



Dining for Women

Program Fact Sheet

Program: Matrichaya

Web Site: matrichaya.org

Mission: Matrichaya's Mission is to bring about socio-economic changes in India through education of children and women in extreme poverty. And to build a global network of knowledgeable, committed philanthropists to achieve above goal. *Matrichaya* means "in the shadow of the mother."

Where Matrichaya Serves: India; state of Jharkhand, mainly in area of Ranchi, the state capital. Matrichaya has adopted seven villages in slum areas and tribal villages around Ranchi. Jharkhand is a relatively new state carved out of the state of Bihar, from which Matrichaya's founder and her family come. Jharkhand is one of India's least developed areas and has a high population density. It suffers from extremely high illiteracy rates (90% for women in Ranchi alone), high mortality rate and a very low per capita income.

Jharkhand is known for its forests and is home to indigenous tribal peoples (*adivasi*) who inhabit them and have historically had separate cultures from the Indian and colonial mainstream that exploited them. Although not technically part of the (now outlawed) Hindu cast system (Adivasi have their own traditions), the adivasi are often considered below social standing and allowed only menial jobs no one else will do. Despair and desperate poverty have led some adivasi to take part in terrorist activities against the State. Others work to preserve indigenous elements of the cultures that are positive while battling attitudes and traditions that are harmful, particularly to women. But the adivasi receive little help from the government or society in general. In the recent floods of North India, adivasi villages were the last to be helped; too late for many. Many of the poor served by Matrichaya are from adivasi villages around Ranchi.

Matrichaya's Story: Matrichaya was created by Ms. Chanchala Mishra in 1994, after the untimely death of her husband. She has dedicated her life to serving her community, a tradition among widows of India. She used her people skills to motivate like-minded volunteers to help her in her mission. With the earned trust of the local community, she has acted as the voice of tribals (adivasi) against those that try to take undue advantage of them. She has used her own resources and contributions from friends and family, along with donations from local businesses to fund her efforts. Ms. Mishra has recruited skilled Board members with keen interest in bringing substantial change in quality of life and in improving literacy. Dr. Archana Mishra, the founder's daughter and Vice President of Matrichaya, is our stateside contact. (See her recipe in *MC*.) In 2004, Matrichaya achieved nonprofit status in NY.

How Matrichaya Works: Matrichaya believes that education is the primary means of socio-economic change. Matrichaya's primary goal is eliminating poverty among the indigenous tribal people (*adivasi*) of the region through education and self-empowerment. It has 3 key initiatives: basic education, learn-and-earn vocational training and micro credit programs, and health and hygiene promotion. All of these initiatives lead to economic independence and empowerment of women.

Education: Despite government schools in the vicinity, children continued to be illiterate. Many, especially girls, are kept home to care for younger siblings or as domestic help. Matrichaya has 7 schools in slum areas around Ranchi. The schools are staffed by paid teachers but have numerous volunteers. After 2 years of school, students understand rudimentary English, have a 90% attendance rate and hopefully have a desire to continue their education. Over 500 students have been through the literacy program and many continue on through 8th grade. Matrichaya also provides literacy training to adult women.

Vocational training and micro credit: Girls and women in urban slums and villages are trained in handicrafts, beauty training, herbal cosmetology, etc. Women prisoners at the Correctional Facility are trained in literacy and a vocation such as embroidery, candle making, tailoring, pickle and jelly making. In the past, DFW has supported many of these programs. (See *MC October 07* and resources on the program schedule page for that month on the food preservation and other programs supported in that year.) Currently DFW is supporting training leading to certification for cosmetology assistants, in embroidery and sewing and in mushroom cultivation. The micro credit program has organized self help groups of women in slum areas and poor villages. The groups award small grants for cottage industries. Products are sold in villages and at an amusement center and other locals in Ranchi.

Health and hygiene: Health camps are held in all adopted areas with medical volunteers organizing eye camps and hygiene awareness programs. Ms. Mishra used her contacts to encourage physicians to volunteer their time and provide sample medications at their health camps.

Ecology and Environment: Conservation drives are organized, including developing a tree plantation.

Financial Profile: Matrichaya is mainly a volunteer driven organization. The schools and vocational programs hire teachers for nominal pay. There are no administrative costs other than \$20 each month for someone to keep records, rent and a secretary. Everyone else is a volunteer.

How It Measures Success: Matrichaya sets goals and objectives for each program and evaluates every year. For instance, every child in the basic literary program is expected to have a 90% attendance rate, be trained in basic hygiene and first aid, be involved in at least one art and culture training program, speak rudimentary English, and take responsibility for keeping the village clean and for planting and maintaining village trees. Matrichaya has been particularly diligent with reports to DFW, photos, report cards on the students, and testimonials from program participants ranging from kindergarteners to beauty assistant trainees. (See *MC Voices* and *MCPreview* on recent updates.)

DFW Giving History with Program: In total to date, DFW has contributed \$21,803 to Matrichaya over 3 years: \$2,905 in 2005, \$3,587 in 2006 and \$15, 311. In October 2008, members of DFW visited Matrichaya. (See supplemental materials in *MC* and on the Program Schedule page on the visit.)

Progress Report as of September 2008: DFW's contribution is currently supporting

- *basic literacy education for 40 children, from teachers salaries to materials, uniforms, soap and medical care
- *vocational training projects of women's self help groups from mushroom cultivation to jewelry making, helping 80 women move toward self-sufficiency
- *literacy training for 50 women

Excerpts from the interim report will appear in MC.

And the **DFW Sarah Manly Fund**, named in memory of a beloved DFW member, supporter, and inspiration has funded the education of two girls beyond Matrichaya's grade levels and will add two more scholarship students next year, funding permitting. Per child, the cost is \$270 annually. To get the girls through Level 10, (approximately 6 years) would cost \$1000 per child. *If you'd like to contribute to the Sarah Manly Fund separately from the dinner donation, please make a donation to DFW and designate it clearly "Sarah Manly Fund."*