NEWSLETTER OF ASSOCIATION FOR INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT-PENN STATE / STATE COLLEGE CHAPTER

Sankalp

FALL 2003

Letter from the President:

It has been a very successful academic year for AID-State College, with a great increase in the enthusiasm and the number of volunteers at our various events. With more volunteers showing up for the football games in fall 2002, the sales were at a record high. These volunteers were as much involved with enjoying the games as they were with the sales. It was a great season, both for the football and the volunteer teams. This success has encouraged us to manage even bigger stalls for the next season, which was thought to be unachievable before. Let's go lions!

The events for the National Gandhi Day of service were a great success too. The visibility of AID is now well established on this campus and this was proven by the number of participating volunteers from other collaborating organizations such as ISA, DSI and EWB. The food collection drive was a great success too, a result of great coordination in placing the donation boxes at strategic points across campus, and flawless publicity.

Our success in the fall semester spurred active members and volunteer teams during the "A Taste of India" food fest in the spring semester. The increase in volunteers allowed us to form new committees such as the decoration committee, which did a phenomenal job in decorating the venue and livening the occasion. Unprecedented ticket sales and space limitations contributed to a very crowded food fest, however, the coordinators and volunteers did a commendable job of managing the situation. To further enhance the next food fest, we have decided to sell limited tickets to prevent crowding, and foster a more relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

The spring semester featured the popular music concert. The concert marked the debut of "The Indus Elementz," a band consisting of Indian PSU graduate students. The talent and showmanship of the band was easily apparent as they drove the crowd to dancing and cheering on the evening of April 12th. Hat's off to them for their amazing performance; a result of a lot of hard work on their part. We look forward to future collaborations with the band.

We devoted most of our energy during the summer to project management. We evaluated project updates received from DISHA and Vimukti, and had a visit report from State College AIDer, Saurabh, who visited a village that is part of the AID-funded "Hundred Block Plan." The national AID conference was held at Pittsburgh this year and several State College members attended this conference. The conference provides an opportunity to tackle some of the nitty-gritty issues regarding AID-sponsored programs and AID policies. One of the outcomes of these discussions was post-approval guidelines for funded projects. These guidelines are aimed to better project management and we plan to have more project updates and reviews in the coming year. Our summer session also consisted of regular discussions and presentations on subjects of

Inside:
AID-India conference report, Food festival pictures, The Indus Elementz debut, EFT and you, Project reports, and more!

http://www.clubs.psu.edu/aid http://www.aidindia.org

COME AND FIND OUT WHAT WE ARE ALL ABOUT!

interest to AID and these sessions led to exposure to new ideas and an exploration of AID philosophy.

We look forward to another productive academic year during which we hope to continue, and improve, our tradition of fund-raising events and project evaluation/sponsoring. In addition, we plan to initiate and foster collaborations with other student organizations on campus in an effort to increase awareness about AID. We always welcome new volunteers; they are invaluable to us as a source of new ideas and helping us succeed with new challenges.

-- **Rajaraman Ramanarayanan**
(rxr242@psu.edu)

AID Conference report

From a seat in the back row, I gazed down the big hall that held around 250-300 people, mostly comprised of young students and professionals. Digital cameras connected to computers were broadcasting the presentation live over the Internet. I could see flickering laptop screens and people frantically taking notes. Everyone was intensely focused and the atmosphere was instantly energizing.

The Fifth Annual Conference of the Association for India's Development (AID) was held at the Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh over the Memorial Day weekend. People working with AID from all around the country had gathered for this three-day event. About fifteen AIDers from State College drove to Pittsburgh to attend the conference. Most of us, including me, were attending the conference for the first time, and we hadn't anticipated that this experience would have such a lasting impact on our lives.

The conference primarily consisted of a series of presentations and workshops. The presentations were given by a variety of people-- AID volunteers, social activists, as well as guest speakers from India. The first day started with an update about the AID chapters in India, given by Ravi Kuchimanchi, a founding and leading member of AID. The next session broke the ice among the participants as they spoke about how AID had helped them to become more aware and responsible in their lives. The guest speaker for the evening was Swati Desai, a social activist working with tribal villages in south Gujarat. Her presentation showcased her work and her experience related to grassroots development and environmental protection, conducted with the goal of economic and political empowerment of the local people.

