Aarohi

NEWSLETTER

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Inside this Issue

1 Uttarayan 2014

2 Health - Commcare
Technology improving door-to-door 'safe motherhood' education

3 Health and Computer Literacy in Supai

4 Kala Ghoda Art Festival 2014

FROM AAROHI'S KITCHEN

4 Mandua Ki Roti with Shishun ki Saag

VOLUNTEER'S SPOTLIGHT

5 Kelsey Bash

NEWSLETTER
Volume III Issue I, April 2014

UTTARAYAN

Spirit of the Mountains

The 19th of January 2014 was a cold winter's day in Delhi's beautiful Sanskriti Kendra. Our children were ready to perform – their spirits as high as the Himalayas – at our 5th annual cultural and fundraising show in Delhi. The theme,`Patang', was represented by flying kites denoting dreams, aspirations and reaching for the sky.

We opened with filmed interviews of Anita, an adolescent village girl discovering the freedom to express her emotions, and brave enough to broach topics such as boyfriends and female foeticide. We listened also to her grandmother who, towards the end of her life, still retained a sense of humour and also dared to dream... These interviews were interspersed with captivating pahari songs and dances performed by the children of Aarohi Bal Sansar. As grand finale a contemporary choreography by Salim (Salaam Balak Trust) was danced to `Manjha', a song composed and sung by Amit Trivedi in the film 'Kai Po Che'.

Around 300 people attended, clapping enthusiastically along to the lilting Himalayan folk music. Our stalls boasting a colourful display of Kumaoni products did well, alongside the fresh mountain vegetables brought in by our partners Himjoli. The children busied themselves with pine cone painting, `Aepan' (Kumaoni folk art), and tried out the potter's wheel. The sun appeared making the afternoon pleasantly conducive to informal interaction, whilst others watched the film `Kaphal' by Batul Mukhtiar.

After their hard work, the children watched an awe-inspiring dance drama at Kingdom of Dreams, and visited the Safdarjung Tomb and an amusement park, alongside other exciting experiences such as taking the Delhi Metro, shopping and eating at a food court. An event of this scale, providing the children with such a wide variety of experiences, is only possible with the support of Aarohi's well-wishers to whom we are most grateful.

Technology improving door-to-door 'safe motherhood' education

Over the last year Aarohi has run a highly successful pilot project using an innovative job aid tool for mobile health workers. The tool is a free, open source mobile phone application that Aarohi developed in conjunction with Dimagi Inc, an American not-for-profit. 10 accredited social health activists (ASHAs) have tested the application in the Okhalkanda Block of Nainital District in their door-to-door 'safe motherhood' educational visits to families. The results have been a win-win-win, benefiting the women and families to whom the health awareness work is targeted, the ASHAs themselves as well as their managers.

The novelty of a multimedia questionnaire using sounds and images on a mobile phone sustains the interest of the woman interviewed as well her whole family allowing the ASHA to provide health awareness more effectively to her target groups. The mobile-phone application questionnaire also ensures that the AHSA does not forget to transmit crucial information during her health education exchange with the women and their families. The application is a lighter and more efficient way for the ASHA to record and manage the information she collects (rather than recording it all into countless paper notebooks) from each visit. Given that the data is automatically uploaded onto a cloud server each time that the ASHA has internet access, real-time information becomes available to managers allowing evidence-based change to strategies in order to respond to needs.

The availability to managers of the information on the interviews conducted by ASHA also makes remote supervision far easier. In light of the positive results of the pilot, Aarohi will expand its use of the application to all health workers in the area and make it available for use by other organisations.

NEWSLETTER
Volume III Issue I, April 2014

Health and Computer Literacy in Supai

*Thanks to the generous donation of the **Late Shri H.K. Trivedi** and **his wife**, Aarohi has been working hard to improve the development of Supai, a picturesque village in Kumaon with very basic health and education indicators, through the **HKT Memorial Fund development project**.*

In January 2014 a computer and activity center was opened in the centre of Supai with three desktop computers. A young woman from the area is actively managing the centre and offers basic computer literacy training to residents of Supai. 15 young people have signed up to the first course – a mixture of boys and girls, including three female Bachelor students of Kumaon University. More students have expressed an interest in following such courses and they will be catered to during the next intake; the number of courses will be expanded and more computers purchased accordingly.

In the area of health, maternal and child health baseline surveys have been conducted in Supai and in three neighboring villages. The findings from these surveys will shape future health interventions by Aarohi such as training local ASHAs and mid-wives. Until now, Aarohi has been bringing doctors to Supai once a month to treat the residents of Supai in the absence of any central health facilities.

Kala Ghoda Art Festival 2014

Aarohi participated alongside its friends and fans in the 14th Kala Ghoda Art Festival 2014 in Rampart Gallery, Fort- Mumbai, from 1st to 5th February.

Kala Ghoda Art Festival, established with the objective of promoting and preserving the art heritage of India, is the country's largest multicultural festival. The festival draws visitors in the thousands, not just from the city but from all over the country, and, indeed, the world.

