

# COMMUNITY SHARES- Mifey and Colleen



*Village women during PRASAD Chikitsa's midwife training- 2004*



*Women receiving their "Graduation Kits" at the end of the training from Mifey Hodson and Colleen Noonan*

In 2004 we spent about 2 weeks with the PRASAD Chikitsa team in Ganeshpuri.

During that time we met with Kavita, one of the Trustees of PRASAD in India. We also met with the extensive PRASAD team who ran the many programs offered throughout the Tansa Valley.

We travelled with the PRASAD team to participate in many of the programs they were involved in, such as the milk delivery to schools, the Mobile Hospital, the Women's Small Loans programs, and training programs offered in many of the neighbouring villages.

- A highlight was the training program for the village midwives. The AIDS epidemic was infecting increasing numbers of people at this time, so safe delivery of babies was particularly important in the villages. It was inspiring to see these wise women learn new techniques to deliver babies safely amid an epidemic. They each received a new safety pack to supplement their work at the end of their training.
- Another highlight was a trip to a village which had received assistance through PRASAD to improve the supply and reliability of water. In the past, many of the village men had to seek work outside the village during the dry season. Often the village well would run dry and the women would have to carry water from the neighbouring village, which was several miles away. Through the assistance of PRASAD, the village men were able to stay in their village, rather than seek work elsewhere. They were financially helped to deepen their well, and to build small stone walls along the watercourse, thereby slowing the monsoon rain and preventing the village from flooding. The well has since been able to provide water all year. It has also made the village much more self-sufficient. Having a reliable source of water has enabled the village to become self-sufficient in food and to have a cash crop to sell. In the past, they were able to harvest one rice crop. They now have the water supply to have multiple crops. They were also able to plant 350 fruit trees which gave them an additional cash crop as well as supply the village with fresh food. In addition to that, they have been able to support a couple of buffalo which provide milk for the village.
- The other program which was especially inspiring was the Small Loans Program for Women. Women were able to receive small loans to set up a small businesses. They were given assistance in establishing their business and in buying equipment etc. One example we saw was a woman who set up a food stall on the side of the road. It involved a table, stove and cooking equipment. The business was so successful she had paid off the loan and also employed her husband. He had been a truck driver, but they were now earning more income from her food stall than he had been earning as a driver.

We saw many other PRASAD programs which were significantly improving the lives of the people in the villages of the Tansa Valley, such as The Mobile Hospital and Art initiatives for young people.

Everywhere we went, the people in each program supported by PRASAD were full of gratitude for the opportunities they were being offered. It was life-changing for so many.

Mifey Hodson and Colleen Noonan



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