

SANGHAMITRA



ANNUAL REPORT 2005 - 2006



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*Your country, brother, shall be your love!
Good unto better you shall improve!
Great deeds indeed are needed now!
Work hard, work long in farm and factory!
Let the land be abundant in milk and honey!
Flood the land with goods, all made at home!
Spread your handiwork all over the world!
Are you a patriot? Do not shout it aloud!
Bragging never did anybody any good!
Quietly, do a fine deed instead!
Let the people see it, it is they that decide!*

—Desha bhakti by Gurajada
Translated from Telugu by Sri Sri Mahakavi



FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY & CEO

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I present this report to you for the period 2005-2006.

Like the past year, this year has also been eventful. Since we pursue an integrated development approach to whatever we undertake, needless to mention that the related activities will be increasing year by year.

*We added two initiatives this year and both of them related to combating HIV/AIDS: one being **Prevention and Control of Child Trafficking and HIV/AIDS**; and the other on **Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS**. While the former covered the population in 23 villages of Toopran and Chegunta Mandals the latter concentrated on pregnant women in both those Mandals. Along with these initiatives, the existing programs related to Comprehensive Eye Care Services and Formation and Strengthening of Self Help Groups continued. Result: the organization conducting many events. They are highlighted in the following pages.*

Before enumerating these events, however, I would like to share a few thoughts about the initiatives that the organization is implementing because they reinforce the importance of peoples' participation and networking. One relates to the spread of

HIV/AIDS and its prevention and the other pertains to comprehensive eye care services.

We are all aware that the spread of HIV/AIDS has reached alarming proportions. I do not want to furnish any statistics but it would be sufficient to say that Andhra Pradesh is leading as the highest HIV/AIDS affected State in India. Hyderabad tops the national average of HIV affected areas with 34%. STI is ever increasing. Prostitution has reached new heights. Trafficking of women and children is on the rise and is taking place without any check. The trafficked victims are lured and taken to various destinations under the pretext of providing/arranging jobs. But many a time they, especially the women, land up in brothels. It is not that the authorities and others concerned are not knowing about it and rescuing the victims. Rescuing the victims is taking place at a slow pace mainly because the perpetrators of this crime go unnoticed or they vanish from the scene without leaving any clue. They do their operation clandestinely. This has to be checked and the culprits brought to book. Needless to mention that the rescued persons—women and children—should be rehabilitated. Our initiatives in partnership with PLAN International (India) aims to achieve this very objective. We need to look this problem from various angles—socio-economic, cultural etc.—and not from mere

moral or legal angles as often we are tempted to do. These problems cannot be tackled unless the government and voluntary organizations, especially Civil Society Organizations, work hand in hand with commitment and without any discrimination and any “holier than those” attitude.

Awareness building exercise on HIV/AIDS in various forms among the people is being carried out on a regular basis for preventing the spread of infection. The communities in the participating villages are actively involved in this effort of checking the spread of this disease. This is indeed encouraging. Spread of infection from parent to child also to be checked at appropriate time. This was also being carried out with the support of UNICEF.

The other initiative of providing Comprehensive Eye Care Services is in operation since May 2004 in Toopran, Chegunta and Ramayempet Mandals, covering a population of over two lakhs. Here, our attempt is to complement the efforts of the government agencies through networking with establishments having similar objectives/programmes. Such arrangements are working out very well. However, it is regrettable that the communities are not participating in this effort to the extent expected of them though they are aware that diseases of the eyes affect them directly in terms of mobility and earning capacity. This is despite holding counseling and awareness building sessions. Of course they have their own reasons and difficulties to describe which we can

understand to a great extent. Our experience is that unless the community shows equal interest in the process of preventing and treating blindness, the blindness control programme will not have the desired effect. However, we also understand this is a slow process and we need sustained effort and a lot of patience.

Our involvement does not end at just providing eye care services. What we are doing is extending a comprehensive eye care service where prevention to identification of blind persons/persons with refractive errors to medical/surgical treatment to rehabilitation are looked into and dealt with appropriately.

