

Chairman's Message

The year 2005 was remarkable in several ways. It marked the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the polio vaccine, yet the world, and particularly India, saw a rise in the number of children affected with polio. Closer to home, there was a breakout of polio in an Amish community in Minnesota, the first time polio has surfaced in the United States since 1979.

Despite these unfortunate turn of events, Polio Children persevered in it's mission of supporting programs specifically tailored for the education and rehabilitation needs of children affected with polio.

Last November, I revisited Sucheta Kriplani Shiksha Niketan (SKSN), located outside Jodhpur in Rajasthan, India, and the primary program we support. It was a very rewarding experience to see first hand what a phenomenal difference your generosity has made to the lives of these children. The Academic and Vocational Residential Center for Girls, built by Polio Children in 2004, is now fully occupied. The "Class of 2004", 24 severely handicapped students who were enrolled above the government imposed limitation on funding, continues to flourish. I was privileged to meet Anuradha Rathod, the first graduate of SKSN to earn a place in a medical school. If meeting Anuradha was the crowning moment of my visit to SKSN, then meeting Sumant Kanwar was the lowest point (see inside).



Locally, we had a busy year as well as we continued with our efforts to spread awareness about the ravages of this crippling disease. We met with diverse groups of people including the Post-Polio Support Group of Rochester and learnt that there were more than 300,000 survivors with polio in the USA. In the coming year, Polio Children looks forward to extending its support to other NGOs in India and in Uganda.

Finally, on behalf of the board of directors of Polio Children, I would like to thank Mr. Deepak Maniar and the board of trustees of the India Community Center of Rochester, Mr. Nandu Atre (*Friends of Raaga*) and Mr. Jatin Gujarati (*Eastern Arts and Music Group*, Toronto, Canada) for hosting musical shows to raise funds for Polio Children, and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly to make these shows runaway successes. Last but not the least, our sincere thanks to all the generous donors for their continued support.

Best wishes for the New Year!

Shirish Patel

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University Education Fund

Started in July 2003 when the first ever graduate of SKSN enrolled at the local University of Jodhpur, this project has continued to grow despite immense resistance from the local community to accommodate these handicapped students in their neighborhoods. Despite these added obstacles, the program produced its first graduate who returned to SKSN to teach.

Total cost of the project: \$64,230
Amount funded by Polio Children: \$64,230



Rekha, the first graduate of the University Education Project teaches class at SKSN

Dairy Farm Project

Started in September 2003 with the primary aim of ensuring self-sufficiency in milk and milk products, the dairy farm project achieved its aim in February 2005 when the milk production exceeded the school's demand. The dairy farm is now stocked with a herd of 14 cows and buffaloes (6 of which were bred on the farm) and is a full-fledged operation that produces milk, *ghee* (clarified butter), yogurt, and *lassi* round the year for the school's 550 children.

Total cost of the project: \$93,500
Amount funded by Polio Children: \$86,355

"Class of 2004"

Twenty four of the most severely polio-crippled children (lovingly renamed the "Class of 2004" in preference to their local name of "Crawling Children") presenting at SKSN have now completed their second year of schooling. Though many of them are in the 8-12 years age range, this has been the only schooling they have ever received. Since they were accepted over and above the government imposed limitation on funding, the complete cost of their stay at SKSN is borne by Polio Children.

Total cost of the project: \$34,865
Amount funded by Polio Children: \$34,865



One of the 24 students enrolled in the 'Class of 2004'

Infrastructure

Finishing touches were put to the Academic and Vocational Training Center for Girls built in July 2004 (at a cost of \$171,625) by furnishing the dormitories and erecting a perimeter wall. Ensuite bathrooms were built for 150 of the most handicapped children so that they no longer have to crawl across 50 yards of a rubble strewn courtyard for their daily ablutions.

