



TNF eNEWS

In the service of Tamil Society . . .

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"Almost anything you do will be insignificant,
but
it is very important that you do it"

- Mohandas Gandhi

Seminar on “e-Governance for Panchayat Presidents” at TNF Centre, Kilpauk, Chennai – 600 010

TNF which has been playing a proactive role in taking ICT to the masses had organized a seminar on e-Governance for Panchayat Presidents on 5 June 06 at TNF Centre. Mr. P. Chandrasekaran, Secretary, TNF Inc. TN Chapter welcomed the invitees and guests.

Dr. A.M. Swaminathan, Trustee, TNF Inc. TN Chapter explained the importance of “e-Governance for Panchayat presidents”. He said that Panchayat presidents should become computer literates as e-governance would play a major role in making Panchayat operations transparent and efficient. He went on and said that to establish e-Governance, Government has provided systems to all the Panchayats in Tamilnadu.

Mr. A.K. Venkatasubramanian, Trustee, TNF Inc. TN Chapter in his key note address exhorted the Panchayat Presidents to computerize their operations and said that e-Governance as a Fair governance, Good governance and Honest governance and that the technology now offered an excellent opportunity to interact with Government and other agencies through email, interactive website etc. However, it is disappointing to note that only a few among over 12,000 Panchayats are making use of computers, he lamented.





Dr. V. Sankaranarayanan, Director, Tamil Virtual University who has been associated with Tamilnadu Foundation for more than a decade lauded the efforts by TNF in taking technology to the masses. He said computerizing the functions of Panchayats would help in speedy implementation of welfare schemes in rural areas.

An impressive e-Governance presentation was made by Mr. R. Panchavarnam, Chairman, Panruti Municipality, with the help of excellent software developed by Panruti Municipality. They have successfully established an e-Governance setup in the municipality. He also assured that he will assist other interested Panchayats in establishing similar setup.

Mr. K. Srinivasa Raghavan, Technical Director, National Informatics Centre, Chennai made a wonderful presentation on "ENRICH and NREG scheme. He explained how easily a Panchayat website could be hosted. He went to state that NIC could train Panchayat Presidents and their staff in creating websites for them using the template developed by NIC.



Mr. P. Chandrasekaran, Secretary, TNF Inc. TN Chapter explained to the participants that establishing facilities for e-Governance is a must. He added that e-Governance could succeed only when whole hearted support from of all levels of Government is made available. He said that TNF is willing to help some of the interested Panchayats in the creation, hosting, updating the digitized information in websites.

Reactions from Panchayat presidents, NGOs and other invitees was positive and many of them during open house session, expressed their willingness to establish an e-Governance setup and requested TNF to train the Panchayat staff, in Computers, internet operations, designing the Panchayat website, updating the website etc.

The participants of the seminar praised the Tamilnadu Foundation for organizing such an informative workshop.

- Kavitha S



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Inauguration of New Building for TDTA Middle School

Moovirundhali an observe village like anyother village in rural Tamilnadu wore a festive look on Tuesday the 6th June 2006. There were good reasons to celebrate. Moovirundhali's son of the soil who won lots of fame and name not only for himself but also for the village was visiting the village. It was none other than the benevolent donor Mr. Paul C. Pandian who along with his family members donated well over Rs. 3.3 million for the construction of totally a new TDTA Middle School Building as the old one was in a totally dilapidated condition and there was no space for a play ground etc. The new school building was built in memory of Paul C. Pandian's parents.



One wonders if the name Paul Pandian means benevolent donor! One retired Government official by name Mr. Paul Pandian has donated nearly 1.5 acres of land for the construction of new Building.



During the simple function, the new building was dedicated to the children of Moovirundali and the neighboring villages. While thanking him for his liberal contribution and benevolent donations, Mr. Paul C. Pandian was flooded with request for support to establish computer centre in the school,

to upgrade the school into High School and later as Higher Secondary School. Unassuming Mr. Paul C. Pandian promised to look into their requests and said that he would do his best to help the children and requested all the parents to see that no child drops out of the school and encourage the children to excel in their studies to have a bright future.

- P. Chandrasekaran.



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Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.

