

FRIEND IN NEED INDIA (FIN) 2015 FACEBOOK POSTS

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1. Introduction to Facebook posts of FIN

Starting from the assumption that a variety of factors impact the environment and a safe and uncontaminated environment is necessary for good health, Friend In Need Trust (or FIN) aims to contribute to environmental protection and health via focus on: (i) construction safe toilets; (ii) appropriate treatment of waste water; (iii) appropriate waste management and (iv) inducing hygiene behaviour on the part of citizens. We refer to this as the FIN diamond model for environmental protection via building of WASH capabilities as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The FIN diamond model for environmental protection and health.

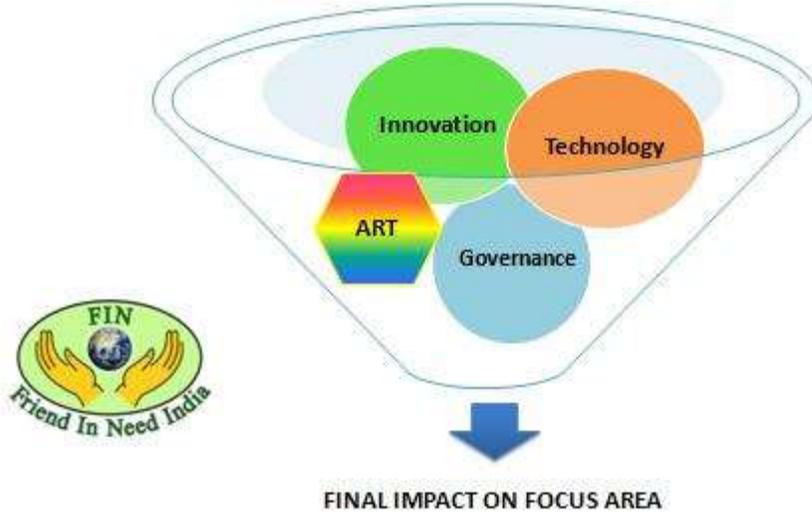
Figure 1: Focus Areas of Friend In Need India



FIN is based in the village of Kameswaram in the Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu. Kameswaram serves as a living lab wherein solutions are co-created with local residents via action-research projects supported by public and private agencies. Volunteers and members of the academic community are actively engaged in these missions.

FIN pursues four types of pathways to achieve concrete targets in its focus areas. By 2016, its conceptual model was as given in Figure 2. The four pathways involved: testing existing technology for adoption, creation of innovations, capacity building in governance and communal art as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Impact Pathways of Friend In Need India



2. Kameswaram happenings

2.1. Happy New Year

January 1

We at Friend In Need India wish you all a very happy and prosperous new year!



“So what do you want me to put as our New Year message to our Facebook readers?” – I asked the FIN staff during our Saturday skype meeting. “Whatever you wish Madam, it’ll be OK for us”, they said and “but I don’t agree” I retorted. So after some arguments, we decided that I would recite two of my favourite poems the next Monday and they would recite me a poem from the fishermen – and we would decide together. But, though eloquent, they found the fishermen’s poem too sad to start a new year with!

So from my two poems, this was what they chose for you ... their reason? “Madam, the message is the most relevant for all of us today...” – By the way the poem was written about 200 years back by an Englishman.

And you can read this poem - replacing Abou with the names of any of our friends in the village Anjaliammal, Annalakshmi, Anjappan or Appasamy.....it'll mean the same....Angels have no fixed or unique affiliations – only representatives of man-made religious institutions are puffed up about their institutional label!

Peace to you....and let us all be more humane and kind to ALL and continue to vote 'NO' to all violence, injustice and environmental degradation through our words and actions in 2015 – but peacefully, showing love and tolerance to all fellow humans while doing so.

Here's to a better, more peaceful, less hot and safer world in 2015! Happy New Year wishes to all!



Abou Ben Adhem
BY LEIGH HUNT

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe
increase!)

Awoke one night from a deep dream of
peace,

And saw, within the moonlight in his
room,

Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—

Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem
bold,

And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?"—The vision raised
its head,

And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

2.2. A salute to Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam

Dr. Kalam, we need more people like you on earth. We will miss you always.