Amount funded by Polio Children: \$22,400

Wind-Generated Power

Over the past 3 years, we have been able to assist SKSN in installing the essential components of an infrastructure that has made this boarding school for physically handicapped children into an almost self-sustaining community. Building a hostel for the girls, installing handicap-accessible sanitary facilities, drilling a tube well to provide a reliable and potable source of water, developing a dairy farm that guarantees a regular supply of milk, and installing a generator and solar panels for power have all helped. Unfortunately, the rising cost of gas and the erection of additional buildings on the campus continues to severely strain the school's energy budget. Installation of a wind-generated power plant, eligible for government subsidy is the most economical and realistic option in this arid region.



Projected cost: \$75,000-\$120,000

Vocation Training

As an increasing number of children graduate from high-school over the next several years, the biggest challenge will be to train them in vocations that match their physical abilities. For some this will be because their grades would not qualify them for admission to college while for the majority it will be because of inadequate finances. Developing employable skills that will allow the students to pursue such trades as tailoring, electrician, and beautician is their only hope of achieving economic independence and eventually join the mainstream of society. The existing vocational training programs at SKSN are very basic and sparsely equipped.



A high school student training in tailoring

Projected costs:

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| Tailoring | \$22,325 |
| Beautician | \$14,335 |
| Electrician | \$18,750 |

Other Sites

We have received letters of enquiry for funding from several non-governmental organizations (NGO) in India and Uganda. We are in the process of reviewing their requests and hope that with continued support from our donors we shall be able to help these children as well.

Requests for funding: \$2000—\$23,520



I met Miss Anuradha Rathod last November when I visited SKSN. It is also her alma mater. She is a first year medical student at Dr. Sampurnanada Medical College in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, and takes pride in the fact that she is the first graduate of SKSN to enter medicine. Though not challenged academically, she is physically. Anuradha has polio in her right leg. Only 19 years old, her gait has already deteriorated to the point that she is barely able to walk from one class to another without running out of breath. She receives an annual scholarship of Rs 500 (\$11) a month. Her father works in a tea canteen and earns less than Rs 30,000 (\$667) a year – barely enough to buy food for his family of 8 let alone send his daughter to a medical school. “That’s my *kismet*”, she says in her quiet non-complaining manner. But behind that unassuming façade is a resolute young woman. She is determined to obtain her medical degree and dreams of becoming a neurosurgeon so that she can “help the less fortunate segment of the society”. More importantly, the future of her 3 younger sisters (one of whom also has polio) is riding on

her success. She is a shining example of and a tremendous inspiration to the more than 550 disabled children (and especially for the more than 160 girls) who reside at SKSN. The prosthetics department at SKSN has already fitted her with calipers to stabilize her gait.

She will become a doctor now that she has obtained a place in medicine. That is natural. She will be under significant mental stress for that’s what medical studies entail. That is a given. A medical career will bring out the best in her given her personality and determination to succeed. That is certain. But how painlessly she attains her degree will depend upon our generosity and support.

Please join Polio Children in helping Anuradha achieve her dream.

