

# AASRAA

## Annual Report

2015-2016



## Background

Aasraa Trust was established in 2009, as a charitable trust focusing on education of children from underprivileged backgrounds. What started as a small intervention for welfare of children from the riverbed slum communities under the Bindal Bridge, in 2009, has now expanded into a multi faceted program touching the lives of more than 1100 children.

Aasraa began working with the riverbed community to promote the need for education and started an after school program to supplement school education. Recognizing the impact of this work, two of Dehradun's leading schools invited Aasraa to use their classrooms for the after school program. This Program, called the 'Wings of Doon' is now being run on a much larger scale with support from 'Sir Ratan Tata Trust'.

Alarmed by the number growing number of children living on the streets of Dehradun, Aasraa started its second project, 'Street Smart'. This project was envisaged to provide basic literacy and vocational skills for street children. Street Smart started at the Rein Basera, a shelter for the homeless behind GPO Dehradun and two other centers on Kanwali Road, a hub for rag pickers in Dehradun. This program is now run from four different centers in Dehradun and caters to 340 children, and is a stepping stone for mainstreaming them into regular school system. At 'Street Smart' children study Computers, English, Mathematics; play various sports and are served nutritious food.

Aasraa launched its first Mobile Learning Centre in June 2015. Two buses were modified to become high tech classrooms on wheels. The idea was that these buses can be parked next to any slum and can provide education or skills to children all day at various locations. Our mobile learning centres eliminate the need to rent and maintain different buildings and in fact help us reach maximum number of children in different slums at different times.

These "Mobile Learning Centres" are a perfect reflection of our philosophy that "no child is unreachable or unteachable". Rag picking and street children should not be excluded from education due to circumstance. If we cannot bring these children to schools, we can certainly bring literacy to them, through our "Mobile Learning Centres". Additionally, these buses fitted with a high definition TV screen that showcases modern, colorful and high quality teaching programs instantly capture the imagination of children.

180 children have already been mainstreamed through 'Street Smart' and 'Mobile Learning Centers'.

Aasraa believes in working with other equally committed nonprofit organizations so as to maximize its outreach and ability to educate and train children. Currently, the Wings program works in collaboration with schools that have provided space on their campus for this after school tutorial project to run; Street Smart has been able to thrive thanks to the Rajkiya Purva Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Rajpur Road and Shiv Sena Dehradun. State Bank of India, Max India Foundation, Help Alliance, INDIAMART, Divya Krishna Trust, Purkul Youth Development Society and Khusi Hona have all collaborated with Aasraa to provide quality education and infrastructure to all children under Aasraa's umbrella.

JOYN India, an American nonprofit group, works in collaboration with us to train the children in block printing and sewing. We also work with Childline a crisis management team for children in distress on our outreach program.

## **NO UNREACHABLE OR UNTEACHABLE CHILD”**

### ***Mission***

*The mission of Aasraa Trust is dedicated to providing opportunity and education to children from underprivileged backgrounds.*

### ***Vision***

*Our vision is to give them a dream and then help them realize it.*

### ***Our idea of making a difference***

*Aasraa Trust is concerned with the lack of educational opportunity available to children of the poorer sections of society. We are seeking to redress this imbalance and give as many children as possible, a chance to spread their wings and fly. We will mentor them, support them and give them confidence...!*

## Launch of the Mobile Learning Centre

Aasraa launched its first Mobile Learning Centre, a revolutionary classroom on wheels for street and slum children in August 2015. The second one was launched in September 2015. These Mobile Learning Centers are basically two buses modified to become high tech classrooms on wheels. The idea was that these buses can be parked next to any slum and can provide education or skills to children all day at various locations. Our "Mobile Learning Centres" eliminate the need to rent and maintain different buildings and in fact help us reach maximum number of children in different slums at different times.

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The first bus (funds donated by ONGC) operates near the Bindal slum area, reaching close to 80 children a day. The second bus (funds donated by Gyan Jyoti Trust) is an extension of the Anti-Begging Campaign targeted towards children who beg for a living and do not attend school. This bus travels across Dehradun picking up children from the streets and initiates them into literacy through art and drama.

***WE ARE AWAITING SPONSORSHIP FOR THE RUNNING COST OF THE SECOND BUS.***

Encouraged by this success, we have now decided to start a fleet of technology enabled "Mobile Learning Centres" to reach maximum number of working children and give them an opportunity to blossom.

