



# REAL SAMACHAR

## Where did we go?

*It may have been months since you last heard from us*



Whether you donated to our organization, requested more information about us, or volunteered with us at a fundraiser, at some point in time you supported REAL: Youth To Youth. However, it may have been awhile since you heard from us. Except for a couple trips to India, we

haven't gone anywhere. In your hands you have the first edition of our newsletter, filled with the many things that REAL has been busy with since we last spoke. From our fundraising efforts in the U.S. to our work in India, we share with you our hopes for the coming years, and how your contribution helped.

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*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow.  
Learn as if you were to live forever."*

*-Gandhi*

## Who we are and what we do

The full name of our organization is REAL: Youth To Youth. "REAL" stands for Rural Education And Literacy. "Youth to Youth" signifies who we are and who we help: we are Portland youth dedicated to helping our counterparts in India. REAL is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and is run by high school students. We raise funds here in the U.S. and work to improve the overall education of students in India by partnering with educational programs. India has the largest illiterate

population in the world, and the majority of these people are located in rural villages. The benefits of improved education include reduced poverty by enhancing employment opportunities. We work tirelessly to fulfill our mission: to support the needs of rural youth with a goal to achieve literacy among the underprivileged population in India. For more information, visit us at [REALyouth.org](http://REALyouth.org).



## Thane Discovery Program: Three-year commitment, infinite progress



*While trying to explain the concept of time zones to seventh grade students and getting blank stares in response, volunteers realized how useful a globe would be. Unfortunately, access to interactive materials like globes is limited in the schools.*

In August 2011, REAL partnered with the Dr. M.L. Dhawale Memorial Trust to begin a three-year long funding commitment for the Thane Discovery Program (\$3,000 per year over three years). Despite daunting obstacles, the Thane Discovery Program has blossomed into an educational system full of potential.

Located approximately two hours north of Mumbai, the Palghar and Vikramgad talukas are home to the Adivasi, a nomadic tribal population. There, people live off the land, travelling as the seasons change. If children there are allowed to go to school at all, they have limited options for education. The literacy rate is below 30% in the area, compared to the 69% rate in the rest of the district.

REAL members visited the Thane schools in August of 2009 and 2011. During the most recent trip, they witnessed how REAL's grant was being utilized. While sitting in on a teacher training workshop (funded by the grant), they heard about the many dilemmas that both students and teachers face. Such insight has proved to be useful; the next year we were able to focus our funds to improve the aspects of the program that most desperately needed attention.

Perhaps the biggest impact was made on us while we visited the Vatsalya Ashram School, a residential school in the area. We were able to talk with students and see what their daily life was like. We truly began to appreciate how lucky students in the United States are to have so much hands-on learning available. We were also able to visit several of the classrooms. While attempting to explain the concept of time zones to seventh grade students and getting blank stares in response, volunteers realized how useful a globe would be. Unfortunately, access to interactive materials such as globes is limited in the district.

The awareness of the importance of hands-on learning sparked the idea that created the Mobile Science Program. The area already has a mobile library, (a van that periodically carries books to all of the schools and allows students to check them). This system is a model for the mobile science program.

In September, we received an update on the Discovery Program about the allocation of funds. So far they have held nine workshops for students and teachers, and held a trip to the University of Pune so 28 of the teachers could attend workshops about teaching science, math, and geography. Teachers described the trip as an enlightening experience that demonstrated to them the full potential of education. The workshops allowed students that needed help in their studies to get extra attention outside of the classroom and be brought up to speed.

For more information about the Thane Discovery Program, contact Anisha Adke, the Thane liaison, at [Anisha@REALyouth.org](mailto:Anisha@REALyouth.org)



## The Mobile Science Concept



### *The Mobile Library, the model for the Mobile Science Program*

Hands-on learning is crucial to understanding concepts. Students in the United States often do not realize how often the curriculum includes a lab or exploratory activity, and how important it is to their understanding. In India, interactive learning is almost nonexistent. Working with visuals helps students to gain a firmer grasp of complex concepts.

During the summer of 2012, REAL's current youth president Kimaya Gupte developed the concept of the Mobile Science Program. She developed the concept with hands-on experiments and we tested some of the curriculum at Portland's India Festival. Children flocked to our booth to explore density, acidity, magnetism, solar energy, and more.

We are in the process of developing the program and the budget. All of the science materials and equipment are costly themselves, and the program will need a transportation vehicle and teaching staffing.

