

VANASTHALI RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, PUNE.

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2005 TO MARCH 2006

Vanasthali Rural Development Center (VRDC) was established on the 21st of December 1981, with a definite purpose in mind: to work mainly in villages for the welfare of women and children.

In its steady march towards the 21st century, India is making all efforts towards a better life for its people. Still, the village population suffers from neglect and deprivation. The rural society is still denied basic amenities of life, viz. sanitation, hygiene, housing, transportation and medicare, smothering chances for bettering standard of life.

VRDC is a voluntary organization, which feels that the process of rural development has to be initiated at the grassroots level. Social awakening has to be generated at the inner core. We feel that 'education' is the only means, which will break the vicious circle of poverty and ignorance. Good living conditions will follow automatically.

While setting an agenda for its activities, VRDC has given top priority to the 'overall personality development' of the rural woman. We have tremendous faith in her innate intelligence, her resilience and her zest for life. We feel that she is relegated to a secondary status due to social constraints and lack of exposure. So our endeavor is two- fold. We make her the focal point of our activities, so that her potentialities are fully utilized. We also see to it that she becomes a catalyst in the process of rural development. Arranging for formal and non-formal educational activities for rural women is the mainstay of our activities.

The dropout rate in rural schools is high mainly because of total absence of facilities for pre-primary education. The rural child enters the primary school, totally unprepared for the rigorous education there. The very impressionable age-span of 3 to 6 years is of great educational value for laying a solid foundation for a child's future education. Therefore, 'balwadi' (nursery schools) for children in every village is our motto and to train and develop the local young women to raise and run balwadis is our primary activity.

AIMS OF THE ORGANIZATION

- To conduct six-month training courses at village level or other convenient places, thus enabling rural women to start Balwadis, and propagate the importance of education around them. Also we see to it that the cost of training course is kept at minimal so everyone can afford it.
- Early Childhood Education (ECE) is meant to promote the all-round development of a child. The principle of 'education through recreation' is to be followed in balwadi activities. Hence the trainees are introduced to such subjects as child psychology, principles and methods of child education, school management, child health and nutrition. They receive practical training in crafts, games, and songs.
- To start courses and programs for rural women, in order to make them economically independent and also enhance their personalities and self-confidence.
- To publish a bi-monthly magazine for fulfilling these aims, to report progress of the center, and enable women to express their views.
- To conduct camps, book exhibitions, film shows, and informative lectures on health and socio-cultural programs for the personality development of rural women.

We have been fortunate in getting valuable guidance, moral support and generous monetary help from our many well-wishers in India and from abroad. The trustees of VRDC express their gratitude to all the donors. Their benevolence and the zeal of VRDC workers have greatly helped VRDC in achieving its goals.. However, the number of balwadis keeps fluctuating due to various reasons. For example, some of our balwadis are being taken over by the government, to be converted into Anganwadis.(Unisef plan)

BALWADI TEACHER –A COMPLETE PERSON

The basic qualities of a well-developed personality are: positive self-image, capacity to plan and execute events, self-reliance and self-discipline, ability to understand and lead others and as well as to co-operate with them. In order to achieve this, we organize various events and activities for balwadi teachers, trainees, and our supervisors. Now, after so many years, our teachers are invited by other organizations and schools to train their teachers through short-duration courses.

Taking a regular pay packet to home for her part-time job boosts the self-esteem of the Vanasthali worker. She can also take advantage of interest-free loans for buying sewing machines and bicycles; the former providing a new source of income and the latter facilitating her mobility. Loans are repaid without fail. We rarely have a bad experience.

The Loans given by VRDC Balwadi Teachers during the year (2005-2006)

	Particulars	No.
1	Sewing Machines	3
2	Educational Aid	2
3	Bicycles	1
4	Small scale business	4
5	Personal	3

- A) We offer economic assistance for constructing toilets, and to individual teachers and local schools
This year we provided assistance to 9 women below the poverty line for the construction of toilets.
- B) Monetary help for medical treatment - 2 Teachers
- C) Flood affected teachers - 34 teachers Rs. 5,000/- per head.