- Thomas A. Edison

Promise at Perumbakkam

Sophie Lewis

(voluntary education worker, writer and theatre practitioner
with TNF in Chennai, Jun-Aug 2006)

Atmospheric pressure was mounting as the TNF car made its long and tiresome way from HQs on Taylor's Road to Perumbakkam, two hours' south. By the time we arrived at the centre due to be inaugurated, the elements were ready to let loose. Fat drops of rain came splashing from the sky, and electricity seemed to fizzle in the air. As I tried to say in my excited little speech to the enrolled women at the site - the weather was heralding a significant feminist victory!

A pleasant, open white building stood there for me to appraise for the first time, three days used, well-kept and promising, and taped over with the ceremonial ribbon. Its porch was populated at present by many, many female human beings. It was the **TNF - I. J. Martin & Co Vocational Training and Guidance Centre**, whose patron's funding came through *Friends of India*, the foundation that sent me here.



Clapping, smiling, welcoming, and the cutting, by TNF's Secretary, of the entrance ribbon... Having then stepped inside, following the general hubbub of settling-down, I was confronted with a daunting display of



rural Indian femininity. Fifty women or so sat on the ground in front of me, which meant about fifty appraising minds, a hundred bright-whited eyes, and a field of beautiful cloth forming orderly strokes of colour as the sari sashes, all parallel to each

other, swept over their left shoulders.

Thank goodness I didn't have to speak first, or for long. These women didn't need telling: *money has come from far away, from Geneva, where I come from, so don't let us down.* One glance at them and you know that they won't. *I ask you all to treat this place with the pride you'd treat your home* - but look, they are, already, coming forth with tender coconuts for us to sip, and cooperating with each other to keep the basic desk areas tidy. *Education is something so desirable* - preaching to the converted.

I was deeply impressed. At Perumbakkam there are computers, there are typewriters, there are sewing machines, chairs, tables, fans, lights, and storage compartments. It is clean and spacious. I warmly congratulate the architects of this project, and am persuaded that there need to be many more of the same ilk around the area.



Under one woman, Mrs E. Ruby's admirable care, they now have the opportunity to acquire skills that could earn them a decent niche in the workplace, skills which, unfortunately, are still more readily transmitted to boys and young men in this country, than to members of the world's majority, the female sex.



The project originated, as I understood it, in a shed, in the form of Ruby, a handful of girls, and a typewriter. (Or something on a similar scale). To see it all balloon this way must be a source of great pride for the new mistress of Perumbakkam.

Some of her wards and pupils are only thirteen years old (and very self-confident). Others are over sixty, somewhat toothless, but full of enthusiasm. The young have come for computer skills; the elder, for



the tailoring. I ask them why they're here - invariably, *"I want to learn how"*. It is striking that it is never phrased *"I want to be able to earn money"* or *"I want a job"*. There seems to be, in Mrs Ruby's wards, a genuine learning curiosity.

Chandrasekaran spoke with artless magnanimity and great friendliness. Trust me, this is true, and I understood nothing of the content! Well,

not quite nothing - the phrases *Friends of India*, *career-counselling*, *typewriting*, and finally my name, *Sophie Lewis*, punctuated the Tamil he was speaking.

I wrote out a few notes on paper I tore out of my scrapbook, and they were heartfelt. *Dear ladies of Perumbakkam, best of luck with your learning...* that I was jealous not to

be able to attend the centre myself; that it had been worth coming so far; my contact details; and some comments about their enthusiasm. I was not prepared for what



happened with those notes! In a flash, my words were typed out of one of the typewriters, and flourished under my nose again, with the injunction, "please sign". If that can be done by rural girls after only three days of training, well, I don't know what more proof is required for one to invest complete support in the venture of TNF and I.J.Martin, as it has turned out.

I enjoyed speaking to the ladies very much, and will, I hope, be able to take a few of them up on their generous offers of 'dinner at my home' over the course of the coming weeks. For I will definitely be returning. There is energy, smartness and humility at Perumbakkam which would serve as an excellent behavioural model for many a Swiss school. I tried, with English, gestures, and expression, to convey that. I thanked them for the coconut. And with pride I delivered my phrase (which is

a painstaking Pamela Walsh favourite while she's here): *ungul varaverppukku mika nandri*. Yes! Thank you, Tamil Nadu, and Perumbakkam especially, for your hospitality, and for showing me so much.

