

WISH Manager Nivedita Das Accepts Director Position with Grassroots India

Nivedita Das was referred to us by Ravenshaw University when we began the WISH program. She is a psychologist and social worker, educated in Delhi. She has served on the Social Welfare Board and is a mental health advocate in Orissa. Nivedita joined Grassroots Asia as manager of WISH and has been instrumental in creating a supportive environment for the young women who have been accepted into the program. Her aim is to create permanent all-around development and success in the girls lives by combining mental health, education and economic opportunity.

The minute she joined the project the girls turned to Nivedita as their best friend and mentor. She conducts individual and group counseling sessions regularly to all WISH participants. More recently, women from the local SHG (self-help groups) have come to WISH for counseling in domestic and business disputes.



Top: Nivedita Das, managing director of WISH, conducts a group counseling session with the residents in Cuttack

In addition to managing our resident homes, Nivedita conducts our school out-reach program to educate young girls on women's health issues and women's rights. She regularly visits primary schools, high schools and colleges. Most recently, she has spearheaded a training program in mental health awareness for students at several colleges and universities, including Utkal and Ravenshaw Universities.



Nivedita Das, psychologist

Nivedita has been assigned to the Board of Directors of our new company, Grassroots India, We feel very fortunate that she has accepted her new position. She will also remain the manager of the WISH project.

She has been through immense challenges over the past year - called at all hours of the night, drug along bumpy rural roads and pulled from every limb for her attention. Yet she still is here...thank God. Hats off to Nivedita Das!

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On the Ground

Emergency Relief, Basic Care & Education



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Prajnana Mission is On The Ground in Orissa Emergency Relief Efforts Commendable During Recent Floods

Flooding of the Mahanadi River delta wrecked havoc on thousands of villages in Orissa last month. As many as 750 villages were completely marooned, cut off from rescue efforts. Our implementing partner Prajnana Mission led an exhaustive emergency relief task force, reaching thousands who were without food, water or medical aid.



Left: Rescuers deliver food under tough conditions. Flooding was the worst in 50 years.

Below: Health camps were established to treat those in need of medical care

Visit our website, **GrassrootsAsia.org** for the latest program news.

The website has been greatly enhanced over the past six months and we can now update program news on the fly.

Prajnana Mission's volunteer doctors and rescue workers rolled out with trucks and supplies to several villages in the districts of Cuttack, Puri, Kendrapara, Jagatsingphur and Banki when the flooding occurred. They were able to reach 35,000 with food and water and 4,000 received medical care.

Grassroots Asia commends their noble efforts and is committed to aiding them in their very efficient and consistent emergency relief efforts in Orissa. Donations are currently being accepted to help repair and rebuild homes for the extremely poor and helpless who have been left without housing.



A Visit to SCB Medical College in Cuttack, Orissa

Grassroots Asia spent 10 days at the SCB Medical College after admitting Rashmita Rana (see inside story), a 10-year-old girl who had two life-saving brain surgeries.

Conditions at the hospital leave room for improvement, to say the least. Many people were waiting for the free government-funded medications for their surgery, but the medicines never seemed to arrive. Some patients had been waiting for over a month. Many could not be provided with a bed, and lay on the floor or in corridors.



Above: WISH girls with Rashmita Rana before her first brain surgery at SCB Medical College. Left to right is Lilima, Rashmita, Amita, Tulsi's-mother and Tulsi, Rashmita's 16-year-old sister

SCB Medical College is considered the best hospital in Orissa and treats all with low-cost, government subsidized medical care, but the sheer volume of patients and lack of funds makes it a grim situation. Doctors have little time for their patients and one oftentimes has to wait weeks to get into the operation theater.

Rashmita was given anesthesia 45 minutes before the operation and it almost wore off before the surgery was done. The tube that was inserted into her brain had complications and she needed a second surgery to replace it. Such were the close calls at SCB Medical College.



Above: Neurology department at SCB Medical College

Grassroots Asia is committed to achieving a higher level of medical care in Orissa and we thank all of the nurses and doctors that were especially caring.



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Rashmita Rana, age 10, undergoes brain surgery

Rashmita is a 10-year old girl who was born with hydrocephalus (water on the brain). Over the past 10 years Rashmita has suffered from headaches and vomiting due to increased pressure inside the cranium. Her father was murdered and her pregnant mother was left to care for five children. The family was unable to pay for the medical care that Rashmita needed, so Rashmita was left untreated and expected to die. Against all odds, Rashmita has endured this agony for the past decade.

Her mother and sister Tulsu (her sister is with our WISH program) brought Rashmita to us after her medical condition was disclosed to us in a counseling session. We arranged a visit to a top neurologist, who told us that it was a very simple operation and she would be home after 10 days in the hospital.