## **Students Appear for National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) Examination**

Aasraa has been certified as an examination centre for NIOS' Open Basic Education Program. Our first batch of students appeared for their board examinations in March 2015. We aim to use NIOS as the stepping-stone into formal education for children who have a comparatively low level of education according to their age group. For the others who directly join our Vocational Training Program we provide NIOS as a means for them to achieve high school graduation alongside learning a dignified livelihood. We are extremely proud of our kids who have worked hard to create scholars within themselves.

Aasraa has also applied for accreditation to NIOS' Vocational Training Program so we can run increased number of vocational training programs and arm our students with more marketable skill sets.

## **Computer Center at the Haven**

**Aasraa Trust** received a jump start with the help of kind supporters like **Counselage India Pvt Ltd, M M Lal Charitable Trust** and **The Divine Life Society** who provided us with the necessary aid that got us off the ground successfully. Over the years, our support base has grown to **AshaJyothi USA, Caring Hand for Children, Ram Krishna Jay Dayal Dalmia Shri Vani Nyas, Shri Ratan Tata Trust, Padmini VNA**, amongst many others. Without their support, our dream of providing education for all children regardless of their socio- economic background would be incomplete.

More recently, **Help Alliance**, a charitable organization started by **Lufthansa** employees' have been kind enough to donate 20 state of the art Dell desktops and laptops along with power back up systems for our computer labs across learning centres. The children are receiving basic computer education and will move on to advance levels in the coming years.

### **Senior Wings at Welham Boys and Summer Valley**

Aasraa has collaborated with the Welham Boys' School to start a new program to provide afterschool remedial classes and activities that will be taken by the WBS students with the assistance of Aasraa and WBS Staff. We have selected children from 2 different target groups. Firstly, children from the Chunabhatta slum area, the majority of who have little to no educational background and a desperate lack of daily supervision, leaving them extremely vulnerable. The second are children from 3 local government schools in the Surajbasti area, where the standard of education is terribly low, a large percentage of these children are young girls. We aspire to expose the students of WBS to the reality of the world around them, to guide them to become sensitive human beings and view society from a different perspective.

Summer Valley School also opened their doors to Aasraa and it's children. Another after school 'Wings' program was launched here. At present, 60 children from Government Schools attend the after school remedial program at Summer Valley. This number is also likely to grow with time.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Mrs. Gurmeet Bindra, Principal Welham Boys' School and Dr. Ashol Wasu, Founder and Director Summer Valley School for their consent and conviction in our cause of leveling the playing field for all our children regardless of their socio- economic standing. We hope to have a longer and stronger association with them in the future.

## Felicitations by Rotary Club

Aasraa's association with the Rotary club goes back to 2014 when they gifted us 50 brand new desks and chairs for "The Haven". The wonderful Rotarians also gifted our kids with Oxford dictionaries that have been very useful in enhancing their English language skills. These desks have been fabulous for us and have helped us optimize the space available at the Haven.

The Rotary Club Dehradun organized Panchsheel District Conference 2016 on 20th February 2016. Aasraa Trust's flagship project, 'Education on the Move' was showcased at the conference. Ms. Shaila Brijnath, Chairman, Aasraa Trust was felicitated during the event for her contribution towards empowering street & slum children of Dehradun.



We feel extremely fortunate to be associated with Rotary Club and the commitment they have displayed in helping us inch closer to our goal.



### **Aasraa kids win top prizes in school competitions**

At Aasraa, we like to ensure that academic achievement is not all that we focus on. Extracurricular activities form an integral part of the Aasraa experience. Academic rigors such as in-depth reading and complex problem-solving go far to strengthen the mind, but extracurricular activities will take this mind strengthening even further. These activities can also work to build professional skills that a classroom alone cannot always foster. In the past year, our kids participated in various extracurricular events at their schools and made us proud by winning several competitions.

Deepak, a student at Bajaj institute of Learning won multiple prizes in athletics at his school's sports day. Deepak is a child with special needs who has shown great promise with technology as well.

Our resident nightingale Anjali Negi, a student of Class 8 in Olympus High School won the third prize in her school's signing competition recently.

Top prizes were also won by Aasraa students at the Learners Engagement Activity organized by National Institute of Open Schooling in Doon Valley Public School, Deoband. Activities included role playing, creative writing, poster making & yoga.

## Aasraa joins the Swachh Bharat initiative

Waste Warriors is a voluntary organization and a registered society committed to clean up India. Their Dehradun operations started in August 2013 and as on date they are working in various areas of Dehradun to ensure that Dehradun “gets clean and stays clean”. The Swachh Bharat Initiative, championed by the Prime Minister himself has further put their work on center stage.