Annual living and college expense: \$2570

Purchase of a 3-wheeled scooter: \$1620

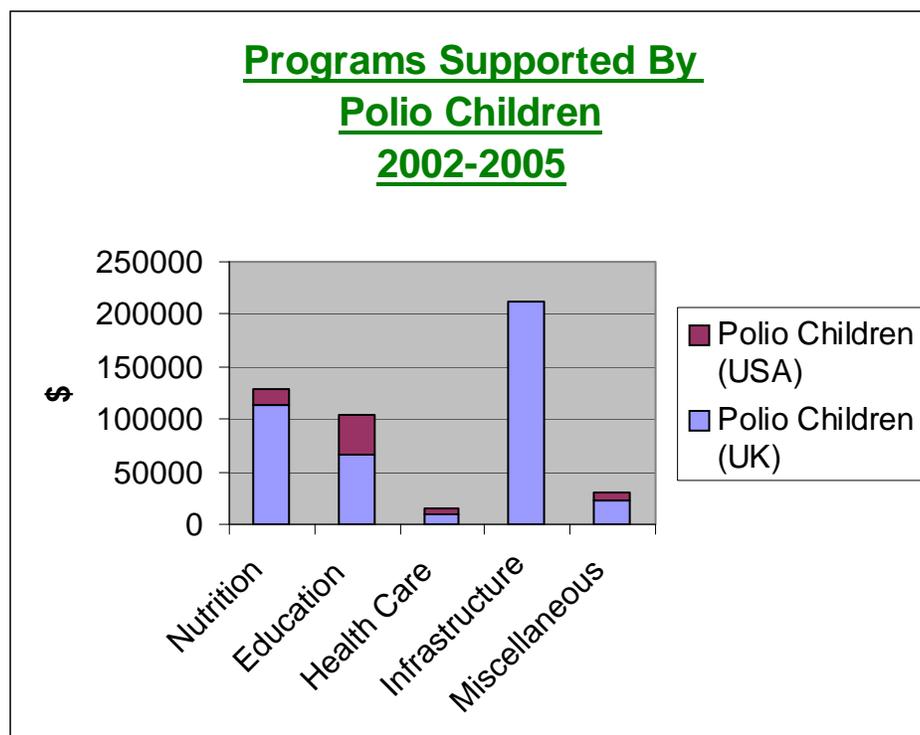
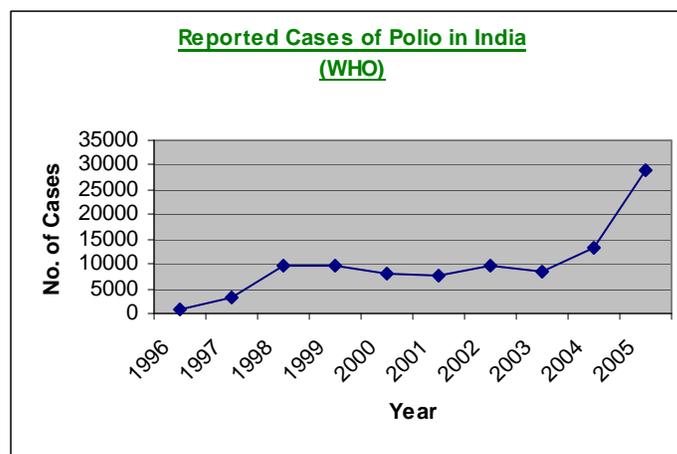
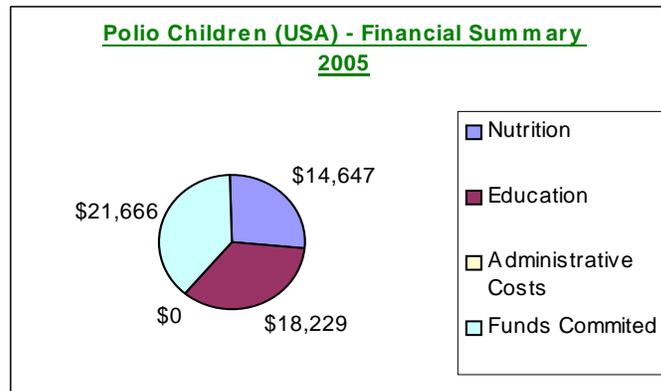
Sumant Kanwar is one of the most unfortunate children I have met so far in my 3 years of work with children with polio. She is a petite 12 year-old. I met her quite accidentally when visiting SKSN. She drew my attention in the dining hall because she was the only child amongst the 70 girls who was not eating. I soon find out the reason. Sumant has a combination of polio and paralysis following a stroke with the result that she has little to no power in 3 of her 4 limbs. The only unaffected limb is her left leg which she uses to hop around. She is at the mercy of whoever sits next to her to have her food chopped which she then struggles to feed herself using her paralyzed arms. She does not have access to any adaptive devices. But behind that crippled body is a fiercely determined girl. The fact that she has survived so far is a testament to her resoluteness.

Upon my return home, I showed a video recording of her to a rehabilitation specialist whose assessment is that Sumant needs a comprehensive evaluation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and trials of various adaptive devices to give her some degree of independence, if she is to survive into adulthood.

Obviously, none of these facilities are available in the rural part of India where she comes from. Polio Children hopes to bring her to the States for these life-saving treatments.

We look forward to your support in giving Sumant a fighting chance.





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Giving Hope and Dignity

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Mailing Label

We need your help to give these children hope and dignity

