



Pratham USA
Every Child in School and Learning Well

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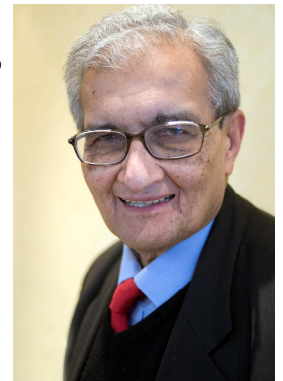
Pratham USA award for Outstanding Service in Education to be presented to Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen

Amartya Sen is the recipient of the Second Annual Pratham USA Award for Outstanding Service in Education. The Award serves to recognize the remarkable ability of an individual to effect change and dramatically impact the delivery of education to the underprivileged. The first award was presented jointly to Nandan Nilekani, Chairperson, Unique Identification Authority of India and Chairman Emeritus, Infosys Technologies, Ltd., and Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Pratham Books and Chairperson, Arghyam Trust.

his writings and in public remarks that the government needs to invest more resources and partner with social groups in making educational reforms. Much of Pratham’s impact has been driven by our understanding that ensuring that every child in India is in school and learning well can only be achieved as a societal mission driven by partnership between key stakeholders including NGOs such as Pratham, the government at all levels, corporations and the people.

Amartya Sen is the Thomas W. Lamont University Professor, and Professor of Economic and Philosophy at Harvard University and was until recently the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He was formerly Honorary President of OXFAM and is now its Honorary Advisor. Amartya is an influential voice in the field of welfare economics. He has argued for decades about the critical importance of education and of public-private partnerships in the field of education. He has advocated in

The award will be formally presented to Amartya Sen at the 2010 Pratham Tri-State Gala on October 21st at the Pierre Hotel in New York City.



Padma Shri Anupam Kher to Serve as Pratham Goodwill Ambassador



Eminent actor and living Bollywood legend, Padma Shri Anupam Kher will serve as Pratham Goodwill Ambassador. He is one of the greatest actors of contemporary cinema and recipient of the Padma Shri Award. The Padma Shri Award is a recognition by the Government of India of exceptional distinguished service. Anupam received this award in 2004 in the category of Arts. Anupam’s critical acclaim and commercial success runs over 100 plays and almost 400 films. While Anupam’s accomplishments as an actor are well known, it is his determination to use his eminence to help India’s children go to school and learn well, that has led to his appointment as a Pratham Goodwill Ambassador. Anupam will also be hosting Pratham’s informative and educational TV program called “Angrezi OK Please.”

“I have always been drawn to the cause of children’s education which is why I have founded a School of Life Program. I am certain a lot of synergy will be unleashed in being appointed Goodwill Ambassador for Pratham and in leveraging my media image. By becoming Pratham’s public face, I hope to augment its fund raising, capacity enhancement and other initiatives dedicated to the cause of children’s education,” said Anupam Kher.

As Goodwill Ambassador, Anupam will undertake a trip to the USA in September 2010 to meet with and encourage supporters of Pratham USA. He will be making stops in New York, New Jersey, Boston, Dallas, Washington DC, North Carolina, Houston and Chicago. Veteran actor Waheeda Rahman has been a Pratham Goodwill Ambassador for several years now, and has supported the organization by helping to raise awareness about the issues of education and learning.

Upcoming Events:

- Bay Area Gala**
Saturday, August 28th
- DFW Gala**
Friday, September 17th
- Chicago Gala**
Sunday, September 19th
- Boston Gala**
Saturday, September 25
- North Carolina Gala**
Sunday, September 26
- Seattle Gala**
Friday, October 15
- Tri-State Gala**
Thursday, October 21

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

Designate Pratham USA to receive a specific amount or a percentage of the balance of your estate and ensure an education for future generations. You can share the below sample language with your drafting attorney.

Sample bequest language: “I, [name], of [city, state ZIP], give, devise and bequeath the sum of \$_____ or _____ percent of my estate to Pratham USA, a nonprofit institution incorporated in the State of Texas with a business address of 9703 Richmond Avenue, Suite 102, Houston TX 77042 and tax identification number 76-0620808 for its unrestricted use and purpose.”

Benefits • Your assets remain in your control during your lifetime. • You can modify your bequest to address changing circumstances. • You can direct your bequest to a particular purpose (be sure to check with us to make sure your gift can be used as intended). • Under current tax law there is no upper limit on the estate tax deduction for your charitable bequests.

