

.....ACHIEVEMENTS SEP 2006-SEP 2007.....

1. Completion of 250 Ecosan toilets in Kameshwaram

In the village of Kameshwaram, 50% of the 500 families now have an Ecosan* toilet in their homes, thanks to the direct and indirect participation of FINT or Friends-in-Need Trust, created to implement project FIR. This is really a great achievement considering the fact that there were no toilets in Kameshwaram before the project was initiated. The other sponsors of the toilet construction are the Tamil Nadu government agency DRDA, the international agency UNICEF and the villagers themselves. All the toilets have been built by our NGO partner Trust SCOPE of Trichy.



<http://www.disasterwatch.net/Tsunami%20Update/TsunamiUpdate.pdf>

*Recall that eco-sanitary or ecosan toilets are those, where there is a separation of urine and faeces, with both being recycled and transformed into compost (urine is used directly & solid waste after an year). All these toilets function with no bad smell or infestation by flying insects.



2. Installation of Ecosan toilets in a school in Kameshwaram

One of the private schools in Kameshwaram called St Sebastian has attained celebrity status by becoming the first school in India with eco-sanitary toilets. Those toilets have been completely financed by the student Association of the Grenoble School of Business, SOS (France) thanks to the dedicated efforts of Antonin BENYACAR and Annabelle DIDIER.

They are II Yr MBA students, who have been in Trichy since September on a French regional scholarship. Their excellent documentation of the evolution of the project has greatly contributed to its success and they are going to be missed very much by all of us as they have recently returned to France. These ecosanitary toilets were also constructed by our NGO partner, SCOPE. Please click on the links below to get details of this magnificent transformation.

http://project-fir-tsunami.org/english/Presentation_SCHOOL_TOILETS_SOS.ppt

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/05/30/stories/2007053012170300.htm>

An ECOSAN FESTIVAL IN KAMESHWARAM

These two events (the completion of 250 toilets for the families and ecosanitary toilets for the school) were celebrated for an entire week (1st June to 7th June) during an “Ecosan Toilet” festival organized by the NGO SCOPE in the village. There were games, prizes, street theatre, local musicians and dancers followed by convivial meals. Several Indian newspapers wrote of this event. Click here for reports from “The Hindu”.

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/06/10/stories/2007061007980300.htm>



This festival demonstrated clearly that eco-sanitary toilets are viable, reliable, and a good solution for the lack of toilets in rural India. This event also brought people from local governments to Kameshwaram; and even some Parliament members from New Delhi.

3. Research papers on factors that influence the utilization of ecosan, the emergence of the market for ecosan and the rationality of NGOs

Antonin and Annabelle interviewed most of the families who had invested in toilets in collaboration with students from the Bharathi Dasan University in Trichy. Their study, which includes details on the nature of the use of toilets by the villages, reveals that while 90% of the families are using these ecosan toilets, there are disparities between family members.

Indeed, babies or children under 5 years of age usually do it on the floor; elderly people can't bend down on the Indian-style toilets. But the group which is the most problematic is the set



including men from 15 to 45 years of age, who would rather relieve themselves on the beach than use the toilets. Apparently, inducing men to use toilets in rural areas is a challenge faced by all agencies proposing toilets! Antonin, Annabelle and I are transforming their research and observations into scientific articles in collaboration with Sangeeta Venkatesh.

