



**FRANCO-INDIAN RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT (Project FIR)**  
**Undertaken by**  
**Association Un-Ami (France)/ Trust Friend-in-need (F.I.N., India)**

**Achievements of the first year April 2005-July 2006**

*This report was compiled in Sep 2006*

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### **Introduction**

Moved by the extreme devastation caused by the Tsunami, people in India, as well as those from other parts of the world, are coming forward to help the afflicted regions in reconstruction. The residents of Grenoble and its suburbs in France, wanted to participate in this world-wide effort. In this context, this project was initiated by Mrs. (Dr.) Shyama V. Ramani, the President of the Franco-Indian Association of Grenoble, France (Ganga-Isere) in January 2005.

During the first year, no reconstruction work undertaken as there were enormous coordination problems in the aftermath of the Tsunami with aid coming from all parts of the world and with do-gooders running amuck in afflicted areas. Though, such outpouring of help was most heart warming, there were also wastage of resources and duplication of efforts because it wasn't clear who needed what or who was doing what.

In this context, Shyama worked more on building a funds base for the project, identifying villages that really needed help, locating credible partners and formulating a developmental project. In this effort she was supported by her family (in both France and India), her friends in France and her students, all of whom gave her their time generously. **The funds gathered were entirely managed by the students of Association S.O.S. of the Ecole Superieure de Commerce de Grenoble (Grenoble Business School).**

A variety of NGO partners were examined and rejected for the reason that they were not willing to accept all of the three conditions given above. Finally, one French association (I.N.D.E.S.) and

an Indian NGO (SCOPE) with the informal collaboration of an Auroville organization (AuroAnnam).

Then three zones were identified as being the target areas for the initiation of our development work :

- The dalit zone of the Chinna Mudaliyar Chavady (CMC) in the Villupuram district near Pondicherry.
- The dalit zone of the Periya Mudaliyar Chavady (PMC) in the Villupuram district near Pondicherry.
- The fishermen village of Kameshwaram in the Nagapattinam district.

**It was found that the PMC and CMC needed help because they were zones with a reputation for social conflict so that they were marginalized in the sense that though the government invested in them as in other places, this was dissipated among the different power groups. In addition, PMC and CMC are interesting as they enjoy aid from a wide variety of small groups from Europe and the USA, along with money and alcohol doled out to them by local political parties just before elections, but the social conflicts continue and no dynamic local groups seem to have emerged taking a lead in the initiation of developmental projects. For instance, there are still basic problems of access to water, hygiene and sanitation.**

**Kameshwaram was found to be marginalized because it was an isolated village in the Nagapattinam coast. However, it is a united community of fishermen living in peace with farmers and merchants, each being of a different caste and religion. They show extreme motivation for involving themselves in a development process and even mentioned that the Tsunami has been good to them, for otherwise people like us would never be reaching out to help isolated communities like theirs.**

A baseline socio-economic survey was carried out in all villages. In Kameshwaram, with SCOPE, it was decided that a series of exposure trips would be organized to determine better the local needs and build social trust. It also became clear that there were problems of divergence of interests in the case of PMC and CMC with INDES, as their efforts were focused on finding financial support their education centre, while our objective was to initiate developmental projects.

### **1. Exposure Trip for women: From Kameshwaram to Tiruchi (Jan 2006)**

Under the aegis of Project FIR, our collaborator NGO SCOPE organized an exposure visit for 15 fisherwomen from Kameshwaram (Tamil Nadu) to the Srimathi Indira Gandhi College in Tiruchirapalli. The students of the college, the professors and the women from Kameshwaram had heart-to-heart emotional exchanges on the problems faced by each group and the opportunities available to each group. Thereafter they were also taken around to the Rock Fort

temple, the most famous landmark of Tiruchi terminating one of the most exciting days of their lives, according to the participants.



**Result of Mission:** The exposure trip involving mothers and daughters was a great hit because it gave them an opportunity that they had never had before to interact with women outside of the village and observe the opportunities available to attain financial independence. Just this simple exposure made them feel more empowered. It also established a foundation for trust. Thus, when discussions were held later on what they wanted, toilets or income generating projects, they were able to evaluate the two options. They first want toilets and once there is complete toilet coverage, the next step will be to examine how income generation can be improved, with special focus on the competencies of the women keeping in mind the constraint that they cannot leave the village for work.