For more information or to receive a personal illustration on how a charitable lead trust could work for you and your family, please contact Sangita Karra, Vice President of Development at skarra@prathamusa.org or 914.260.3793.

Pratham wins Henry R. Kravis Prize in Leadership 2010

Henry R. Kravis Prize in leadership award ceremony was held at the Museum of Modern Art on March 23, 2010.



L-R, Henry Kravis, Farida Lambay - Co-Founder Pratham, Pamela Gann, Dr. Rukmini Banerji - Pratham, Marie-Josée Kravis

On March 23, 2010, Pratham was honored at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City as the 2010 recipient of the Henry R. Kravis Prize in Leadership. The Henry R Kravis Prize in Leadership was established in 2006 and conducts a rigorous due diligence and selection process to choose its annual recipient in the non-profit sector. Its aim is

to identify extraordinary leadership in this sector and share their best practices with others. The prize also carries a \$250,000 award.

The Prize is presented and administered by Claremont McKenna College (CMC) and Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis. Mrs. Kravis, an economist, is a Senior Fellow of the Hudson Institute; Mr. Kravis, founding partner of Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co., is an alumnus and trustee of Claremont McKenna College. The Prize is affiliated with The Kravis Leadership Institute, one of CMC's ten distinguished research institutes.

"Pratham embodies the leadership and entrepreneurial spirit that Claremont McKenna College imparts to its students each year," said Mr. Kravis. "Every year we look for nonprofits that achieve sustainable and significant impact among their target communities," continued Henry Kravis, and this year with Pratham, "we hit the jackpot."

Pratham Selected as Winner of the 2009 CNN-IBN Indian of the Year

Pratham was selected as the winner of the prestigious CNN-IBN Indian of the Year award in the public service category for its contributions in the field of literacy and education. The CNN-IBN award honors and recognizes Indians whose extraordinary endeavors have built brand India.



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh spoke about Pratham at the awards ceremony in New Delhi on December 21st. He remarked, "One organization that does work towards uplifting of the silent majority is Pratham. In honoring them today, we recognize a pioneering NGO model that draws on the expertise and experience of educationists, corporates, workers, activists and professionals and unites them in the common vision of a better life for all our children."

MIT Economist Dr. Esther Duflo Wins John Bates Clark Award

Pratham USA congratulates Dr. Esther Duflo on being awarded the John Bates Clark Medal, also known as the "Baby Nobel Prize in Economics" given to the most promising economist in the United States under the age of 40. This is widely regarded as one of the field's most prestigious awards, perhaps second only to the Nobel in economic science. Approximately 40% of the winners have subsequently been awarded the Nobel Award. Dr. Duflo is a Professor of Economics and the Director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Pratham's work has been studied extensively and endorsed as a Millennium Development Goals "best buy" by J-PAL under the leadership of Duflo and Dr. Abhijit Banerjee, Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics. Duflo and J-PAL have been part of multiple randomized studies with Pratham which helped evaluate a range of Pratham programs. The researchers continue to study Pratham's impact and plan to release new research on Pratham's flagship Read India program in 2011. We wish Dr. Duflo continued success in her work.



Dr. Esther Duflo

Pratham Wins the EMPI-Indian Express Indian Innovation Award for Read India

The EMPI Group of Institutions established the Indian Innovation Awards in 2005. These awards, perhaps the first of its kind in the country, were a part of a larger movement entitled "Mission Innovative India" started by former President A P J Abdul Kalam. This award identifies and recognizes innovative organizations in India who through their actions have introduced breakthrough changes in the Indian context and can become role models for others to emulate.

In 2010, 184 candidates were reviewed, of those 8 were chosen. Applicants represented different facets of Indian society from corporations to NGOs and to government departments. In addition to Pratham the other 7 winners were Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Akshay Patra Foundation, Samtel Display Systems, Arvind Eye Care, Gujarat Vikas Nigam, Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, Nagaland Municipal Corporation. The organizations were selected after a rigorous evaluation process validated by the Boston Consulting Group.



Mumbai Indians for quality education

The Mumbai Indians, the Mumbai cricket team of the Indian Premier League (IPL) has joined hands with Pratham in order to give every child an equal opportunity to learn. The Mumbai Indians Education for All initiative is the brainchild of Nita Ambani, owner of the team. The initiative was designed in order to support efforts that provide quality education to children. The Mumbai Indians launched a fundraising campaign to support the initiative by selling wristbands priced at Rs. 40 and autographed by captain Sachin Tendulkar. All proceeds from the wristband sales go to support their five partner organizations including Pratham.

