



**Association Un-Ami, France-----Association Friend-In-Need, (F.I.N.) Inde**

### **Summary of News Letter (September 2006)**

**A letter from two French students Antonin Bencayar and Annabelle Didider who are going to spend the year in Tiruchirapalli and Kameshwaram.**

Dear Friends,

I had eclipsed again, July and August being the summer vacation here. The project is moving along well and we have now a sizeable Indian contingent supporting us in addition to the French families. Sincere thanks to all of you who are supporting us. My letters should be coming regularly again!

I know that many new members have joined and I send a zillion emails a day and so though I think I sent “a thank you note” to all new members, I might have slipped up on one or two. In case, I have forgotten, I’m sorry...many thanks for joining. Next month, I will put the names of those from we have received a cheque after revising my database.

One of the objectives of this project is to build Indo-French networks of friends and collaboration alongside the rehabilitation efforts. In this connection, two French students Antonin Benyacar and Annabelle Didier of the Grenoble School of Management are leaving for India this month, to spend a year in the fishermen village of Kameshwaram. I asked them to write a letter for you and this is what they submitted.....(and I translated.....)...**They are both very young and so feel free to read their letters out aloud to your kids...**

Enjoy the letter and keep in touch and please spread the word about the project as always. *Note, that for the assiduous reader who perseveres till the end of the letter two surprises await.*

Best Wishes,  
Shyama V. Ramani

#### **Letter from Antonin Benyacar**



Dear Friends,

My name is Antonin Benyacar. I was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1984, so I'm 21 years old. I have lived in a city called Annecy since 15 years; it's a very pretty town between Lyon and Geneva. But my origins can be traced to a place much farther away; for my family name is BENYACAR, and this corresponds to a Jewish community of Turkey. My paternal great-grand parents were Turkish and my mother was born in Algeria to Franco-Algerian parents. I know all this sounds a bit complicated but this mixing has succeeded pretty well !

I have a younger sister who is 18 years old and who is studying biology in Lyon, whereas I enrolled in a Business Management course at the Grenoble School of Management in 2004. Though I have been fascinated by a number of subjects, I must confess that my favourites are "*international relations*" and "*Political Science*". So naturally I joined "Association S.O.S.", an association started and run by the students of the Grenoble School of Management and during this last academic year (July 2005-July 2006) I was its President.

It seems to me that our world is turning around more and more crazily. Of course I can't put it right, all by myself, but I do hope to make a contribution to make it better. When Shyama presented project FIR to us in 2005, I told myself immediately, "Wow, here's my chance to understand better!" And what do I mean by understanding better? It's pretty simple: I pass a lot of time, totally immersing myself, in reading books that analyse the increase of social inequalities, of exclusion, of the continuing ravage man is wrecking on his fellowmen and the environment all while being part of the strengthening process of globalisation. Given the size, the diversity, and the current context of India, a number of the above phenomena are present in India even as it grows at rates unprecedented in recent history. To have the opportunity to observe first hand and try to analyse the process of development and underdevelopment is just great. This trip will be an unprecedented occasion for me to learn. It goes without saying that I will offer all my competencies both to the people of Kameshwaram and the organizations working there. I am convinced that we can do great things together.

We are financing this project in several ways : First of all through donations raised by Shyama, and then through a scholarship offered by the Region of Rhone-Alpes that we were lucky enough to win and finally, I have worked very hard at several jobs in order to raise funds to invest in Kameshwaram. A world redistribution of wealth is necessary, and so I am going to do my little bit and that's as much as I can do for the moment.

I am sure that all of you have many projects, some of them easy and some of them to be guarded preciously in the world of pipe-dreams. You must be facing, as we do in France, many constraints: administrative, financial.....so that your projects see the light of day. It is sometimes too difficult to do it all alone. If you wish, through this project we can discuss everything together. Surely we may not have the best ideas or we might see things in another way, and so in the process of giving aid, let us initiate exchange and sharing of knowledge.

We also have a lot of problems to solve in France. Some of them may even make you smile: For example a large proportion of the vegetables that are available in supermarkets (tomatoes for example) are not planted in soil and have never seen the light of day. We pump in so much pesticides and fertilizer that the tomatoes are rendered dangerous for health (not to mention that they have less and less taste).

You see that our problems are not all of the same nature but they touch the same universal rights: the sovereignty of access to proper food, health, education, employment.....

We will surely have an occasion to discuss all these more at length. And if you want to start discussing these topics with me, go right ahead. I will be happy to respond. (antonin.benyacar@no-log.org)

Best wishes,  
Antonin Benyacar.

#### **Letter from Annabelle Didier**



Dear Friends,

My name is Annabelle Didier, I've also just turned 21 and I am from the region called Vosages in France. With my elder brother who's 22 years old and my parents, we have lived in different towns in the North-East part of France (Epinal, Charleville-Mézières, Nancy). I left the town of Nancy two years back to enter a preparatory school in the economics sector and I got admission in the Grenoble School of Management. I am following a general curriculum (finance, human resource management and marketing) and there after I intend to specialize in accounting and financial communication.

But my studies never stopped me from plunging and participating fully in extra-curricular activities. For instance, I created a "Juggling Club" as a section of the Cultural Association of the school and I participated in the organization of the "Festival of Street Arts" at Grenoble in 2005. But it's Association S.O.S. that took up the most of my free time. I was the treasurer of the Association and project chief of our last project in India at Cochin.

Being extremely interested in the process of development as it's happening today and being aware of the day to day problems encountered in Indian villages, it was natural

that I should be a part of project F.I.R. This project really tries to formulate development projects as a response to the needs of the people, as expressed by them rather than as seen by us and it is creating relations between a number of actors of quality, which is responsible in my view for the trust that has been built and the success of all parties. This mission in India will be also a most enriching experience for me to work with an Indian NGO, something that may even serve as a trampoline for my future professional life.

I worked for three months in order to earn the funds to invest in Kameshwaram and also to cover the costs of the trip and the stay in India. We are also grateful for the scholarship that we have received from the Region of Rhone-Alps that is a big help.

On the field, we anticipate two phases for the project. First, an initial study to evaluate the socio-economic structure of Kameshwaram and the range of competencies of its inhabitants. Second, an examination of possible activities for the women and also for the youngsters with the purpose of improving the development of their personalities and also to enable them to improve their economic status through the acquisition of new competencies.

An important component of the project consists of the construction of public and private toilets which can improve the conditions of hygiene in the villages. But the concretisation of these actions can be realized only through an active collaboration with the villages and which should in turn lead to long-term improvements.

Once these objectives are attained, we would like to write our MBA dissertation and pursue the establishment of Franco-Indian relations between academic institutions.

Our project is therefore ambitious but I love challenges, especially when the final objectives are those close to my heart.

Best Wishes,  
Annabelle Didier

\*\*See clip sent by friend Raju showing Antonin and Annabelle taking a course in Indian speed driving!! <http://www.purnendu.homechoice.co.uk/Video/OnlyinIndia.wmv>

\*\*Not so funny....a newspaper article that concerns me..yeah...you can give it the skip, but of course I couldn't resist the temptation to slip it in.. <http://www.project-fir-tsunami.org/english/Hindu-july06.pdf>