30 Jul 2015, 02:58

Just after we scheduled our last post, I got the news about Dr. Kalam, one of my favourite heroes. I could not help but feel a very deep sense of sorrow. You can read about his greatness, his nobility, his generosity and his service to the country on the internet. Here, I share two stories with you. One of many years back. And one of the day before yesterday.



<http://www.medindia.net/news/Better-Sanitation-can-Help-India-Save-Five-Billion-Rupees-Every-Year-APJ-Abdul-Kalam-28819-1.htm>

Shyama V. Ramani - Sanitation for the people lecture

The Facts on India

Complete Sanitation coverage could save at least Rs 500 crore every year, as the monetary costs of treating health problems related to sanitation is estimated to be Rs. 200 crores and the loss of working days due to associated illnesses is worth about Rs 300 crores.



About 35 or 38 years back, my father, an academic, the late Dr. M.S.Venkataramani, came home in great spirits after a meeting in another city. “The government meeting went off fine, but what happened afterwards was even better.”

“What exactly happened?” asked my mother.

“I met a man. His name is Abdul Kalam and we just had a roaring time. We didn’t feel the time go by. I nearly missed my flight. And the conversation – what high quality, enlightening conversation we had. Today, I have enjoyed the company of a truly great and noble man.” Here he gave us a killing look – but of course, we all knew that our intellectual capabilities were very low and we didn’t mind at all!

“So, what did you talk about?” asked my mother (who never talked rubbish like us).

“About the Gita and space technology and spirituality”, my father replied.

Now the Gita is a holy book of the Hindus. And of course, at the mention of the Gita, I a teenager lost all interest and I promptly went back to the romance I was reading. But it did strike me that this man must be so very cultured and wise and know so much to discuss holy books and link them with space technology and spirituality. I hadn't a clue, but the tall, dark and handsome hero of my book was far more enthralling at that moment and I never listened to the rest of the conversation between my parents.

But I couldn't forget Abdul Kalam, because my father never gave compliments about anybody. So if he said someone was great – the guy must be really GREAT. I followed Dr.Kalam's work much more closely as an adult and was very inspired by him and the way he lived and served his fellow men and women. He spoke on sanitation too. I have put up my slide that quotes him on this post. And his words are very powerful as you can read.

I called up Paranjothi in Kameshwaram the next day for a chat.

“Madam, he was one of us. He's a Tamil and we are mourning him even more. He came once to Nagapattinam. Of course, I didn't miss the speech Madam. Who can miss Kalam? It's a privilege not to be missed. He spoke very well, Madam. It was both entertaining and educative.”

Then he continued. “Madam, I have a question.”

“Shoot Paranjothi.”

“Are they missing him in Paris? In London? In New York? Do they speak about him?”

“I haven't read all the papers Paranjothi. But I can tell you one thing. When any fights break out between Muslims and Hindus in India, the international media loves to report about it in gory detail. But when a most beloved Muslim, is mourned by millions in India, because his love, his intelligence, his righteousness, his service has touched everyone – and all people return the love back to him - they don't emphasize the point much. Isn't that strange? But, that's what I love about India. It has made Mother Theresa and given us Kalam – I don't know of any other secular and democratic country like India. Long live Kalam's teachings and the power of his love and sense of service.”

“Madam”

“Yes?”

“He was more than just a human – for me, he was a living yogi.”

“Yes. Paranjothi – I agree. And I just saw the photo of your homage in our dropbox. Thanks. I'll put it up. Bye for now.”

3. Cultural tid-bits – in and out of Kameswaram

3.1. Happy pongal

January 14

What's happening in Kameshwaram?

To mark a new beginning for Pongal, Friend In Need staff worked with Saint Sebastian School staff and the School Principal, Mr. Das, to accompany a march by the students!



Volunteers from the Scouts, Junior Red Cross and Green India - went throughout the village distributing pamphlets encouraging people not to use plastic bags and explaining how plastic litter is seriously polluting our environment. The children ended their march by cleaning the premises of the village Panchayat (Council house).

Bravo kids!

You are our hopes for a better future!

We wish all our readers a wonderful Pongal or new beginning to follow your dreams!



3.2. Republic Day

January 26

A new mission on the Indian Republic day - keeping Kameshwaram FIT!

