

WITH SINCERE GRATITUDE

The participation at the Krakow Conference was made possible through the generosity of Deutsch Ordenswerke International who covered the registration and stay and the American Jewish World Service who took care of the Airfare.

#10

APRIL 2009

SANKALP
1000
CLUB

VIEWS AND VOICES

Ashoka Fellows Partnering with each other, brings new hope to Mumbai's IDUs

In May, 2009, Sankalp will officially launch the Sankalp-AMBA Project, a revolutionary programme geared at providing introductory computer training to recovering clients, helping them develop marketable professional skills, enabling them to find group work in the lucrative data entry sector, and to eventually earn small amounts of income. The training is being adapted from a teaching model developed by Sugandha Sukturaj, director of AMBA-CEEIC (Centre for the Economical Empowerment for the Intellectually Challenged), an NGO that provides

computer skills, data entry, and back office instruction to individuals with intellectual challenges at over 15 centers throughout India. The partnership was established when Ms. Sukturaj and Mr. Eldred Tellis, both recipients of the prestigious Ashoka Fellowship, met and discussed the need for Sankalp's clients to "be productive" as a means towards successful recovery.

The initial phase of the programme began in March, 2009 when Sankalp acquired several laptops with Ms. Sukturaj's assistance, and interested clients from all of



Eldred interacts with AMBA clients in Bangalore as he is convinced that the same c



Sugandha taking Sankalp inmates through their first 'touch' of the computer

Sankalp's drop-in centres took part in a variety of "non-computer activities" aimed at teaching the English alphabet, along with actual computer exposure exercises, several times a week. In April, Ms. Jyoti Pohane, one of Sankalp's counselors and now coordinator of the Sankalp-AMBA Project and AJWS volunteer Talya Gillman visited AMBA's central training center in Bangalore, along with associate trainers Mr. Raju Sharma and Mr. Ramzan Shaikh, themselves recovering addicts who will assist Sankalp staff in all aspects of the training. The group spent four days observing the teaching methods and work processes that AMBA's clients experience. Particularly interesting to Raju and Ramzan was getting to know AMBA's trainers and students, all of whom possess various developmental disabilities yet operate computers and perform complicated data entry tasks with little error. Both associate trainers mentioned that spending time at AMBA helped them feel more capable and empowered to do similar work in Mumbai: 'If they can do it, why can't we?' they asked. One of the central components of the visit was for Raju and Ramzan to become familiar with the non-computer activities and games that help students learn the letters in the alphabet as visual images; pictures to be identified and not necessarily 'read.'. They spent time participating in such exercises as well as learning basic computer functions, which they will now pass on to Sankalp's clients.

With the official launch of the Project, twenty two of Sankalp's most promising clients will take part in a similar intensive residential training process, spending several

months improving their knowledge of the English alphabet and keyboard layout, basic computer operation, and various other skills necessary for acquiring data entry contract work from large companies. The opportunity to interact with computers for the first time was such an exciting and empowering experience for many of the clients that their faces literally shone; thus the client's reactions upon initial exposure to the computer were symbolic of the promise that this Project holds!

Talya Gilman

A Thousand Thanks

**SANKALP
1000
CLUB**

You joined the Sankalp One Thousand Club and pledged one thousand rupees a year to put more bite into Sankalp's effort to reach out to marginalised street drug users who are desperately in need of help.

It's time to repeat your generous act (we need every rupee and are counting on a thousand from you again in 2005). We look forward to your renewal of your membership and bringing in new members as well.

A thousand thanks in advance.

Altaf, a life cut in half

Altaf was busy when I first met him nearly four years ago. This was at the Shelter, a facility run by Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust for drug users in need of medical and other support. He was making paper bags and seemed to be doing a rather good job considering that his left arm and leg were missing and the right hand had only three fingers.

Thirteen years earlier, still in his early teens, Altaf had left his home in a village near the city of Bangalore where he used to live with his parents and a younger brother and sister. He is unable to remember all the details about leaving home except that he lived in acute poverty.

Boarding a train leaving for Mumbai Altaf reached the city the next day and started living on the platforms in and around Mumbai Central railway station. Living the life of a street urchin, he acquired the drug habit. With a group of friends, he used to hang out by the side of rail tracks, 'chasing' brown sugar (a crude form of heroin 'Chasers' inhale fumes of the drug from a heated foil). For a living he used to steal scrap from the rail yards surrounding the station complex and to supplement his income he picked the pockets of rail passengers. As time passed, he began injecting the drug whenever he did not have enough money. Living in this way Altaf met with an accident and lost two fingers of his right hand.

