

HAND IN HAND/SEED NEWSLETTER NO 1

Dear Friends of Hand in Hand/SEED,

You are just about to start reading the first of hopefully many in a row of newsletters from Hand in Hand/SEED in Tamil Nadu. Since this newsletter has reached your mailbox, you have most probably already been in contact with us in one way or another. If not, let me start by briefly introducing Hand in Hand/SEED and myself.

My name is Kalpana Sankar and I function as the Chief Executive Officer Hand in Hand/SEED. Hand in Hand/SEED is an NGO active in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Our vision is to eliminate child labour and eradicate extreme poverty by providing sustainable livelihoods to families through the empowerment of women. In order to attain this, my 700 colleagues and I are currently active in implementing an Integrated Community Development Project with five interconnected sectors:

1. Education and child labour elimination
2. Self Help Groups (SHGs) and microfinance for enterprise and job creation
3. Citizens' centres to strengthen democracy on a grassroots level
4. Medical camps and awareness campaigns to improve health levels
5. Environmental protection via watershed projects and solid waste management

Hand in Hand/SEED has a continuous and close cooperation with its support organisation Hand in Hand Sweden. Hand in Hand Sweden is a non-profit NGO accredited with the following 90-account number:

90 00 91-0. Hand in Hand Sweden's main purpose is to spread information and build opinion about the work and activities of Hand in Hand/SEED in Tamil Nadu, as well as to support us with funding.

In these quarterly letters, we would like to share some of our experiences with you – both the positive highlights and the events that have put constraints on our organisation. We also hope that the newsletters will function as an open forum where you are able to share your comments, questions, and inputs on our activities.

Two Prizes



One of the Mahalakshmi SHG members preparing buns in the Crisp Bakery.

In this first newsletter, we would like to start by shedding some light on two for us very important prizes. To begin with, we are proud to announce that the “Crisp Bakery Unit”, run by the Mahalakshmi SHG in Kancheepuram, has been adjudged second best micro-enterprise in the entire county by the Indian Bank! The eight female entrepreneurs were felicitated by H.E. Abdul Kalam, President of India,

during the Indian Bank centenary celebrations in Chennai on 4 September.

Apart from this joyful event, we are also celebrating that the Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006 to Professor Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank for their efforts to create economic and social development from below. The committee writes that:

"Lasting peace cannot be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty. Microcredit is one such means. Development from below also serves to advance democracy and human rights."

Achievements

The second half of 2006 has so far been hectic yet constructive. Here are some of the highlights from the field.



A girl from the Mahatma Gandhi Nursery and Primary School waving at the camera.

In our education and child labour elimination project, 408 children have been enrolled into regular schooling, totalling in 5 480 children. Hand in Hand/SEED has continued its quest to eliminate child labour and we are now happy to declare that 44 communities have become child labour free and have been proclaimed so in the presence of the Chief Educational Officer and the District Labour Officer. In the Sponsorship Program, 203 children are now covered and 153 of them receive monthly parcels. In addition, the new Mahatma Gandhi Nursery and Primary School was inaugurated on 2 October – the birth date of Mr Gandhi.

As to our SHG and microfinance project, we are now active in ten districts in Tamil Nadu. Until now, 8 773 groups have been formed, enrolling 129 437 women. Additionally, 22 000 family-based and 65 medium-sized enterprises – 30 farm based and 35 non-farm based – have been established.

Our citizens' centres project has been initiated as an attempt to enhance grassroots level democracy and give a voice to the voiceless: the marginalised, poor, and illiterate sections of our society. During this quarter, 26 citizens' centres have been set up, totalling in 70 centres out of which 59 are running in government-owned buildings.

Finally, medical camps have been organised with the support from government-employed doctors; 10 011 patients have been screened in 51 camps during the last quarter.

Visits and Partnerships

Hand in Hand/SEED has been blessed with many visitors during the last months. Members of the Young Presidents' Organisation (YPO) visited many of our projects during three days in August. Thereafter, a group of high-level delegates from



“Jobs for Growth” Project Leader Ms Vuyo Mahalati talking to the women at one of Hand in Hand’s tailor-making centres.

various government departments, research institutions, and the development sector in South Africa – including H.E. Queen Thandikela Jane Ndlovu – visited our projects. We have also been honoured by a visit from an Afghani delegation led by H.E. Mr Asif Rahimi, Deputy Minister of Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MMRD) in Afghanistan.



Hand in Hand CEO Dr Kalpana Sankar receiving an Afghani carpet from H.E. Mr Asif Rahimi, Deputy Minister of Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MMRD) in Afghanistan.

A group of Hand in Hand/SEED trainers have also participated in a big training effort in South Africa as part of the government initiative “Jobs for Growth” where Hand in Hand/SEED is playing a role as trainers.

Support Us!

As you can see, our engagement has grown rapidly in the last years, as has the need for funding. In order to continue in our successful fight, we seek your partner-

ship. Your support and our dedication will truly make a difference and facilitate a life of dignity, hope, and choice for the marginalised and disadvantaged sections of society. All donations – no matter size – are welcome and will contribute to our work. If you wish to donate, please visit us on our new website www.hihseed.org, where you also can read more about our various activities.

Questions, comments, or contributions to the next newsletter are welcome! Please send me an e-mail as per below and I promise to get back to you.

Yours Sincerely

Kalpana Sankar
Chief Executive Officer

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