S.A.L.



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It is well to give when asked,
but it is better to give unasked, through understanding.

- Kahlil Gibran

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TNF - Educational Loan Project

Every year hundreds of deserving students, particularly those with poor family background coming from rural areas are not able to pursue higher education of their choice due financial constraints. Government of India with all its good intention has advised all the Nationalized Banks to extend financial assistance to pursue higher education without insisting on collateral security (which most of the rural parents are not able to offer). Despite many announcements by Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India, Reserve Bank of India, Indian Bank Association and the Corporate Offices of respective Nationalized Banks, the ground reality is just the opposite and by and large the Branch Managers are reluctant to grant Educational loans without full collateral security. But, invariably the poor students are not able to offer collateral security to the satisfaction of the Branch Manager and hence they are not able to pursue higher education.

Many benevolent donors have come forward to help some of the poor students from their villages, their Districts etc. Under the 'TNF Educational Loan Project' we may encourage the donors to donate the amount to Tamilnadu Foundation so that the amount would be retained in a Fixed Deposit and the same may be offered to the Bank as security for the Educational loan.

We are requesting the Branch Managers to seek all the information and whatever security that the parents could offer and GRANT Educational loans to the students recommended by the Donor and Tamilnadu Foundation. We from TNF Inc TN chapter will keep a close

follow up on the progress of the students and also on the loan repayment.

We will insist on the parents to

1. Remit a specified amount which they could manage every month towards the loan account.
2. Apply for Government scholarship if the students are eligible and remit the entire scholarship amount towards the Educational loan and
3. Insist on the students to pay minimum of 50% of their salary once they are employed. This way we hope that the student would be able to clear the Bank loan within 2 years of completing their graduate program.

This way a specific amount of donation would be able to help many deserving students to get Bank Loan. Since, we are backing up the Educational Loan with security of Fixed Deposit (which may not be revealed to the loan applicants) the Banks will find it comfortable to grant the loan after obtaining whatever security the parents are able to provide.

Under phase I, it is proposed to create a corpus of Rs.20 lakhs in the next 2 to 3 years and in Phase II another Rs.30 lakhs in the next five years and under Phase III create additional corpus of Rs.50 lakhs taking the total deposit to Rs.10 million in the next eight years.

We appeal to all benevolent donors who want to support this 'TNF – Educational Loan Project' to contribute liberally for creating the above corpus. Donors may recommend the names of deserving students along with their donation to Tamilnadu Foundation.

- P. Chandrasekaran

Help to RHADA

Thanks to the efficient and transparent help delivery system in operation at TNF Inc. TN Chapter and thanks to periodic reporting of status of application and utilization of donations to the respective donors, we have been receiving regularly donations from TNF members and well wishers from Switzerland. These, donations were followed with donations from Canada and Singapore to support many of our on going projects.



Latest to join the list of foreign donors is Associaco Laia Mendoza a charitable organization from Barcelona, Spain. Mr. Lluís Compte, representing ALM visited TNF Centre couple of months ago and made an indepth study of the projects of TNF, its operations and the help delivery system. Happy with TNF Inc. TN Chapter, he recommended to his organization to carryout projects through TNF and suggested to transfer necessary funds to TNF Inc. TN Chapter account.

We have already received US \$ 4900, US \$ 5080 and € 5965 to support some of ALM's Projects in Vedanthangal, Madurantagam etc. in Kancheepuram District.

On 19 May 06, PC and Mr. Lluis Compte and Mr. K. Thangavelu of SCI visited chithamoor and other neighboring villages which are being serviced by a local charitable organization RHADA (Rural Harijan Agricultural Development Association)

The Tribal children in and around chithamoor village need quite some help to pursue their studies and to prevent them from dropping out of school.

Mr. Lluis compte was kind enough to recommend to ALM to grant nearly Rs. 120,000/- to help the Tribals and other poor children in these villages. Shortly the children will have uniforms, Books, Notebooks, Geometry Boxes etc. and it is hoped that the parents will keep their promise of sending the children regularly to the school.



- P. Chandrasekaran.