



Parivartan

- AID-Bay Area Newsletter -



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Thanal shows the way – Zero Waste Kovalam

Time and again, NGOs working with environmental issues are faced with questions like – How to reach the masses? How to give alternate solutions? Here is a story that answers these questions.

Thanal(www.thanal.org) along with Green Peace (www.greenpeace.org) and Equations - Bangalore launched a campaign against an incinerator proposal for managing waste by the Department of Tourism in Kovalam in 1999. This later became the Zero Waste Kovalam (ZWK) movement.

In the late 90s Kovalam – a famous tourist destination in Kerala faced an unprecedented problem – Tourism was on the decline; garbage dumps were found all along the beach; the beach was not safe. Meanwhile the water bodies around Kovalam were getting polluted. Water levels in wells were going down. The hotels operating along the beach bought water in huge tanker lorries which reduced the water level even more. Though Kovalam was named as one of the top tourist destinations, life for the villagers did not change much – they were still dependent on stone crushing, daily wage jobs and marginal farms.

It was time for introspection on the Waste Management of Kovalam. Thanal took up the challenge. It did a survey on the waste generated every day

and found that the waste generated was only 3 tons as against the 25 tons that was claimed. The Tourism Dept shelved its proposal for the giant 25 ton incinerator. The idea of ZWK was then born.

ZWK is a concept to tackle the issue of waste management and resource utilization in a manner that is socially just, environmentally healthy and economically beneficial to the local community. ZWK has the Tourism Dept, local Panchayat, the Hoteliers Association and the local people as the main stake holders.

A Zero Waste Center has been setup as the hub for all training and innovation; a place where local products are displayed and sold. Bio-gas plants have been setup to convert the bio-decayable waste into fuel to generate electricity. A resource recovery park has been setup to store the non-biodegradable waste before it is sent to recycling facilities. It also serves as a ‘storage place’ for toxic waste so it could be used later while campaigning for extended manufacturer’s responsibility to take back the products.

Thanal knew a mere campaign would not help to sustain ZWK. So it started various programs that were economically beneficial to the local community. It introduced organic farming to women

groups to make the land toxic free, consulted scientists to come up with organic remedies to pests and started organic bazaars to sell their products.

Training on using coconut shell products, paper bags and tailor waste was started to replace their plastic counterparts, thus reducing non bio-decayable waste. BDSP (Business Development and Support Program) was launched to market these products. More small-scale industries are being planned. An awareness program has also been launched in 23 schools; children are taught basic ecology, bird watching and to make basic paper products. Our chapter has been supporting Thanal in running the training programs.

As a result of all this, instead of a giant incinerator polluting the environment with one person operating it, what we see is

- 100% diversion of bio-degradable discards.
- 90% recycling of non-biodegradable discards.
- 104 new jobs in the community.
- 2 Small Scale Industrial Units with more planned..
- Significant reduction in plastic bottles.

In January, ZWK won the ‘Most Innovative Project in Tourism’ award at the Tourism week Celebrations in New Delhi for the year 2003. A well deserved award indeed!

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“Whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it is most important that you do it” - Mahatma Gandhi

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Make a real difference



AID has been supporting the Hundred Block Plan aimed at improving child and women's health working with Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF) in Tamil Nadu (TN) and Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS) in Bihar. The initial funding was provided from June 2002 to May 2004. The program has been successfully implemented; AID-India will send us a detailed report. Meanwhile, AID-India has been discussing with TNSF and BGVS about the future of the program - Should AID continue the funding for the blocks or can the blocks sustain the program without external funds. Here are the decisions that have been taken.

- Continue the support to nine Bihar blocks; drop support to three blocks that are not doing well.
- Continue support to Bihar State team, materials and training camps.
- Discontinue support to TN blocks and state field team as TNSF has received funds from Tata trust.
- Start support for two blocks in TN for integrated development – implemented by AID-India - in the areas of health, education, enterprises, technology and rural development, libraries, etc.
- Start support for one block in Karnataka (with HRFDL and AID-Bangalore).
- Support for material production for TN for use by TNSF and other NGOs.