*What I am trying to bring out by quoting the experience of the organization is that there are two major elements that one cannot ignore while implementing any initiative. They are: **a. peoples participation and b. networking of people and organizations.** Development agencies should give utmost importance to both these aspects not only in writing but also in action. Otherwise the efforts put in will not be effective and will not ensure sustainability.*

MDIDP (Medak District Integrated Development Project) is a larger initiative of Sanghamitra and within its framework comes different projects. What Sanghamitra could do in the last five years had been a small portion of this larger initiative. Therefore, a lot of work has still to go into it and in that regard skill development for income generation, community health care including primary health care,



environmental sanitation, primary education, eradication of child labour and promotion of suitable farming and farming methods are on our priority list. Implementing these require inputs in terms of funds and human resources. We are sure that support will be forthcoming from many organizations in the future for taking up new ventures and expanding the ongoing ones.

We look forward to the active participation of anyone who is interested in the development of other people, in our efforts to bring about development in the areas we operate. We must express here that whatever we had been able to achieve was possible with the help, support and cooperation of many people and organizations.

I take this opportunity to thank all the funding partners and government agencies who have extended their assistance for undertaking the initiatives mentioned in the report. Thanks to all the networking institutions/communities and associates

who have contributed to the efforts of the organization in the field of integrated development.

The Sanghamitra team has put in its best efforts in ensuring that the organization achieve effectiveness in all activities. I am proud of all the members in the team.

The Executive Committee of Sanghamitra has been a source of inspiration. It has encouraged taking up new initiatives and has extended its unstinted cooperation to all those initiatives. I hereby place on record my sincere thanks to them.

I also thank my Provincial, Fr G Lazar svd, for allowing me to continue with Sanghamitra.

Above all I could always feel the unseen hands of Divine Providence guiding us especially in difficult situations. I bow my head in thanks giving before that Almighty Power.

— Fr. John Vattamattom svd
Secretary & CEO

SANGHAMITRA

HYDERABAD

Fifth Annual Report for the period April 2005 – March 2006

I. COMPREHENSIVE EYE CARE SERVICES (CES)

1. Eye Screening Events

At community level - 27		At school level - 93	
Persons screened	2056	Children screened	11772
Male	848	Male	6172
Female	1208	Female	5600
Persons provided spectacles free of charge	253	Children with refractive errors	184
Male	129	Male	82
Female	124	Female	102
Persons treated for cataract & other ailments	756	Children provided spectacles free of charge	184
Male	353	Male	82
Female	403	Female	102
Persons provided with operative spectacles free of charge	598	Children refracted at the camps	656
Male	303	Male	339
Female	295	Female	317



A community eye screening camp



A school eye screening camp



2. Community Based Rehabilitation

In the three mandals that the organization is involved, 93 cases (44 male; 49 female) of incurable blindness had been



Economic rehabilitation: a goat for rearing

identified. They are being extended the necessary support depending on their age, educational background and other considerations. Accordingly, 57 persons (26 male; 31 female) were assisted in getting certificate of blindness, 35 (15 male; 20 female) persons in getting bus passes, and 38 persons (15 male; 23 female) in getting monthly pensions. Three children were enrolled in schools. Five persons were assisted in economic rehabilitation.

3. Training programmes

Training programmes for various



A training course for leaders of SHGs

functionaries – government and non-government – on eye health care were conducted during the year under report. The objective of such programme was to build awareness on matters related to eyecare so that the participants in turn could disseminate the knowledge gained to their peer groups, colleagues, students, patients and others as the case may be for achieving/maintaining better eye health. The topics covered in the programmes included: Preventable/avoidable blindness; vision impairment and treatment; importance of Vitamin A supplementation and consumption of vegetables, childhood visual impairments and their causes and treatment; and rehabilitative services. The programme also covered general topics such as immunization, community health; communicable diseases etc. The resource persons in those programmes included: Medak District Ophthalmic Surgeon; Medical officers of Primary Health Centres; (Chegunta and Toopran Mandals) and senior members of staff of Sanghamitra.