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to continue its support for Pratham with Millions in grant funds

The Hewlett Foundation recently announced renewed support of Pratham with two new grants totaling \$9.5 million including \$2 million in matching funds. These funds will be used to extend the work commenced under the Read India campaign to better students' grades and institutionalize Pratham's effective teaching methods. A second grant, for \$3 million, will support Pratham's annual survey of student reading and math skills (ASER), which has been an important tool in assessing learning levels across India and for strengthening government support of education.

In 2007, the Hewlett and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations had jointly awarded Pratham a \$9.1 million 3 year grant to launch its flagship Read India Campaign. The 2010 renewal of Hewlett's support is a testament to the foundation's commitment and confidence in Pratham.

ASER Implemented in Pakistan and Elsewhere



The seeds of ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) in Pakistan were sown in 2008 when a seven member team from ASER Centre went to Lahore to train members of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) or the "Centre of Education and Consciousness".

ITA was established in response to the profound education crises that plagues Pakistan. Since 2008, ITA pooled together resources and energies and implemented ASER in 11 districts of Pakistan. In 2010 ASER Pakistan will cover 30-50 districts and in 2011 ASER Pakistan is poised to cover all rural districts of Pakistan.

ASER Pakistan is now a part of a wider South-North movement in citizen led surveys working for evidence based demand initiatives from below, working in India. ASER is now being implemented in East African countries Tanzania and Kenya.

West African Delegation Visit Pratham Projects Across India

A twelve-member committee of top level bureaucrats, directors of various NGOs and teachers from West Africa went to India to visit Pratham projects. During the visit, Senegalese and Malian representatives visited Pratham's programs in Delhi, Meerut, Mathura and Jaipur to gain a better understanding of Pratham initiatives and to learn how they might replicate the model in their own countries.

Cheikh Mbow, National Co-ordinator of Organizations Defending Public Education (COSYDEP), stated, "One important lesson we take back is that nothing can be done alone. And to bring about a revolutionary change we need like-minded

people working with the same energy and passion. We are thoroughly encouraged to see Pratham working with the community and the government and bringing about a positive change in so many people's lives. If we reach out to the right people in the right manner, we can bring about a change for sure."

Pratham Success Story Spotlight:

Ram Achal used to work at a brick kiln. A second grade dropout, he was rescued from there and brought to the Gyanshala. He was enrolled in the first month of the Dumra Gyanshala's existence in 2004.



He said "In the beginning, I hated to be in discipline and doing things according to routine. Daily practices, morning chores and attending the yoga classes were very frustrating to me. But, I gradually started liking the teacher's lectures. I got admission in 8th Std. in the nearby Government Middle school. There I played 'Kho-Kho' for the first time. It is a very exciting game".

Ram's aim now is to obtain a first class in board exam. He knows that his hardwork will help him get full command over his subjects. He wants to be good government officer.

Ram has accomplished a lot in his young life since coming to the Gyanshala. He has excelled not only in his studies but also in sports and other youth activities that had previously not been an option from him. In these last three years, he has participated in local and district level tournaments in kho-kho and kabbadi and represented the state of Bihar in athletic competitions.

Ram has also made his mark academically, with three distinctions in Psychology, Music, and Social Sciences. He passed his intermediate board examination in the first division, a remarkable and well-earned accomplishment for a former second-grade dropout!

Read India Campaign Ends

Pratham's Read India (RI) campaign ended in May 2010 after a period of 3 years. RI success has been confirmed based on evaluations by the various stake holders.

Awards:

Pratham and its flagship Read India campaign have been recognized by several organizations over the last 6 months for its innovative approach.

- 2010 Henry R. Kravis Leadership Prize for leadership in the non-profit sector
- 2009 CNN-IBN Indian of the Year in the Public Service category for its contributions in the field of education
- Designated by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, a center based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, as one of seven "must-buys" to reach the Millennium Development Goals
- 2010 EMPI-Indian Express Innovation Award
- 2010 International Outreach Award was presented to Pratham by the Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce

Foundation Support: Grants from The Hewlett Foundation and The Douglas Marshal Foundation were critical to the funding of the Read India campaign. Both these foundations have renewed their grants, a vote of confidence on Read India and a head start for the next phase.

Recognition by Governments: ASER has been referred to by the Planning Commission. In India several State Governments continue to collaborate with Pratham. Pratham Founders Madhav Chavan and Farida Lambay are collaborating with the national government as part of important policy making bodies on primary education. Farida Lambay has recently become a member of the national level Advisory Council on implementation of Right to Education Act.