If you would like more information, contact Ramani at runach@gmail.com.

Struggle for Justice - Bhopal

December 3, 1984: Tonnes of Methyl Iso Cyanate, a toxic gas, leaks from a pesticide plant owned by Union Carbide killing around 20,000 of people and affecting thousands of others. People lose their dearest and the survivors suffer from various health problems.

October 3, 2004: Little has changed. The community still feels the effects of the tragedy. The waste lying on the abandoned factory site has seeped into the groundwater. They suffer from elevated rates of cancer and asthma due to inhaled toxic gases and sustained doses of chemicals through water. Bhopalis are still fighting over the inability of Government to hold Dow Chemical Company (Dow

chemicals has bought Union Carbide) fully accountable for this grave act.

As time passed, the resolve of Bhopalis to fight for complete justice has only been strengthened. AID Bay Area, along with other groups, is planning events around Dec 3, 2004 to make the community speak in one voice against the perpetrators, reminding them of their unfinished responsibilities in Bhopal. Your participation is essential to make that voice stronger and to ensure complete justice in Bhopal.

If you want to be notified about these events or would like to involve yourself in the planning of events around 20th anniversary of Bhopal Gas Tragedy, contact Sudarshan sudarshan.suresh@gmail.com. For regular campaign updates, please visit www.aidsfbay.org.

Project Updates

CEHAT

Our chapter has been supporting CEHAT (Center for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes) in Dahanu for training tribal women to treat common ailments and work as first contact care units.

A batch of 45 women health workers (Arogya Saathis) who were trained recently appeared for the SNTD University exam; all of them cleared it with nearly half of them scoring over 90% - An important achievement for standardized training.

Certificates were distributed to these Arogya Saathis' at a function. Besides recognizing the innovative nature of this project it also helped establish credibility among public health officials. For next year, the health department has agreed

to provide essential medicines worth Rs.50,000. This will help sustain the Saathis' work.

The Arogya Saathis' have treated over 5700 patients during the first nine months and the community has saved Rs. 3 lakhs in that period.

An orientation program for the Hamlet Health committees (formed as part of the project) was conducted in March for about 130 representatives. This will be helpful in strengthening and complementing the Saathis efforts.

Some initiatives planned for next year are using Health Calendars to collaborate and monitor the work of the PHCs, campaigning on key health issues, continuing dialogue with PHCs and status of the Arogya Saathis. For more information, contact Kaustubh at kaustubh.desai@sun.com.

SAADOW

Scores of women in the Natham block of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu are earning their own livelihood thanks to a project managed by SAADOW (Social Awareness and Development Organization for Women). It is a women-welfare NGO founded in 1990 and run primarily by women.

SAADOW serves the poverty-stricken rural communities of Natham, Kottampatty and Sonarpatty blocks in Dindigul district by organizing self-help groups (SHG) and coming up with creative ways of imparting alternate income-generating skills to the landless laborers.

Funds from AID Bay Area enabled the NGO to purchase ten sewing machines and hire a tailoring instructor to offer

training to women in a local shed. Since its inception in 2002, this tailoring center has trained 114 women. Of these trainees, 72 are self-employed with the help of SHG loans, 35 of the trainees are employed in local garment factories.

The impact of this project to the lives of local women of Natham has been enormous. Primarily, it has given them a way out from being forced to take up exploitative jobs in the Gulf where they were often victims of sexual harassment. Secondly, it has allowed the women to elevate their societal visibility and increase their economic leverage within the community.

If you would like more details on this project or would like to be involved in this initiative please contact Sharath Hegde at ssheg@yahoo.com

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Upcoming Events

Talk by Aruna Roy

Ramon Magsaysay award winner, former IAS officer and founder of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathana (MKSS), Aruna Roy is participating in a talk hosted by AID Bay Area along with PRAJANet and Asia Pacific Research Center. The talk will be held on Oct. 25th. Admission is free. Venue details will be posted at our website www.aidsfbay.org a few days before the event.