The State College contingent at the AID conference

The latter part of the evening was focused on the communal riots in Gujarat and its implications. Gautam Desai, an AID-Duke volunteer, who visited Gujarat after the riots led the presentation. His slides transported the audience to the ravaged and burning streets of Gujarat following the riots. At one point, he juxtaposed pictures of the riot-devastated areas and earthquake-affected areas, and challenged the audience to distinguish between the two. The point was clear, human engineered disasters are just as devastating as natural calamities.

There was not a person in the audience without tears when Nishrin, the daughter of Ehsaan Jaafri, spoke about the gruesome death of her father during the riots. It was accepted that cessation of communal division is an essential aspect of the social and economic development of the country, and AID passed a resolution to actively promote pluralism as its agenda.

The second day of the conference started with a presentation by Nafisa Ben, a well-known activist from Gujarat, whose organization was involved in solving water-related problems. She emphasized the need for holistic development, and the use of local knowledge and resources for overcoming problems faced by villages. The rest of the day was devoted to administrative workshops dealing with a variety of topics from

project evaluation to treasury. The evening was allocated to discussion of the second major topic for the conference, which was supporting the cause of the Bhopal gas tragedy victims. The speakers were Rashida Bi and Champa Devi, two survivors of the gas tragedy who are still fighting for compensation and justice. They recounted their experiences from the day of the tragedy to the years of token relief that followed. The talk ended with a hearty rendition of a folk song, composed by activist Satinath Sarangi, by the entire audience.

AID activists singing a song

The conference dealt with important and serious issues, but the organizers had not neglected to provide some opportunities for fun also. Volunteers from different chapters presented songs, skits, and dances, which were brilliantly performed and highly entertaining.

The third day of the conference consisted of more workshops, and an interactive session on living holistically. The conference signed off with a presentation by Vamsi, of AID-State College, on the issues faced by AID volunteers in continuing to support social development activities after returning to India.

The conference was very well organized and informative. It provided the means for everyone to participate and learn new things. It was inspiring to see so many people, each with their own passions and ideas, coming together for a common cause. I will cherish this experience of meeting some of the brightest people of India working towards a dream that all Indians have.

-- **Rushabh Mehta** (ram346@psu.edu)

Vimukti Update

AID-State College continues to support the Vimukti project, whose goal is the empowerment of Dalit women in the Raichur district of Karnataka. The six volunteers for Vimukti are working towards setting up livelihood schemes for sangahas. These schemes range from terracotta jewelry and soap production, to neem and pesticide production. The terracotta jewelry production has worked well, and some of this jewelry is even being sold by the State College chapter during AID-organized events. The drought situation in Karnataka has made things difficult for the Vimukti volunteers because the dependence on Hydroelectric power has led to frequent power cuts in the rural areas. Nevertheless, terracotta jewelry and child labor education programs are proceeding normally, and rainwater harvesting has also commenced to aid in drought relief. AID-State College has provided Vimukti their Phase II funding, of $3500, and this money is being supplemented by the proceeds from the jewelry sales. Vimukti continues its role as a catalyst--providing support, encouragement, and information--to bring people hope and confidence in their ability to change their own future.

-- **Suvrath Mahadevan** (suvrath@psu.edu)

THE NEW FACE OF AID-STATE COLLEGE:

President	Rajaraman Ramanarayan
Vice-President	Anand Narasimhamurthy
Secretary	Ujjwal Baid
Treasurer	Sachin Oswal
Publicity Chair	Archana Sriram
Liaison Officer	Saurabh Mishra
GSA Rep.	Suvrath Mahadevan
Faculty Advisor	Jayashree Sonti

AID, EFT, and You

AID:
"Interconnected Problems have Interconnected Solutions"

AID's vision is to address the depth of problems across the breadth of our nation in a holistic manner, through several short-term developmental projects and a more sustained, long-term involvement in selected efforts. Part of this effort involves fund raising, while the rest of it is devoted to successful implementation of our ideas through the funding of appropriate projects.

Here is an analysis of the funds raised this year by the State College Chapter:

5th Annual Food Festival – 35 Cooks x 75 Volunteers x 550 patrons = $4500
Football Games Stall – 8 Games (8 Days) x 10 Volunteers = $4270

Fundraising is the basis for our ability to nurture developmental projects in India. To further increase our effectiveness as an organization, we need to enhance our efforts towards the evaluation and assessment of more projects, which should be possible through efficient fundraising. Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) is one way of achieving this objective.

EFT: An AID-State College Initiative
"It's all about money"

EFT is a paperless, electronic way of transferring funds from one financial institution to another. EFT uses the Citizen Bank's Automated Clearing House (ACH) service to transfer money electronically, from a donor's checking account to the AID's bank account.