Today, the 26th of January is India's 66th Republic Day and we mark it with a new mission. With folks like Raji (see previous post), we want to take the culture of 'keeping fit' through running, from Indian cities to Indian villages like Kameshwaram - including both women and men.

In villages, social culture dictates that in any household where the earnings of men are sufficient, women stay at home. Not working outside means confinement to a very small space and having

several hours free every day, which are now mainly used to watch television or socialize. Thus, despite the clean air, wonderful trees and enough food - according to our survey, women suffer from a variety of ailments and often a state of great mental and physical fatigue. We feel that this could be due to not having opportunities for physical exercise - which of course is even further impeded by the traditional form of clothing.

Towards this end, we want to organize two workshops for running in the village: one for school children and one for adult women in the village (but we are not sure if anyone will join in the workshop for adults - still it will be worth trying). If you wish to contribute to this event please go to <http://friend-in-need.org/donate/> and drop us an email at fintrust.india@gmail.com. Our budget is 1 lakh rupees or INR 100,000 (or 1500 Euros or \$1620 USD). This budget will be used to mainly buy shoes, sports accessories like balls for the children and refreshments for the village participants (INR 75,000) and travel and boarding for the selected teachers of 'running'(INR 25,000). Thanks in advance.

3.3. MuthuMariyamman Puja

February 9

What's happening in Kameshwaram?

In Kameshwaram, as in most Tamil Nadu villages, there are temples dating from pre-Aryan times which continue to welcome worshippers and citizens seeking grace from the Goddess Mariamman – Mother Nature. The Goddess of the people was never affected by the caste system and was ever accessible to all – especially the lower castes.

In Kameshwaram, there is a beautiful Shri Shiva Kami MuthuMariyamman temple and last Friday February 8, 2015, it was time for the 12 year ritual cleansing – or the Kumbhabhishekam – of the temple – when the temple is thoroughly cleaned to welcome the adherents. Through combined and united prayers, the worshippers create positive vibrations in the temple premises that bestow grace upon all who visit.

For this important day, Friend In Need was asked by the Kameshwaram Village Panchyat or Council to take care of waste management. So from Thursday February 7, our team has been helping to prepare for the festival. The 15 tins that we set up were used to the brim and today the team finished cleaning up the rest. Next time we intend to set up bigger tins and more of them. May the Grace of Mariamman light your days and our days to come!





3.4. Holi

March 6

Today is Holi - the festival of colors!!

Yesterday, at sunset, people in India, burned a big pyre symbolising the burning of Holika, from where the festival gets its name. The burning of the pyre is a symbol of good winning over evil.

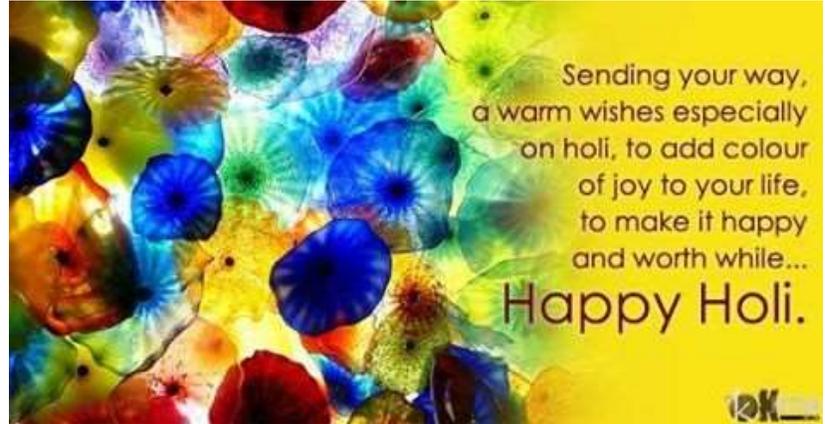
As we mark the beginning of spring today, we wish you a very happy and colourful Holi filled with lots of joy. This spring rite is echoed under different names in different countries of the world, taking different forms.

Then, Sunday, March 8, is International Women's Day - initiated since 1975 by the UN. Yes, it is only since very recently, we have begun to recognize the human rights of women. Combining it with the fun of Holi, we wish that for the rights of women too, there is triumph of good over evil and we see positive steps towards a gender equal world.

Echoing our thoughts here's an excerpt from a wonderful poem by Maya Angelou:

....From "Phenomenal Woman"...