RI reached more than half of India: RI has been implemented in 19 States. Below are statistics showing the impact of RI over the last 3 years.



Year	Districts covered	Villages covered	Teachers trained	Volunteers trained	Children Reached (millions)
2007-08	350	270,000	877,000	376,000	21
2008-09	358	350,000	605,000	445,000	34
2009-10	229	86,000	282,000	127,000	12

Read India II is launched

While 96% of children in India of ages 6-14 attend school, the 2009 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) revealed that 50% of children in Grade 5 still cannot read Grade 2 texts and 62% of Grade 5 children cannot do basic arithmetic. Despite the significant impact of the Read India I campaign, much more needs to be done to improve children's learning levels. Building on the progress achieved and the lessons learned since Read India was first launched in 2007, Pratham has now entered into the second phase of the campaign - "Read India II"

Read India II Goals:

- Create a large scale movement focused on improving the learning levels of children in grades 1-5
- Target higher competencies in reading comprehension, written expression and advanced math in grades 1-5 and move on to work with children in grades 6 -8, with a goal of keeping the focus on grade specific competency
- Enhance the training provided to volunteers and teachers. Pratham plans to achieve its goal through the following multi-pronged strategy:
 - Focus on smaller geographies within states (Districts and Blocks)
 - Ensure a sustained presence in specific areas for a three -year period to build capacity within the area
 - Introduce Pratham's CAMaL methodology in classrooms - CAMaL, or Combined Activities for Maximized Learning, combines reading, writing, and speaking activities so that these competencies all develop simultaneously
 - Invest more time and money in training volunteers through structured courses
 - Lengthen volunteer engagement through " Education for Education"
 - Involve parents and communities in assessment to increase accountability of schools and teachers

You Can Help!

More than 90% of All Funds Raised by Pratham Go Directly to Pratham Programs

There are many ways to support Pratham:

- Support Pratham's programs with a tax-deductible donation. Visit donate.PrathamUSA.org.
- Designate Pratham as your charity of choice in lieu of gifts for birthdays, holidays, weddings, etc.
- Activate a corporate matching program or encourage your company to support Pratham directly.
- Introduce us to a corporation or foundation that you think might be interested in our work.
- Volunteer for your Pratham USA chapter, do your own fundraiser or help start a new chapter.
- Be a Pratham ambassador: Tell your friends about Pratham, encourage them to visit our sites in India, and bring them to our events.

Pratham Across USA

Pratham Chicago YP Network

The Pratham Chicago Young Professionals Network hosted its first event on May 6th, 2010. The happy hour drew a dynamic crowd of 30 young professionals from around Chicago who were interested in supporting education initiatives for India's youth. The evening kicked off with a lively reception at Spoon on Wells Street, followed by an introduction by Pratham YP's committee members. The committee informed the attendees about Pratham's groundbreaking techniques that have reached over 33 million children and highlighted the importance of funding the organization. The funds raised from the event helped impact the education of over 20 children. The next event will be in the fall 2010!

Pratham DFW

The Indian community of DFW is gearing up for the Chapter's annual gala to be held on September 17 at The Intercontinental Hotel Dallas. With Padma Shri Anupam Kher as Keynote speaker and Co-Founder Madhav Chavan providing an update on Pratham, participants are in for an evening of inspiration and celebration.

Pratham Tri-State

Pratham supporters Gail and Victor Khosla welcomed friends to their home in Greenwich, CT for an elegant evening with Director, Gregg Helvey, for a private screening of his 2010 Academy Award nominated Best Live Action Short Film, Kavi, and to learn how Pratham is helping children in India. Kavi, is the story of young boy who wants to escape the brick kiln where he is forced to work as a modern-day slave. Gregg Helvey spoke of Kavi's simple dreams of "going to school and playing cricket" aptly followed by remarks from Pratham USA Chairman, Arvind Sanger about the tremendous strides the organization is making to make sure that every underprivileged child in India receives the opportunity of an education.

Pratham Boston

In association with the Indian Medical Association of New England, Pratham Boston Young Professionals held a fundraiser on Thursday, May 20, 2010 at the Tamarind Bay in Brookline. The highlights included a presentation of Pratham's work and an entertainment act by Brownstar.

