

## Service on Wheels: Nandini Mobile Van

In the three years since its inception, the Nandini Mobile Van has logged thousands of kilometers. Educating rural citizens in the areas of sanitation, waste management, and public and personal health is the primary goal of the project. Through the years, a strong emphasis has been placed on women's empowerment and personal hygiene with children. With 70% of Indians living in rural environments, there are literally thousands of villages to visit.



Keeping this in mind, Nandini and its dedicated team of staff and volunteers have visited 108 villages in Gujarat for an average of 3-5 days each, wherein they engage with the local communities in innovative and creative ways of spreading the knowledge of responsible and safe sanitation and health management. Many of these villages, after the Nandini visit, developed sanitation committees to address the longer term education and application of these learnings. In this time, 16 villages have now been classified as model villages for sanitation based on the fact that 100% of homes in the village not only have toilets installed, but also utilize them.



While spreading this awareness will always be the primary objective of the Nandini Van project, there have been many other discoveries and benefits in the last three years. In this time, 418 domestic and international volunteers have accompanied the staff on these rural excursions. During and after these visits, the volunteers are always amazed at the depth of the experience and the opportunity to immerse in these rich and colorful communities. The interactions and exchange of learning between families in

these villages and volunteers from urban settings in Ahmedabad, other states in India, and from all over the world are a sight to behold. The beauty of a project like the Nandini Mobile Van is how its benefits reveal themselves to us over time.

## NANDINI VILLAGE LOG (2008-2010)

No.	District Name	Number of Villages	Beneficiaries\ Villagers
1	Patan	11	678 Women 1128 Children 180 Youth 270 Adolescents (male & female)
2	Mehsana	9	998 Women 904 Children 144 Youth 162 Adolescents (male & female)
3	Ahmedabad	18	1296 Women 1938 Children 252 Youth 192 Adolescents (male & female)
4	Junagadh	27	1802 Women 2317 Children 486 Youth 243 Adolescents (male & female)
5	Bhavnagar	7	212 Women 317 Children 48 Youth 91 Adolescents (male & female)
6	Amreli	8	702 Women 518 Children 52 Youth 78 Adolescents (male & female)
7	Gandhinagar	9	348 Women 928 Children 223 Youth 344 Adolescents (male & female)
8	Bharuch	7	628 Women 678 Children 204 Youth 174 Adolescents (male & female)
9	Surat	4	228 Women 467 Children 57 Youth

			89 Adolescents (male & female)
10	Narmada	3	154 Women 231 Children 59 Youth 48 Adolescents (male & female)
11	Anand	2	112 Women 153 Children 28 Youth 43 Adolescents (male & female)
12	Nadiada	3	167 Women 339 Children 82 Youth 24 Adolescents (male & female)

When visiting these villages, the core values that the Nandini team focuses on imparting to the communities are varied, but all tie back to the basic fundamentals of personal and environmental health and hygiene. A sampling of the activities that take place during a typical visit from the Nandini Van follows:

- Prabhat Feri – Through an early morning procession, full with chanting and music, the ideals of our message are intertwined spiritually with the people of the village.
- Gram Safai – For two hours every day, the Nandini staff and volunteers spearhead a villagewide cleaning campaign of a neglected part of the village filled with waste. A particular emphasis is placed on engaging all segments of the village population, including women and children. Another common activity is cleaning the public restrooms and then painting them to give them a new and clean look.



- Village Rally – At each stop, the youth and children of the village are mobilized and, while chanting many environmental slogans, proceed throughout the village in order to bring awareness of the cause to those members of the community who may still be skeptical.



- Wastebin Recycling – An activity that is a favorite of the international volunteers is where old wastebins from around the village are collected. They are then cleaned and repainted and distributed out to all of the shopkeepers to affix to the front façade of their shop. The connection between the shopowners and the volunteers is so pure that the language barrier is no hindrance.



- Primary School – A focused, interactive presentation is conducted with the primary school students where they are educated about the basics of personal hygiene and sanitation.
- Women’s Outreach – The women of the village, whether through individual outreach, or addressing existing women’s groups, such as SHGs or microfinance groups, are presented the basics of home sanitation and the vital role they play in the overall health and hygiene of a household.





Village Youth – While all of these activities take place on a typical Nandini visit, the responsibility of maintaining this momentum is always given to the youth of the village. These young men and women are motivated to dedicate a minimum of one hour of their time, as a group, to continuing the message and activities of the Nandini van, every week.

- Tree Plantation – During the monsoon seasons, the benefits of a green environment are not only explained, but are applied. The people of the village, along with the Nandini staff and volunteers plant trees all throughout their village with love and dedication.



- Engage Unemployed Youth – The Nandini staff go door to door in the village accepting monetary donations from village citizens who see the value of their message. These total funds are then matched by the Nandini project.



This total sum then serves as an honorarium for unemployed youth in the village who would like to stay engaged with keeping their village clean and healthy. These young men are compensated with these funds to maintain the village wastebins and tend to the trees that have been planted throughout the

village.

- Personal Homestays – During these village visits, the volunteers, both international and domestic, are placed with families throughout the village to offer an opportunity for the volunteers to connect with members of the community on a personal level, while imparting practical and applicable knowledge in the areas of home and personal sanitation.



- Multimedia Show – Every night, the side façade of the Nandini Van transforms to a stage and movie screen for the entire village. Through an LCD on the side of the van, a projector, and an audio system, the villagers are treated to a series of presentations, jokes, skits, and videos talking about the issues of environmental health and sanitation.

