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## Annual Report 2017

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Friend in Need Trust (FIN)

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Sanitation, Waste Management and  
Hygiene Behaviour for Health and  
Climate resilience

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## **FIN Annual Report 2017**

### **Contents**

1. Introduction .....	1
2. Achievements of 2017 .....	1
2.1. FIN India achievements .....	1
2.2. FIN Kameswaram achievements .....	2
3. Challenges of 2017 .....	6
3.1. FIN India challenges and responses for 2018 .....	6
3.2. FIN Kameswaram challenges and responses for 2018 .....	7
4. Financial Narrative .....	7
5. Conclusion .....	8

## **Annual Report of Friend In Need Trust for 2017**

### **1. Introduction**

The objective of Friend in Need (FIN) Trust is to derive models to make India clean through improving access to safe sanitation and associated problems in Kameswaram village. It is supported by a larger team that we call FIN India.

### **2. Achievements of 2017**

#### **2.1. FIN India achievements**

- i) Recognition from the Government of Tamil Nadu: Friend In Need Trust was recognized to be an outstanding organization in the field of Environmental Education, Awareness, Protection and Management. For this, it won the Second Prize, of Tamil Nadu Environment Awards for NGOs - Ministry of Environment, Government of Tamil Nadu (November 7, 2017).
- ii) *Successful submission and acceptance of the final report to the NCSTC of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.* Incentivising the Provision of Rural Sanitation through sustainability audits for the NGP Programme, for Government of India (Department of Science and Technology) 2015-2016
- iii) *Interest from two top schools in Chennai for internships:* The Madras School of Economics and the Madras School of Social Work. We reached out to about 10 top

engineering and business schools as we want to leverage engineering and business knowledge towards solving India's WASH problems. Out of them, two have expressed interest in supporting us.

- iv) *Submission of an international project:* Though we did not get it – it was a good experience to submit a project for the EU on bioenergy. Indeed, we tried for two projects. However, not getting them is not a waste, as they will serve as a foundation for future project proposals.
- v) *Creation of a new and enhanced website :* Our website is like a Wikipedia in itself – according to Manoj our website developer. It is dense in knowledge but not crowded and very easy to navigate.



- vi) *International Publication based on the FIN experience:* Ramani, Shyama V., Shuan SadreGhazi and Suraksha Gupta, “Catalysing Innovation for Social Impact: The Role of Social Enterprises in the Indian Sanitation Sector” with in ***Technological Forecasting and Social Change***, 121, 216-227, (2017).
- vii) *International Publication based on the FIN experience:* Ramani, Shyama V., Timothée Frühauf and Arijita Dutta “On diarrhoea in adolescents and school toilets: Insights from an Indian village school study”, ***Journal of Development Studies***, 1-16 (2017). This is based on interviews of kids in Saint Sebastian School of Kameswaram village.

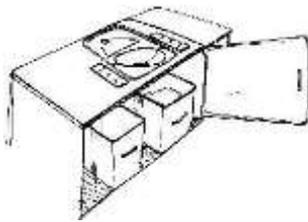
## 2.2. FIN Kameswaram achievements

- i) *New innovative model of ecosan toilet with attached bathroom*



Thanks to a generous donation of a well wisher we were able to innovate to build a better type of ecosan toilet. We are very grateful to Rushva Parihar, part of the FIN team, for having arranged this. Adapting from the design proposed in the handbook ‘Ecological Sanitation: A Practitioners’ Handbook (UNICEF, 2011, p.29)’ and integrating many ideas given by many sanitation experts as well as architects, with whom we have discussed the challenges of ecological toilets, we arrived at our final

model. We acknowledge gratefully all ideas given by many that has gone into this design. This is a urine-diverting dry toilet that is often referred to as the ‘ecosan’ toilet. Thus, no one will have to touch the human compost.