## 2. Creation of Association Un-Ami in France (Feb 2006)



As the project became clearer, it was evident that the activities had to be centralized and managed by a team. For this purpose Association Un-Ami was created in Reims with Shyama V. Ramani as President, Christine Honoré as s Vice President and Maryse Gottschalk as Secretary.

on photo (left to left) :  
Maryse, Christine and Shyama

### 3. Farmer's Exposure Visit to a public agricultural extension centre KVK, Sikkal (May 2006)

Under the aegis of Project FIR, our collaborator NGO SCOPE organized an exposure visit to the Agricultural Extension centre of the Indian Central Government (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) in Sikkal, which is 5 kms away from the town of Nagapattinam. On May 30<sup>th</sup> 2006, 26 women and 4 men of Kameshwaram village (B Zone) from the farming community were taken to Sikkal.



**Result of Mission:** The result of this exposure was to initiate the adoption of maize by five farmers. The seeds were given free by the research centre in a program to initiate the growing of new crops in this region. This is an experiment and the results of the integration of this new crop will determine whether the adoption of this crop, which has never been grown before in this region, can be extended.

### 4. Exposure Visit to Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute – (June 2006)

Under the aegis of Project FIR, our collaborator NGO SCOPE organized an exposure visit for 15 people from Kameshwaram (Tamil Nadu), including 5 fishermen and 10 fisherwomen, to the renowned **Central Fisheries Technology, and Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, (CIFT) Cochin** (in Kerala) on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2006. They were exposed to a variety of fish processing methods, fishing equipment and a solar dryer.



**Result of Mission:** After reflecting on the various innovations that they had been exposed to, the participants of this mission from Kameshwaram concluded that a **solar dryer would be the innovation that would help them the most** given their current situation.

#### 5. Creation of Trust Friend-in-Need (F.I.N.) (June 2006)



By January 2006, the project had also attracted a sizeable Indian base and in order to mobilize and manage the funds gathered from the Indian side, it was evident that a sister organization in India was necessary. For this purpose the Trust F.I.N. or Friend-in-Need was created at Tiruchirapalli in June 2006 with Shyama V. Ramani as Founder Trustee and Raji Srikant, Annappoorna Venkataraman, V.Vaijyanthi and V.Ganapathy as Trustees.

On photo, left to right :  
Vaijyanthi, Shyama, Subburaman,  
Shanthy, Annappoorna et Raji.

#### 6. Construction of a Fish Market Yard (Apr-Jul 2006)

The first base-line socio-economic survey and discussions with the people of Kameshwaram as well as the village government or Panchayat revealed a “Fish market yard” to be the first need of the fishermen. At that time the fish was being spread over the sand, and this reduced the quality

and hence the price of the fish. The fish yard has been completed successfully in July 2006 and it has generated both revenue and employment.

In return for the construction of the fish-market yard, the village panchayat signed a memorandum of understanding that a roof would be built by the villagers, the market place would be maintained by the villagers and a needy person (preferably a woman) would be employed to keep it clean.



**Result of Action:** The construction of the market place for fish can be considered a success for :

- ⇒ it has increased the prices at which fish are sold; increasing the revenue.
- ⇒ it has increased the quantity of fish which are being sold (the catch is the same but the amount of clean fish has increased due to water pump); increasing the revenue.
- ⇒ it has created employment for a caretaker; increasing the revenue.
- ⇒ it has increased the sales of other products such as vegetables since now there is a clearly defined market place; increasing the revenue.
- ⇒ it has increased welfare, as the elderly who sit to sell side products such as vegetables can sit in the shade.



**Extension requested by fishermen:** In fact, the traffic in the fish market yard has increased so much, that clearly a second fish market place is necessary to provide enough space and water for the trading of fish in Kameshwaram under hygienic and adequate conditions.

### 7. Construction of 100 Ecosanitary Toilets in Kameshwaram (July-Oct 2006)

A hundred eco-san toilets are gradually being constructed in the village of Kameshwaram. Eco-san toilets are those where there are two separate holes for urinating and passing bowels.

They are also dry toilets, in the sense that instead of using water, ashes are thrown over solid wastes to convert them into compost.

They are particularly adapted to developing countries and even more so, to regions with high water levels such as coastal regions.



Kameshwaram was a village without any toilet before project FIR.

**Result of Mission:** Now in this first phase 100 toilets are being built and we hope that over the coming 3 years, we can find enough funds to ensure complete coverage, which would mean building about 300 more



### 8. Sending three French students to Pondicherry (July-August 2006)

Three student volunteers from France went to Pondicherry (using their own funds) with Association Un-Ami taking care of all the logistics and paying for their boarding and lodging in Pondicherry.

1. Julie Ferrand (University Paris 1)
2. Laure Deutsch-Hollingworth (University of Bordeaux)
3. Aude Nowak ( Ecole Normale Cachan)

**Result of Mission:** They did a case study of the hygiene and sanitation and water access problems present at PMC and CMC.

**\*\*\*Budget Details are available on request. Please write to [shyama\\_ramani@yahoo.com](mailto:shyama_ramani@yahoo.com)**