



Labor & Human Rights



Health & Safety



Education



Environmental Impact

## AVANI's 2014 Annual Report

*protecting children providing education improving lives*

**ALL CHILDREN HAVE A ROLE IN INDIA'S FUTURE. AND THAT'S WHAT AVANI IS ALL ABOUT.**

AVANI operates without any government funding and could not exist without local community participation and generous donations.

Of the estimated 85 million child laborers in India today, an estimated 40,000 of them work in the Kolhapur district of the state of Maharashtra. Many of these children have been sold or forced into hazardous occupations and into commercial sex work. Girls suffer the most.

It is our purpose to work alongside children from the homeless, migrant and nomadic communities. We do this by conducting surveys to identify children at risk, rescue those children in need, and provide them with food, clothes, shelter, healthcare, rehabilitation and an education up to standard 10 and beyond.

### *the* Challenge:

**Protecting India's At Risk Children While Developing Responsible Citizens of Tomorrow.**

## Introduction

Since 1996, AVANI has worked towards ending the child labor practices of the Kolhapur district in the state of Maharashtra, India. Protecting these children from being exploited as child laborers is their primary focus. Once rescued, these children are provided with healthy food, clean clothes, a safe place to sleep and access to quality education. They are given every opportunity to succeed so they can be rehabilitated into healthy, productive members of society.

AVANI is a multifaceted organization that concentrates on women's Empowerment, legal counseling for the rights of women and children, community health education programs for adolescent, pregnant and lactating mothers, a bi-monthly and child labor rescue program, school for migrant children in the brickyard labor camps, and our own children's home for rescued child laborers and the children of abandoned, divorced and widowed women.

In some of the worst the cases, single nomadic mothers do not have housing or even a safe place for their young children to stay while they work. For these mothers, AVANI established its own children's home to address this special need. With their children safely cared for, the mothers are given vocational training and job placement opportunities, while regaining their dignity. Once they have a steady job history and become more self reliant, the children can return to their new home and be cared for by their mothers.



## Education

All 38 AVANI children attend government schools. They are also given special before and after school coaching by our two registered, staff teachers. These teachers tutor the students in all subjects at all class levels, assess their progress every month and spend extra time working with the slower learners.

Four times a year, parents meetings are conducted to update them on the progress of their children and review policy and procedural topics as dictated by the Indian government. The teachers and

staff of AVANI are in regular contact with the government school teachers and discuss the progress of our students.

Most of the parents of our students do not understand or even appreciate the importance of education and how it can change the lives of their children. Anuradha conducts meetings with the parents of the AVANI children and offers them her perspective about education and it's importance.



In June 2013, the first student had passed 10th standard from AVANI. It was a sense of pride for organization. This year, seven more students have appeared for the class10 examination.





## Sports

Along with studies, sports activities are an important aspect in the development of our students. The children at AVANI participate in Yoga and exercises each morning before school and have time for play after school. They play various games like jump rope, football, cricket and indoor games.

This past fall, the AVANI children took top honors at the state level Olympics for the 19 government recognized children's homes in the district. Over 400 children participated in the event. AVANI children won 17 first place trophies in 18 events.



## Excursions and Field Trips

Each year, the children of AVANI go on excursions and field trips during the Diwali holidays and summer vacation.

This year, one of AVANI's local donors sponsored a day at the water park for all our students and 110 additional children from the brickyard schools and rag picking communities we are also involved with.

Most of the children had never been to a water park before. The children were very excited about going on all the rides. The smiles on their faces said everything that needed to be said.



The children expanded their knowledge of Indian history by visiting the many historical Indian sites in and around Aurangabad.

## Summer Camps and Workshops

Each April, after their school exams have ended, 10 day summer camp is organized by AVANI for our students just before they return home for their summer vacation. Life Skill Training was this years theme. Many volunteers participate each year in organizing the camp. The primary focus of the camp is to allow the children to develop their arts and crafts skills, and hone their inner strengths and interests.





Workshops were conducted by professionals regarding topics such as adolescence, leadership skills, team building and personality development. As these basic skills are not taught as part of their primary education, AVANI thought it was important in their overall character development.

The standard 10 students were involved in workshops on addictions such as alcohol and tobacco. The workshop was conducted by a doctor who addressed the students on the various kinds of addictions and how one needs to stay away from them. A workshop on 'Life Education' was conducted for the girls of our children's home. The girls were made

aware of their physical and hormonal changes and the issues related to them.

## Women's Day Celebration

On Women's day the mothers of these children were invited to AVANI and recognized for their achievements. We at Avani, organized many games for them. The Women participated in all the games with a lot of zeal. The women were very happy and expressed that they had never done all this before.



## Health Checkup

### Physical

Health is an important part of our life. A person should be healthy to perform his daily chores efficiently. Every child's health is equally important for us. Every three months the AVANI children visit the doctor for their entire checkup. The children are taken for ear nose and throat, dental, blood and skin examinations. Most of the doctors lower their rates or offer their services free of charge. Complete health records of all the children are maintained by AVANI.

### Psychological

Most of the children come from broken homes and have experienced a tremendous amount of turmoil in their short lives. For the past three years, the children have regular visits with a professional child

psychologist. We have seen improvements in temperament and in concentration most of the children. They have also commented on how being able to discuss their past experiences have helped them to better understand and cope with issues that have bothered them.



