received medical advice and treatment.

**Workshop on public hearings in health:** In October 2010, *aalamba* along with JAA-K, organized a three-day workshop to review the work that was carried out during 2009-2010. Experiences of various public hearings conducted on health system throughout the state were shared and issues pertaining to rational drug use and patents were discussed.

## Relationship with other agencies

- **Samvada:-** Four representatives visited the flood-affected villages and witnessed the flood relief and rehabilitation work.
- **Action Aid India (AAI):-** Two representatives from AAI visited Badami to document the flood relief and rehabilitation activities. The photos taken were exhibited at a photo-exhibition called 'Deluge' held at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- **Association for India's Development (AID):-** An AID volunteer visited the flood-affected villages of Badami and was part of the relief distribution efforts. She also participated in the shelter program.
- **Community Health Cell (CHC) Interns:-** A CHC intern spent a month with the *aalamba* team in Badami. She participated in group meetings and facilitated discussions on post-flood health issues. Another intern was involved in the follow-up work of the public hearing, in matters concerning health.
- **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS):-** The *aalamba* team hosted 17 social work students from TISS, Mumbai for two weeks. They studied the *aalamba* program in Bangalore and Badami as part of their field exposure program. Another group of three students visited Khyada village and documented the flood relief work.

## Organisational matters

All the society members contributed their time, resources and efforts in the functioning of the Society. Naveen Thomas served as the Co-ordinator of *aalamba*. Rev.Dr.M.C.George helped in the programmatic and administrative matters of *aalamba* on a regular and honorary basis.

Regular Annual General Body Meetings (AGBM) were held where the Annual Report was adopted and the Audited Statement of Accounts was passed. The Executive Committee which met at least twice a year, actively planned and reviewed the activities of the organisation. Simon Rodrigues and Associates served as the auditors for the Society's accounts.

**The team:** The present *aalamba* team consists of Anu Thomas, Hanumanth Poojar, V. Lokesh, S. Prafulla, Shafiullah N. (accountant), Shivabayavva Huddar, Smitha Gowda, Swarna Bhat and Rajesh Joseph.

## Acknowledgements

A number of people have been co-travellers in the *aalamba* journey, contributing to the positive streams of development. We record our sincere thanks to the community members who were the participants of the *aalamba* program, for travelling with us on this journey and allowing us to be a part of their lives.

*Why would you support a new organisation? Will it sustain? Will it perform?* These are questions that must have been asked of MphasiS when they decided to partner with us. They chose to look at the passion, experience and commitment of the members of the organisation, and partnered with us a year after *headstreams* was born. We thank MphasiS F1 Foundation for the trust reposed in us and for their contribution to the work of *aalamba*. We specially thank Shri. Elango R., Chief Human Resources Officer and Dr. Meenu Bhambhani, Global Head, CSR, at MphasiS for their contribution and participation in different activities of *aalamba*. Many employees of MphasiS also regularly contributed to the various initiatives of *aalamba* through the Employee Contribution Portal. We thank them for their interest and support.

Employees of TCS contributed financially and volunteered their time and efforts during the flood relief work at Badami. We thank them for their concern and involvement. We also thank the volunteers and professionals from various organisations who assisted in the distribution of the relief material and contributed to the relief efforts.

Several individuals have also contributed their thoughts, ideas, time and money to meet different needs at different points of time. We thank each one of them. We specially thank Mr. Nitin Warier, Dr. Lakshmi Warier, Mr. Jacob Chacko and Mr. Ranjan George for consistently supporting different initiatives.

Mr. Dharmaraju Kakani from Oxfam GB was an early supporter of the program, even before the organisation took its present form. We thank him for his contribution. Dr. Kishan Kumar and Dr. Valsa Mathew have always readily contributed their time and expertise. We thank them for their involvement.

*aalamba* has benefitted from the expertise of a large number of professionals from various reputed organisations including Gokuldas Images, Hotel Lalit Ashok, Apple of my i, and Mother Earth. We are thankful to each one of them for their support and valuable contribution. We specially thank Shri. Sumir Hinduja, Shri. Sunil Raheja and Shri. Vasant of Gokuldas Images for their valuable contribution to our livelihood programs.

Financial management and accountability is key to an organisation's functioning. We thank Mr. George Cheriyan for his time and efforts in reviewing our financial systems and providing valuable inputs from time-to-time. We also thank our auditors, Simon Rodrigues & Associates and appreciate the values and ethical commitment which they bring to their work.

We thank Rev.Dr.M.C.George who helped *aalamba* in the programmatic and administrative matters on a regular and honorary basis. We also recognise his contribution in preparing the first draft of the *aalamba* theme song. We thank Selena, Nigel, Sam and Santhy who refined the song and extended it. Special thanks to Sr. Anistacea, Tharsilla and Ashwini for translating it into Tamil and Kannada.

Shri. Bhaskar Reddy and Shri P.M.Varghese provided us space to run our training centre and were supportive of all our activities. St. Joseph's Indian High School and St. Joseph's Arts & Science College have also always contributed their space for our programs and partnered with us in all our work. We thank them all for their contribution.

