

Anisha – From Darkness to Light

By Lawrence Fryer

During the recent international gathering in Bangalore many people visited and were duly impressed by the Susila Dharma projects Mithra, Sradha and Anisha being run by Subud members in Bangalore

Anisha is a comparatively new project which a young lady, Mrs. Valli Rajan, started in 1998 with the aim of improving the lives of people living in appalling conditions in the market area of central Bangalore.

Valli is a qualified lawyer and sociologist and had become aware of the living conditions in the Vandimode slum near the central market during her student days. She started her work there with her own resources and the help of a few fellow students.



Vandimode

In the meantime Anisha is working in 3 slum areas and is about to extend it's activities to 2 further areas. This work consists of a variety of interlinked activities. The following details have been taken from Anisha's most recent six month report.

- 37 children attend Anisha's pre-primary classes
- 102 school going children are given supplementary education with the result that all of them could continue to the next class
- Educational tours and a special anti child labour day have been organised
- 8 child labourers have been identified and given bridging courses so that they could be admitted into the mainstream schools

- Anisha has encouraged 66 Children to save regularly - up till now they were able to save 2.568 INR (about 45 Euro)
- 17 women's and 2 men's self-help groups have been formed covering altogether 316 families. They have managed to save 117,930 INR and have an annual turnover of 232,909 INR (4,200 Euros) which is used for small loans (40% for basic needs, 20% for education, 30% for micro-enterprises and 10% to repay outside loans)
- A lot of attention has been given to medical help. Over 50 children and 10 women have been treated. The women's groups have been given health awareness training in particular on aids.
- Anisha has succeeded in getting government benefits for 17 old age pensioners and for a widow.

Recently Anisha has also become involved in rural development in a very poor rural district about 120 km south of Bangalore. Valli has become aware of the problems the rural poor face partly because her husband comes from a rural area and partly because, before working fulltime for Anisha, she worked as an administrator of an organisation ICRA (Institute for Cultural Research and Action) which promotes sustainable organic cultivation with small and marginal farmers. There is a close link between the problems of the city slums and rural poverty because of the continual migration of the rural poor into the cities in the search for work.

Anisha has made a 3 year project proposal aiming to make a sustainable improvement in the living conditions of the rural poor in 20 villages. The project involves a broad range of activities in the areas of agriculture, education, women's empowerment, vocational training and health support. Susila Dharma Germany is preparing to present the project to the German Government (BMZ) for funding.