

Friends of India

June 2006

Our mission

- improve the learning environment and school infrastructure
- motivate women and children to continue learning
- empower women through social development programmes and vocational training

Supporting education at the grass roots

Dear Friends of 'Friends of India'

Already mid-2006 !



My trip to India earlier this year proved to be a very stimulating one, as I was joined by members Alydia Seidell and Sarah Browne. Alydia was with me to visit and photograph projects. Some of her photos will feature in the 2007 FOI Calendar—remember to buy one, or lots. Sarah was there with a view to organizing group visits from Switzerland later on in the year. How about a 10 day tour to familiarise yourself with the projects you are supporting and to discover Tamil Nadu? Watch this space!

Our visit was – as always – packed to bursting with a variety of visits. Schools, with varying needs from toilets to new classrooms. A home for women with HIV/Aids who are learning to embroider table linen (which we will sell at our next bazaar). Unveiling the foundation stones of 2 multi-purpose educational centres – one in Arni and the other in Kovolam. Once completed these centres will provide education and training for thousands of rural women and children. Another exciting moment was meeting a few of our 30 FOI cows you gave as Christmas presents! All had calves and were adorable (see back page). And our collaboration with the Chaîne du Bonheur is bearing fruit. There is news of these and other projects filling this newsletter.

The most lasting memory I hold of this last trip is the incredible energy, self esteem and the joy expressed by the SUEB women (see the photo). They have progressed from being uneducated, often abused and degraded, to self-sufficient, enterprising, confident members of society. FOI has helped them to help themselves. That is all we want to do!

*Thank you for your continued support.
Remember—we need your 2006 membership fee to support FOI's work (see back page!)*



How do we choose? How do we say 'No'?

First a few numbers

Tamil Nadu

Total population	62.4 million
No. of women	31.0 million
Literacy rate of women (men)	65% (82%)
No. of illiterate women	17.7 million
No. of schools in Tamil Nadu	>56'000
% of schools with no teacher	6% (>3,000)
... with no or unusable water/toilets	25-35%
Children <15 not in school	7.5 million

These figures are from various sources, including the 2005 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (www.pratham.org)

FOI has no fear of running out of projects. Every time we visit TN the challenge we face is not finding projects but how to turn them down. Above are the kind of numbers—enormous numbers—that reinforce FOI's resolve to assist women and children in Tamil Nadu. The situation across India is similar, sometimes significantly worse. Thankfully the situation is improving, so maybe the Indian Government's goal of universalization of quality primary education in India by 2010 has a chance of being achieved (*compare this ambitious goal with the UN Millennium Development Goal for 2015 "to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling"*). FOI is contributing to achieving this goal. But sometimes it's not easy to say "No". Fortunately we have



a certain number of 'First Line Filters', in particular our partners SUEB and TNF, which receive proposals and after a review will pass to us ideas that seem to fit the FOI portfolio. But then the FOI executive needs to decide! But how? With a pyramid! Those of you that have recently participated in a FOI event can't have

failed to notice the FOI 'Mission Pyramid'. It illustrates the four aspects against which we judge and focus our selections.

Infrastructure (basic needs): *Water, toilets, walls*

Environment (for learning): *classrooms, teachers' salaries, equipment*

Motivation (for attending school): *Uniforms, nutritional snacks, pens & pencils*

Empowerment (opportunities for women): *Skills, training*

Most FOI projects can be easily mapped to these aspects. Most. There now and then exceptional cases or exceptional circumstances that we respond to as 'one off' opportunities to assist (a 'good' example of that were our steps into the area of disaster relief last year when the tsunami hit some of our communities).

School Projects

(Sponsor: **You?** Take your pick!)

Education in India is divided into preprimary, primary, middle (or intermediate), secondary (or high school), and higher levels.

- Primary school (Classes 1-5) - 6-11y
- Middle (Intermediate) school, (Classes 6-8) - 11-14y
- Secondary (High) school ages (Classes 9-12) - 14-17y

FOI's current emphasis is on primary schools. We work with three partners (SUEB, TNF, & Coastal & Rural Development Trust (CRDT). If you'd like to support a school project, you have two options

Option 1 : Contribute to the 'School Pool'

This is a pool of funds used to cover general school needs. These may include such things as:

- Extra teachers
- Installing partitions in classrooms
- New classrooms
- Materials (Learning and school)
- Girls' toilets

You can tell us if you have a preference for supporting a particular need. Your contribution may be allocated to the needs of a specific school as listed below, or to another.

Option 2 : Support specific schools

The majority (75%) of the 56,000+ TN schools are government schools. Most of the remainder are private schools. FOI supports some of these through its partners.

You can opt to support specific needs in one of these schools:

Paddapai, Primary School (SUEB)

165 children: 80 girls, 85 boys

Needs: Uniforms (10 CHF/uniform); Teaching material (350 CHF); Classrooms to be renovated (1000 CHF); 5 toilets (2750 CHF)

Nookambalayam, Primary School (SUEB)

224 children; 107 girls; 117 boys

Needs: A new building (13,500 CHF), Salary for 3 qualified teachers (65 CHF/teacher/month; Uniforms (10 CHF/uniform); Compound wall (40 CHF/metre)

Jaladianpet, Panchayat Union Elementary School (SUEB)

481 students; girls 223; boys 258

Needs: Blackboard paint (300 CHF); 3 ventilation fans (60 CHF each); 3 table/chair sets (150 CHF each); 2 extra Teachers (65 CHF/teacher/month)

Kolathur, Primary School (CRDT)

