

Aamara Biswas (India)

www.aamarabiswas.org

Our Biswas (US)

www.ourbiswasusa.org

**Women Helping Women through Nano Finance
Annual Report (2015-2016)**

Dear Friends,

Namaskar!

It is again time for me to give you the report of the projects. Your kindness, trust, and support over the years, in different ways, to help the most underprivileged women of the society through Aamara Biswas (AB) and Our Biswas (OB), can't be acknowledged through words or by just telling you "thank you". You are a part of the success stories and equally responsible for the progress and changes AB brings in the lives of thousands of women. As I always mention, the success at each step is due to the team effort. I am extremely humbled to be part of this team with all of you. The women of Odisha send their gratitude and love.

For the new donors, this is a brief introduction about Nano Finance (NF). The main goal of this program is to empower extremely poor women and girls in the rural villages and poor urban neighborhoods in the state of Odisha by providing them with access to very small, interest-free loans of \$10 – 20, with a payback period of one-full year. With this small loan, they can avoid going to the moneylenders for a loan that would have an annual interest rate of 120% or more.

The following issues are discussed in this report.

A. Financial Statement

B. Aamara Biswas Center

C. The Projects supported by AB

D. Sustainability of Aamara Biswas

E. Taking NF Project to Kampala, Uganda

F. Conclusion

A. Financial Statement

From the Contribution for 2015-16

The following amount was directly transferred from OB account (US) to AB account (Odisha, India)

Date	Transfer	Receive
August 5, 2015	\$13,000	\$12,990
November 19, 2015	\$21,000	\$20,990
January 20, 2016	\$8,000	\$7,990
February 2, 2016	\$2,000	\$1,993
Total	\$44,000	\$43,963

Expense Details

1. Nano Finance	\$7,780
2. Aamara Biswas Center	\$30,790
3. Sanitary Napkin Unit	\$1,235
4. Salaries for six months	\$1,950
5. Travel	\$490
6. Other Expenses	
Auditor and Architect	\$95
Grand Total of all Expenses	\$42,340

B. The Aamara Biswas Center (AB Center)

The construction of the AB Center was possible only due to your financial support. Last year, some donors specifically donated towards buying the land and building the Center. It is a dream come true for the women of AB. The center is situated in an interior village of Jagatsingpur district of Eastern Odisha. It is a 1200 square feet, one-story building with a veranda that adds an extra 600 square feet working area for the future. The women take pride and feel the Center belongs to them. The entire team worked day and night to finish the center in less than four months in extremely hot weather. In the beginning of May, the Jagatsingpur Training/Production unit and Sanitary Napkin unit have moved to the Center from the rental location. The rental money saved currently is being used for another training center in the Fisherman's villages.

C. The Projects Supported by AB

Nano Finance (NF) Project

There is a great demand for the expansion of the NF project. We expand it according to our annual budget. AB does not advertise its activities. The coordinators try their best to give loans to the women who are really in need. We encourage the women to take loans only 5 or 6 times, and then give other women a chance to take loans to improve their living condition. The loans are also given on first-come, first-served basis. Currently, AB is working in more than 80 villages. As of December 2016, AB is planning to take the NF project to a very difficult and ultra poor tribal area of the Klahanie district of Odisha. There is a student group very keen to partner with AB to start this project, who will also contribute a nominal amount to the collaboration. I am looking forward to meeting these women and working with the students. [Ranu, I will explain more about this project, here]

Sanitary Napkin Unit

The Sanitary Napkin Unit, which began in February 2015, moved to the AB Center last May. As a result, AB saved the rental expense of its location, which was a financial strain on the budget. While difficult to sustain in a short time period, it is an important project to support women's health. In the region, it is encouraging to see how, in just one year, the women have become aware of the importance of using disposable sanitary napkins. Once they use it, they do not want to go back to the old approach. The price of the pads must be affordable. I remember, at the beginning, how difficult and embarrassing it was for the girls and women to discuss the sanitary napkins and the related health problems. Now they discuss it openly and give their opinions about how to make better quality napkins, but sell them at an affordable price. This is a great advance for women's health. [Ranu, do you have quantitative data you can add here?]