After speaking with Dr. Ujwala Pendse (our liaison for the Thane Discovery Program) about potential

costs, we realized exactly how tall of a mountain we have set out to climb. Despite the obstacles in our path, we are hopeful and determined to implement the program.

In this coming year we are strategizing on ways to gain support from private donors and corporations, local businesses and foundations. We are applying for grants from large multinational organizations like Verizon, Coca Cola, TATA and Mahindra & Mahindra and we are reaching into our local community in the hopes that we will be able to raise the necessary funds for this program.

We hope to begin piloting the program at schools like the Vatsalya Ashram School and other surrounding schools, and if we succeed we will expand to other regions.

For more information about the Mobile Science Concept, please contact Kimaya Gupte at [Kimaya@REALyouth.org](mailto:Kimaya@REALyouth.org).

## FUNDRAISING IN THE U.S.



### Portland Marathon

Every year at the beginning of October, REAL volunteers work at the Portland Marathon: monitoring the course, handing out finisher t-shirts, or giving each runner a rose. This year, we supplied the finishers with much needed water.



### India Day

At Portland's annual India Day, we promoted worldwide literacy and education at our booth. This year, we held hands-on science activities for kids, sold water, and wrote people's names in henna in different Indian languages and on bookmarks.



## Site Visits: Our tool for learning more



### *A REAL volunteer visits a second grade classroom*

Through site-visits we are able to see first-hand the impact of REAL's grants. Talking with teachers, faculty, students, and parents gives

us insight into challenges the schools face, in ways that no other form of communication can.

Site visits give us knowledge of exactly the kind of conditions we are fighting against, and inspire our volunteers to work harder to promote global education. Through a site-visit we are able to better determine program needs and accordingly allocate limited resources.

We are always looking for volunteers to visit the programs we support. If you are planning a trip to India and wish to visit a REAL supported program, please contact Harsha Uppili at [Harsha@REALyouth.org](mailto:Harsha@REALyouth.org).

## Advocating for Rights: Malala Yousufzai

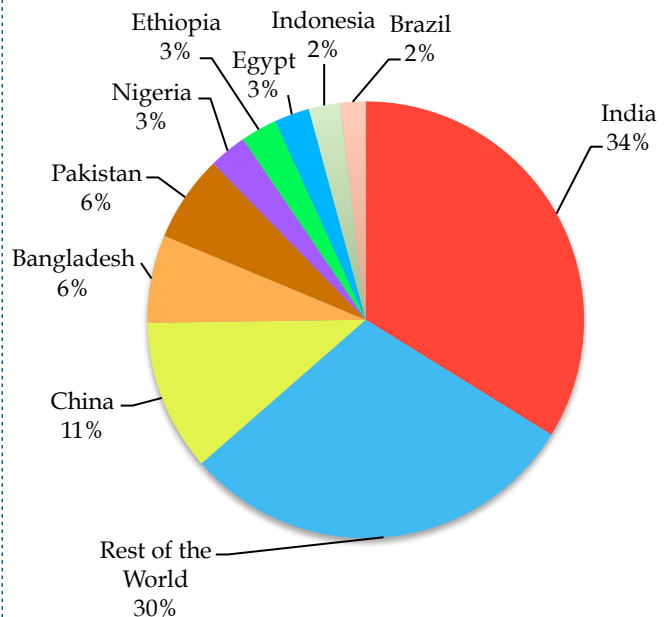
On October 9, 2012, a Taliban gunmen shot 14-year-old activist Malala Yousufzai. Yousufzai is a strong believer of the exposure of the Taliban's atrocities, as well as in the education of girls.

In 2007 militants began to infiltrate the Swat Valley, Yousufzai's home. By 2008, they controlled the majority of the valley; in doing so they destroyed about 200 schools, most of which were girls' institutions. At one point, the Taliban said that they intended to halt female education.

Yousufzai began writing a blog when she was 11 years old under a pseudonym, speaking of life under Taliban occupation. In 2009, when the Taliban were removed from the Swat Valley, she began to publicly broadcast the need of girls' education in direct opposition of the Taliban.

Resisting the tyranny of such a powerful group in order to stand up for education requires unfathomable amounts of courage. Yousufzai's protest of oppression and her defiance for fighting for her rights serve as an inspiration to us all.

### World Adult Illiterate Population, percentage by country, 2000-2004



2000-2004 data are derived from the March 2004 literacy assessment by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics