

HAND IN HAND/SEED NEWSLETTER NO 2

Dear Friends of Hand in Hand/SEED,

These last months have perhaps been the most intense and hectic so far in Hand in Hand's short history. Much has happened internally with our organisation; some of the key vacancies are now filled or about to be filled, new strategies are being drawn in for example the health field, and we have entered a new area of work in solid waste management. In times of change and turmoil, it is as important as ever not to lose focus of our core vision and reason of existence – to eradicate child labour and reduce poverty.

The Global March against Child Labour

In our Child Labour Elimination and Education Project, much focus is being put on sensitising and mobilising communities around child labour and the importance of education for all. We are now aiming at sensitising all our 150,000 and so Self Help Group (SHG) women on child rights issues as well as making 100-150 panchayats child labour free.

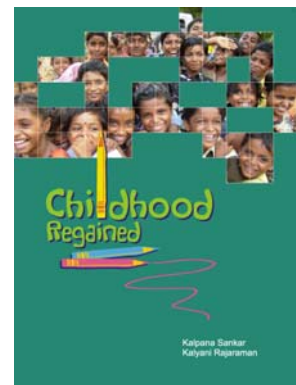
On 3 February, Hand in Hand together with Rotary International District 3230 organised a rally against child labour. Thousands of schoolchildren, college students, and individuals from all over Tamil Nadu came together in a symbolic march to raise our voice against child labour, create awareness about the current laws and

their enforcement, and build a coalition against child labour.



Some of the demonstrators taking part in the Global Walk against Child Labour along the Marina Beach in Chennai.

In conjunction with this event, our Project Director Ms Kalyani Rajaraman and I also released our new book "Childhood Regained". The book explores child labour in India from a macro- as well as from the grassroots level, and puts the Indian situation into a global as well as historical context. It outlines the main problems in the current public debate and in the Indian legislative framework, where the definition of child labour still is limited to work in certain hazardous sectors instead of encompassing every child who is not enrolled in school. The book is avail-



able to download on the Hand in Hand website www.hihseed.org.

Ministerial Inauguration

The Right to Information Act 2005 has as major objective to provide for the right of access to information to all citizens. As a means to facilitate for poor and illiterate people to access information – for example on how to vote, apply for welfare programmes, and register for government schemes – Hand in Hand has opened Citizens' Centres at panchayat level.

A typical centre has an "IT-kiosk" with one to three computers and facilities for printing/copying/scanning/faxing, as well as a small library with books and dailies to encourage reading habits among children and adults. Some of the centres have Internet but connectivity is generally a problem in remote areas. The centres offer popular computer courses that aim at making the younger generation computer literate, tuition for schoolchildren, public debates and get-togethers, and services to SHGs.



A woman using the computer in one of the Citizens' Centres.

Our Citizens' Centre Project has expanded rapidly during the last months and we now have one hundred centres functioning in Kancheepuram District and Thiruvannamalai Districts. Nine of the centres have become self-sustainable and generate revenues to meet all their expenditures.

There is a strong community participation in 95 of the centres, demonstrated by the provision of rent-free government land and buildings.

When the Swedish ship "Götheborg" visited the Chennai harbour, Hand in Hand was there to welcome the visitors. During the celebrations, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Maud Olofsson, together with Indian Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Shri Dayanidhi Maran, inaugurated our hundredth Citizens' Centre. An exact replica of the village centre had been constructed at the five-star hotel Taj Coromandel in Chennai and the inaugural celebrations were attended by Panchayat leader Mr Subramanian and 20 Citizens' Centre instructors.



Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Maud Olofsson, Indian Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Shri Dayanidhi Maran, Hand in Hand CEO Dr Kalpana Sankar, and Mr Percy Barnevik.

Self Help Groups and Microfinance

In our SHG and Microfinance Project, things are developing like never before and we are now able to extend credit plus services such as literacy training, entrepreneurial training, financial skills, and team-building to more than 150,000 SHGs. The newly registered Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) Hand in Hand Microfinance Ltd is expanding its scope of activities and we are expecting the NBFC to be in full operation shortly.

Hand in Hand Fact Box

No of fulltime employees:	1024
No of children enrolled into regular schooling:	6,045
No of SHGs:	12,049
No of SHG women	178,281
No of Citizens' Centres:	100

New Initiatives and Partnerships in Solid Waste Management

Although recent years' fast growth in India has brought about some major positive changes, it is also a severe challenge to the natural environment. Environmental degradation such as contaminated water, sinking groundwater levels, unhealthy soils, and polluted air has become a harsh reality in most parts of India. Noteworthy, a damaged local environment hits the most vulnerable groups of society the hardest as poor and marginalised people lack the resources needed to reduce the negative effects of a degraded environment. One result of a rapid urbanisation, a slowly reducing gap between urban and rural, changing consumption patterns, and a growing population is the problem of waste. The generation of municipal solid waste in India in the year 2047 has been projected to exceed 260 million tons – a number more than five times the present levels.



Waste being dumped outside of Kancheepuram town – a very typical sight in India.

Hand in Hand believes that all development initiatives must be sustainable, not

the least from an environmental perspective. As of February, we have set up a new team that solely will focus on solid waste management. To support the solid waste management initiative, we have also entered into a partnership with EXNORA – an international NGO focusing solely on environmental projects such as solid waste management, wastewater management, tree plantation, and rainwater harvesting.

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 partnership. 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 they 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

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