



**SPRING 2004**

## **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

A wonderful fund-raising fall semester has ended and with the traditional Food Fest around the corner we look forward to another great semester. A look at the treasurer's column will justify the statement that I have just made and explain our enthusiasm for the coming semester.

Our first fund-raising event last semester was the football games. In fact, the first game against Temple University was scheduled even before the semester officially started. This time we had chosen to host a bigger stall after a lot of deliberation. Many of us felt that going for a bigger stall would be a great challenge; perhaps one that we may not be able to meet. However, thanks to the optimistic lot in this group, we decided to face the challenge, and it would be an understatement to say that this paid off. The pinnacle of our achievement was when we crossed the \$1000 mark during the Ohio State game alone. The volunteer support from the student community at Penn State was overwhelming. Another tradition is being set here by the Penn State students who have never failed to help us when we need their services. We raised close to \$5000 from the football games last semester, an amount that surpassed the funds raised from the Food Fest. Kudos to the football volunteer team! I am sure that with this level of enthusiasm, the volunteer team is bound to break and make more records in the future.

Our next event for the semester was the National Gandhi Day of Service (NGDOS). This is an event that provides us with the opportunity to work with other organizations at Penn State. As in the previous year, we organized a food

collection drive to benefit the local food bank. As part of this drive, we had food collection boxes at various departments across the campus. In addition, an information table was set up at the HUB on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Students belonging to the Delta Sigma Iota fraternity manned the table throughout the day. We also organized various events at the HUB Heritage Hall for that evening. These events included an interfaith recital, a play, and a movie. The play, named "Koi Hai?" was staged by the local theater group *Prayaas* and it was a great success. The movie,

### **In this issue:**

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entitled "A Force More Powerful" highlighted non-violent movements around the globe in recent history. The event was a tribute to the Gandhian principles of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*. In the future we would like to work with more organizations at Penn State and do more service to the local community, in keeping with the theme of NGDOS.

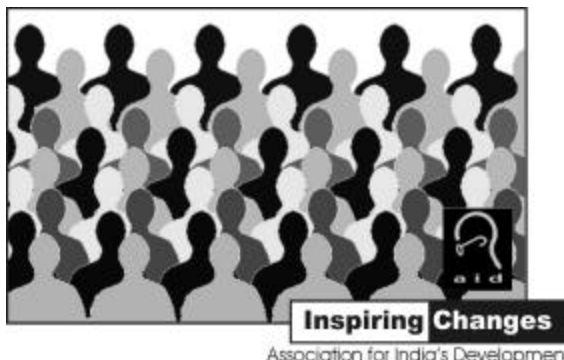
Due to the enormous success of the concert, held during the Spring 2003 semester, we decided to host it again. The show was on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2003. The "Indus Elementz" proved their enormous talents once again by entralling the entire crowd with Hindi movie songs along with a smattering of English rock songs and Punjabi songs. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves that night.

<http://www.clubs.psu.edu/aid>

<http://www.aidindia.org>

COME AND FIND OUT WHAT WE ARE ALL ABOUT!

Apart from the fund-raising events, the semester was especially busy with project reviews scheduled every two weeks. It was encouraging to see each project team doing a thorough job in presenting these reviews. The State College team for the DISHA project has an article in this issue based on the written report they received from India.



With a busy and successful semester behind us, we look forward to the Food Fest and other activities in the spring semester. We plan to remain committed to regular project reviews in our chapter. As the new semester starts, new challenges have risen. Having raised funds, and with the funding commitment to the existing Vimukti project coming to an end, we need to scout for new projects. We are using the AID-wide project database to identify projects that are of interest to us. Currently, we are reviewing a project aimed at providing alternative employment to sex workers in the Madurai area. Projects have to pass rigorous scrutiny by the active members and also require an onsite visit before they are approved for funding. We look forward to funding a new project soon.

The past year has seen a significant increase in the number of volunteers for the various fund-raising events. In addition, we are interfacing and collaborating with more and more on-campus organizations that have helped strengthen AID-State College. We are confident that AID-State College will have a productive spring semester.

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

## THE INDUS ELEMENTZ CONCERT

November 22, 2003

Music is perhaps the most accessible universal language. It transcends barriers of space and time and is blind to distinctions of race, creed, nationality, etc. The allure of rhyme and rhythm reaches out to all. What better vehicle to carry the message of AID?

The stage is set. The band is practicing and people are filing into the State College Area High School auditorium. Many have heard the band before. The home-grown "Indus Elementz" had their debut concert six months ago and it ensnared the audience and left them wanting for more.

"Are we ready to start?"

"Looks like it. Hey, the backdrop looks nice."