The following groups were imparted such training courses during their reporting period.

a. For leaders of SHGs

This was a day's programme organized in June '05. Forty two SHG leaders from Ramayampet mandal took part in the training held at Ramayampet.

b. For ICDS Teachers

Two training programme (one in Aug 05 and another in Sept. 05) were conducted. They were of one-day duration each. While one was organized in Ramayampet (for ICDS

teachers of Ramayampet Mandal) the other was in Chegunta (for the ICDS teachers of Chegunta mandal). Thirty ICDS teachers (15 from each mandal) took part in the training.

c. For para medical staff

This one-day training programme was organized for the para medical staff of the primary health centers (PHC) of Chegunta



Training para-medical staff

and Toopran. Twenty three members of staff of Chegunta PHC and 19 of Toopran PHC underwent this course. They were conducted in June '05 (for Chegunta) and March 06 (for Toopran).

d. For School Teachers

This one-day training course was organized in Feb '06 for the school teachers of Toopran mandal. Fifty nine teachers took part in the programme.

e. For Health Club members

In June '06 this one-day training programme was organized at Ramayampet. Forty five health club members – registered medical practitioners (allopathic and others) took part in the programme. The participants

were from Chegunta and Ramayampet mandals.

4. Campaigns

School children are involved in building awareness on eye health. They undertake campaign by taking out rallies in their respective villages using posters, placards and other informative material on eye health related issues. Six such rallies were conducted by the students of various schools in Toopran (3) and Chegunta (3) Mandals.



A campaign in progress

Prior to taking out the rally talks on eye health including general health were organized for the benefit of the students.

5. Kitchen Gardens

Sixteen kitchen gardens were set up in different villages of Chegunta (10) and Ramayampet (6) Mandals. This was as part of promoting consumption of vegetables for maintaining good health.

6. World Sight Day

World Sight Day was celebrated on 14 Oct 05 at Toopran. An eye screening camp was conducted on the occasion when 386 persons attended it. The Medak District



Ophthalmic Surgeon, Dr K. Sudarshan and Hamsa Multi Speciality Hospitals, Narsapur, took part in the celebrations. An eye health/general health exhibition was also organized on the occasion. Medical treatment for the needy was given at the camp site itself while persons requiring surgical treatment were referred to Hamsa Multi Speciality Hospitals.

II. SELF HELP GROUPS (SHGs)

The organization continues to involve itself in forming and strengthening of SHGs. 131 SHGs are now functioning in 26 villages of Chegunta Mandal under the guidance of Sanghamitra focusing mainly on savings and income generating activities. In all there are 1560 members. Ninety of these groups received refundable financial assistance from VELUGU (a State Govt sponsored scheme) also. Bank loans range from Rs. 20000-30000. A few SHGs received financial support from the SC Corporation at the rate of Rs. 5000 per member. Sanghamitra facilitated the efforts of the SHGs in obtaining loans from various sources and guided them to put the loan to appropriate use. The loans were repayable in ten equal monthly instalments.

The loans obtained were being used for purchasing of cattle, putting up petty shops, vegetable growing /vending, farming and so on. As a part of empowering women to look after their and their families' health, talks were given on the topics of personal hygiene, water and sanitation, immunization, mother and child health, preventable illnesses, HIV/AIDS, eye care etc. on the scheduled monthly meeting days.

III. HIV/AIDS

A. *Prevention and Control of Child Trafficking & HIV/AIDS in Andhra Pradesh (CTHAPAP)*

1. General

This project—Prevention and Control of Child Trafficking and HIV/AIDS in Andhra Pradesh (CTHAPAP)—is under implementation since March 2005 in 23 villages of Toopran and Chegunta Mandals. Given below are the main events under this programme:

- a. Awareness campaign on HIV/trafficking in each village: Cultural shows, individual and group discussions, meetings.
- b. School enrolment, retention and follow-up: 132 school drop-outs rejoined school
- c. Vigilance committees for arresting trafficking: 49 village committees have been formed.
- d. Child and adolescent Sanghas: 50 Sanghas formed as a measure to prevent HIV/AIDS and trafficking.
- e. Mobilization of support to counseling, medical and nutritional requirement of HIV/AIDS affected persons: Networking with 9 institutions is on for carrying out these efforts.
- f. Provision of treatment and care to people and children living with HIV/AIDS: Coordinating with 7 hospitals and 1 Care and Support Centre for the purpose.