## Celebration of Festivals

In India we celebrate a lot of festivals. These events can be segregated under both religious and national festivals. This year we celebrated national festivals like Independence day, Republic day and Gandhi Jayanthi. Distinguished personalities from various fields are invited to grace the occasion. The children are taught the importance of these days and how we should be grateful to our freedom fighters and national leaders. It is because of their sacrifices we are free from slavery. Tree plantations were done to commemorate the day to make our environment green and grow as many trees as possible.

Religious festivals were also celebrated with a lot of fervor. The children come to know the importance of these days. We celebrated Raksha Bandhan, Holi, Guru Purnima, and Diwali. Every festival has its own story and contain learning principles for the children. Birth anniversaries of many famous social reformers are also celebrated. This is done by sharing information of that reformer, his/her work and how they changed the society by their reformist thinking.



Holi is an Indian festival and is celebrated with great religious fervor. Puran Poli is a delicacy prepared on this day. As a religious sentiment, this delicacy is offered to god in the form of throwing it in fire. This is actually the wastage of food and the same can be given to poor people. In the same way fuel and wood is also wasted. AVANI has asked people to donate the food to the poor instead. AVANI distributes this food to the migrant children in our brickyard school. This year AVANI collected 1500

Puran Polis and 1700 fuel and wood products, which shows that people are realizing the fact that the food should not be wasted.



On the occasion of Diwali and Raksha Bandhan, the children, with the help of our craft teacher prepared eco-friendly greeting cards, festival lanterns, rakhi bracelets and cloth flowers. This is an effort to raise funds for the children of AVANI in a small way.





## Common Birthday

Most of the AVANI children do not have birth certificates as they were born at home in a village or in the fields while their mothers were working. So each year, all the AVANI children celebrate their birthday on the same day, January 5th. The date is significant as it is also the birthday of the prominent social reformer Savitri Bai Phule. She fought for the right for all children to attend school back in the 16th century.

Recently, AVANI organized a program FOR Earth Day

(Vasundhara Din). Mother Earth protects us from all evils. What do we do for our mother Earth? This was the question we raised to our children. The children came up with answers why they should keep our place clean and green and away from pollution. We had a very beautiful discussion on the topic.

## 365 Program

The program was started in 2012 to create awareness in people about contributing to our construction fund. Their contribution can make a lot of difference in these children's life. In the program we encourage everyone whom we come across to donate 1 rupee day for 365 days so that at the end of the year he contributes 365 rupees. This can be done by everyone and it is no burden on anybody's pocket. Some boxes were kept at tea centers where people are donating generously. Today, we have 159 donors participating in this program. These funds will be used for the construction of new children's home.





## Cultural Program

A cultural program called AVANI TARANG was organized in the month of January. Anuradha and an AVANI board member came up with the idea of organizing a cultural event to raise funds for the construction of new children's home. The staff of AVANI put a lot of effort into it. Many famous personalities from the Marathi (regional) film industry were present at this event. They performed on various songs, dances and skits. The children of AVANI also performed at this event. This initiative was AVANI's first attempt at an event like this and it was a success.



## Brickyard Schools

Even after 60 years of Independence, many children in India have to move from place to place with their parents for their livelihood. Every year, migrant families come to Kolhapur in search of work from the drought prone areas of Maharashtra. This migration takes these children away from the mainstream school. Every school should be held responsible for the children of their locality. Setting up these schools in the brickyard labor camps is not a permanent solution. There should be a government plan in place so there will be no need for these laborers to migrate in the first place.

This year Avani has started 11 Anganwadi schools (Kindergarten) for 3 to 6 years old in Karveer and Shirol Taluqa. The teachers appointed by AVANI, conduct surveys to identify the children of different age groups. The teachers teach these children the basics of education in a play way method. The children are provided nutritious food and educational materials. When these children are at school, the parents are free and concentrate on their work as the children are in the safe hands of the teachers. In spite of many obstacles, Avani is able to manage brickyard schools successfully.

A successful attempt was made by AVANI this year for the children age 6-14 to be a part of mainstream school system. A peaceful demonstration was held by AVANI in front of Zilla Parishad. 35 girls and 45 boys school students took part in this peaceful protest. Our demands were accepted and the migrant children from brickyard were given admission to government schools.



## Staff and Board of AVANI

Staff of Avani plays an important role in the day to day activities of Avani. Anuradha meets the staff every month for a monthly review of the activities of AVANI, as it helps in the improvement of the functioning of the organization. The staff updates Anuradha regarding the donors, children, their activities, and visitors. The staff prepares a monthly report every month and keeps a record of the same. Rescue operations are managed by our staff with the help of the police.

The staff visited various organizations working in the same field so that there is some learning. This year the staff visited 'Maher' an organization which works for the children and women. The staff was very impressed by the organization and it performed its work.



Anuradha and the other AVANI board members have regular meetings to discuss and implement various issues relating to the children's home. The board members have to be informed about all the activities of Avani. The topics discussed in this year were regarding the children, their activities, the new site for new children's home, donations and the appointment of the new staff.

## Visitors

213 groups of people totaling over 1,150 individuals visited the AVANI children's home last year. Most of the visitors are visiting AVANI for the first time after reading about AVANI in the newspaper or seeing a news program about the work on television or simply by word of mouth.

The groups and organizations consist of politicians, industrialists, social workers from other NGO's and primary and college students. Even the Kolhapur District Judge had visited Avani as he was interested in the work.

## Future Goals

A new children's home is being constructed at our new site near the village of Hanbarwadi. The campus will include an aftercare home for girls 19 years of age and older.

These children would be going for the Vocational Training. This year we are sending two of our boys to Sangli in partnership with Verala Development Society. This would help them in choosing a vocation of their choice and simultaneously go forward with their education.