Training and Production Units

The Jagatsingpur Training and Production Unit moved to the new AB Center last May. As a result, we have saved the rent we were paying before. [Ranu, is it possible to state how long it will take to break even, and ultimately when you AB will be able to save with the new Center, given the cost of renting vs. the cost of construction?] This unit has trained more than 125 girls in a six month course, at the end of which, students receive a certificate. Many of the girls who completed the program have started their own business. Also, the production unit provide space for more than 60 women to pursue other livelihoods such as making garments that AB helps to market. AB splits the profit equally. In the old center, due to the small space, only 15 girls could be trained. Now more than 25 girls can be trained at the same time. Currently 21 girls are participating in this training.

The Noliasahi Training Center started last April in a small room. Currently, 15 girls are enrolled. The rent we have saved from the Jagatsingpur Training and Production unit is being used for the teacher's salary and the rent.

Purusottampur Training/Production Center: In December 2010, AB took over this training/production center that was not functioning due to lack of funds. AB gave more than \$6,000 to buy raw materials. Currently, this center is running smoothly, giving training, and also providing livelihood to many women/girls from the surrounding villages; the women are making ladies' garments. [Who brings the goods to market?] AB does not give any more financial support to this center.

Drinking Water Filter Project

AB started this project by buying 555 filters. [As of when has it...] It has expanded to 1,360 filters. AB is not investing additional funds for this project. New filters are purchased by recirculating the originally-invested money. The coordinator regularly maintains the filters by replacing the parts.

D. Sustainability of Aamara Biswas and Supported projects

Sustainability of these projects and the organization are a major importance to all of us and to those we serve. Of course the organization will continue to sustain until it gets the financial support from the kind and generous donors and by the coordinators who work sincerely and unselfishly for the organization.

The beauty of the NF project is that it is sustainable by re-circulating the money returned by the women in the program. Increased donor participating will all AB to grow and serve more women in additional communities. It can expand depending on the new support AB gets from the donors every year.

In the case of the training and production units, the profit from the Jagatsingpur Training/Production unit takes care of the teacher's salaries and travel expenses of the coordinator. The student's registration money and monthly fees take care of maintaining the sewing machines. The unit is now self-sustained.

The teacher's salary and the rent of the new training unit in the fisherman's village comes from the rental money saved by moving the Jagatsingpur training/production unit to the new AB center.

In the case of Sanitary Napkin unit, AB manages to maintain the machines, pay the electricity and diesel bills, pay the coordinators and the girls their wages, and manages the small expenses by selling the pads. But, we need additional funding to buy the raw materials for the sanitary napkins. [Can you be more specific, how much do you need?] In a few years, this project will not only bring better health to the women, but also provide sanitary napkins to many girls/women at an affordable cost in the rural/urban areas of Odisha.

Critical to sustaining AB, the women in the program must feel ownership and love for the organization. This is why donor support is essential, so to reveal the organization's strength and continued commitment to the women we serve.. We are commitment, that with their trust and love, AB will sustain itself and empower the most under privileged women of the societies.

F. Taking NF concept to Kampala, Uganda

Last April, AB took the NF concept to Kampala, in collaboration with the Clover Foundation (clover-foundation.org), a USA-based nonprofit organization with an affiliate NGO in Uganda. At this site, which is an early childhood learning center and preschool for young children living in extreme poverty in the urban slums of Kampala, Nano Finance is enabling the mothers of Clover children to improve their livelihoods, so they in turn can create a better home environment for their children. In only a few months, nearly 95% of the women participating have returned their loans and have taken a second time loan to expand their small trades.

G. Conclusion

Here is one of my experiences worth sharing with you. During my last visit, a person came to return the loan that his deceased wife had taken from AB. He said, “My wife took this loan from AB with trust and I can’t break her trust.” I did not accept the amount because he was not responsible for his wife’s loan. This is AB’s rule. It truly touched my heart. The TRUST is such a powerful tool on which AB thrives. I see the future of AB through these experiences.

Submitted by Joyasree (Ran) Mahanti, Founder of Aamara Biswas and Our Biswas