**Figure 3.7** Single vault ecosan toilet with a 2-hole separation pan and removable bins

ii) *An improved version of our public waste bin*



An example of a community waste bin given to the village under the SWACHH Bharath Programme is shown here. Five such bins have been given for the huge area of Kameshwaram of about 936 hectres. Each costs more than 20,000 INR. They are very heavy and one has to bend to open it. One has to get one hands on the waste to remove it properly. After volunteering to clear waste from one of these bins, my sister remarked: “The door of the bin is heavy and difficult to open. I was very afraid that the door might get unhooked and perhaps fall on my back. I found it difficult to

keep bending and taking out the waste.”

In contrast, our waste bins consist of wooden sticks embedded deeply in the ground and covered with netting material commonly used in roofs. They are easy to open and workers can easily fill their garbage bags with the waste. (Note: Manual waste picking is still followed in villages. No modern equipment or heavy machinery is involved). Stickers on three sides of



the bin nudge passersby to use the bin instead of throwing rubbish on the ground. It has increased visibility and its simple yet efficient design makes it eye-catching, tempting the people to use it.

We continued to experiment. Shanmugarajan suggested a more standardized frame. Shyama then visioned it (after seeing Marc, the UNU-MERIT Financial administrator make some for his garden) and worked with Paranjothi to make a much more solid and aesthetic version.



**Design Innovation 3:** Giving of geographical identity to different zones in the villages through a 3 component vector of information: (i) number of bin; (ii) name of place; (iii) number of the ward.

Impact:

- The waste bins have attracted a lot of attention and praise – from diverse stakeholders. Households find it convenient to throw garbage in and



NAREGA workers find it easier to take out garbage.

Photo with NAREGA workers. Given the social stigma attached to waste management, families are sending their eldest to work on waste collection.

- Panchayat members request that it be multiplied. Thus, we are likely to use the remainder after the two toilets on the waste bins. Photo with Kamraj – the acting head of the Gram Panchayat that includes Kameshwaram and adjacent villages.



- Youngsters and outside workers are happy because the bin labels reveal the geographical identity of the place. For instance, they can ask a friend to meet them near bin number 7 in ward number 6!

*(iii) Efforts were made to give FIN identity to masons*

**What FIN Masons will get:**

- One photo of the team per year.
- Three cotton shirts with the logo of FIN.
- Documentation of their work – with before and after pictures every year in the form of an album that will be given to them every year (Paranjothi is least interested in this and must be coaxed into doing a good job – have enlisted Mouni also for the task).
- An annual medical check-up
- Two workshops (1 hour in office and 2 hours in the field) on innovation per year that I will personally conduct for them – where I will ask them questions and they will teach me and we will discuss.
- A bank, ATM and phone literacy workshop by Shanmugan – where he will show them whatever they want.



Photo - Left to right: Paranjothi, Bhaskaran, Veerappan and Manikandan

*(iv) Recording of Tacit Knowledge – A very big effort*

We had the good fortune to get Mr. Shankar Venkataraman, ex-Intel team leader of engineering project, to be in the village and record the tacit knowledge of the masons to write out a manual on how to build a septic tank – entirely co-written and validated by them. This is of excellent quality. And the masons adored him. Mr. Shankar proved to be a great example in showing how wonderfully tacit knowledge can be codified by showing respect and empathy – even while adhering to high standards of research.



### **3. Challenges of 2017**

#### **3.1. FIN India challenges and responses for 2018**

Friend In Need India is a unique venture. The idea is to provide consultancy services to address the WASH (Water, Waste Management, Sanitation and Hygiene Behaviour) challenges of India. But this is not its unique feature! Its originality is the system of governance, which is summarized on the philosophy page of our website <http://friend-in-need.org/fin-philosophy/>. With team members living in different regions and some with other professional commitments, FIN India can work only if all members have a strong engagement to its developmental social mission and to team work. However, typical strategic problems of free riding, using the collective knowledge for personal ends, and shirking from engagements are the main reasons, which led to the dissolution of the team in 2017. But, out of this learning emerged a clearer vision of the kind of people we wanted for FIN India. It was decided that in 2018 we would focus on building academic collaborations and training students in Kameswaram and look for more appropriate members for the action-research team of FIN India.

