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Dear friends of Asha,

At the outset, we want to thank you for your appreciation and feedback to the inaugural edition of Asha for Education Silicon Valley chapter’s quarterly newsletter. We are happy to bring you the second edition of “Endearing Causes”.

As an organization that works for social justice, we stand in solidarity with the ongoing movement for racial justice in the US, and across the world. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. We continue to hope and fight for everyone to be treated equally, irrespective of their backgrounds.

In this edition, among other things, we want to highlight our efforts in providing immediate relief to our brothers and sisters in India impacted by the crisis brought about by COVID-19. You will also read project and fundraising stories from our East Bay wing. If you would like to volunteer, donate, or learn more about our initiatives, visit sv.ashanet.org, or write to us at sv@ashanet.org.
Our COVID-19 Response

The impending and far-reaching impact of COVID-19 dawned upon our chapter when we had to indefinitely postpone our annual running event - Spring Run, back in March. We started having conversations with our project partners about how best to be prepared for the outbreak in India. From the get-go, we communicated to our partners that none of Asha SV supported employees [teachers, drivers, administrators, community organizers, wardens, etc.] should lose their job or pay. However, it was clear that we had a bigger role to play here, to help alleviate the pain that thousands of fellow citizens were going through. We primarily focused on victims that the state and central governments were not able to reach. This included stranded laborers and immigrants without ration cards, transgender people, and orphans among others. The clarity regarding what our role should be in this moment helped us expedite much-needed funding to our partners on the ground. We disbursed over $100,000 in April alone, over 2X, our average monthly disbursement.

With a renewed sense of purpose, we quickly formed an informal task force to focus on fundraising. Considering how Team Asha programs were either suspended or postponed, we realized that we had to rely upon fundraisers on Facebook and at corporations. We actively reached out to our volunteers to help start fundraisers in their respective companies and kept track of the progress. We helped them with curated media content from the projects we were assisting in promoting the cause among their colleagues. Across the last 3 months, we raised $70,000 for our chapter. We partnered with Asha Austin to hold a joint fundraiser raising $100,000. The importance of our ability to be agile and respond to a crisis like this has never been more apparent. The impact of COVID-19 will be felt for a long time. While we certainly could not help every family that is hurting right now, we are happy to have actively supported 1395 families and held various awareness campaigns through our project partners. We are in this together, and we will win this together!

Asha for Education COVID-19 Newsletter

Over the past 100 days, we rallied 100’s of volunteers from various chapters to support 38 different projects on the ground coordinating immediate relief efforts in response to COVID-19 crisis. Across all of Asha chapters, we have disbursed over $128,000 so far to address the issue. This helped over 10,000 families put food on their plates. More details about Asha-wide efforts in response to COVID-19 can be found in our COVID-19 newsletter.
When COVID-19 hit, Team Asha East Bay could not start their annual running program. There was a lot of uncertainty over what the year had in store. However, the core group was determined to keep the community engaged and raise funds that our projects in India depend upon.

They soon started a 6 weeks virtual strength training program, “More Power to Asha” (MPTA), with a recommended fundraising target of $500. This was also an opportunity for the group to hold dedicated strength training sessions, something that was harder to do in a typical year. To encourage and ensure participation, a choice of two sessions a day was offered to participants - a morning and an evening session. This was followed by weekend sessions, making it 4 sessions a week. This was the layout:
- Tuesday: Full body
- Thursday: Core
- Saturday: Lower body
- Sunday: Upper body

The weekly sessions built up the intensity to progress to HIIT and TABATA in the following weeks. With over 50 registrations and about 30 regular participants, the program was well-received. The participants also had a chance to interact with some of Asha SV’s project partners, which motivated them to fundraise for the cause even though it was not mandated. Overall, the program managed to raise $30,000 during the course of 6 weeks. We want to thank the coaches and coordinators for relentlessly pursuing the cause of education in these times and wish them the very best for season 2 of MPTA!

Fund raising amidst COVID-19

2020 will undoubtedly be one of our toughest years to raise funds. Our projects are reliant upon the funds we raise. Please consider contributing in these challenging times, every $ you donate will make a meaningful impact.
Our organization is only as strong as our volunteers. At Asha SV, we have been blessed with a steady influx of dedicated volunteers who have helped us carry our mission forward.

Abhinav Tyagi learned about Asha through his friend, Robin. He joined Asha because he believes in education being the answer to the questions haunting our society. "Before joining Asha, I read about many of the problems our society faces and how education is the fundamental solution to many of them."

Since joining Asha SV, he has been an active participant in the chapter meetings and has worked with fellow volunteers to run fundraisers on social media platforms. Recently, he was a member of the core team that reviewed proposals as part of Edu-Impact 2020 - our annual seed funding challenge for new initiatives pan-India. He is set to steward one of the Edu-Impact 2020 projects starting later this year. Abhinav has also contributed to the preparation of this newsletter. We wish Abhinav a long and fruitful journey with Asha.

Over the years, Asha SV has grown into a busy and thriving chapter with several initiatives running in parallel. Year over year, we have expanded the number of projects we support, the number of volunteers we engage, and the number of new initiatives that we spearhead. The natural consequence of this has been that our meetings are packed with full agenda, and the 100 hours of yearly chapter meeting time is not sufficient to hold in-depth discussions.

Starting this year, we have started monthly chapter meetings in East Bay [currently being held online due to COVID-19] as a way to have more "chapter hours" as well as a way to engage with East Bay volunteers who have so far mostly focused on fundraising. The participation we have seen so far has been very encouraging, and we have already been able to shift the renewals for 2 projects and 3 fellowships to East Bay. With continued interest and participation from East Bay volunteers, we see this expanding to greater numbers in the future.

If you are from East Bay and want to be involved, please write to sv@ashanet.org for volunteering opportunities.
Sankalp Day Care is a non-profit institution in Kanpur, India, aiming to provide a nurturing environment for children with special needs. They cater to children with a wide range of challenges, including cerebral palsy, autism, speech impediments, and behavioral problems. They offer special education, physiotherapy, speech therapy, and vocational training for 60 children at their facility as of 2020. Besides this, Sankalp also takes up awareness campaigns, counseling sessions for parents, and interactive sessions for teachers.

Since 2010, Asha Silicon Valley has supported this project to the tune of $104,006. This has allowed them to increase their student capacity from 20 to 60 while maintaining the same quality of care by employing more qualified teachers and conveyance vehicles. With our continued support, Sankalp can focus on their mission - to create an atmosphere where special needs children can learn to grow and express themselves, and lead a happy life.
SV Disbursements Cross $8 Million

Silicon Valley chapter of Asha for Education was formed 22 years ago in 1998. In these 22 years, the chapter has supported 132 unique projects and disbursed $8,005,662 till date.

Building a chapter of this size takes an enormous amount of sustained effort, and for that, we want to thank all the current and ex-volunteers of our chapter who relentlessly worked for the mission of education for all. Your work has created opportunities for scores of children who would otherwise be deprived of them.

We would also like to extend our special thanks to our Team Asha East Bay and Team Asha South Bay volunteers who have been the fundraising backbone of our chapter year after year. We are able to forward the cause of education because of your commitment and belief in Asha’s Mission.

Finally, we would like to thank our generous donors and patrons whose contributions have made a difference to this world.

To A Bright Future :-)