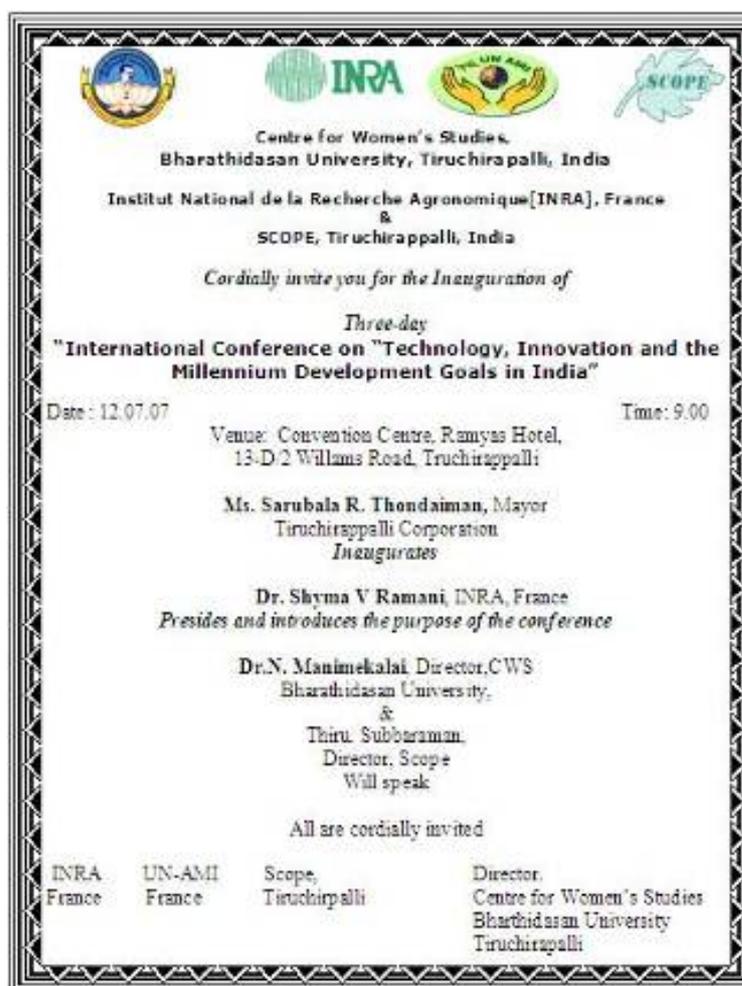
Furthermore, Vivekananda Mukherjee, an economist and Reader at JADHAVPUR University, Calcutta is in Paris having obtained the HERMES Fellowship from the French government. We are working on the role and rationality of NGOs and government policy in the context of a market economy.

4. Organization of an International conference

Donors may recall that we had two goals when we started this project 2.5 years back: initiation of actions for sustainable development in Kameshwaram and creation of Franco-Indian networks through academic and cultural activities. Up to now, the cultural exchange projects have been too ambitious a goal for us to achieve.

However, the academic exchanges have worked well. The latest achievement in this line was the international conference that I organized in Trichy with the financial support of INRA and the wonderful collaboration of Dr. Manimekalai of Bharathi Dasan University and Mr. Subburaman and Mr. Ganapathy of Scope, our partner in the FIR project.

The conference was on “The Role of Technology and Innovation in attaining the Millennium Development Goals of food security, health and environmental security”. The conference was the first of its kind in India, bringing academics, NGOs, policy makers, firms and funding agencies together to discuss strategies in a spirit of cooperation and come up with a set of ideas to pursue further. There were about 106 participants. The program and the presentations can be found on our website



The three day conference ended with a visit to the village of Kameshwaram to cheer for a **toilet beauty contest!**

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/07/13/stories/2007071358480300.htm>

5. Organization of India's first toilet beauty contest!

In order to induce families to use toilets and not close them up to be used as rooms or rent it out, the usual practice is to tie investment in toilet construction to a zero percent interest loan in the post-construction phase, so that usage of toilets is tied to a livelihood investment project, which completely covers the initial investment in toilet construction. With this incentive mechanism, accepting to invest in toilets gives beneficiaries the opportunity to obtain a loan at 0% interest rate.

We decided not to do this because it would have really added to the costs and would not have revealed the motivation to use toilets. I thought of another way, which at first surprised our NGO partner SCOPE, but then was accepted and most enthusiastically and efficiently implemented by them: **A toilet beauty contest!** And how does this work? The rules are the following: it's only open to families in which the men use the toilets, and they are given 6 months to prepare. Prizes are given for the following: the nicest garden around the toilet, the best outside innovation/decoration, and the best inside innovation/decoration. For each category, three prizes are given to the winning families: a first prize of 5,000 Rupees, a second of 2,500 Rupees and a third prize of 1,000 Rupees.