- g. One Association of PLHAs (People living with HIV/AIDS) has been formed with the objective of initiating, when necessary, collective action to achieve their rights. The Association has 70 members.
- h. Village level sessions for VOCSET (Victims of Commercial Sex Exploitation and Trafficking): 31 sessions were conducted to find out the grievances and complaints of the affected persons and provide them with solutions.
- i. Skill/knowledge development sessions on HIV/AIDS: 11 sessions were conducted for the benefit of the members of staff of the organization.
- j. Identification of PLHAs and CLHAs (Children Living with HIV/AIDS): 70 PLHAs and 04 CLHAs have been identified. 116 STI cases were detected. All of these persons were attended to in accordance with their need.
- k. Forming Networks of PLHAs: One network formed. There are 16 members in it. Awareness building on HIV/AIDS is the main objective of the network. More such networks will be formed in the future. Experts are invited to talk on the subject as part of the process.

2. Discussion on Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act 1956 and GO No. 1 (NGO level):

This was conducted at Chegunta in July 2005. There were 140 participants. The

Mandal Revenue Officer and the Mandal Development Officer of Chegunta Mandal and the Medical Officer of Primary Health Centre, Chegunta spoke on the occasion. The other speakers were: Sri Jagannadha Rao, Chairman, HARD, Ramayampet and Smt Krishna Jyothi, Project Officer, ICDS at Ramayampet.

3. Reviewing of Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act 1956 and GO-1 (District level):

This was a meeting organized at Sangareddy in July 05. It was aimed at building awareness among the people regarding IT(P) Act 1956 and the amendments being proposed to it. There were 148 participants from various parts of Ramayampet and Siddipet Mandals (through our coalition partners SWARD in Siddipet and HARD in Ramayampet). The Medak District Leprosy Officer, Dr. Bhaskar Rao, and Sri. G.Prakash, Project Officer, Velugu, took



Reviewing IT (P) Act 1956

part in the programme which was chaired by Dr G R S Rao, President, Academy of Gandhian Studies, Tirupati.

4. Global Movement for Children (GMFC)

a. NGO Level Open Forum on Child Rights.

This one-day programme (NGO level), held at Chegunta in Nov. 05, had 420 participants which included 398 school



NGO level open forum meeting in progress

children. Discussions covered: Child rights; Right to health and education; Stigma attached to HIV+ children and the need for wiping it off.

The Mandal Development Officer (MRO) of Toopran Mandal, Sri. Shaik Azmathullah, Dr. D.Rayanna, an expert in Health Education, Sri. Ram Mohan, a Public Prosecutor, Dr. Rangachary, Medak District Secretary, Loksatta were resource persons for the programme.

b. Open Forum on Child Rights.

This was a day's programme (District Level), held in Nov 05 at Chegunta. There were 371 participants including 247 school children. The Mandal Revenue Officer (Sri. Durgaiah), the Mandal Development Officer (Sri. Bhoomalingam) and the Mandal Education Officer (Sri. Bhadraiah) of

Chegunta Mandal, Sri. Ram Mohan, Public Prosecutor and Smt. Shivkumari, Secretary, SWARD, spoke on the occasion after an introduction to the theme by the Secretary & CEO of Sanghamitra, Fr John Vattamattom SVD.

c. Training of Trainers (ToT): This was aimed at School teachers and conducted at Chegunta in Nov 05 with a view to equipping them with the necessary knowledge to educate their students in regard to: (i) mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS; (ii) controlling of the spread of the disease; (iii) measures to educate the public; and (iv) removal of stigma attached to HIV/AIDS affected persons. There were 97 participants.