Another feature was that we tried to make contact with a number of academic institutions, but they are not interested in trying to study which solution design would be best – but rather in describing the drivers of problem and giving very general conclusions on solutions. The academic institutes where we failed to elicit interest for establishing collaboration are: Ambedkar University, ISEC, IIM – Indore, IIT-Mumbai, TISS-Mumbai, IIM-Trichi and JPSIMR. The teachers there have their set network and are not much interested in our work.

### 3.2. FIN Kameswaram challenges and responses for 2018

There are three main challenges. First, the masons do not understand the value of documentation and treat our field manager's presence and suggestions as an irritation. Second, our field manager likes to pursue a variety of tasks, but has no patience to follow up a process slowly and consistently. Third, we recruited young women, and they left quickly after getting married. Working is considered as only a stop-gap to get the right bridegroom and associated conditions. Two married women fought with each other and left. In 2018, we will focus on recruiting women who can accompany students, who have already children and who get along well.

### 4. Financial Narrative

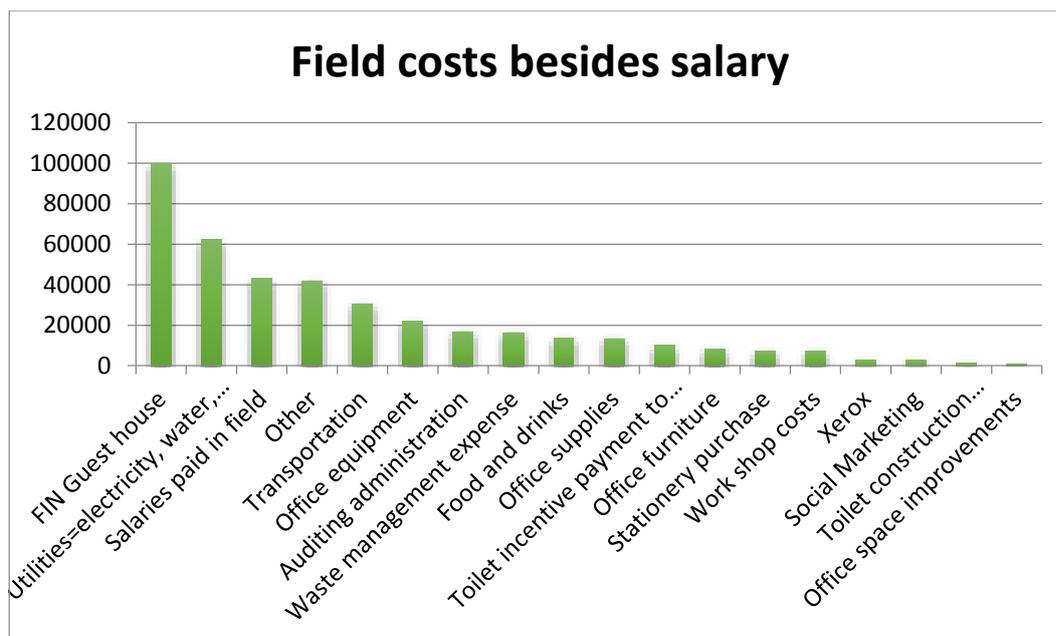
CALENDAR YEAR 2017		
Source of Revenue	Amount	%
Award	10000	1.61%
Bank interest on project funds of 2016	10855	1.75%
Donations	600673	96.64%
Total resources	621528	

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Summary of expenditure		
Field Expenditure		399619
Salaries to Field staff		359245
Salaries to Project staff		200000
Material & Travel of Interns		35000
Media Expenditure		19210
Consultant Payments		87333
Guest House & office equipment and materials		191388
Travel of FIN Members		46457.6
Petty Expenditure		70.8
Total expenditure		1338323.4

**Balance** **-726795.4**

\*This balance was covered by the project funding from the Department of Science and Technology – the second instalment of 8 lakh rupees.