The judges: Gita Balakrishnan, Malavika Ramanujan and Sangeeta Venkatesh (left to right)



Our panel of judges shown on left comprised of architects (Gita and Malavika) and writer-consultant (Sangeeta) drawn from our donors, who braved the heat on the hottest day of the summer in Kameshwaram (13th July) to visit the first batch of 100 toilets. They judged the 71 toilet contestants on the basis of a set of criteria covering state of hygiene, maintenance and home and garden innovations.

Moreover, a participation prize of a kudam or a vessel to store water was given to the other participating families as a consolation prize. *Mr. Subburaman and Mr. Ganapathy insisted that a consolation prize be given because village communities are bound by a collective spirit which must be preserved while initiating any action that leads to different outcomes for the villagers.* This proved to be a precious piece of advice and everyone returned home content and *if the participation rate is taken as an indicator of toilet use by men, then we have managed to induce 71% rate of toilet utilization by men through this contest....a record in rural India!*



Left hand side: Winner of best outside decoration Mrs Saroj PaulRaj.

Right hand side: Winner of best home innovation inside (he had put shelves, mirror etc.) R.Nagappan.

Winner of the best garden: Mrs. Vedavalli



Many thanks to our Indian donors who financed the main toilet contest prizes. The kudams or consolation prizes were financed Mrs. Véronique POIRIER, who organized and cooked an enormous Indian meal for all the teachers and the parents of St.Joseph school in Grenoble, France, to raise funds for the kudams. On the left is Mr. Subburaman of SCOPE with some of the participants of the contest.

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/07/15/stories/2007071550890200.htm>

<http://www.indianexpress.com/printerFriendly/204454.html>

6. Installation of DEWATS waste water treatment system in school in PMC (Periya Mudaliyar Chavady)



Though we had targeted the dalit zones of the villages of Periya Mudaliyar Chavady (PMC) and Chinna Mudaliyar Chavady as areas for the improvement of sanitation, we never got off the ground for lack of an appropriate partner who had the same interests as we did. Finally, we got off to a start this year by repairing a set of toilets in a public school of PMC. There were a set of six toilets in the school which had been closed down since ten years due to lack of personnel to clean it. The septic tank was cleaned and removed and in its place, a series of septic tanks forming a DEWATS system of decentralized waste management developed by the organization called CSR from Auroville was installed.

Our partners in this action were Eco-Pro, Auroville and the Panchayat Union Middle School, Periyamudaliyar Chavady. The construction of DEWATS was overseen by Eco-Pro and financed mainly by Association Un-Ami. This time the toilets are being maintained by the students and the teachers.

The “*reciprocity*” clause drawn up and duly signed by PMC School Authorities ensures the constant involvement of students and school teachers in the project. Mixed groups consisting of both boys and girls are expected to undertake the sweeping of the area in front of the school and will be responsible for the collection of rubbish to be put in the pits. A garbage bin, which will be decorated every year by the students, will be kept in every class room and students are supposed to deposit all recyclable rubbish (paper, plastic etc.) in this bin only.

7. Obtaining a subvention for the construction of more Ecosan and vermicompostage training and installation in Kameshwaram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Government of France and The ‘Gilde Europeen Du Raid’.

The Guild was created in 1967 to support individual and collective (of Trusts like ours) initiatives that answered to the spirit of adventure and solidarity between France and countries of the South and East. It is supported by the French Government.



Our project written by Antonin Benyacar, Annabelle Didier and myself for the construction of 100 Ecosan toilets and vermicompostage was one of the 15 projects to be chosen among more than 100 projects submitted to the Gilde this year. We have been granted 6000 Euros.