DETAILS REGARDING OUR BALWADIS 2005- 2006

Sr.No	District	No. of Balwadis	No. of teachers	Helpers	No. of Students
1. 1	Pune	47	47	3	1303
2. 2	Nashik	4	3	1	110
3.	Solapur	36	36	0	1144
4.	Satara	4	5	2	180
5.	Nagar	9	9	1	250
6.	Sangli	4	4	0	170
7.	Kolhapur	0	0	0	0
8.	Latur	25	25	0	665
		129	130	7	3822

The total strength of supervisors and asst. supervisors
for running of these Balwadis is as follows:

Sr.No	District	Supervisors	Asst. Supervisors
1	Pune	14	2
2	Nashik	2	1
3	Solapur	3	-
4	Satara	3	1
5	Nagar	3	5
6	Sangli	1	1
7	Kolhapur	1	1
8	Latur	3	3
	Total	30	14

RESUME OF VRDC ACTIVITIES IN THE YEAR

Balwadi Teacher Training Course for Rural Women (Six- month's duration) April 2005 – March 2006

The Teachers' training course is an opportunity to women in remote villages to have Informal as well as formal education which otherwise is not possible due to lack of Facilities. Such education is always useful in their daily life. Vanasthali is happy to be able to provide qualitative education almost at their doorstep.

Sr. no	District	No. of Courses	No. of Trainees
1	Pune	21	447
2	Nasik	3	61
3	Solapur	1	21
4	Satara	2	33
5	Nagar	4	77
6	Sangli	1	21
	Total	32	660

About 50 Teachers helped in running these courses.

TRAINING FOR BALWADI TEACHERS OF PIMPRI – CHICHWAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

M/S Forbes Marshal requested Vanasthali to render assistance to 136 Balwadis of Pimpri Chinchwad Dist, Pune and give periodical training to their teachers. This was ably done by 5 of our supervisors. It was very gratifying to observe significant improvement in the teaching skills of the PCMC staff and overall performance of their balwadis.

The dept of education (PCMC) has requested VRDC's supervisors to continue supervision of their 136 Balwadis.

CELEBRATION OF THE 25TH YEAR OF VRDC (SILVER JUBILEE FUNCTION-)

Vanasthali entered 25th year of its activity on 21st Dec 2005. To mark this occasion VRDC teachers and trainees came to Pune from all the various regions, where VRDC work has spread over past 24 years.

Exhibition of articles and projects related to our teachers training work was an attraction at the venue of the cultural program, specially organized to mark this occasion. Children of the primary school Jejuri put up a folk dance, VRDC teachers and supervisors put up a program covering the growth and different activities of VRDC during these 24 years. An audience of more than 500 people enjoyed this program.

Mrs. Freni Tarapore, reted Principal SNTD. Home Science College and an eminent educationist was the chief guest and Mrs. Surekha Panandikar (a prominent activist for the spread of Library activity for children) from Delhi, was the guest. There were many more honorable guests who graced the occasion.

Revati Salunkhe, Kathak dance expert and her group gave an energy charged performance related to the theme of "Panchmahabhutha" from Hindu philosophy and the destruction by and sufferance due to Tsunami.

Publication of a special issue "Vanasthali" (the bimonthly of VRDC) publication of special Calendar for the year 2006, short audio Visual Presentation about Vanasthali activities in all the region and launch of Vanasthali website: www.vanasthali.net with the help of students from Symbiosis Institute, sharing care project were special features of this occasion.

VRDC has decided to carry out special activities throughout this year, e.g. special competition and progress for children in all the in special different regions, like different activities for trainees everywhere and special refresher trainings and other activities for teachers and supervisors

PRIMARY SCHOOL AT JEJURI

The Primary school at Jejuri, started in 1996, has shown good results. The school runs up to 4th standard primary class. The progress of children is satisfactory. At present we have 192 children from the 1st to the 4th standard. We have received encouraging support from the children's parents on whose initiative this school was started. Parents attend meetings for discussing school activities. A library was started for the benefit of the children, as well as the teachers and parents.

The staff consists of 1 Supervisor, 4 teachers, 1 Sports teacher and 1 Librarian, 3 helpers.

HOBBY CLASSES FOR GOVT. REMAND HOME CHILDREN AND ASHRAM SCHOOL CHILDREN & MUNICIPAL CHILDREN

Villages lack not only in civic amenities but also in wholesome recreational activities. Our study-cum-hobby classes in remand homes and in government 'ashram' schools at Baramati, Sangamner, Shrirampur, Talegaon-Dhamdhere, Padegaon and Dapodi (Pune) serve a dual purpose. They encourage about 468 destitute children to take up their studies more seriously, as they receive assistance with their homework. Moreover it helps these children to acquire a sense of belonging and commitment towards society in general, a very essential factor in their overall development.

