



# MUKTI

## NEWS LETTER

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### ACHIEVEMENT AND GOALS

Mukti has made significant progress in their health and education programs. A recent book bank and distribution project reached out to thousands of students. The programs were assessed by both Mukti's board as well as by representatives from Asha and Association for India's Development (AID). The due diligence performed by Mukti's friend and supporters and their subsequent kind words provided us with encouragement and hope. Details of their visit are provided below.

Mukti's annual general meeting was conducted in early summer. Details are provided below

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The AGM was held on 26 May, 2006 at Purbasridharpur. A new board of trustees was elected for 2006-2007:

- Sankar Halder – President
- Nimai Halder – Vice President
- Madhusudan Bairagi – Secretary
- Bijoy Halder – Treasurer
- Biswanath Mandal – Member
- Subhrajit Bhattacharya - Member

The board discussed short- and long- term targets. These include: One good primary and secondary school; primary health center, provide self-help training to unemployed local youth; starting up coaching program for underprivileged student; promoting sports and working closely with other clubs, and composing local and Mukti news and circulate in various public places.



### VOLUNTEERS WORKSHOP



Work shops were conducted for more than 200 Mukti volunteers alongside the AGM. Individual workshops were provided for each wing - Health, education, cultural, economy & ecology. The training was conducted by experienced volunteers from other NGOs, experienced social workers and senior volunteers within Mukti.

Volunteers were trained in the following:

- Expertise in social work
- Various local problems and probable solutions.
- How to increase awareness among villagers and volunteers.
- How to manage Mukti social programs efficiently.
- Plans for achievement of goals of the various upcoming **Mukti** programs.

## BOOK BANK PROJECT

Book distribution camps were conducted as part of **Mukti's** Book Bank project, which is currently being jointly sponsored by Asha-Yale and Asha-NYC/NJ. Approximately 1800 students were recipients of this year's book distribution.



The events were held in June 2006. Camps were conducted at two locations:

Purbasridharpur – Approximately 700 high school students from Nagendrapur Hemanta Kumari High School and Jata Nagendrapur high school attended the camp on 3 June 2006. Kankandighi - Approximately 800 high school students from four high schools attended the camp on 4 June 2006. This included a girl's high school within this gram panchayat. Additionally, 300 students enrolled in Class XII and graduation level courses also received textbooks as a part of this program.



**Bijoy Halder presenting textbooks to students**



**Books and pens being arranged for distribution**

Representatives from AID (Kolkata) and the Red Plus Society were present during the book distributions. The following issues regarding education in this region were identified during the Asha representative's site visit:

**Lack of schools, teachers and government support** – the primary response to this challenge is to shore up government support. Mukti is considering the possibility of building schools in conjunction with Asha NYC/NJ.

**Nutritional and economical obstacles** – Mukti is considering providing meals at schools to ensure proper nutrition for the children. Research will be done to find sources for low-cost nutrient-rich food.

**Lack of motivation** – more stress will be laid on awareness among local youth to demonstrate the long-term potential of education. Career guidance will be provided and incentives (prizes for good performance) will be considered.

Additional efforts to increase the quality of education will include attention to the health needs of children through proper nutrition and provision of solar lamps. Private tuitions, utilizing local educated but unemployed youth, will be used as an interim solution till the local schools are set up to provide adequate facilities for education.

### SITE VISIT - ASHA

A site visit was conducted by Ranitendranath Tagore (Ranit) of Asha-Yale as part of the continued support of the Book Bank Project & the Talented Student Scholarship (TSS) Project. Ranit visited the Hemanta Kumari High School and spoke to teachers. He also met with the students of the TSS project and their parents. Ranit recounts his conversation with a parent:

*"Another inspiring story was that of Mrs. Radha Jana, mother of a student .... Being determined to provide education to her children in spite of grinding poverty, she made a trip to Kolkata upon hearing that someone was giving away old textbooks. She was confident that her efforts towards educating her children would be appreciated. However, after making the long and expensive trip to Kolkata, she was unable to get past the security guard who treated her with disrespect and told her to go away. In spite of this humiliation (it brought tears to her eyes while describing it), Mrs. Jana was undeterred from taking the next available opportunity to procure textbooks for her children."*

Ranit noted improvement in test scores of sponsored students and discussed benefits/obstacles of the project and reviewed additional needs.



### SITE VISIT - AID

A site visit was conducted by Somnath Mukherji of AID- Boston. The purpose of the visit was to conduct a site visit of the sanitation project (low-cost toilets) and to review the progress of the Book Bank project for Asha-NJ. Somnath visited many houses to check on the toilets and their usage – he reports that people *"had been using it regularly for the past 8 or 9 months and seemed quite satisfied."* He noted some design flaws but observed that Mukti volunteers were working to address the shortcomings in the structure. Somnath also visited the Hementakumari High School to check on the effectiveness of the Book Bank Project.

Two other key observations were noted in his site report – the first was recording a need for training and information on practicing organic agriculture, soil testing, crop rotation and other techniques to reduce dependency of chemicals. The second was the lack of medical facilities in close proximity which has created a significant health-care/services issue. Mukti has been discussing this with AID and Asha and have long term plans for targeting these issues.

Somnath's insightful report helped Mukti get recognition from some of our supporting organizations, and also provides valuable guidance for operations and long-term goals.