One day a friend and he decided to visit Ajmer, a Muslim pilgrimage centre, a few hundred kilometers from Mumbai. At Udaipur station where the train had halted en route, Altaf's friend alighted onto the station to buy food while Altaf waited at the compartment door. Both friends had been smoking the drug throughout their journey from Mumbai. Altaf noticed a piece of foil 'panni' on the rail track. To pick it up he tried to climb down but slipped, falling heavily on the tracks, and passed out. He was run over by a passing train, he found himself in a hospital in Udaipur, his injuries were severe, the left arm and leg were badly mangled. He was also in acute withdrawal due to stoppage of his heroin intake. Thus half-crazed with pain and in a daze he limped out of the hospital against medical advice and boarded a train to Mumbai. In a serious condition, continually losing blood from his wounds, he lay in agony for four days on a foot over bridge at Mumbai Central station, refusing to go to a hospital. Eventually the staff from Sankalp under instructions from their director, admitted him to nearby Nair hospital.

After spending nearly one and half months in hospital, Altaf was discharged and taken to the centre run by Sankalp. His left lower and upper limbs had been amputated. His recovery was slow but uneventful. He was taught various job skills and became adept at making



paper bags and other decorative paper products. His boarding and lodging was provided for and he was paid a small stipend for his work. Although his physical wounds had healed there was a lot of pent up anger and frustration which manifested from time to time in bouts of angry outbursts and other irrational behaviour. This led to conflicts with other inmates and the staff, leading to his walking out from the shelter. However he was later given space at another centre where he is put up at present. All those four years he has spent with Sankalp, Altaf has never relapsed into addiction even once, a huge achievement in itself considering the success rate is so low. He has not seen or heard from his parents in thirteen years but is reluctant to contact them, due to feelings of guilt and embarrassment.

Altaf continues battling life on many fronts. The day he meets his parents his life will complete a full circle. He is a survivor.

Dr. Aslam Malik

International Workshop on Drug Treatment Organisations, Dhaka, November 3-5, 2008

'Sustainability, Quality and Diversity' was the theme of the International Workshop held by Caritas Germany in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 3rd 5th November 2008. For a decade Caritas has been involved in the sub-continent, rendering support to organizations working in the field of Drug Demand Reduction. It has aided in the development of strategies and approaches to drug treatment programmes.

The International Workshop had delegates from Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and Cambodia including representatives from local organizations in Bangladesh. It was hosted by Bangladesh Rehabilitation and Assistance Centre for Addicts (BARACA), a project of Caritas Bangladesh established by the Catholics Bishops Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB).

The inaugural session was honored by the presence of several dignitaries -- the Archbishop of Dhaka, the German Ambassador to Bangladesh, Addl. Director General, Dept. of Narcotics Control, Bangladesh, and the office bearers of Caritas, Bangladesh and BARACA. It was followed by country-wise presentations on the updated context of drug production, trafficking, supply and demand reduction in the countries represented. The situation in the Indian context was presented by Mr. Jacob Panmei, DSSS from Imphal, Manipur. The presentation highlighted how India's unenviable location between the Golden triangle -- Burma, Thailand, Malaysia and the Golden Crescent -- Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan inevitably made it the main transit point for drug trafficking.

I represented Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, and presented two papers the first on 'Harm Reduction: Practices and Standard of Quality' and the second on 'Advocacy in the Area of Drug Demand Reduction'.

The paper on 'Harm Reduction' explained the principles, strategies and the aims of harm reduction and how it contributes to the prevention of the spread of HIV among

and from Intravenous Drug Users. The principles and the hierarchy of harm reduction are used to show that harm reduction services such as needle and syringe exchange, access to public health, referrals, abscess prevention and management can all work with the same or similar goals like abstinence based programmes. Harm reduction policies, strategies and activities are aimed at limiting or reducing the nature and extent of adverse consequences in health, social, economic and legal aspects of society.

The epidemic of HIV/AIDS among IDUs remains unresolved. There is a need to think and act in innovative ways for the development of new policies to respond to the pandemic, especially the stigma and discrimination which blocks affected people from accessing care and services. For these policies to come into practice, however, advocacy skills to influence decision makers are required. My paper on 'Advocacy in the area of Drug demand Reduction' dealt with the various stages and principles of Advocacy Activities.

Papers on concepts and practices for greater awareness, networking and fund raising were also presented. These were followed up by experience-sharing discussions and group debates. Each group came up with findings and recommendations to be integrated into a final statement from the 'Workshop on Standards of Quality, Sustainability and Diversity', which was presented as the Asia-specific view at the Berlin Conference, in January 2009.

Delegates were accommodated at the Catholics Bishops Conference of Bangladesh Conference Centre. The participants had an opportunity to visit BARACA and observe, the income generation activities poultry farming, fisheries, cattle rearing and cultivation of rice and vegetables.

Suseelkumar



Learning and teaching in Mumbai

About a year ago or so I was struggling with a deep sense of unsettlement and searching for the meaning of life in my own life, and I decided that sharing, helping, and improving the lives of others is one way of fusing meaning into my life. The idea of equality and helping others resonates strongly in me, and it is closely tied to me being a Jew. One of the reasons I love Judaism so much (despite frequent headaches it gives me) is the importance it places on good deeds, charity, and a general idea of helping and giving. With that in mind, I started a search for a Jewish organization that helps anyone regardless of religion, race, and sex. My search led me to apply for an assignment with American Jewish World Service, and my assignment landed me in Mumbai as a volunteer with Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust.