The scheme was initiated by the State College chapter in May 2003 and has been successfully implemented for the past 4 months. Here's an analysis of the funds raised through EFT in first 4 months:

EFT – 10 Donors x 15$ (avg.) x 4 months = $600

Here's our target for the year 2004:

EFT – 50 Donors x 10$ (avg.) x 12 months = $6000

These numbers are projections just for State College, and they provide an idea about the impact that EFT can have on our fundraising ability. This Independence Day (Aug 15th, 2003) the scheme was made available to all AID chapters, and we hope that it results in a significant increase in AID-wide fund collection.

The EFT Process

- Donor fills out an EFT form (that is available on the web at www.aidindia.org in the "Donate" section)
- Donor mails the form, along with a voided check, to EFT P.O. Box at State College
- Donor's account details are entered into the EFT database housed in State College
- Funds (specified by the donor) are transferred from the donor's account to the AID account once a month
- Receipts, detailing total funds transferred, are mailed to the donor once a year
- There is a provision for change of address/bank account information/donation amount or termination of donations

Advantages to AID

- This scheme reduces paperwork.
- It provides a dependable source of money that we can use to fund projects
- It extends access to places that don't have AID chapters in their vicinity.

YOU:
"Flights to catch, work to do
Can't find time, to send checks to you."

Advantages for You

- One check will last you a lifetime. You can discontinue your donations anytime.
- Small monthly installments & hence less financial burden
    - student volunteers can contribute
- All donor information is kept confidential. The checks are aptly disposed once the information is entered into the EFT database, which is accessible only to the EFT coordinator. In addition, the electronic transactions are encrypted & secure.

- Donations are Tax exempt. Receipts, mailed once a year, can be used for tax purposes.

Disadvantages for You

- None :)

We invite you to pledge your support to AID through the EFT initiative and we greatly appreciate your help and encouragement towards meeting our goals.

For more information on the scheme, please email eft@aidindia.org

-- **Sachin Oswal** (sachinoswal@yahoo.com)

DISHA Project Update

Gujarat Livelihoods Regeneration Project

- Approved in 2001 by 3 chapters within AID – State College, Duke and Minnesota. Project work started towards the end of year 2001.
- Total amount approved - $64,000.
- The project consisted of 3 different proposals coordinated by an NGO named DISHA (Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Action).

The 3 projects are:

- Shoe making: to help the Chammar (shoe maker) community of Banaskantha district by providing raw materials to make shoes and also help them with the marketing of the finished product.

- Ambar charka: to supply Ambar charkas and necessary raw materials to affected families in Patdi taluka to enable them to earn money using their traditional weaving skills.

- Salt pan: to help local salt makers in Patdi taluka, known as Agariyas, by buying a salt pan for groups of around 10 people, and providing them with the necessary raw materials.

1) Currently, around 70 people are engaged in the shoe making activity and the sales have been very good. The shoes are being sold at local markets as well as elsewhere through DISHA's contacts. This has helped some of the families to pay off debt that they had obtained at high interest rates.

2) The Ambar charka project has not been implemented completely as it was found that there wasn't a sufficient market to sell the manufactured products. Hence, alternative income generating activities are being organized for these people, based on the market demand in the region and the skills that they possess. Twenty women who already had an ambar charka were provided with raw materials, and they have been marketing their product with the help of a local cooperative.

3) The salt machines and the diesel engines for pumping the salt water have been distributed to a total of 55 groups and they are working well. Marketing the crushed and packaged salt has not been a problem, as there is high demand for it.

4) The first installment of $32,000 has been almost completely used. The remaining funds will be sent to DISHA after their future plans have been finalized. The second phase of the project will target more people in the activities that have a greater market demand.

More details are available at:
http://www.clubs.psu.edu/up/aid/home/projects/disha/main.html

- **Kavitha Nellore** (kavi@psu.edu)