Several NGOs have also worked with us in different initiatives. We specially thank *the ant* (action north-east trust), Fedina, Poussepin Alliance for Social Services (PASS) and Community Health Cell (CHC) for partnering with us in the quest towards achieving fullness of life for all.

## **Looking forward**

As an organisation, we have moved from infancy to childhood. This is just a beginning. There are many more miles to cross, hurdles to overcome and co-travellers to befriend in our journey towards fullness of life for all. We recommit ourselves to the journey ahead.

- Report by  
Co-ordinator, *aalamba*  
Aug 28, 2011

### ***For further details, please contact:***

The Co-ordinator, *aalamba*  
*Headstreams*, No. 2200, H.A.L. II Stage  
5<sup>th</sup> E Cross, 17<sup>th</sup> A Main, Bangalore  
Karnataka state. Pin: 560 008  
Ph: 080-25200318, 9342858056  
Email: [contact@headstreams.org](mailto:contact@headstreams.org)

Website: [www.headstreams.org](http://www.headstreams.org)



# *headstreams society & aalamba team members*

*The people who make it happen!*

## **headstreams society members**

- **Dr. Cheriyan Alexander** is a professor of English in St. Joseph's College, Bangalore. He has been teaching since 1982. Dr. Alexander writes on issues of literature, culture and the arts for newspapers and magazines.
- **Rev. Dr. M. C. George** is an ordained Minister of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. He has over 40 years of experience in rural development work, counselling, education and administration. He is the author of over 75 articles on different issues. He has also authored four books on homiletics, family and parenting, published by CSS (Christava Sahitya Samithy).
- **Jean George** is a stay-at-home mother who has completed her M. Phil in Psychiatric Social Work from NIMHANS, Bangalore. She began her career as a School Counsellor in 1997 and has subsequently worked as a Development Co-ordinator in a child-centred NGO and trained corporates on topics of mental health.
- **Mahalakshmi Parthasarathy** is a consultant, working with environment, development and health related organizations since 1995. She has varied experience in Research, Communication, Networking and Administration. She is currently leading a programme where young women from low income backgrounds pursuing professional courses are groomed for excellence in their field.
- **Naveen I. Thomas** completed his M.A. in Social Work and is passionate about livelihoods and social security. He is involved in disaster management since 2000. He is also part of the people's health movement and is involved in research and action on issues of health and social exclusion.
- **Nitya Thomas** is a corporate lawyer. After completing her studies in Law, Nitya also did an advanced Post Graduate Diploma in Business Law from National Law School, Bangalore. Her interests lie in the fields of arts, theatre, music, pottery, and Indian classical dance.
- **Santhy George** completed her Master's in English Literature and B.Ed. She taught in Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore, for three years. She is a stay-at-home mother who is interested in family and parenting issues and has attended a course in Family Developmental Counselling.
- **Selena George** completed her Master's in Social Work and is passionate about children, especially in issues concerning their psychosocial development. She has experience in this through her work as child facilitator at the learning co-operative Bhavya in Bangalore, an orientation course she did at NIMHANS, Bangalore, working with the Child And Police (CAP) Project with Dr. Reddy's Foundation, Hyderabad, and through mothering her daughter.
- **Shailesh Vaite** completed his M.A. in Social Work in 2000. He has worked with several organisations in the South Asian region on environmental and health issues. He is currently working on tobacco control related issues in the Asian region.

## **The aalamba team**

- **Anu Thomas** completed her Master's degree in Psychology and is involved in organising young women's SHGs for entrepreneurship. She is also working on a social entrepreneurship program.
- **Hanumanth Poojar** is experienced in community organisation and is part of the Badami *aalamba* team. He is also a member of a local Co-operative Society which deals with banking.
- **Lokesh V.** has completed his Master's in Social Work and has over three years' experience in organising community groups. He is proficient in using participative art to create awareness and to mobilise people.
- **Prafualla S.** is a graduate in Natural Resource Management and has experience of working on livelihood issues.
- **Rajesh G.** has completed his Master's in Economics and has vast experience in working with the urban informal sector workers.
- **Smitha G.** has completed her Master's in Social Work and is an expert in training women's groups in entrepreneurship skills.
- **Shafiulla N.** is a Commerce Graduate with over experience in teaching Tally software. He has worked as an accountant for over three years and has experience in Tally and SAP.
- **Shivabayavva Huddar** is a member of the *aalamba* team at Badami. She has experience in community organisation and is also a tailoring expert.
- **Swarna Bhat** is based in Bagalkot and leads the *aalamba* team at Badami. She has over 12 years experience in organising people for their rights. She is an active member of the Grameena Koolikarmikara Sangha (GRAKOOS) and is a core committee member of the People's Health Movement Karnataka (JAA-K) and the Right to Food Campaign in India.
- **Daniel Madapur, Kempanna, Kiran Kumar, Padma Priya, Ramesha, Rashmi and Sowmya K. R.:** They had been part of the *aalamba* team and have served in various capacities over the years. We thank them for their contribution!

**Co-ordinator:** Naveen I. Thomas (Secretary, *headstreams*).