Teachers belonging to various schools in the mandal participated in the Training programme. They were given an overview of the prevailing situation with respect to HIV/AIDS with particular reference to the State of Andhra Pradesh. The sessions were handled by Dr. Bhaskar Rao, Medak District Leprosy Officer and Mr. Sudhakar, Counsellor at the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre (VCTC), Kamareddy.

d. Student Rally

Two rallies of school / college students were organized at Toopran and Chegunta Mandals on the occasion of World AIDS Day on 1 Dec 2005. The rallies were aimed at spreading awareness on HIV/AIDS and child trafficking.

Students from 28 schools of the two mandals participated in an essay competition organized as part of GMFC. 1084 boys and 987 girls took part in the competition. Prizes



The CEO of Sanghamitra Fr. John Vattamattom svd addressing the students on the occasion of World Aids Day.

were awarded to the winners of the essay competition. In 51 schools of these Mandals **Lesson for Life** sessions were conducted. 2273 boys and 1811 girls attended these sessions.

After the rally meetings were conducted highlighting the issues related to HIV/AIDS, its spread and the importance of prevention of its spread. Dr GRS Rao, President of



Student Rally

Academy of Gandhian Studies, Tirupati, was the Chief Guest on the occasion both at Toopran and Chegunta.

While the Deputy Superintendent of

Police, Toopran Sub-division (Sri G Mohan Reddy) flagged off the rally at Toopran, it was the Mandal Revenue Officer (Sri T Durgaiah), the Mandal Development Officer (Sri Bhoomalingam), and the Medical Officer of Primary Health Centre, Chegunta (Dr Rama Rao) Chegunta Mandal who jointly flagged off the rally in Chegunta. In Toopran the distance covered was 4 kms and in Chegunta it was 2.5 kms. Toopran saw participation of 3168 children while it was 3768 at Chegunta (both the Mandals put together the rally had 6718 students).

B. Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT) of HIV/AIDS

This UNICEF partnered initiative was implemented in Toopran and Chegunta mandals as a pilot project. A survey covering



An awareness building session on PPTCT

13697 households in the project area was conducted to identify pregnant women as part of the initiative. There were 425 pregnant women at the time of the survey (Oct 05 to Dec 05). 43 pregnant women (suspected to have contracted the virus / disease) were referred to government health facilities and of which 08 pregnant women



were diagnosed HIV+. These persons were helped in getting the necessary medical assistance from the government health facilities to prevent transmission of the virus to the child.



Another PPTCT awareness building exercise

One of the major activities of this project was to build awareness programmes on HIV/AIDS with specific reference to parent to child transmission of HIV/AIDS through holding cultural events in the villages. A cultural troupe based in one of the villages of Chegunta Mandal undertook these programs under the guidance of our team. During the shows, the troupe covered other important topics like hygiene, sanitation, water, immunization, sexually transmitted infections and development issues concerning the villages.

IV. INVOLVEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

1. AIDS Awareness and Sustained Holistic Action (AASHA) Programme

AASHA programme was the effort of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS and as a part of their

efforts, July 05 was devoted to building awareness among the community on the seriousness of this disease and the ways of preventing its spread. Sanghamitra was actively involved with the programme in Toopran and Chegunta Mandals on the request of the Government functionaries concerned with a view to strengthening their efforts. Programmes such as video/audio shows, talks etc. were organized. The Medical Officers of local primary health centres led the events. The programme included separate sessions on immoral trafficking and HIV/AIDS at Mandal and district levels. Our team joined the government functionaries in conducting these events.

2. Eye screening programmes for truck drivers

The Toopran Police and Road Transport Authority (RTA) of Medak organized an eye screening camp in April 05 exclusively for truck drivers. Sanghamitra team collaborated in organizing this camp at which 287 truck drivers were screened for possible eye ailments. 40 persons were distributed spectacles free of cost. MNR Hospital, Sangareddy, Hamsa Multi Speciality Hospitals, Narsapur and local Primary Health Centres and the Medak District Ophthalmic Surgeon were actively involved in conducting the camp.