A screen rolls down and a short presentation



**The welcome wagon**  
Volunteers hard at work before the concert

about AID commences. Community members Shyam Sundar and Savita Sethuraman, Jayashree Sonti, and Neela Yennawar have put together the PowerPoint presentation. Fund-raisers such as the concert provide a great venue for AID to inform people about who we are and what we do.

The band is introduced to loud cheers. The show starts with a beautiful rendition of "Sa Ni Dha Pa" by Laloo and Sameer. We are so lucky to have such talent right here in State College! Laloo quickly becomes a crowd favorite and has to contend with shouts of "Laloo! Laloo! Laloooo!" for the rest of the evening. The concert winds its way through favorites such as

## Sankalp

“Papa Kehete Hai” and classics such as “Ek Ladki Bheegi Bhagi Si,” building up momentum with each song. Many people remained standing and danced for the entire show and many others were coaxed out of their seats by the melodies.



Laloo takes a break while the guitars work

The music is pumping. The keys are dancing under the trained fingers of Vishal and Aravindhan...the crowd is dancing with joy...and the lights too are dancing under the skilled attention of Rushabh.

“Okay. These switches control the stage lights. This here is center stage, and those are the side lights.” Rushabh informs me.

“Got it.”

We are experimenting with the lights control panel. The panel is littered with sliders that control the stage lights. We have to figure out which sliders do what and to make it even more fun, many of them are mislabeled.

“Hey. The one that says ‘Blue’ really controls a red light!”

“And this one here also controls a second red light.”

We take turns working the lights. It’s fun. Rushabh has a lot of pointers for me.

“Lights out at the end of each song and then turn them on.”

“Dim the lights now. Ya, that looks good.”

“Hey, the stage is too dark!” complains Rajitha, who’s handling the video camera in the lights control room.

“The low light level indicator is flashing on the video camera. Can you turn up the lights a bit?” she asks.

“Yaar, this is a concert. It’s supposed to be dark!” quips Rushabh.

It’s intermission and the crowd is treated to some home-cooked poha along with chips and soda. The energy in the crowd is easily perceptible. Indus Elementz has worked their magic yet again. The “Red Hot Chili Peppers” beckon the crowd back into the auditorium. Soon everyone is on their feet again as the haunting tunes of Pink Floyd’s “Comfortably Numb” float in the auditorium. Angshuman sounds a challenge with his guitar solo to anyone still seated. The second half of the concert is off to a roaring start.

The band cranks it up a notch for the second half. “Pehla Nasha” is followed by a Burman medley. By the time Jassi is singing in Punjabi, fans have gathered by the proscenium to dance. The



### The Indus Elementz

A well-deserved applause at the end of the concert

concert is an eclectic mix of oldies and new songs. There are Hindi, Punjabi and English songs and even a remix version of “Roop Tera Mastana” featuring some reggae.

The band signs off with a rousing rendition of A.R. Rehman’s version of “Vande Maataram.” I see people singing along. Many have their arms raised and some have lit lighters as a fantastic vision of home is presented through music.

The concert was once again a great success. It raised a record \$825 that night. A lot of effort goes into organizing such an event but its

success makes it all worthwhile. AID-State College thrives because of people's willingness to help improve the lives of underprivileged masses in rural India. It was very heartening to see so many people coming together to share AID's vision of a poverty-free, healthy, and literate rural India.

-- **Ram Dixit** (rvd10@psu.edu)

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## **PEHAL: A new beginning at State College**

*Peahal* is a new "initiative" by a group of people at Penn State University who are driven by a desire to contribute to society. Its goal is to provide support for literacy endeavors and to attempt to solve problems that can benefit from simple technological solutions.

As one of the first projects, *Peahal* is helping AID-TNSF (Association for India's Development – Tamil Nadu Science Forum) to prepare material for the "Eureka Science Education Network" project in Tamil Nadu. We are helping make posters on various scientific and technical topics for this project.

The group, which currently consists of six members, was a fruition of discussion sessions held during August 2003. The majority of the members are AID-State College volunteers but it has gradually grown to attract non-AIDers too. Around February 2004 we felt that we could function as an independent entity and complement the efforts of AID. We have set ourselves the following mandate:

*-To disseminate knowledge of existing technological solutions to people who do not have access to them.*

*-To work towards promoting education and literacy in India by means of creative educational and scientific kits.*

*-To use our expertise to develop cheap and innovative solutions to technological problems.*

*-To build a database of like-minded people and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to facilitate networking and reduce redundancy of effort.*

Our goal is to combine scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge and practices so that we can develop sustainable solutions to small-scale community level projects. For example, we can provide the technology for fabricating terra-cotta water filters to supplement the income of terra-cotta jewelers. Such applications require little new investment in infrastructure and would provide tangible benefits to the families. In addition, this technology would provide an affordable household water filtration system for clean and safe drinking water.