Pratham DC

The Pratham DC Young Professionals Network (YPN) was launched on April 20, 2010. It was started by a group of Young Professionals that strongly believe in the message of Pratham and

the undeniable need for education to be the basis of every community. The Young Professionals in the D.C. area had the kickoff event at Firefly restaurant. The group has also decided that they should meet monthly to attract more people towards supporting Pratham and its cause. Currently the monthly speaker series and happy hours are scheduled to be repetitive events with other periodic events to be included in the near future. In May, the first of the speaker series was kicked off by Dr. Anand Anandalingam, Dean, Robert E. Smith School of Business. The discussions spanned from the impacts of philanthropy on society to ways on creating grassroots awareness.

Pratham Houston

The Pratham Houston Gala on May 1 was truly a "Passage to India" that traversed through Houston. Over 700 supporters gathered at the Westin Galleria where a total of \$550,000 was raised to help Pratham achieve its mission of universal quality education, especially for the millions of children who are still illiterate. Honorary Chairs Pershant and Nidhika Mehta, and chairs Meena Datt and Simran Riha, were instrumental in the success of the event. Ex Mayor of Houston, Honorable Bill White and Andrea White, long-term supporters of Pratham, commended the Indo-American community for its spirit of giving.

Pratham North Carolina

The Pratham NC Young Professionals was launched in early May where Prem Yadav, head of the Pratham Computer Assisted Learning Center in India, was the Keynote Speaker. The 30-plus attendees at the dinner embraced the dedication of Prem and his team of 425 youth-employees focused efforts to support key programs such as: running computer centers in schools; consultancy to other like organizations; hardware/infrastructure support; development of user-friendly software for administrators; creation of educational software for children. Initial costs for establishing a computer learning center is \$6,000. Sustained by nominal fees paid by students, each center can educate up to 350 children on a sustainable basis.

Pratham SF Bay Area

Pratham Tees Off: Pratham Bay area participated in a Hole In One competition in partnership with The Rotary Club of Cupertino, California. *Networking with Pratham:* Our Young Professionals' group met in San Francisco at Sens Restaurant, on May 6th, to hear Premal Shah (Kiva),

Meghan Nesbitt (Salesforce Foundation) and Yashvinee Narechania (Room to Read) share their experiences in the world of "giving" and fund raising. *Pratham walked/ran in the name of "Seva":* at the "Sevathon 2010" along with 42 other non profit organizations we spread the message of education for every child.

Pratham Los Angeles

Pratham Los Angeles organized a successful fund raiser at the residence of Drs Mahesh and Jayshree Vyas on Sunday, 2 May 2010 in Yorba Linda, CA. Over 250 supporters enjoyed the sitar recital by Pandit Ms. Khushal Das. He was accompanied by Tabla maestro Pandit Kumar Bose. Board chairman Sudesh and Chitra Arora made their annual commitment of \$500K to Pratham and several other current and new donors reaffirmed their financial commitment.

Pratham Donor and Volunteer Profile

Bharat Shah, a Pratham volunteer was awarded the Microsoft 2010 Technical Recognition Award, which came with \$27,000 in prize money. Bharat choose to donate his award in full to Pratham USA.

The Technical Recognition Award recipients have been acknowledged by their peers for their extraordinary achievement, leadership and impact. "Microsoft presents this award to celebrate the relentless spirit of these individuals by expanding their impact to the global community, through a charitable contribution made on their behalf."

Microsoft has a long history of recognizing employees who are engaged in work to better the world. This award was designed to embrace the philosophy of giving at the Microsoft Corporation and to make a "direct acknowledgement of Bharat Shah's passion and support for the efforts of Pratham and for the organizations inspirational work and its impact on the communities it works in."

On behalf of Pratham, we would like to congratulate Bharat Shah on his award and his commitment to helping others.

Create your own fundraising page

FirstGiving online gives you the opportunity to raise money for Pratham USA by setting up your own fundraising page on the website. You can then email your page to friends, family, and colleagues, who can donate by credit or debit card in an easy, secure online transaction. For more information visit: www.firstgiving.com/prathamusa

Pratham USA National Advisory Board Welcomes Chandrika K. Tandon



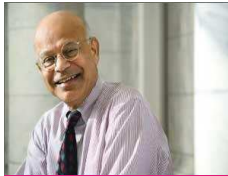
Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon

Pratham USA is delighted to welcome Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon to its National Board of Advisors. Ms. Tandon brings considerable expertise in global finance and philanthropy as well as deep knowledge of issues of development in India. Ms. Tandon joins current Advisory Board members, Rajat K. Gupta, former Chairman at McKinsey & Co and Natwar Gandhi, Chief Financial Officer for the District of Columbia.