"Chava", "Ranwara" and "Vidyabhyas" these Marathi magazines devoted to general knowledge and recreation for children, are provided in hobby classes and remand homes. Children get plenty of information about wild life, environment, science etc. and also plenty of recreational matter in the form of brainteasers, riddles, stories, poems etc. Our teachers are conducting hobby-cum-study classes in Municipal and Zilla Parishad schools. Around 25,450 children benefit from the activities of 603 teachers. Hobby class activities, i.e., drawing, painting, paper handicraft, books to read, bring some fun and relief in their lives. Although we are not getting any monetary assistance from villagers, they help by providing classrooms and craft supplies. When hobby class camps are arranged for several days in summer and winter vacations, local people provide some snacks or sweets to the children.

DETAILS REGARDING HOBBY CLASSES RUN IN REMAND HOMES.

Sr.No.	District	No. of teachers	No. of Remand Home students
1	Pune	4	138
2	Nashik	-	-
3	Solapur	-	-
4	Satara	-	-
5	Nagar	5	230
6	Sangli	-	-
7	Kolhapur	6	100
8	Latur	-	-
		15	468

GOVT. ASHRAM SCHOOLS

These government run residential schools are established with the purpose of caring for children of migrant and tribal families. We find that severe efforts are required to supplement their activities. Our involvement by sending regularly our teachers is indicated below:

Some Details regarding hobby-classes run in Ashram schools.

Sr.No	District	No. of our teachers	No. of participating Students
1	Pune	15	585
2	Nashik	-	-
3	Solapur	1	42
4	Satara	2	90
5	Nagar	1	80
6	Sangli	-	-
7	Kolhapur	-	-
8	Latur	8	160
		27	957

HOBBY CLASSES FOR SCHOOLS OF MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS AND DISTRICT BOARDS

Sr.No	District	No. of teachers	No. of Hobby classes	No. of Students
1	Pune	303	303	10997
2	Nashik	75	75	3692
3	Solapur	27	27	1432
4	Satara	67	67	2481
5	Nagar	74	74	4820
6	Sangli	42	42	1605
7	Kolhapur	-	-	-
8	Latur	15	15	420
		603	603	25447

VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES.

Somatane center: The center trains women making of detergent powder, phenyl, liquid soap, candle sticks, clay figures, tribal Warli paintings, stitching jobs, paper bags, bath mats etc., etc. In all about 167 women benefited by this training. This helps in giving some income to these needy women when they sell the products in village fairs.

MEETING OF SUPERVISORS IN PUNE OFFICE

Our zonal supervisors come together in the Pune office to exchange ideas, discuss problems and deliberate on future plans. We had four such meetings this year.

Special mention is made of the instructive lecture by Mr. Salke who demonstrated preparation of scientific toys for the supervisors. Supervisors visited Doorstep school ((Mobile school for the children of construction workers) Pune.

ZONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Increasing activities of Vanasthali workers require premises to serve as our local offices. At present we have eight such regional offices, at Sangamner, Baramati, Jejuri, Saswad, Somatne-Phata, Lasalgaon and Sangola and Shrimapur. Local people have access to all our activities continuously. At our local offices, we conduct activities such as regular meetings of teachers training and supervisors, hobby cum study classes for 6-12 age group children, parents meeting etc.

OUR BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION – VANASTHALI

This publication gives plenty of opportunities to our teachers, supervisors and rural readers to share their experiences, exchange views on different topics and exercise their minds for creative writing. This bimonthly also serves as a window for each center to outside world and gives exposure to larger issues.

The bi-monthly issues this year were compiled, edited and published by centers as follows: Pune, Lonand-Shirwal, Kirloskarwadi, Saswad .

The Children's special issues were published from Talegaon, August 2005 and Samgamner Nov- 2005 this was done to encourage children to express themselves in writing, painting ext.

The Local talents efficiently handled the responsibility of collecting funds through advertisements and overseeing the publication. Our teachers have proved that they are in no way inferior to their city counterparts.

RURAL LIBRARY MOVEMENT

Vanasthali is one of the organizations selected by the 'PANAPOI VACHANALAYA' movement to participate in their efforts to make available, in remote rural places, wholesome, interesting books and reading materials for villages. 'Yashonidhi Nyas' has so far channeled, through VRDC centers, 24 of portable libraries. The response from the Vanasthali supervisors, teachers, reader's young and old and even the whole village communities has been heart warming. Over 3000 books so far are in circulation.

