



Volunteer Newsletter



Jan-Feb 2003



Volunteer Newsletter

Jan-Feb 2003

Contents

1. Message from Vibha Board
2. Projects Team Update
3. Products Team Update
4. Volunteer Relations Team Update
5. Action Center Updates
6. General awareness



1. Message from the Vibha Board (Ron- rvictor@homelandnetworks.com)

The Vibha Board appointed Ron Victor (Secretary of Vibha Inc.) to oversee operations of Vibha Inc. in 2003. Per the objective, the immediate tasks were to ensure that Vibha has a proper plan and a leadership team to ensure that Vibha's objectives are met for the year 2003.

Plan 2003 was successfully executed and completed by Jan 31st. The plan has been made available to all volunteers through the respective Action-Coordinators. The board conducted the required elections towards appointing a new COO (Chief Operating Officer) - Muthiah Thirunavukkarasu. This was immediately followed electing/appointing the required leadership for various national functions by Feb 15th. The board has since requested the Plan 2003 of each of these national Functional Teams and these plans are expected by March 15th 2003.

The board has also been involved this quarter in completing the transition effort and formalities due to be completed by April. Project and Program funding decisions will start being made based on inputs received from the national projects team. The board is thankful to all Action Center Coordinators, functional directors and each one of the Vibha volunteers.



2. Projects Team Update (vibha-projects@yahoogroups.com)

A spreadsheet with the list of projects under review has been sent to all volunteers. This will be updated on a monthly basis. A document explaining the process of project selection has also been uploaded onto Action Center Coordinators yahoogroups for distribution to everyone.

Vibha started funding of its first project- Makkal Palli Iyakkam (MPI) and three projects are in the final stages of approval- Alamb, GORD- Gandhian Organization for Rural Development and Rachana. This year's annual plan for the projects team is being finalized and will be sent to all volunteers by the end of this month.



3. Products Team Update (Ganesh- balamitran@yahoo.com)

The products team has been working on getting new Vibha Products ready.

The team has identified 'Akanksha', an NGO in India, to start off a products relationship with. Akanksha was chosen from a list of about 10 NGOs that were considered. There were no hard and fast rules on this selection process except that the NGO should be non-religious, non-political and not use child labor and share Vibha's mission.

Akanksha is a pretty well established org in Bombay/Pune and is chaired by Anu Agha and supported by many companies including Thermax, Tatas, DSP Merill Lynch, Citibank and so on. The products will be co-branded (carrying the names of Vibha and Akanksha). Pricing will be similar to Vibha's old pricing structure and so will be most of the commercial terms. The products that are currently under consideration are - cards, calendars and maybe a few souvenir items such as photo-frames, which will be finalized after analyzing the logistics and getting volunteer feedback.



4. Updates from Action Centers

Vibha Action centers across US have been actively involved in Vibha awareness and fundraisers. Given below are some updates from a few action centers.

Atlanta, Georgia

Contact Info: Natarajan - pnatarajan@yahoo.com

Past events

- A Volunteer get-together to celebrate 2002 and to look forward to 2003
- Organized in January Organized talk on Child Issues with AID India. Talk by MAYA India representative.

Upcoming events

- March 16: Tamil Play (joint program with GA Tamil Sangam and Georgia Tech)
- April 5 & 12: Dandia & Bhangra
- May 3 & 4: Cricket (joint program with India Club of Georgia Tech)

Other update

Atlanta website has been launched - <http://atlanta.vibha.org>

Austin, Texas

Contact Info: Bikash Mishra - bikash_mishra@yahoo.com

Past events

- In January, Vibha Austin wrote procedures, policies and officer guidelines for their action center. In the process, 6 officer positions were created, which resulted in the change of Action Center Coordinators in late January.
- In March 2003, Vibha Austin adopted a local school where Vibha volunteers go to tutor elementary school children.

Upcoming events

In a push to increase Vibha awareness the Austin group has several events scheduled for the next couple of months. There is a cricket tournament coming up on the 23rd of the month, a bowlathon on April 19th, a movie-fest in March/April and a gala speaker event in April.

Other update

Vibha Austin website has been created- <http://austin.vibha.org>.

Bay Area, California

Contact Info: Arun Santhanam - afxdll@yahoo.com

Past events

- Plan for 2003 was completed. Attended national plan web conference.
- We had our annual party on Feb 1, 2003 with over 50 volunteers attending to celebrate 2002's success and to welcome 2003 teams.
- New volunteer orientation meeting happened on Jan 29th with 5 new volunteers attending the same.

Upcoming events

- KOED Pledge drive is happening on March 13, 2003. 15 Vibha volunteers will appear on TV to help the pledge drive. This is done to increase Vibha's visibility.
- Concert planning in full swing. Do not have any concrete leads for artistes yet.

Other update

Web/DB team is working to get the bay area website online and to open up the Volunteer Resources section for team leads.

Cleveland, Ohio

Contact Info: Mannar Dhandapani - mannard@hotmail.com

Upcoming events

- DJ- Party in the first week of April. Logistics and publicity for this event are being worked out.
- A cricket tournament is being planned for this summer.

Other Update

The Vibha website for Cleveland is being put together.

Dallas, Texas

Contact Info: Abhijeet Chachad - chachad@ti.com

Upcoming events

- The main focus for the Dallas team for this year would be 'volunteers drives' to get new volunteers and retain existing ones. A volunteer event is being planned in May that will focus on creating more awareness about Vibha in Dallas, especially among patrons, followed by a casual networking event for volunteers.
- Bowlathon is being planned in April expecting 100+ participants. This event will also be used as a forum to re-launch Vibha in Dallas.
- An event for children is also being planned, either in the form of 'Art for Heart' or 'Children's Day'. This has been an important event in the past, and it is hoped that this year it will help motivate volunteers, create interest in Vibha, and reach out to families in Dallas.
- Organizing Vibha Walk in Dallas this year is a decision still to be taken. The main concerns are volunteer strength and sponsorship.