Kala Ghoda Art Festival proves to be the most exciting both in terms of customer interaction and sales. Given that Aarohi could not participate in the festival last year, loyal followers of Aarohi's natural products were eagerly awaiting this year's edition of the festival. We received an overwhelming response from our already existing customer base, whilst new faces showed a welcomed curiosity for our handmade natural products. Aarohi's products were appreciated and bought up by a number of people: more than half of the total stock we had for the whole event was purchased during just the opening days. Total sales amounted to 123 647 Indian Rupees.

Aside from aiming to sell our products and meet new customers, we also participate in such exhibitions across the country in order to connect producers to the products' end users, so that the producer team can build their self-confidence and experience other parts of the country. We are regularly exploring opportunities to participate in more events like these.

FROM AAROHI'S KITCHEN

Mandua Ki Roti with Shishun ki Saag

These delicious and nutritious chapattis and Shishun (nettle) saag (green vegetable) make a wonderful combination, especially in winter. The rotis are made from Mandua Flour (Finger Millet) and saag is prepared from a wild local plant called "Shishun or Bichhu Ghas". It is a green leafy vegetable dish liked by all. It is better to pick only the tender leaves. This dish is commonly eaten in Uttarakhand during winter and is one of Uttarakhand's main delicacies. It is eaten with ghee or butter.

Ingredients (serves 4-5)

1. Mandua flour - 600 gm
2. Wheat flour - 200 gm
3. Water - As Required

1. Shishun - 500 gm
2. Garlic - 50 gm
3 Dry red chili – 2
4. Salt - To taste
5. Mustard oil / Ghee - 30 ml

Preparation for Rotis:

1. Mix mandua and wheat flour well.
2. Add water and prepare a stiff dough.
3. Divide into evenly-sized balls and roll out into chapattis.
4. Cook on both sides over a slow fire.
5. Ensure that the rotis have been well baked.

Preparation for Saag:

1. Hold the tender leaves of Shishun with tongs and blanch them in boiling water.
2. Blend / grind the blanched leaves to make a fine paste.
3. Heat oil in a thick-bottomed pan. Add chili, garlic and stir well, add the pulp and fry. Add salt to taste.

Garnishing for Saag:

Garnish with ghee / butter if one wishes. Serve hot with Mandua Rotis.

VOLUNTEER'S SPOTLIGHT

Kelsey Bash

Maternal Anemia in Rural Uttarakhand: The Call for Increased Nutritional Education

By Kelsey Bash, Colgate University, SIT Study Abroad

As an Aarohi volunteer and an American undergraduate studying in India for a semester, I was given the opportunity to explore maternal anemia in villages in rural Kumaon. Anemia is pervasive among women in India, particularly among women in Kumaon, affecting 57% of pregnant women, and causing 20% of all maternal deaths (IIPS 2007).

My study sought to answer the question: What is the perception of maternal anemia among women in rural Kumaon and how is the effort to educate women about nutrition affecting such perceptions and, consequently, the effectiveness of anemia interventions? I sought to answer this question through a series of interviews with pregnant women, women who had given birth within the last year, and health workers in six villages—two of which were Aarohi intervention villages—in Bhainsyachana and Okhalkanda Block.

The most important findings of my study were severely limited maternal nutritional knowledge, limited antenatal nutritional education, and limited efficacy of governmental interventions. Few of the mothers interviewed recognized the words "nutrition," "anemia," or "iron," though most reported feeling weak. Furthermore most were unable to address anemia or nutrition, and very few recognized the connection between their health and that of their child's. Poor maternal education appeared to be a product of the poor training of health workers. Encouragingly, workers in Aarohi intervention villages reported to have received better education than those in other villages. Finally, governmental anemia interventions, namely hemoglobin tests, IFA supplementation, and ICDS food supplementation, were observed to be largely ineffective due to poor utilization.

The poor nutritional knowledge among pregnant women observed in rural Kumaon in my study highlights the need for increased education about nutrition to both mothers and health workers and underlines such education as a potential solution to the pervasive health concern that is anemia in India.

International Institute for Population Sciences. (2007). National Family Health Survey III. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Mumbai: Government of India.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Become a supporter by making a donation towards our work, or an Aarohi member & spread the word about our life changing community based work in Kumaon, encouraging your friends & family to engage with us & pledge their support.

You can now Give Online! Aarohi has partnered with Global Giving to offer an easy and efficient way to accept donations online.

Visit **http://www.globalgiving.org** and search for Aarohi!"

JOIN HANDS

We welcome doctors, teachers, managers, designers, musicians, theatre persons, IT professionals or anyone with a desire to share his or her skills to volunteer with us. Aarohi encourages creative ideas and provides a unique opportunity to experience a different way of living and working.

All contributions to Aarohi are eligible for Income Tax Exemption under section 80G of the IT Act.

Aarohi

Aarohi is a voluntary organisation founded in 1992. It is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. It is also registered u/s 80 G and 12 A of the IT Act and under the FCRA.

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