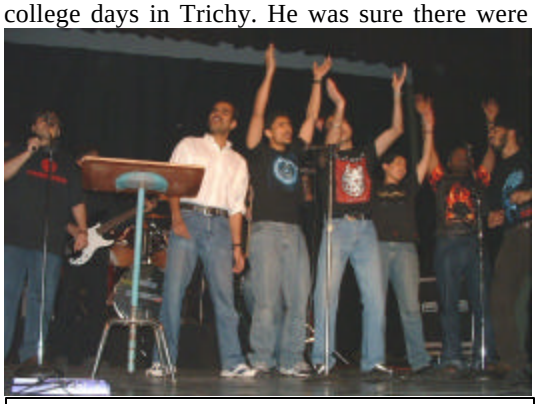
Indus Elementz concert

May 7, 2003

"Is there any way we can get this backdrop down," Rajaraman is talking on the cell phone, backstage, in the State College Area High School auditorium. It's Sunday and already past 4pm. The concert starts in less than a couple of hours. The stage backdrop is not down, exposing an ugly wall. Meanwhile, the band is furiously practicing and tuning their instruments, to get it just right. It's their debut concert. We run to Wal-mart and buy all the yards of black cloth available, hoping to cover the back of the stage. It works, we are in business…It's show time! "Ram, make sure you turn off the auditorium lights after you finish your introduction." "Okay." Stage lights out. Cheers. Ram is now on the stage, spotlight on him: "Friends, on behalf of the Association for India's Development, State College Chapter, I welcome you all…"

"Presenting, the Indus Elementz!" Lights out. Loud cheers. Silence. The music begins with Rahman-esque beats, and the stirring notes to "Vande Mataram" fill the air. Here we go…

Sometime during the spring of 2002, a group of graduate students, mostly from the engineering departments, took initiative to form a band. Vicky (Chandrashekar Ramaswamy), a music enthusiast, had played in concerts during his college days in Trichy. He was sure there were



Vocal rhythms by the Indus Elementz

other students at Penn State who also enjoyed playing music. Aravindan, who had joined Penn State in the fall of 2002, too had played in concerts at Pilani, and the two were confident that they could pull one off here. After a barrage of emails sent out to scope for band members, thirteen students got together: Arvindan and Vishal on the keyboard, Angshuman, Vicky, Madhu, Jaspreet and Batra on guitars, Kamal on the drums, Sameer, Lalu, Jasanjyot (Jassi), Dheeraj (DJ) as the male vocalists and Vidhya, as the female vocalist. The Indus Elementz was born. Some of the band members had friends who worked for AID, and a collaboration between the two seemed inevitable. Thus it came to be that the annual AID-sponsored concert would feature the debut of the Indus Elementz.

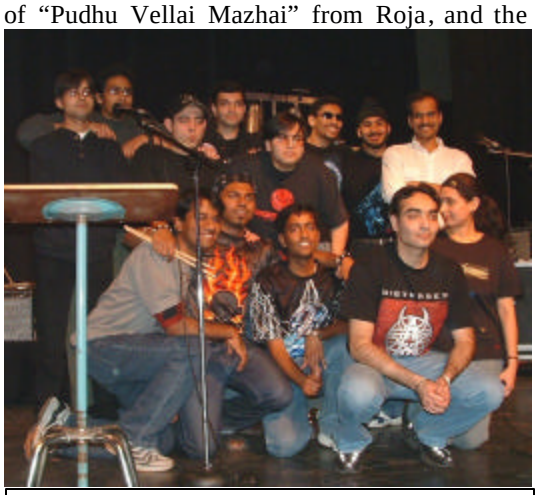
Many couldn't resist dancing!

"Can everyone hear the sound in all parts of the auditorium?" Vicky is asking the crowd. They have stopped mid-song in "Aap ki dua." Something always goes wrong. Some piece of the sound equipment isn't working. Jaspreet provides the audience some diversion with an impromptu guitar play and singing, while the sound technician, Tim, is figuring out what's wrong. Finally, they decide to take a break. The crowd enjoys bhel, pakoras and soda thanks to the work of Jayashree, our faculty advisor. Back in the hall, the problems are fixed and we are ready to rock-n-roll again. "Intehaan ho gayi, intezaar ki" It sounds great! We are back on track.

Rajaraman and Vibha were the concert coordinators for AID. With the Food Fest behind us in March, they had less than three weeks to plan for the concert. Being part of a small, student-based community requires a lot of effort for successful fund raising. There was so much to be done for the concert: from reserving the hall and printing the tickets, to publicity and event-management. It is always a great learning experience. The commitment of the AID members and volunteers for the cause is always

inspiring, and AID is a great way to bring together Indians from diverse backgrounds.