The Pratham USA National Advisory Board was founded in 2009 and is still in formation. With the establishment of this group we hope to bring together a diverse group of individuals to challenge, guide and energize our work. The support of our Advisory Board members is crucial in driving Pratham USA's potential to influence the reach and quality of education in India.

Ms. Tandon is Chairman of Tandon Capital Associates, Inc., a financial advisory firm founded in 1992. She also chairs the Tandon Foundation, which supports nonprofit organizations that focus on sustainable livelihoods, women's economic power, education, the arts and spirituality.

Ms. Tandon is an active Board Member of the American India Foundation, and chairs its livelihoods' program. She is also a founding board member of the Hindu Community Outreach Foundation, an advisory board member of the Indo American Arts Council and a member of the Board of Overseers of New York University's Stern School of Business.



Natwar Gandhi

Natwar Gandhi is the Chief Financial Officer of the District of Columbia Government and in that capacity manages the finances of the District's \$10 billion budget.

In 2007, Gandhi was named one of Governing magazine's 2007 Public of Officials of the Year and Washingtonian magazine's 150 most powerful public officials. He was also named one of Washingtonian magazine's 2006 Washingtonians of the Year and was a recipient of the Association of Government Accountants' (AGA) 2007 Distinguished Local Government Leadership Award. His other honors include The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Meritorious Leadership Award (Inaugural Recipient) and the DC Chamber of Commerce Impact Award in 2005, as well as Achievement of the Year Awards from the AGA (National chapter in 2000 and Washington, DC, chapter in 1999). He also received the President's Award from the Greater Washington Society of CPAs in 2000, and Distinguished Service and Meritorious Service Awards from the GAO.



Rajat K. Gupta

Rajat Kumar Gupta is the former managing director of McKinsey & Company worldwide. He previously served as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advisor on UN Reform. He is an independent Director of Procter & Gamble, AMR Corporation, Harman International, Qatar Financial Centre, and a Member of the Supervisory Board of Sberbank. He is also the Chairman of the Board of Genpact and New Silk Route Private Equity.

Mr. Gupta is very active in many nonprofit institutions focused on education, health and development. He is Chairman of the Board of the Indian School of Business and is associated in a leadership role with many other institutions including Harvard Business School; Kellogg School of Management; the Rockefeller Foundation, Tsinghua University; Yale; Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI); Weill Cornell Medical College; Avahan, the India AIDS Initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and Harvard School of Public Health. He is involved with a variety of global development and trade organizations, including serving as Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Gates Foundation; Co-Chair of the American India Foundation (AIF); Foundation Board of the World Economic Forum; Board of the Millennium Promise; and Vice Chairman of International Chamber of Commerce.

A Year of Changing Lives, Speech is Silver, Silence Is Gold

Eleven year old Murli, of Yazali village, Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh is speech impaired. He came to meet the project facilitator of the Bal Panchayat with his grandmother and expressed a desire to contest for the village elections. Mr. Panchayat spoke of being apprehensive about Murli's participation in the program. At the time of the first meeting it was unclear whether Murli would take advantage of the opportunity he was being given. This apprehension bothered Mr. Panchayat, but not Murli. He knew exactly what he was up to.

As the elections came close, Murli's competitors used speech and songs to impress the vote bank. Murli simply visited each and every house of the village with a Pratham facilitator and used the facilitator's voice to appeal to the voters. He campaigned day and

night with a chocolate bar in hand - his election symbol and even distributed some. It was a moment of triumph when the results were declared and Murli stood 2nd in the elections beating 8 of his competitors. 72 out of 200 voters had chosen him as their leader.

He is now committed to work on the issue of 'school drop outs' through the Bal Panchayat. Murli regularly sits with his fellow members to find solutions to the problems faced by the children of their village. Inadequate access to education, water and health facilities, child labor and lack of basic sanitary facilities are some of his concerns now. The Bal Panchayat has drawn up a list of children who don't attend school and seek support from the sarpanch and the headmaster to work on the situation.

Murli has never been to school but his

face shines with excitement when we ask him to. If he chooses to, Murli would join a nearby Pratham shelter and learn the basics of reading and writing. Meanwhile, he's referred to a speech therapist in Bapatla for a thorough assessment.



Murli (second from the right) with his grandmother and friends

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Rajat K. Gupta- **Opalesque Solutions**
Natwar Gandhi- **Matthew Worden**



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