FOUR SUPERVISORS –VISIT FRANCE Special program – Silver jubilee year

On invitation from Entr'inde, France four of our supervisors visited (Saint-Michel sur Orge) France and shared their experience with school children and their parents and the school staff in three different schools in France.

Members of Artisans du Monde and Entr'inde and Partage sans Frontière made all the arrangements for their stay and visits in France. These two organizations and our Indian well wishers supported financially to make this trip possible for the supervisors.

In this 25th year of VRDC's work it has provided a new dimension to our activities. Our teachers have seen a new horizon. Low education, different culture, different language was not of any consequence. Our teachers came over these difficulties and reached their target group through the medium of music, handicrafts and off course body language and communication skills other than language. They themselves gained a lot from this international experience. The Mayor of Saint-Michel sur Orge honoured our teachers in a specially arranged function to appreciate their work.

ASSISTANCE TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS FROM VRDC

1. VRDC has donated Rs. 12,000 for Honorarium of teachers of 5 Balwadis of Mata Balak Utkarsha Sanstha, (Sangola), Dist Solapur.
2. Rs. 10,000/- are donated to Ushatai Lokhande Charitable Trust to provide part of the salaries for 4 Secondary School Teachers in Sangise (Mawal) Dist Pune.
3. Jagruti fondation 2 Balwadi teachers honorarium.

OUR VISITORS

1. Mrs. Rati Forbes – Director Forbes Marshal
2. The volunteers of ASMAE organization – France.
3. Perspective Assienne, France – 8guests.
4. Smt. Smita Talwalkar – Mumbai. Film & T.V. artist.
5. Shri. Chandiprasad Wellknown environmentalist -Himachal Pradesh
6. Sharon and Andreas – Panah – Schweiz, Swiss.
7. Loic and Rossana – France.

OUR FUTURE PLANS

- Expand the coverage of activities for training and development of balwadi teachers.
- Intensify the winter and summer camps for the Balwadi teachers and trainees.
- Establish Balwadis in about 200 villages.
- Give financial incentives to the Balwadi teachers to construct personal toilets and toilets for schools.
- Give aid to balwadi teachers and supervisors to equip themselves with bicycles and scooters for their work.
- Establish women's groups in communities in villages through our teachers and supervisors.
- Increase the number of Hobby classes in Municipal Schools
- Provide Vocational Training to Women in more Villages.
- More Primary School.

GRATITUDE

VRDC gratefully acknowledges the contribution of its many friends and well-wishers, who generously donate their time and money: Friends of France, Vidhyarthi Sahayak Samiti, N. G. Paranjape Pratishthan, Yashonidhi Nyas, Mata Balak Utkarsha Sanstha, Jagruti Santha, Inner wheel club, Pune. local mahila mandals, grampanchayats, doctors, school authorities, villagers, rotary clubs, lions clubs, and many others who are with us.

Vanasthali gets support from local people in various ways; for example, a suitable place for running a balwadi may be offered free of charge. Also frequently local villagers give sweets, toys, or cash donations to the children. This gesture speaks for the increasing interest shown in children's education.

VRDC also thanks its balwadi teachers, helpers, supervisors and teachers of training courses. Thanks are due to its office staff and colleagues who regularly devote their time and offer many valuable ideas. The teamwork of Vanasthali is backed and encouraged by our trustees.

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR VANASTHALI?

1. You can donate story books, old magazines, toys, greeting cards, and clothes for the children.
2. You can write interesting and informative articles for women and children for our bi-monthly.
3. You can pay Rs.100 as annual subscription for Vanasthali bi-monthly.
4. You can donate any amount of money as a token gesture on any festival or household occasion; for example, birthdays, anniversaries, or any auspicious occasion. (Please draw the cheque in favour of Vanasthali Rural Development Centre, Pune)
5. You can send advertisements for the bi-monthly and especially for the Diwali issue.

(Donations to Vanasthali Rural development Centre are exempt from Income- Tax under section 80-G of Income-Tax Act 1960.)

Our friends in India and abroad substantially support all activities of Vanasthali at the grassroots level, both individually and through organizations. We are encouraged by this gesture of our friends.

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO :

- Frères de Nos Frères – Switzerland
- Castricum Helpt Muttathara – The Netherlands
- Action Group – 365, Cologne – Germany
- Panah Schweiz Group – Switzerland
- Entr'Inde – France
- ASMAE – France
- Jill Spier, USA
- Artisans du Monde, France
- Geeta Narasimhan – USA.