The crowd is really into the concert now. They have been treated to some excellent numbers. From the foot tapping, "Humma humma," to the evergreen (or blue?), "Neele neele amber se," the concert swings into top gear with an Amitabh medly. "Rang barse," "Dekha na hai re," "Khaike paan banaras," "Sara Zamaana," they just keep on flowing. The crowd is out of their seats now. To quote Tony Greig, they are dancing in the aisles. As the concert comes to an end, we listen to a brilliantly sequenced version of "Pudhu Vellai Mazhai" from Roja, and the



THE INDUS ELEMENTZ

concert signs off with the nostalgic "Poorani Jeans." That was a great performance. Wow!
Epilogue: We are at Jayshree's place, having a post concert dinner. Aravindan is playing on the piano and everyone is singing. It is great to see that a mission has brought so many people together. Events like the concert help increase the visibility of AID and help us to spread our message. We look forward to hosting the Indus Elementz for another concert in the winter.

-- **Rushabh Mehta** (ram346@psu.edu)

HBP: Firm steps towards development

A visit report:

The AID-State College/Penn State chapter is funding the Chand Block in Bihar as part of the Hundred Block Plan (HBP). This plan covers 60 villages in this block. The first phase of the program is already in progress. This phase is based on the Arogya Iyakkam health program, which was rated as one of the ten best programs in the world by UNICEF. More details about the program can be obtained on the AID website (www.aidindia.org).

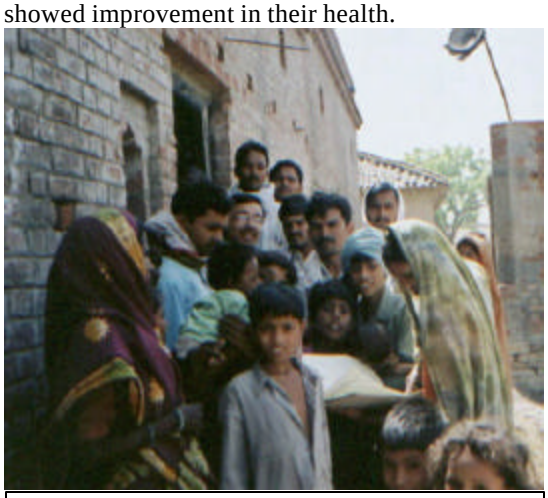
My motivation for this visit was to get an idea as to what the on-site volunteers thought of the program, and to gauge their commitment to its aim. I strongly believe that if the volunteers are committed to the cause, then it is only a matter of time that the program will grow in strength. During my visit, I was fully satisfied with the determination and the dedication of the volunteers of the Chand Block.

Chand Block is in the district of Kaimur. The headquarters of Kaimur district are in Bhabhua. I reached Bhabhua on 30th May and met Ishwarlok Singh, the secretary of the Bihar Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS). He took me to Diwane village where I was scheduled to stay. This village has no electricity, phone or modern toilets. A single solar phone is available to the residents and water is collected from wells. Out of the 60 villages in this block, about 40 villages bear with these conditions.

Birju ji gave me a detailed description of the progress of the program in their block. The volunteers are coordinating with the Public Health Centers (PHCs) in the area to ascertain the proper distribution of vitamin A (to relieve night blindness), ORS packets and iron tablets, etc. These supplements helped cure the night blindness of a kid named Ishwar Prasad. This instilled confidence in the program among the local people.

The next day, we went to visit some villages. I met the village level volunteers and some families. Under the program, each village is given a register in which the names of all the children below five years of age are recorded. The children are weighed every six months and are designated into five categories depending on their weight (normal or from grades I to IV). The village level volunteers visit each family five to six times a month and give health-related advice. For example, the parents of children in grades I

and II are advised to feed their children water of cooked dal (lentils), goat's milk, and other easily and cheaply available fruits and vegetables. The grade III and IV children are advised to be taken to the PHC or district hospital for treatment. Volunteers also regularly remind the children and pregnant women about immunization schedules. I saw sufficient enthusiasm among the local people for the program and several children showed improvement in their health.



Kushuma Devi (holding the register), is the village health volunteer for Songer village. She is also the Panchayat (Panchayat Saukharan) coordinator for the literacy committee

I was happy that I got the opportunity to visit these villages and I felt assured that the HBP program is having a positive impact on the villagers in this region.

-- **Saurabh Mishra** (sum104@psu.edu)

Treasury Update-- Sachin Oswal

Amounts raised in the past year:

1. 5th Annual Food Festival - $4500
2. Football Games - $4250
3. Concert - $500

The following projects were funded by our chapter, during the year, in addition to our earlier commitments:

1. Vimukti - $3320
2. HBP - $3000

A TASTE OF INDIA—IN STILL LIFE

A Taste of India is in the air

A sea of people surrounding islands of food

The Crew, after the event