*Peahal* is a newborn organization that is just spreading its fledgling wings and is always on the lookout for people who are willing to contribute their time and expertise to help our ventures. Presently, the group consists of people working in physics, astrophysics, life sciences, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and electronics. We would be happy to have more people and from other disciplines as well. A broad, interdisciplinary mix of people will help us tackle diverse projects such as those involving renewable energy resources, sustainable development, watershed development, water pollution, health issues, rural technology, etc. In addition, we welcome people from different nationalities, as we believe that we could all benefit through our efforts. There is no restriction on the ideas and people who can join us. If you are willing to contribute your time and expertise, or just wish to check out what we are doing, drop us an email at [contact\\_pehal@yahoo.com](mailto:contact_pehal@yahoo.com).

-- **Alok Sharan** (aloks@psu.edu)

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### **Want to donate to AID-State College?**

#### **CHECK OUT EFT!**

It's fast, easy and paperless! You have full control on the amount of your monthly donations.

For more information, and to download forms, please visit:  
<http://www.clubs.psu.edu/up/aid/web/fundraising/eft/index.html>

## EVENTS IN STILL LIFE



**The goal is in sight!**  
Imagine how many hungry and thirsty people this stadium can accommodate!



**Retreat to the food**  
The annual AID-State College retreat is a learning and a fun experience. Orientation sessions are followed by food and games.



**Service with a smile for a cause**  
Glimpses into the AID-managed snack stall



The beautiful Stone Valley was the venue for the 2003 retreat.

## TREASURY REPORT

Earnings		Disbursements	
<i>Football Games</i>	5225	<i>Postage</i>	95
<i>Food Festival</i>	4500	<i>Sankalp (printing expense)</i>	65
<i>EFT</i>	2140	<i>Vimukti funding (2<sup>nd</sup> installment)</i>	3200
<i>Donations</i>	1100		
<i>Concert</i>	885		
<i>OneforIndia</i>	375		
<i>Vimukti Jewelry</i>	265		
<i>T-Shirts</i>	NA		
<i>Calendars</i>	NA		
<b>Total \$</b>	<b>14,490</b>	<b>Total \$</b>	<b>3,360</b>

-- Sachin Oswal (szo107@psu.edu)

## DISHA PROJECT UPDATE

DISHA (Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Action) is an NGO that coordinates three proposals that are part of the Gujarat livelihood regeneration project. The project was approved in 2001 by three chapters within AID: State College, Duke and Minnesota. The total amount approved was \$64,000 and project work started towards the end of 2001.

Details of the 3 projects:

**Shoe-making:** This project helps the *chammar* (shoe-maker) community of Banaskantha district by providing them the raw materials to make shoes and helping them market their product.

Currently, around 40 *chammars* are involved, who earn Rs. 60-70 per day. They have established two shops for marketing their product and they pay the rent for these shops. They also initiated a savings group which had to be discontinued due to difficulties faced during the drought season. Since the inception of this project, an additional 50 people have shown

interest in making *mojdis*, the raw material for which will be procured from Chennai.

**Weaving:** This project helps to supply *ambar charkas* and the necessary raw materials to affected families in Patdi taluka and enables them to earn a living using their traditional weaving skills.

Due to an insufficient demand for *khaddar* and cotton cloth, the *ambar charkas* were instead modified to weave woolen cloth to make shawls during winter. Nine women in Limbdi talkua participated in the program and made 755 shawls of which 750 were sold. At the end of winter, these women will switch to weaving bath towels and sitting mattresses (*asans*).

**Salt-pan:** This project helps local salt makers in Patdi taluka by buying salt-pans for groups of about 10 people, and providing them with the necessary resources for salt harvesting. The villages selected are: Oddu, Degam, Kharagoda, and Navagam Sadla.

The salt-pan project has been the most successful of the three projects. Here are some statistics:

- 42% of beneficiaries produced 400-500 tons of salt in the year 2002-03, compared to 14% in 2001-02. About 47% produced over 500 tons of salt in 2002-03, versus 7% in 2001-02
- The increased salt harvest has improved the income of beneficiaries. About 74% of beneficiaries earned over Rs. 30,000 in 2002-03 compared to just 2% in 2001-02
- Beneficiaries have formed 3 savings groups, two of them with women. As of October 2003, Oddu village beneficiaries had deposited Rs. 41,000 in their savings group.

In January 2004, AID approved Rs. 9 lakhs towards the salt-pan project that would help an additional 140 families in other villages of Patdi taluka who are still using traditional methods of salt harvesting.

-- Chandrakala Ganesh (cxg913@psu.edu)