The investment on the FIN Guest house reflects the fact that we are preparing a home away from home to receive student interns to study and develop solution designs for rural India. We are also making classrooms in it so that we can use it as a teaching centre.

## 5. Conclusion

The experience of FIN 2017 lent it greater clarity such that we now consider ourselves to be operating as follows.

The objective of Friend in Need (FIN) Trust is to make impact through:

- improving access to safe sanitation and developing an efficient community level waste management system in Kameswaram village; and
- facilitating WASH transitions to Green and Clean environments both within and outside of Kameswaram. By WASH transition we mean universal safe sanitation coverage, access to water, effective community waste management systems, value creation from these and hygiene behaviour on the part of all stakeholders.

FIN operates via two divisions:

- FIN Kameshwaram, a rural living lab in Kameshwaram village (Tamil Nadu, India) experimenting with grassroots innovation generation and diffusion, livelihood creation and community engagement.
- FIN India, working with other societal stakeholders like schools, households, public agencies, civil society etc. all over India and in other developing countries.

Thus, we are essentially a knowledge and frugal innovations charity, generating and sharing knowledge and frugal innovations for a Green and Clean World.

Our reflections on 2017 are best summarized in the following Facebook post with which we started the year 2018.



### **Remembering 2017 and moving forward in 2018.**

Reflect on the past, clear your mind of unnecessary negative memories, retain the lessons and move joyfully into the future!

Yes, this is what my family and friends tell me all the time and this is what I am trying to do, but it's so difficult. Last year was a very difficult one for me and for FIN.

“How was the ceremony?” I asked Paranjothi, last week, on December 26, after the Tsunami Remembrance Day in Kameshwaram.

“Nice and simple. We marched through all the streets of those who had lost a family member and put a garland on the remembrance pillar. Thirteen years ago! Madam, that means we have been here together 12.5 years already!”

“Yes, it's so embarrassing Paranjothi. In meetings, they ask me for the numbers – how many villages covered with toilets? How many toilets built? How many people helped? Every NGO seems to have done so much more than us.”

Paranjothi was quick to retort, “I don't agree with you – stop thinking negatively – we have done a lot and have had a good impact.”. He rarely argues so spontaneously and what he told me put me in good spirits again. But, that I have to write out properly another time. Not now. I won't bore you with it.

To continue with the present story, I guess, maybe that's why people have kept asking me to do something outside of Kameshwaram since ten years.

And, maybe that's why about four years back I started dreaming of a team, a virtual team made of passionate professionals in India, who would do excellent action-research work and transform more places in India for the better (in terms of sanitation, waste management and hygiene behaviour).



Well, that's why I started working on it seriously three years back. Actually, I have been at it every free second since that time. I put together a team and it was indeed super fun and we did lots of good work, but the needs of the context and the team members, each one's aspirations, each one's style and the individual and collective capabilities were not a good enough match. And by the middle of last year it was all over.

Paranjothi similarly had a terrible year. He managed to get a lot of things done but all alone. We were also trying to build a team that would be truly motivated to make their village clean. For the same reasons as for the research team – it didn't happen.

But, today, we are left a stronger and more focussed team than ever before with a clearer understanding of why we are all in FIN and what our culture is and what our values are and what we will not compromise upon. This is a wonderful outcome.

Another good thing about all of the above is that it's not the first time such a thing has happened to me. I have failed many times. And over time, I have just got better and better at bouncing back (though I do tend to sigh from time to time) and thinking about new ways of tackling challenges. By the last trimester of 2017, I got new ideas and a new vision and started experimenting with it. The first results were enough to convince me that this would be worth exploring.

So this letter is for everybody – who's had a tough 2017. Don't worry if you have had set backs. You can really use them as opportunities for learning and growth. Actually, I'm so happy that it all happened the way it did - otherwise I wouldn't have got my new vision and I think it's a better one. Send us your good vibes too.

And may the force be with you and us in 2018!

