

## "Project – Lev Olam" –Activity Report Kamalapur, slate Godam Villages, India

- Background:

Our support project took place in two villages in India: Kamalpur and Slate Godam. Kamalapur is a fairly big village with a population of several thousands. Slate Godam on the other hand is a very small and neglected village with a population of several dozens families and enormous need for resources.

These villages reflect the usual status of Indian periphery with minimum or noun support from the state and very basic community services and infrastructure. As most villages in India the population is very poor and supports itself from small farming, commerce and fishing.

The living conditions in the villages are very basic. No running water, electricity available for several hours every day, the sewage system is very partial and many houses are not connected to it. The roads are very bad and very few buses reach the villages. There are no government institutions, factories or tourist attractions in the area so the residents have very limited options for earning a living.

- Kamalpur School:

The local school serves all the children in the near villages and it operates in fairly reasonable building in the village.

Most of the children in school are between the ages 4 years old and 10 years old. There is no proper schedule of studies. Usually the smaller children study reading and writing, arithmetic and enjoy leisure activities. The elder group study English, geography, history and sciences. One of the local teachers is a university graduate (according to him) and teaching level is better than other places we attended.

- Slate Godam Girls Kindergarten-School:

The school is actually a tiny house in an extremely bad condition. It's located very near to the forest so snakes, giant spiders and other animals are regular visitors. Actually there is only one study room in the school and all the children in different ages learn together, they don't have any chairs or tables and they usually sit on the mats on the floor. The school-kindergarten is intended for girls only and many of them are orphans because of many families desert baby girls to avoid the high costs of marrying a daughter.

- The Children:

Both schools are considered to be elementary schools. Nevertheless, sometimes elder children and even teenagers join the school if they have no other work or activity for the day. Most of the children have one set of clothing, and one per of shoes (or noun at all) and their nutrition is very basic and not sufficient – usually chapatti (local bread), some vegetables, lentil soup and very rarely a chicken. Usually they have one notebook for all classes and one pencil (the teacher has one pencil sharpener) and the teachers don't really follow their notebooks or give them any homework.

Medical problems, of all kinds, are very frequent and the local clinic is just a disaster, very dirty with very old and insufficient equipment and the staff has very good intensions but very few training. A big medical problem is rabies, there are many mad dogs in the villages (especially in Kamalpur) and even though not all of them are sick, in any case of dog bite the kid has to be taken to the nearest hospital to get injections, if his family can afford it. The treatment is not free and the cost of the injections is above the ability of an average family and therefore in many cases a beaten kid does not get the proper treatment.

Nevertheless, the main concern of poor communities in India is not medical. As in other parts of India it seems the increasing prices of food is the major concern of the residents and their children, as well as the drought that hits large areas in the recent years and reduced the agricultural products pretty much.

Another major problem the residents encountered, and had very dramatic effects on the children is a balanced nutrition. Milk supply is not frequent and most of the Indians are vegetarian so many children suffer from constant protein deficit.

- Support Operation:

After preliminary coordination with the local schools headmasters a support program was set. The program tried to balance the needs of local communities and children with the specifications of the Matanel Foundation.

It was very important to us to take an active part in the program and not just spend the money and vanish afterwards. Therefore, two groups of volunteers, about 20 backpackers each, participated in a two cycles (10 days each) support project. The volunteers personally renovated the buildings, helped digging irrigation canals, taught the children English, Arithmetic and arts, played, sang and danced with them.

Because of the harsh poverty of the children, the support program has focused on the main and most urgent needs of the children: proper feeding, clean water, immediate health treatments, new clothing, learning materials and toys.

Due to the poor condition of the Slate Godam school-Kindergarten the renovation budget was dedicated to this building while kamalpur village received more funds for food distribution, urgent medical treatments and houses renovation. The agriculture support budget was also invested in Kamalpur which is mostly an agricultural village.

### **Food Distribution:**

During the support project we invited all the kids in the schools to join us for lunch. It was an issue we tried to deal with in the most sensitive approach. We tried to present it not as charity act but as a joint friendly activity. Therefore, the volunteers set with the children and ate together with them the same food. Because of the fact that many volunteers kept kosher food we didn't buy the food, Instead we bought all the ingredients and hired three cooks. Every day we also asked the kids to take home the spare ingredients such as rice, flour, sugar, eggs and vegetables claiming we don't want to draw animals to the school.

The joint lunch gave us an opportunity to teach hygiene and sanitation rules and we conducted a common hand washing before lunch, emphasizing to the kids that it's a crucial phase before eating, which helps to prevent a variety of health problems, very common in these areas.