An event to celebrate the Swachh Bharat Campaign, sponsored by ONGC in association with Aasraa Trust & Waste Warriors was organized on 28th September in Kishan Nagar Chowk area of Dehradun. The event was attended by Mr. Anil Sood, Head of Institute- GEOPIC ONGC, Ms. Nandini Sharma, Local Councillor of Kishan Nagar area, Mr. Puneet Bhatia- Head of the Vyapar Mandal Dehradun & Ms. Shaila Brijnath, Chairman, Aasraa Trust, Ms. Jodie Underhill, CEO- Waste Warriors. The guests shared their idea of Swachh Bharat and the need for citizens to participate in this nationwide movement for change.



Over a hundred people participated in this event including ONGC personnel, students of Welham Girls School, Rajkiya Purva Madhyamik Vidhyalaya, Swami Vivekananda Public School, children from the rag picking community, children from Aasraa Trust, Team Aasraa & Waste Warriors. A special Waste Disposal Awareness workshop was organized by Waste Warriors, which included educating all participants on the concept of *Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle*. The children also participated in banner painting, drawing, wallet making with waste paper and a theme based quiz and race. The team not only cleaned the area but also focused on awareness generation and sensitization of the residents about cleanliness and sanitation.

Following the activity event, all participants engaged in a cleanliness drive around the Kishan Nagar area and eight dustbins donated by ONGC were installed along the Kishan Nagar Chowk.

## **Music and Art**

At Aasraa, we have introduced music as a tool of healing, learning and self-expression. Frances H. Rauscher, an eminent psychologist who has conducted several studies on the effects of music on the learning process concluded that, "Learning music is an important developmental activity that may help at-risk children compete academically on a more equal basis with their middle-income peers."

The children at Aasraa are learning nursery rhymes, patriotic songs, poems, and alphabets through the singsong method. We have also inaugurated a new music room at our boys hostel facility on the occasion of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's birth anniversary. Prof Dhirendra and Mrs Nirmala Sharma, friends of Dr. Kalam, donated the instruments. We have a dedicated music teacher who takes classes across all projects. Under his tutelage, several of our students have learnt to play various musical instruments.

## **Art Therapy at Aasraa**

Many of our children come from backgrounds where they have witnessed harsh, abusive behavior. They are victims of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, physical violence, often abandoned and left helpless. Art, as we all know is a wonderful medium of expression. It is a powerful healing tool. Ms. Christina DeCesare, an art therapist from USA, conducted a two day Art Therapy session for our children and teachers. She demonstrated how art can be used for different purposes like classroom management and to strengthen the understanding between students and teachers.

**Aasraa girl wins silver at State meet**

Versha Godwal, won the silver medal at the Uttarakhand Open Junior State Level Taekwondo Competition! Versha is a student of class 8 in Olympus High School. We are so proud of her achievements.

## **Medical Care**

We believe that no child can be educated if they are hungry, cold or sick. We provide the children of Aasraa with nutrition, warm clothing and round the clock medical care. No compromises are made in the quality of medical care provided to our children.

- Ashish, age 11, had a 3.5 hour sling surgery performed by Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Himanshu Kochhar & his team at Max Hospital. Ashish had fractured his arm and the bones were incorrectly set. Thanks to Max India Foundation (who gave us a 50% discount) and three Good Samaritan's, Ashish should be able to use his arm very soon.
- 800+ children were successfully administered de-worming and Vitamin A tablets, thanks to Vitamin Angels
- With the help of Max Foundation, close to 300 children will be inoculated against Typhoid this month

### **Capacity Building and Teacher Training**

Our teachers form the core of what we do. Without them we would not be able to provide the life changing education that our children need. We are also constantly working to enhance the capabilities of our teachers and contribute to their professional development. Regular trainings are organized throughout the school year. We invite various experts as resource persons and trainers to introduce our teachers to new and improved teaching methodologies.

We organized a two-day teacher's training workshop at the **State Resource Centre** on **Principals of Adult Learning & Method** on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The teachers learned about **Improved Pace Content & Learning Method** (IPCL), which focuses on teaching first time learners. The workshop concentrated on creating a comfortable teaching environment for children and breaking the code of a formal classroom. The objective is to facilitate learning through what is familiar to the students by having informal discussions and conversations.



Harwant Singh, Principal of PYDS Learning Academy, one of the best CBSE Schools in Dehradun offered to help us create a systematic learning and teaching plan for various learning levels across our projects. Thanks to his incredible approach Jolly Phonics and Jodi Gyan kits are familiar terms that our teachers have acquainted themselves with. They are learning new and effective ways of teaching and connecting with children.

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