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.



3.5. Tamil New Year

April 14

Paranjothi, Friend of All and Field Manager at Friend In Need India, wishes everyone a very HAPPY TAMIL NEW YEAR! (Here he is with a gentleman of 77, who told me that many elders like him are very grateful for Paranjothi's support)



Happy Tamil New Year ! Today, is a day when Tamils world over, celebrate the coming of the new year with good food and a visit to the local temple to pray for grace. The food is special today, including sweet, sour, spicy and bitter dishes – because life brings us experiences of

different flavours, but each is meant to enable us to learn in a unique way for self-realization and inner peace.

And of course, all festivals are a good time to savour music, dance and art. Thus, I invite you to savour the New Year with two different renderings of a 17th or 18th century (nobody is very sure) song written by the poet Sadasiva Brahmendrar, in Tamil Nadu (though in Sanskrit) which has stood the test of time being entirely passed from one generation to another in the oral tradition. Entitled 'Pibare Rama rasam' it invokes listeners to drink the essence of Rama, the righteous. It argues that by doing the right thing, and moreover by staying away from those who may lead one to do wrong, self-fulfilment is more likely.

The first rendering is by smiling youngsters equipped with minimum technology. Here, the genius of Master Anatharaman is clear and the young accompanists are equally talented!<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOGuj9cPHnQ>

Another set of professionals with modern sound technology provide another beautiful rendition <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgnHT3pJ04I> and Ms Sreeranjini Kodampally is the accomplished singer.

Both these are illustrations of the creative ways in which the heritage of classical music and other traditions are being upheld and interpreted by Indian youth.

Peace and Joy to you on this Tamil New Year!

3.6. Raksha Bandhan

Happy Raksha Bandan!

28 Aug 2015, 18:02



What would we do without our brothers? Like millions of other women, I am blessed with wonderful brothers, both my own and cousins. They have shaped my personality, improved my intellect and contributed to my sense of security. Further, going beyond brothers, like all women, I am also regularly helped and supported by many brotherly acts of kindness, both big and small.

Last week, I was in a plane, in the aisle seat and a gentleman was sitting next to the window, and the seat in between us was empty. Neither of us spoke to the other beyond the perfunctory "Hello". At some point, the stewardess announced for the third time, "We are going to enter a zone of turbulence, please return to your seats and fasten your seat belts". The two previous times, I had reached into my handbag and got my little prayer book and read out the 'Hanuman Chalisa' (as all my prayers are need-based!). Now as I reached down for the third time, the man

spoke to me; he was smiling: "Don't worry. You will reach home safe and see your family. I take this route all the time. Finish your work now so that you can enjoy your time this evening. Everything is going to be fine." I smiled back and put up my prayer book. I felt safe. I waved bye to him when we got down. I don't know who he was. I only know that his kindness had brought me peace and a sense of well being that would support me during many more trips.

So for all acts of brotherly kindness that provide daily grace to women across the world - here's a big thank you!

3.7. *Ganesh Chaturthi*

What is happening in India!

17 Sep 2015, 09:32



Today is Ganesh Chaturthi, it is a festival that is celebrated across India bringing people of all religions, castes and creeds together. It is celebrated on the day of Lord Ganesh's birth. Lord Ganesh has many names Lord Vinayaka, Ganesh ji, Ganpati ji, Vinayaka and is the darling of the masses. The festival is thus also known as Vinayak Chaturthi or Vinayak Chavithi. Ganesh is the Lord of knowledge, wisdom, prosperity and good fortune. This day, observed as one of the most auspicious in the Hindu religion, is widely celebrated especially in the state of Maharashtra. The celebrations last for around ten days (from Bhadrapad Shudh Chaturthi to Ananta Chaturdashi). Today, on the first day, a clay idol of Lord Ganesha is installed in homes, and is decorated with flowers - like this one! We wish all of you the best fortune in the coming year. In the spirit of celebrating the day we leave you with a small prayer that is chanted today for the

lord, sung by the nightingale of India Lata Mangeshkar.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0W8Wh-8UCg>

3.8. Dussehra

What is happening in India ?

Today is Dussehra also called Vijayadashami

18 Oct 2015, 11:56

Dussehra is one of the most important Hindu festivals celebrated in various forms, across India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.