### **Agricultural Support and Irrigation:**

Since the demand for agricultural support was far too big for our resources we decided to direct our support budget for several of the poorest farmers. The farmers were selected based on the recommendations of our local Indian partners and after a short visit to the fields and our impressions of it.

Pretty soon we discovered that the poorest farmers are those which their fields are far from the river. These farmers had to rely on small water canals and rain water reservoirs. These canals and reservoirs need constant maintenance and improvements. Therefore, the majority of the budget was spent on deepening the water canals and plating them and the reservoirs with Waterproof plastic sheets. The work was carried out by local workers and in one case we also hired a tractor, which had a dramatic effect on our efforts and the local farmers. The rest of the budget was dedicated to buy different seeds, mostly sunflower seeds, suitable for the weather, several bags of fertilizers and also some fodder for the bulls.

### **School Renovation:**

As mentioned above, the school renovation project took place in the Kindergarten-school in Slate Godam. The main reasons were the fairly reasonable condition of the Kamalpur School and the heart touching condition of the Slate Godam girl's school, many of them – orphans.

The project was carried out by 26 Israeli backpackers in a 10 days volunteering session. Some of the backpackers participated in 2-3 days of volunteering while others spent the whole 10 days working and renovating the school.

The poor condition of the school is very clear in the attached photos and footage. Before starting the renovation project pest control was necessary since the building was also the home of many spiders and rats and in the yard, wasps hive was removed by a local expert.

The volunteers cleaned the building, painted the walls and fences, strengthen the roof and replaced broken and leaking shingles. We also purchased several benches, new mats and mattresses and learning aids for the benefit of the teachers. New equipment was also purchased for the small kitchen where the teachers cooked lunch for the children.

All the kids received new school bags, pencils, crayons and other learning aids. On the last day we had a farewell party and the kids received toys, coloring books, candies and chocolates. We promised them to come back soon and continue our support project.

### Houses Renovation:

According to local requests, one of the main problems in India is the strong monsoon storms. During the monsoon a huge amount of rain drops in a very short period of time. Therefore, their most urgent needs were roofs renovations, gutters and drainages. Some of the budget was also used for connecting houses to sewerage canals. We also supplied several bags of cement, a large amount of walls coloring equipment and wall colors and many bamboo tree trunks which are used for many building uses in Indian villages.

### Costs Summary:

1. Food distribution: 2,613\$.
2. School renovation: 1,740\$.
3. Water canals and reservoirs: 1,070\$.
4. Agricultural support: 1,675\$.
5. Houses renovation: 1,130\$.
6. Learning aids for children: 2,050\$.
7. Salaries for Indian employees: 1,587\$
8. Special expenses (medical support): 460\$.

Total Project's Cost: **12,325\$.**

- **Summary:**

The huge gap between the needs in India and our allocated resources is unbridgeable. Nevertheless, any support project has a dramatic effect improving local communities and especially children's conditions. Since our support project was focused in making a long term change, the effects of it continue long after it was completed. We must also take into consideration the effects on the Israeli volunteers and the image of Israel in India and worldwide. Most important, the responses of children, adults and the village leadership were extremely thankful. The Project was a highly enriching and fulfilling experience to all participants: Indians and Israelis. We parted from the children with a promise to come back again.

- Total Project's cost:

	<u>Course One(\$):</u>	<u>Course Two(\$):</u>	<u>Total(\$):</u>
<b>Coordination and Administration:</b>			
Airline tickets and visas	1,250	1,250	2,500
Insurance	150	150	300
Preparation for departure	100	100	200
Immunizations and medical check-ups	240	240	480
Equipment	300	300	600
Training & Guidance	180	180	360
Living Fees	500	500	1,000
Miscellaneous	200	200	400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,920</b>	<b>2,920</b>	<b>5,840</b>
<b>Operations in India :</b>			
Transportation	570	620	1,190
Communication	150	100	250
Equipment	350	250	600
Food distribution	1,440	1,173	2,613
School Renovation	340	1,400	1,740
Distribution of learning equipment	630	485	1,115
Water canals & reservoirs	1,070	--	1,070
Toys	650	300	950
Houses Renovation	930	200	1,130
Agricultural support – seeds, irrigation, equipment	1,190	485	1,675
Salaries - Indian Employees	812	775	1,587
Miscellaneous	450	350	800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,582</b>	<b>6,138</b>	<b>14,720</b>
<b>Volunteers:</b>			
Food & Clean Water	800	700	1,500
Transportation	410	360	770
Farewell Party	180	150	330
Miscellaneous	150	150	300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,540</b>	<b>1,360</b>	<b>2,900</b>
<b>TOTAL PROJECT'S COST</b>	<b>13,042</b>	<b>10,418</b>	<b>23,460</b>