3. Camp of the district authorities under the aegis of the local M L A

The local MLA from the Ramayampet constituency, Smt. Padma Devender Reddy, organized a camp in June 05 at Chegunta

Zilla Parishad High School (Chegunta Mandal is a part of Ramayampet Assembly Constituency) for the benefit of differently challenged persons, including visually challenged ones. At this camp the government authorities were present for issuance of certificates to the differently challenged individuals on the spot. Such certificates are of use for securing various benefits under different schemes of the government. Sanghamitra team assisted the persons requiring these certificates to present themselves in the camp for undergoing the mandatory medical examination prior to issuance of certificates. [Normally one has to visit the District HQ—75 km away from Chegunta—to obtain this document from the authorities.] 17 visually challenged persons—10 males and 7 females (included 3 boys and a girl)—were issued Medical Board Certificates.

V. RURAL ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES/EXPOSURE VISITS

1. Rural Orientation programme for MSW students

A group of 15 students of MSW (previous) from St. Francis College for women, Secunderabad, underwent a two-day rural orientation programme in Sept 05 in two villages of Chegunta Mandal. The students after dividing themselves into groups, conducted a PRA programme in one of the villages and documented the information collected for their own understanding of a village situation. They performed cultural programmes in these villages conveying the alarming rise in the number of HIV/AIDS and the importance of

arresting its spread through various methods. The cultural show also dealt with superstitions and development matters concerning the people in the villages. The students were given an orientation.

2. Exposure programme for farmers

This was a programme organized by Dr S Ravi Kumar, Senior Scientist (Agronomy), at the National Research Centre for Sorghum (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) in Hyderabad for the benefit of farmers in Toopran and Chegunta Mandals. Twenty one farmers made use of this exposure visit to Kurnool. The objective of the programme was to expose the farmers to institutions that facilitate extension of agriculture knowledge and entrepreneurship development. The visit was to K V K in Kothakota, Syndicate Institute of Entrepreneurship Development, Kurnool and Certified Seed Production plot at Gospadu. The visit created an environment for the farmers for experiential adult learning. A thought process for alternative farming that support sustainability has now set in among the farmers who took part in the programme. This is evident from the interest that the farmers are showing after the visit.

3. Meetings with farmers

At Chegunta

A meeting of farmers with Dr S Ravi Kumar, a Senior Scientist at the National Research Centre for Sorghum (ICAR), Hyderabad was organized in May 05 at Chegunta. 12 farmers from Bonal and Chinnashivnoor villages participated in the meeting. The aim of the meeting was to introduce a high yielding variety of Sorghum





Dr. Ravi Kumar inspecting sorghum plants

seeds in the Mandal. Dr Ravi Kumar, upon receiving a positive response from the farmers, distributed Sorghum seeds free of cost together with suitable fertilizers. The farmers were reported to be satisfied with this new variety as it gave them a good yield.

At Toopran

A discussion with the farmers who were a part of the team (and a few farmers interested in trying alternative farming) which made use of the exposure visit to Kurnool, was conducted in early March 06 at Toopran, when Dr Ravi Kumar (ICAR) and Dr T J Rego, a retired Principal Scientist from ICRISAT, who



Dr. Rego (wearing cap) inspecting the soil at a village in Toopran Mandal

is an expert in Soil Sciences handled the topic of alternative farming. [This was a follow up of the exposure programme and as a process of encouraging the (other) farmers in taking up alternative farming for long term sustainability]. 45 farmers actively participated in the meeting and as part of an action plan it was decided to take out soil from various farms for scientific testing. Accordingly soil was removed in the third week of March 06 for testing and based on the result of the testing further course of action will be drawn up for execution.

A discussion with the farmers of Chegunta will be organized soon on the same lines as above.

VI. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF SANGHAMITRA

Sanghamitra celebrated International Women's Day and its Fifth Anniversary on 8 March 06 at Chegunta. A meeting of a large number of women and adolescent girls—nearly 2000 not counting men and children—was organized, as a part of the celebration. The meeting which was presided over by Dr G R S Rao, President of Academy of Gandhian Studies, Tirupati, had Shri T Durgaiah, Mandal Revenue Officer of Chegunta Mandal as the Chief Guest. The participants belonged to almost all the villages of Chegunta Mandal.

