

India: Street Children education and rehabilitation

In the South of India, the region Tirupur is known for its garment export industry. An important industry, that has grown enormously over the last 20 years. From the 80's till late 90's it was accompanied by a massive recruitment of child labour. Over the last decade international campaigns have helped to reduce child labour use. At the same time there is a large poor, illiterate rural population that has to cope with poverty. Every month, hundreds of street children come into the region, in search of a livelihood, looking for work. Besides the poor external environment, the region also faces environmental problems: drinking water, huge piles of solid waste and domestic and industrial effluents.

The SAVE organization is trying to improve the situation of street children in this region, and has a project under construction for an ecological park, that is to sustain itself within 4 years. Linking the development of street children and the issue of managing environmental degradation is the key and novel creativity of this project.

Net4kids' partner for this project is [SAVE](#). This project is contracted and monitored by [Wilde Ganzen](#).

Ecological Park for Street Children in Tirupur

A sustainable ecological park has been selected as a tool to rehabilitate street children. The park provides food, shelter, education, training and recreation. It cultivates the habit of an ecologically sustainable living style. The energy of street children is converted into positive action.

What

The ecological park is to provide shelter and proper clothing to the street children. Their literacy skill will be developed through educational programs. A fruit and dairy farm

and agro-forestry assists in gaining economic sustainability. Children will be trained as computer literates, waste recycling mechanics, carpenters, electricians etc. The street children will learn skills after which they are better prepared to face the competitive world.



Objectives

The aim is to change street children into dignified members of society by providing them with physical care, social care, education and income generation skills and attitudes. It is estimated that 100 to 120 children (from 8 to 18 years of age) will be rehabilitated each year.

How to help

This project was first started in 2005. Since then funds have been used for:

- acquisition and development of the land (major share of the costs of year 1, thereafter decreasing)
- construction of the buildings (educational and vocational, administrative, housing for the children)
- annual running costs: education, vocational training, food expenses, dresses salaries etc.

Planning is that the park can sustain itself from the proceedings of the land within 4 years from the start.

The project activities are:

- development of sustainability: fruit farm (bananas, mango, pomegranate,

lime, papaya, coconut), tree planting (a.o. teakwood, silver oak), vermi-compost yard, dairy farm, etc.

- education and training
- shelter, food, education and development of income generation skills for street children with the aim of rehabilitation

The older children are involved in the realization of the project in multiple stages.

Accomplished so far

The project started with the purchase of 6 acres of land in May 2005. The land has been fenced and cleaned.

Many types of trees are growing now on the land, such as bamboo, coconut, mango and teak trees. A dairy farm, a biogas plant and vermin compost yard were set up.

Educational classes are conducted and vocational training has started. A dormitory has been built.

SAVE has many years of experience with the rehabilitation of street children.

The story of Gayathri

Gayathri, a 4 year old girl child, was found crying in the bus station of Tirupur by the staff of SAVE on 17th November 2006.

The staff informed the station police about the lonely cry of the child and waited for whole half day in bus stand. Since nobody claimed the child, then we have decided to inform the police and brought the child to SAVE's shelter home and media coverage was given in all daily papers with photos of Gayathri and no one turned until today. She became part of one among hundred children who live at SAVE and she is looked after well by every child in our home along with madern (warden).

She can speak very little about her parents. She belongs to Trichy which is 200 km away

from Tirupur town. Mother's name Valli and father's name Muthu who beats her mother several times after drunk. She was traveling by bus with her mother and she was asked to wait in the bus station but her mother never came to meet her. Gayathri cannot give the full address of the family or any other useful contact to trace the parents or the place of living. She looks very innocent and soft spoken. She plays with all other children in SAVE and does not look for her mother as she becomes one among other children in the home.

About SAVE

There is a major need for rehabilitation of street children in this fast growing Tirupur area, but the institutional arrangements to shelter street children are inadequate. SAVE (Social Awareness Voluntary Education) is among the organizations that run shelter home projects.

SAVE is a Non Profit and Non Governmental Organization (NGO) working for the rights of children in the Tirupur region ever since its inception in 1993. Initially, SAVE's activities were conducted with the support of volunteers. In May 1994, SAVE became a full pledged organization by engaging full-time staff for the implementation of its planned activities.

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