MKSS is an organization of workers and peasants struggling for dignity and economic justice. It has been doing wonderful work in the areas of 'Right to Information, Work & Food' (RTI). Through a series of public hearings and mass-based struggles they are educating illiterate laborers on how information can give them power - to stop corrupt officials from siphoning off funds needed to dig wells or demand the pitiful wages that

are their due. The RTI act has been passed by nine states in India by now and also by the national parliament in 2002.



Disillusioned with her effectiveness as a civil servant, Aruna left her career as an IAS officer and joined SWRC (Social Work and Research Centre), a rural development NGO. But she found the NGO approach to be insufficient for true people empowerment. In 1987 she moved to the Devdungri village to live amongst the rural poor and thus MKSS came into existence. It has since become a powerful vehicle for the rural masses to express their concerns and to

campaign for them.

A key MKSS contribution to the universal quest for social justice is the articulation and development of the campaigns for potent, enforceable Right to Information laws. It helped development by ensuring accountability and it also serves as a powerful organizational tool for overall citizen empowerment.

Earlier this year, Aruna was invited to be on the 12 member National Advisory Council. After much debate MKSS decided to accept this opportunity to ensure that the government's Common Minimum Program is implemented in its true spirit. The council has already conducted a lot of business and Aruna will be able to give an update on its progress.

MKSS consists of several outstanding, highly committed activists and Aruna emphasizes that she is merely

a more visible face of this collective effort.

We are proud to introduce MKSS and Aruna Roy to the AID community and to several similar communities across the US. Their work has a direct bearing on the eradication of poverty which is our core concern. We hope to support and strengthen this work in as many ways as possible.

Mallika Sarabhai Dance Performance

Indians for Collective Actions (ICA) is organizing a Dance Performance by the renowned artiste Dr. Mallika Sarabhai on Oct 10, at 5 pm at Smithwick Theater, Foothill College, Los Altos Hills. AID is supporting this event. In this multimedia performance titled, "An idea called Meera", Mallika Sarabhai and Daksha will be performing along with a team of dancers from India. Mallika will also take part in a talk earlier in the day at Stanford.

Recent Events

Annual AID Picnic

AID Bay Area volunteers and their families enjoyed an AID's Day Out at Lake Elizabeth, Fremont on Sunday, July 25th.

It was an exciting opportunity for the volunteers to socialize with like minded people. The home-cooked food, prepared by the excellent cooks of AID and the various games developed specifically for the occasion resulted in a very special and fun day.

The picnic hangover still lingers on and the day will remain in our memory forever.

We are already looking forward to the next picnic. Hope you can join us and participate in all the festivities.

AID Recognition and Awards

AID has received a **4-star rating** from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent evaluator of charities. AID is also #2 among 10 of the Best Charities. For more info, visit <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm/bay/search.summary/orgid/7135.htm>

A rare honor was conferred upon AID (Houston) chapter. Their efforts along with other groups for Indo-Pakistan peace were recognized by the local US Congressional Rep - Sheila Jackson Lee with a Certificate of Congressional Recognition. It can be seen at www.aidindia.org/id/congress-certificate.pdf

Your Voice Counts

Support Narmada Valley Families

In July, AID (including our chapter) approved \$13,000 for relief work in the valley being done by Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Centre. But more support is possible only with individuals lending a hand.

This is an urgent appeal for your support to the Jansahyog (people-to-people) relief effort that provides food-grains, sheets for temporary shelter and other humanitarian relief to those displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada.

The people are still without rehabilitation, struggling for rights and survival. They are

facing brutal evictions by having their houses burnt to force them to move to very inadequate rehabilitation lands. There are hundreds of families that have faced crop loss in successive years owing to submergence of their lands and are in very dire straits. They require food grains and your sahyog (helping hand).

Directed donations to AID can be made by visiting the Relief website: <http://www.aidindia.org/sahyog> \$120 provides basic food grains for a family for 6 months. Our target is to raise \$30,000. We hope you can support one or more families for 6 months to a year, so they can survive and continue their efforts to seek rehabilitation

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Your Voice Counts (Continued)

Assam Bihar Floods

The recent floods in the states of Bihar and Assam have affected more than 40 million. Thousands are dead, 3 million displaced, 19 districts in Bihar and 23 in Assam have been submerged.