Rashmita went through the operation with flying colors and was on her way to recovery. Then, 10 days after she left the hospital, Rashmita developed complications and was re-admitted to the hospital. Doctors collectively refused treatment and sent her home, saying that it was in God's hands.



Grassroots Asia staff and the WISH participants protested, insisting they do something to save her. Arguing and pleading at SCB Medical College led to one doctor, Dr. Salim, deciding to go for a second operation. It was successful and Rashmita is currently recovering at our WISH home in Cuttack. Her family has asked that we care for her and keep her at our home. We are currently evaluating what is best for her in the long term.

Grassroots India to Manage WISH



Grassroots India was incorporated as an Indian Company 25 on May 22, 2008. The new company was formed to undertake the management of the WISH project, and to lay the foundation for Grassroots Asia's future growth in India.

The WISH (Women's Independent Self-Help) Network offers assistance in health, education and micro-enterprise for the under-privileged, with special emphasis on women. Vocational training, housing and job opportunities are provided, along with mental health counseling and life management skills training.

Small business enterprises act as business training centers and will help to make the WISH project more self-sufficient.

WISH will open Babies to Ladies, a new retail location for our tailoring center...more in the next issue



Pre-Natal Vitamins Distributed to Migrant Workers in Cuttack—Donated by Vitamin Angels & Rainbow Light



Pre-Natal Vitamins are distributed to migrant workers at CDA (Cuttack Development Authority). The Rainbow Light vitamins were donated by Vitamin Angels

Vitamin Angels recently donated 30,000 Rainbow Light pre-natal vitamins to Grassroots Asia.

The vitamins are being distributed through the Hariharananda Charitable Health Clinics, managed by Prajnana Mission. They will publish literature on pre- and post-natal care which will be distributed with the vitamins at a series of women's health camps.

OB-GYN doctors will be available for consultation. Medicines and vitamins will be distributed free of cost.

Orissa has a high infant mortality rate and malnutrition is commonplace. Grassroots Asia is working towards the improvement of woman's health awareness, care and appropriate follow up.

The Puri and Cuttack clinics have already started the vitamin distribution.

More in the next issue....



Health evaluations were conducted. We found several women who were in need of immediate medical care

Many projects have been funded, or funded in part, by a grant from the Duane Stranahan Estate of the Toledo Community Foundation. Grassroots Asia extends a warm thank you to the Duane Stranahan family and all of its donors for making this work possible

Hariharananda Balashram Celebrates Annual Day

It has been four years since the inauguration of the Hariharananda Balashram resident home & school in Arua, Orissa.

Students celebrated in July with theatre performances, yoga, singing and dance. A special lunch was prepared and faculty and guests spoke about the children's achievement and the success of the school.

200 orphans, semi-orphans and extremely poor children are in residence at the Hariharananda Balashram receiving quality care and education.



Construction Continues at Hariharananda Balashram

The construction continues at the Hariharananda Balashram with the addition of three new staff quarters and the boy's dormitory. The boy's dormitory will have three stories and be located across the road where the dairy, additional staff quarters and the new playground are. The Balashram spans six acres and is growing into a substantial village. The foundation will be laid for the playground this fall. The project development is nothing short of miraculous. Another great achievement of the management, Prajnana Mission.



Top: The main schoolhouse and girl's dormitory. Above/Center: The new boy's hostel Left: New staff quarter building

Grassroots Asia and Ruchika Social Services teamed for the first annual field trip for the Shradha Bhaban and WISH residents. This past July we all went to the popular new water park, located between Bhubaneswar and



Shradha Bhaban and WISH Residents Visit the New Water Park

Cuttack. This will be the first trip in a continuing annual event aimed at fostering cooperation between the two programs. Ruchika Social Service made us all a beautiful lunch to share and a great time was had by all.



Save-A-Life Orphanage Receives Financial Aid for 2008-09 School Year

Sangram and Deepti Nayak care for 54 children at their simple home in Tulsipur, Cuttack at the Save-A-Life Ministries. The Nayak's have dedicated their life so that unwanted babies can have a good home and quality care.

Grassroots Asia has again sponsored this year's school and college fees, textbooks and notebooks for the children.



About Grassroots Asia...

Grassroots Asia identifies and empowers grassroots projects in Asia which offer a high social return on investment. Emphasis is placed on emergency relief, basic care and education for children and the underprivileged.

Grassroots Asia is a volunteer organization. 100% of contributions go directly to projects. There are NO administrative fees.

Grassroots Asia is a 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible.

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