These 100 ecosan will be the first for the fishermen community of Kameshwaram. So far all of the Ecosan built have been for the farmers.

Now all of the damaged huts of the fisherfolk have been rebuilt as solid houses by KOVAI, a trust formed of industrialists from the town of Coimbatore. However, none of these houses are equipped with toilets or bathrooms! As part of the reciprocity clause in return for contributing to the financing of the ecosan toilets, the fishermen will be required to dump the organic waste generated in their homes, into one of several vermicompostage pits that will be built along the four borders of their housing compound, a first step in waste management that we want to initiate in Kameshwaram.

8. Construction of the first Toilet-cum-Bathroom complex for a rural Panchayat in India: And we've done it in Kameshwaram.

Panchayat offices are one of the most important motors of change in rural India. Most panchayat offices in poor zones are not equipped with sufficient toilets or bathrooms and Kameshwaram is no exception to this rule. The panchayat has three staff and in addition receives scores of visitors every month (local residents, residents and officials of other villages, district officials etc.). To serve their needs, the panchayat office has one pit latrine, which often becomes dysfunctional during the rainy season. Thus, an environmental friendly toilet-bath complex or TBC serves an essential and crying need of the Kameshwaram panchayat, while demonstrating a technology that causes no damage to the environment and can be maintained with least recourse to public funding.



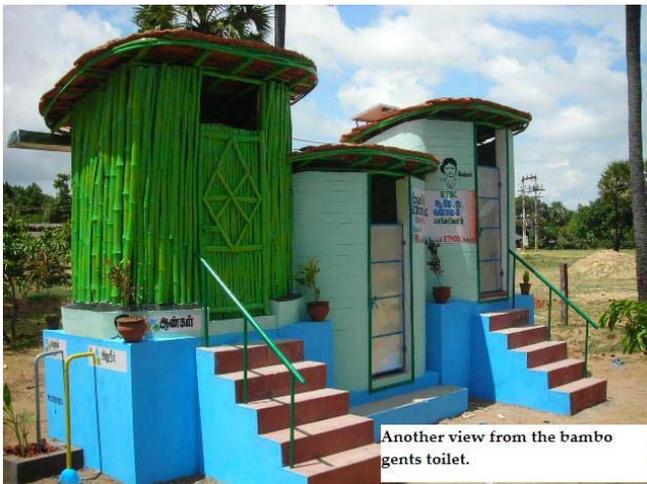
Village Panchayat Members discussing with SCOPE staff and Ward councillors and NIT Students



In a unique collaboration between between Gita Balakrishnan, architect of Ethos (Calcutta), M.Subburaman, Eco-san expert of SCOPE and two students of architecture of the “National Institute of Technology” (NIT, Trichy) Ashish Bhuvan (picture on left) and Vivekanand Tiwari (picture on right), with support from the faculty of the architecture



department of NIT, Trichy, India's first **Toilet cum Bathroom Complex or TBC** was designed by the students and SCOPE faculty with feedback from Gita and myself.



Another view from the bamboo gents toilet.

The highlights of the Designer toilet are as follows. It is an Eco-friendly Toilet Bathroom Complex (ETBC) with Rain-Water-Harvesting (RWH) and Solar energy facility. The bathroom has RWH facility. Water is collected in all three tiled roofs and drained into two tanks inside the bathroom. The bathroom is provided with towel and soap stand. The men's toilet has bamboo walls and support for roof and contains ceramic ecosan toilet pans. The women's toilet has brick walls and superstructure and contains fibre-reinforced plastic pans. The solar panel fixed on the

roof of the women's toilet, supplies power to light the solar in the toilets, and the bathroom for about 3-4 hours. Hand Railings are provided to users, to climb up the steps. A kitchen garden is being raised behind the toilet complex and will use the compost created in the ecosan toilets. It will be maintained by Kameshwaram Panchayat.

Shyama V. Ramani; Oct 30, 2007