Throughout my Indian journey, I had a chance to explore a new culture, have a chance for personal growth, and the best part was meeting people. I came in contact with the most amazing people everyday -- fellow volunteers, local NGOs, local activists, and all the wonderful staff at Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust.

The staff members at Sankalp inspired me more and more with their compassion, and a desire to help/change/improve things. I met folks who selflessly gave of their time to others, and by taking small steps made huge differences in the lives of others. Ordinary people, who while very appreciative of their own good fortunes, sought ways to help others to change their fortunes, and extend a helping hand to the most abandoned members of society. To sum it up, I met people

who are working hard at making this world a better place.

I used my skills as a Systems Analyst to help develop a contract with a group of software professionals that could be useful in documentation at Sankalp. I was able to pass on some skills to Shital who was selected as the coordinator of the new Documentation Department set up by Sankalp while I was there.

And then of course there was the experience of being in and with Mumbai as it went through the nightmare that held the city down for several days, and where a lovely Jewish couple whom I had met a few days earlier tragically lost their lives. This couple was an emissary for one of the groups in Judaism called Chabad. This organization is known for its selfless help in reaching out to members of its community, very much in the same way that Sankalp is reaching out to members of its own community. A senseless and baseless hatred of people, who don't see that all of us are more similar than different, cut short the lives of two wonderful individuals.

Meeting, being, learning from all the people I have met while in Mumbai has stretched me in new ways. I am learning more about myself as I answer questions about who I am, where I have come from, and such. It is also very warming to see how much people are similar rather than different. It gives me hope that it is possible to create a reality where learning to respect one another is the norm and where differences can co-exist peacefully.

Olga Bakayeva



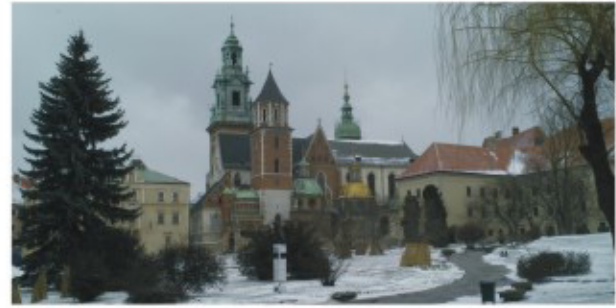
Making Prisons more responsive to Drug User's needs

I was delighted to receive an invitation to make an oral presentation of Sankalp's work at Arthur Road Jail, at the 1st Conference of the Connections Project. The conference titled 'Joining the Dots Criminal Justice, Treatment and Harm Reduction', was the first of its kind to take a look at drugs and infections within the European Union Criminal Justice System. It also included contributions from Russia, Australia and the U.S.A.

Pat O'Hare, President of the International Harm Reduction Association (I.H.R.A), gave the keynote address. He emphasised the need for equal services for drug users 'inside' as were made available on the 'outside'. This he said was part of an individual's human rights which needed to be upheld. From his vast 20 years experience, he was clear in his pronouncement that security was better maintained where the majority of services existed, and this included a 'needle syringe programme', in prison.

Barnie, President of Swedish Drug Users Association asked a very pertinent question. 'How does one try to make the world drug free, when you cannot do it in a PRISON? Here you have a lot of drug users, a lot of drugs and not a lot to do ...so...' He said that Sweden was a signatory to a WHO Charter with 50 other countries that pledge to have services within prisons similar to those on the outside. Yet there are none except a bowl of condoms.

Annette from the World Health Organisation said that it has been demonstrated that drug use exists in prisons and it takes place with greater risk. Also that Hepatitis C and HIV have a higher rate of transmission in prisons. In spite of this, there are only 9 needle syringe programmes in Europe and only one (Iran) in Asia.



Pictureisue Krakow was an ideal location to discuss the drab state of affairs of

The main debate centered around looking at the prison as a cost effective treatment opportunity. The main challenge was, how best to go about availing of the opportunity. It was clear that policies in most countries were inadequate to the needs that existed.

Besides the 'high' of interacting with experts in the field, the conference was an opportunity to attend a Master class by Dr. Dwayne Simpson. He shared many of his 'secrets' for Adaptive Treatment Planning and Innovative Implementation. Much can be adapted and used for our detox camps and I have undertaken a goal to help build 'capacities' for our own staff.

From the presentations it was also clear how 'after care' for drug using prisoners contributed to a five-fold increase in success rates. Sankalp will make a small beginning by taking our clients released from prison for a 24 hour support exercise which includes introductions to our Drop-in-Centre, Narcotics Anonymous and some 'clean' company on the outside. More power to us through implementation.

Eldred Tellis



Eldred along with DO International Director Ulrich Kohler got to spend some quali

SANKALP REHABILITATION TRUST

Administrative Office: Topiwala Lane Municipal School, 1st Floor, Opp. Lamington Road Police Station, Grant Road, Mumbai-400 007. E-mail : sankalp.trust@gmail.com Website : www.sankalp.org.in For Private Circulation only