Other Update

The Dallas website is being designed at present and expected to be completed in a few weeks.

Houston, Texas

Contact Info: Advait Kulkarni - advaitkulkarni@india.com

Past events

The Million Penny drives were started in Jan/Feb. Jars were placed at many Indian grocery stores. Efforts to increase the penny drive are underway.

Upcoming events

VI BHA Chess competition is being planned and at present they are getting geared for publicizing the event.

Other Update

Website development efforts are underway.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Contact Info: Vijay Chakravarthi - Vijay.Chakravarthi@med.ge.com

Past events

- Penny Drive: Penny jars have been placed in 4 locations in Milwaukee with publicity material. These jars are being generously filled now and the plans are on to establish penny jars at 2 other locations.
- Membership: This month the membership touched 17 with the addition of 3 new members.

- Pick N Save Project: The Milwaukee group launched the Pick N Save Project by registered as a Voluntary Organization with Pick N Save, a popular grocery chain in the area. When a patron adds the voluntary organization number to his/her Savings Card, the grocery store donates 1% of all purchases to VIBHA. Volunteers are actively recruiting people to get engaged in this easy way to make a difference.

Sacramento, California

Contact Info: Krishna Iyer - ksundara@pcocd2.intel.com

Past events

Volunteers discussed financial target for 2003 and wrapped up last year's accounts.

Upcoming events

The next event planned is Dandia in the July/August.

San Francisco, California

Contact Info: Pradeep- pradeepananth@yahoo.com

Upcoming events

- Screening of World Cup cricket games in association with Kezar pub is currently on. The response has been overwhelming so far with the India-Pakistan game attracting close to 300 people. A report on this event as well as a write-up on Vibha was featured in Asian Week - a San Francisco based newspaper.
- A play is being organized with A'shore productions in May. Details are being finalized.

Other update

- Sponsorship strategy for this year is being planned.



6. General Awareness

Why we do what we do? Here is a compilation of statistics on issues that we fight against. Thanks to Coneti Girimohan (girimohan@hotmail.com) of Atlanta for the compilation.

Child Labor

- For the year 2000, the ILO projects that there will be 13,157,000 economically active children, 5,992,000 girls and 7,165,000 boys between the ages of 10-14, representing 12.07% of this age group.
- Interpolation of census figures by the National Labor Institute indicates that out of 203 million children between the ages of 5 and 14, 116 million are in school, 12.6 million are in full-time employment, and the status of 74 million is unknown. Most, if not all, of the 87 million children, not in school, do housework, work on family farms, work alongside their parents as paid agricultural laborers, work as domestic servants, or are otherwise employed.

- Andhra Pradesh has 1.662,000 child laborers, the highest in the country, with the problem being very acute in Mahboobnagar, Kurnool and Prakasam districts. ("Andhra Pradesh has Highest Number of Child Laborers", Press Trust of India, 12 September 2000)

Child Slavery

- There are no universally accepted figures for the number of bonded child laborers. However, in the carpet industry alone, human rights organizations estimate that there may be as many as 300,000 children working, many of them under condition that amount to bonded labor.
- The labor commissioner estimated that there were 3,000 bonded child laborers in the Magadi silk twining factories in Karnataka.
- 15% of the 100,000 children working in the carpet industry of Uttar Pradesh are in debt-bondage.
- 70-80% of the 8,000 to 50,000 children in the glass industry in Ferozabad are bonded.
- In West Bengal, the organized traffic in illegal Bangladeshi immigrants is a source of bonded labor.
- Persons sometimes are sold into virtual slavery. Many boys, some of who are as young as 4, end up as riders in camel races in West Asia and the Gulf States, especially in the United Arab Emirates, or begging during the Haj.
- A large number of bonded children were found working in 4 industries i.e. silk weaving, flower growing, silver work and rolling *bidis*. ("India court investigation reveal scale of bonded labors", UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, June 1996)
- It takes up to 15 years for girls held in prostitution via debt-bondage to purchase their freedom. (Robert I. Freidman, "India's Shame: Sexual Slavery and Political Corruption Are Leading to an AIDS Catastrophe", The Nation, 8 April 1996)
- Of the 11,280 children below the age of 14 years involved in domestic chores for a wage in 19 towns of Tamil Nadu, around 3,000 children were employed in the homes of government servants. (Ramya Kannan, "India: Study shows lack of follow-up action", The Hindu, 20 September, 2000, citing The 'preliminary assessment' of the prevalence of domestic child labor, by Peace Trust, and 15 other NGOs)
- In Chennai, a study found that 25% of child domestic workers interviewed began working before they were nine and a further 65% began work between the ages of nine and 12 years old. More than 80% were girls. (Anti-Slavery International and Arunodhaya, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Out of Reach: A study of child domestic workers in Chennai, India", 1999)

Child Trafficking

- Over 1 million girls and women are believed to be forced into the sex industry within the country at any given time. Women's rights organisations and NGO's estimate that more than 12,000 and perhaps as many as 50,000 women and children are trafficked into the country annually from neighboring states for the sex trade.
- An estimated 1,000 to 1,500 Indian children are smuggled out every year to Saudi Arabia for begging during the Haj season. From Murshidabad alone, some 400 children accompanied by their chachas leave every year, and not all of them return home again. (["How to earn big bucks: Rent a child to Chacha", The Asian Age, 16 March 1997, cited in Child Workers in Asia, April-September 1997](#))