110 students

Needs: Repaint in/outside ; Cover outside play area ; Light for Kindergarten; Camper stoves; Levelling of the play ground; Qualified teachers; Uniforms; New blackboard (*Whole project approx. 3,500 CHF*)

Pungkeri, Primary School (CRDT)

50 students

Needs: Qualified teachers; Uniforms; Nutrition snacks; School material (*Approx 2,000 CHF/year*)

Malayangulam, Primary & Middle School (SUEB)

164 students

Needs: Tables and chairs (4000 CHF for each school) (currently 1 chair in the two schools, used by a teacher)

Kunnavakkam, Middle School (SUEB)

121 students

Needs: 1 qualified teacher (65 CHF/month); Tables and chairs (3000 CHF)

Vocation & Guidance Centre for Young Women

(Sponsor: I J Martin & Cie, Geneva; Partner TNF)

It is calculated that in 2005 in TN 2.7% of school-age children weren't placed in school. Across all Classes, the figures are the same—there are 10% more girls out of school than boys. The worst age is middle school age (11-14), when 5% of girls drop out of school (compared with 4% of boys). (Source: ACER report). The mid-teens is a complicated time in a teenagers' life, in India just as in Europe. Being an uneducated girl can be the start of a



Nookambalayam, Primary School



The 7,000 CHF cheque that will make a difference

path of hard work at home, abuse (often sexual abuse) and little future. With little knowledge of basic life skills, like nutrition, and family planning, these girls are at risk. Or were. Now a generous donation of 7'000 CHF from I J Martin & Cie in

Geneva has got a vocation & guidance centre for young women off the ground and functioning. It is a pioneering project, that FOI and TNF hope will pave the way for further centres of the same kind. The young women will be taught basic life skills, and also vocational skills which will give them a chance to progress and make a place for themselves in society. But, once off the ground, this project (and future versions) need to be kept afloat. The I J Martin donation—while generous—will run-out one day. So, we need your support, for this project, and for new such centres.

Kovalam—building a multi-purpose training centre, and helping the community

(Sponsors: Geneva English School, Dutch Reformed Church, Geneva; Partner: CRDT)

FOI was helping coastal communities in Tamil Nadu even before the tsunami struck in 2004. A good example of this is what we continue to provide to the communities of Kovalam, a small fishing village, an hour away from Chennai, under the aegis of the *Coastal & Rural Development Trust*. It is here that *Geneva English School (GES)* are sponsoring a new multipurpose building that will serve not only as a school building, but also as a vocational training centre for women. The foundations and ground floor are already funded thanks to GES. To complete the whole centre 10,000 CHF is still needed.

Kovalam is where our partner Coastal & Rural Development Trust, has been active since 2000—with the support of FOI—through the commitment of Mr. Narayanan. This where the *Dutch Reformed Church of Geneva* provided fishermen affected by the tsunami with 20 new nets.



Kovalam opening ceremony

Arni— A centre for the community

(Sponsor: J-P Cuoni; Partner SUEB)

Another centre — the *SUEB Women & Children Development Centre* — is to be constructed in Arni, a small town approximately 130 km from Chennai once famous for its silk. Here, through the generosity of J-P Cuoni a building plot has been purchased and inaugurated, and on it will be built a multipurpose training block. Work has yet to begin (the photo below is of the ground bought). Once constructed this centre will be supporting women from 17 poor rural villages. Additional sponsors will be needed to equip it and to keep it running.



A space to watch!

The Fishermen's Trust Project

(Partner: Chaîne du Bonheur)

The Fishermen's Trust has been established in Ennore, on the coast north of Chennai, in response to post-Tsunami needs, with the financial assistance of Chaîne du Bonheur ("Swiss Solidarity"). Pam Walsh and Ted Talbot visited the project early in 2006, and met with the Trust project coordinator, some of the fishermen, and members of the village council (the 'Panchayat'), and women from recently established Self Help Groups. There have been challenges to surmount in order to succeed in this project (more information in the next issue) but "despite" it all, the Fishermen's Trust is succeeding. The fact that 140 families have joined the Trust, when they know that only 65 families will be able to benefit directly from the provision of boats, is a tribute to the confidence they have in the a system adopted for financing the boats, etc.

Swiss Solidarity has published an excellent information brochure entitled "One year after the tsunami". It can be downloaded from their web page at website (www.swiss-solidarity.org).

And now, the moment you have been waiting for ...

Have you 'herd' – FOI and microfinance bringing independence to women (and cows to new homes)

(Partner : SUEB)

FOI has handed over more than 30 cows and calves to happy owners in Tamil Nadu. Here is a small selection of the 'FOI Herd' more introductions in a later issue. Cute thought these happy families look, this important programme uses micro-finance as a means to provide access to a resource—in this case cows, but it could be a sewing machine—that will permit a woman to establish a small business, and so bring money into the home, and independence and responsibility into her life. FOI and SUEB support many cases of microfinance; more examples in future newsletters



Mothers & calves happily installed with their new (women) owners



50/50 Finance — your 120 CHF gift together with a 120 CHF micro-finance loan pays for a cow with a calf. Having both calf and cow means immediate productivity and thus a livelihood for a family. And paying with a micro-finance loan is a good and sustainable investment

FOI Membership 2006

Due Now!

Individual membership @ 100 CHF
Couple membership @ 160 CHF

Don't forget. Pleez!

Paying your membership? Want to give a donation?

UBS Bank Account:
IBAN CH68 0024 0240 4399 3140 D
Acct. No. 240-439931.40D

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