The objective of the celebration was: (1) to provide an opportunity for the women of the Mandal to come together to renew their friendship, discuss issues concerning them and find solutions to their common problems; and (2) to provide a platform for the women

to discuss specific issues related to health such as resurgence of tuberculosis and malaria and emergence of life threatening diseases like HIV/AIDS and development issues like importance of educating girl child and prevention of child marriages.

Keeping these objectives in mind the programme was conducted. This two and a half hour meeting covered many important topics. They included: spread of HIV/AIDS and the role of women in combating the disease; women and child trafficking and its consequences on the health of the individual in general and the community in particular; how to make use of the government and non government facilities dealing with the disease; the schemes that are available from the government institutions for the development of women; educating children without discriminating boys and girls; seeking health care facilities at appropriate time; sexually transmitted diseases; and many development issues concerning them.

Being the 5th anniversary, like in the past, the Secretary and CEO of Sanghamitra, Fr John Vattamattom, svd, presented in brief a report on the activities of the organization. He touched upon the various initiatives with which the organization was involved.

A few people from the gathering spoke of their experiences in participating in the activities being organized by Sanghamitra. They were:

In relation to SHGs: Smt R Laxmi of Chinnashivanoor said that six SHGs are functioning in her village. According to her the team of Sanghamitra taught the groups savings habit and appropriate utilization of the money saved, besides establishing bank

linkages and facilitating availing of loans from various government institutions and banks. Many members are now carrying out income generation activities which have helped improve their economic conditions. The members have gained a lot of courage and confidence in dealing with officials of various organizations, she said.

In relation to Comprehensive Eye Care Services two persons spoke: One, OR Siddamma, 65 years, Golparthy village of Ramayempet Mandal: She said she underwent (cataract) operation with the help of Sanghamitra team. She did not have clear vision till then, she pointed out and added that she was now able to see with spectacles and do her works without the help of others. She now motivates others to go for timely eye examination and operation. Two, G Subhadra, 55 years, [B Kondapur village of Chegunta Mandal. She became totally blind at the age of 9 years after an attack of chicken pox]. She said she had been confined to her house ever since she became blind till the Sanghamitra team visited her at her home and counseled her (as part of Community Based Rehabilitation). She is now able to walk some distance in her village with the help of a cane stick and do her own work without the assistance of others.

In relation to village libraries, Mr T. Yadagiri of Peddashivanoor said that through establishing libraries in various villages, Sanghamitra is promoting reading habits among people. The libraries are being used by youth, farmers, school children and businessmen. The libraries are becoming Centres of Information for many in the villages, he said.



In relation to Child Trafficking and HIV/AIDS, Bhagya of Wadiaram village of Chegunta Mandal described the services being rendered by Sanghamitra. She said the team of the organization gave the HIV/AIDS affected persons courage and confidence in leading a normal life, through counseling and providing medicines and nutrition (by way of providing rice, dhal, cereals etc). She said Persons Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) in her village were in the process of forming themselves as a group.

In recognition of rendering exceptionally good services to the community and in recognition of showing entrepreneurship nine persons from Toopran, Chegunta and Ramayanpet mandals were felicitated on the occasion with a small gift and a shawl, courtesy Sri G. Mohan Reddy, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Toopran.

VII. OTHER EVENTS

1. World Health Day

The organization celebrated World Health Day in April 05 at Chegunta. It was



Smt. Padma addressing the participants

celebrated jointly with MEDVAN and MEDCSO as People's Health Day when many NGOs and others interested in the health of the people actively participated. Two health activists from Hyderabad— Smt. R.K. Padma and Dr. P. Suresh—



NGO representatives in discussion

conducted the programmes with subject inputs from them. The participants raised a number of health issues and in a separate discussion with the NGOs working in the and nearby Mandals, it was decided to take up those issues in due course at appropriate levels for redressal on a priority basis.

2. Seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

With a view to encouraging business houses to join hands with grassroots NGOs for fulfilling their Corporate Social Responsibility a Seminar entitled **"Corporate Social Responsibility – India Vision 2020"** was organized at ICFAI Business School, Hyderabad. Though the participation of business houses in the seminar was far below our expectation, we have had the satisfaction of making a

beginning of such a partnership process. We hope to conduct seminars of this nature in the future considering the interest shown by the participants and the telephonic messages received from the business houses that could not participate.