AID has been working with its NGO partners (In Bihar, BGVS and CHARM, in Assam RVC, ERLISID and ACRD) towards providing the needed relief and rehabilitation.

The situation in the flood-affected areas is lamentable. Thatched huts have collapsed due to incessant rains. With the

scarcity of food poor people are forced to eat shells and vegetation. There is a stink in the air due to decomposed vegetation, human excreta and animal carcass making it a sanitary and health hazard.



Relief efforts including an already approved \$15,500 got underway. Medical relief camps were held; help of

volunteers were enlisted.

According to the latest report from CHARM, 14 villages of Kiratpur block were visited; medicines were distributed in Chamar, Kunjara, Khatwai, Mallah and Musahars communities. The CHARM team distributed medicines to 759 patients in 14 villages. ERLISID is working with 2,000 people in Chandrapur district distributing 10 kgs rice and 2 kgs dal per person. RVC is working with 10,000 families in Dhemaji district. BGVS identified some badly affected districts like Saharsa, Begusaraj, Khagaria, Supaul,

Madhepura, Dharbhanga etc. and started the relief effort using AID sanctioned funds.

More reports of the relief efforts are available at www.aidindia.org/AssamBiharFloods

We wish to thank all those who have contributed to these relief efforts. AID has raised \$7,552 in donations so far. The actual need may be four to six times this amount. AID appeals for donations to the Relief and Rehabilitation Fund to support such efforts now and in the future at <https://www.aidindia.org/aidadmin/RRFDonation.jsp>

Help them get back to life!

Opportunities to AID us

Talk by Aruna Roy

We need all the help we can get in publicizing the Aruna Roy talk event among the Indian Community, different professional organizations and the press. We also need people to read and understand the issues that MKSS campaigns for and act as a support group from here. For more information, please contact Ramani at rarunach@gmail.com.

Agricultural Biotechnology study group

Recently a task-force headed by MS Swaminathan and appointed by the Government of India submitted a report heavily favoring the promotion of agricultural biotechnology in India. Green

Foundation, Thanal and APPVVU, three groups that work on sustainable agriculture, farmer's rights and environment – issues we support - wrote to us asking us to send protest letters against this report. Though in principle we have general agreement about the necessity to proceed cautiously with agricultural biotechnology, we do need a few volunteers to do an in-depth research on this topic and educate others so that we can take an official stand as a chapter. If interested in any work related to this issue, please contact Karuna at karuna.muthiah@oracle.com

Software Skills

We have a central database where all information about the projects that we review or

support is stored. We need help with adding new features, make it more user-friendly, add documentation etc. If interested in this, please contact Suresh Madhu at smadhu@earthlink.net.

Prepare/Translate educational materials

Tamil Nadu Science Forum and AID-India produce many interesting science pamphlets in English. There is a request from other Science Forums for these pamphlets in Hindi. If interested, contact Kaustubh at kaustubh.desai@sun.com.

They also plan to produce Video CDs and flyers explaining many scientific concepts in simple and easy-to-understand language. If you are interested in science and communicating ideas and

would like to contribute, please contact Srividhya at srividhya.venkataraman@intel.com

There is also a need for translation of short stories from Tamil to Hindi. If interested, contact Kaustubh at kaustubh.desai@sun.com.

Thanks

We express our sincere thanks to our donors, volunteers, well-wishers and supporters. For more information about the AID-Bay Area chapter, visit our website at <http://www.aidsfbay.org/>, come to one of our Community Service Hours (CSHs) at Stanford (every 2nd & 4th Sundays of a month) or contact a volunteer.

We welcome your comments and/or questions about our chapter and this newsletter at info@aidfbay.org.

95% of AID funds come from individuals like you. Please donate generously.

Yes! I would like to make a tax-deductible donation in the amount of

\$50 \$100 \$300 Other _____

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