VIII. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

1. Skill development programme on low vision

Sri D V Ramana, Project Coordinator, Comprehensive Eye Care Services (CES), participated in a two-day National Workshop on low vision organized by Vision 2020—India in collaboration with the Government of India and Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad in August 05 at Ahmedabad. The Workshop covered three main aspects related to low vision: One, low vision services—clinical and non-clinical; Two, low vision services at primary, secondary and tertiary levels and the human resource requirement at each level; and Three, supportive mechanisms.

2. Workshop on Integrated Education

Ms A Uma and Sri B Tata Rao (IE Teachers in the CES Project and Sri DV Ramana, Project Coordinator of CES project took part in a Workshop on Integrated Education. The programme was organized at Coimbatore by Sight Savers International for the benefit of its project

partners. The Workshop covered topics such as : visual impairment—classification of, signs and symptoms, refractive errors, low vision—categories of, low vision aids; educational services for the visually impaired, types of schools; advantages of integrated education; teaching techniques; daily living skills; legislations pertaining to disabled.

3. Workshop on Financial and Administrative Management

Sight Savers International (SSI)—who supports Comprehensive Eye Care Services project— organized a three-day Workshop in September 05 in Bangalore on Financial and Administrative Management for its partners. Sr Annie Thomas our Accountant took part in the Workshop on all the days while the CEO (who is also the Project Director of the Project) was present on the last day as per the programme. The Workshop was found useful in many ways though it was organized in specific relation to SSI project.

4. Personality Development

1n April 05 a two-day personality development programme was organized for the members of the field team. This was conducted by a group in Hyderabad, specialized in the subject, focusing on NGOs. The course was reported to have been of use to the team.



Personality Development Programme in progress



5. Skill/knowledge development programme on HIV/AIDS

In order to develop the knowledge and skill of the team of Sanghamitra with respect to HIV/AIDS, a number of small sessions on the topic were conducted at the field level. This has helped them in dealing with HIV/AIDS cases more effectively.

IX. VISITORS

(1) Dr Paige Garland, Director of Plan-it-Life, an event management & research group from Australia. She spent a few days at the field level interacting with the members of Self Help Groups and the field staff with a view to enhancing her knowledge in the field of rural development.

(2) Mr Martin Butler and Mrs Wendy Butler, Social Workers from Australia. They

interacted with the members of a few Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Chegunta to understand the functioning of such groups.

(3) Ten Rural Bankers from Ghana visited one of the villages of Chegunta Mandal – Vallabhapuram – and interacted with the members of a Self Help Group (SHG) to get acquainted with the way the SHGs are functioning.

The interaction of these bankers with the SHGs was a part of a six-week training course that they were undergoing at the National Institute of Small Industry Extension Training (NISJET) of the Government of India in Hyderabad. A two-week prior to their visit to our field area, they were given a two-hour session at the Institute on the activities of Sanghamitra with specific regard to SHGs.

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“There is one thing stronger than all the armies of the world and that is ‘AN IDEA’ whose time has come”.

—Victor Hugo

Believe nothing, merely because you have been told it, or because it is traditional or because you yourself have imagined it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for your teacher. But whatever after due consideration and analysis you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings, that doctrine, believe and cling to and take it as your guide.

—The Buddha

*If the farmer's hands slacken
Even the ascetic's state will fall.*

—Thirukkural, 104:6

VISION :

SANGHAMITRA's vision is to create a reliable and acceptable mode of 'Social Regeneration' by initiating a people's movement for basic necessities and empowering the masses for a self awakening, resulting in the integrated development of the adopted areas and society at large.

MISSION :

- | To engage in the task of integrated human development through people's awakening leading to social transformation.
- | To undertake developmental activities aimed at reconstruction of village societies for the advancement of individuals, families and communities.
- | To strive for discouragement and eventual eradication of child labour.
- | To ensure minimum primary level of education and primary health care for all the people.