The name Dussehra is derived from Sanskrit Dasha-hara literally means Dashanan or ten-headed and it refers to Lord Rama's victory over the ten-headed king Ravana, who had abducted his wife Sita. The rise and fall of Ravana serves to illustrate how an intelligent man, especially a ruler, can become demonic and ruin his own country, when driven by greed (relevant even today!).

The day also marks the victory of Goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasur, another testimony of the important place of the feminine divine in Hinduism. The Goddess fought against him and his evil forces for 9 nights and 10 days. The name Vijayadashami is also derived from the Sanskrit words "Vijaya-dashami" literally meaning the victory on the dashami (Dashmi being the tenth lunar day of the Hindu calendar month). Diwali, the festival of lights is celebrated twenty days after Dussehra.





Lord Rama prayed to Goddess Durga before he defeated Ravana, so across India people bring home idols of Goddess Durga and pray to her. It is a day of great celebration and jubilation. In many parts of India the defeat of Ravana is enacted and large idols of Ravana, in his demonic form, are burnt in celebration.

At Kameshwaram, like in other Southern States, all the tools of our livelihood, and our office, were cleaned thoroughly and the village council and fishermen were invited to join us in offering thanks to Goddess Saraswathi, who embodies wisdom and learning.

From everyone at Friend in Need, we wish you a Happy Dussehra

3.9. Deepavali

What is Happening in India?

It is Diwali - the Festivals of lights!!

9 Nov 2015, 10:56



India, the land of rich cultural heritage, where many festivals are celebrated has one or the other festival every month! The brightest one of them is Diwali (or Deepavali) the "festival of lights". It is the glorious occasion that is not restricted to one day, but extended to a five-day celebration.

Like for every other Hindu festival, stories from mythology are associated with Diwali too! If

you remember our post on Dussehra, it was a celebration of Lord Ram's victory over the King of Lanka, Ravana. Diwali also marks the return of Lord Ram to his kingdom Ayodhya. On the arrival of Lord Ram along with his wife Sita, the people of Ayodhya decorated their homes as well as the city of Ayodhya by lighting tiny diyas (earthen lamps) throughout the city, in order to welcome their beloved prince Shri Ram and Devi Sita. This is why we still celebrate it with lights and the lighting of diyas.

The great Hindu epic 'Mahabharata' has another interesting story related to the 'Kartik Amavasyaa', which is the day of Diwali. According to the story, 'the Pandavas', the five brothers Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahdeva, were sentenced to thirteen years exile following their defeat against 'the Kauravas' - Duryodhana and his ninety nine brothers, at the game of dice. Therefore, the Pandavas spent thirteen years in the jungles and returned to their kingdom on the day of 'Kartik Amavasyaa'. On their return, the people of their kingdom welcomed the Pandavas by celebrating the event by lighting earthen lamps everywhere in their city.

So on this wonderful occasion, we at Friend In Need wish you a very happy and prosperous Diwali!

We also leave you with one of our favorite Diwali songs from Bollywood!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeARcrGZee8>

4. Action Research

4.1. Action Research via internship

4.1.1. The sanitation and waste challenges of Indian villages by FIN interns

24 Jul 2015, 09:00

When you have a layman's view on sanitation in developing countries like we had before our trip, you might think that it is mainly a matter of fundraising and infrastructure building. The truth is, money is a piece of cake compared to the real impediments. These three main challenges are the ones we got to know from talking to the villagers and associated decision makers. The biggest challenge is corruption and the inefficiency of public service it implies: from the very bottom to the top of the administration, one single inept level is enough to put brakes on the entire system. For instance, the whole waste collection system falls apart as soon as the Panchayat staff stops showing up for work while being paid (which was the case throughout the time when we were in Kameshwaram – apparently he was on a prolonged six months honeymoon), or even higher when the district level decision makers do not spend the amounts allocated on real projects.



The second huge problem is the mindset and the habits of the population targeted. The former shows when people use the concrete-made toilet building as a warehouse or a kitchen, refuse to use ecological toilets – or even conventional ones – because it is constraining, refuse to maintain toilets because it is supposed to be the scavengers’ job, don’t see the point of collecting and treating their waste etc. The third immense problem is lack of leadership our own NGO is facing. A very harsh obstacle related to economic context of India: a rising country with huge wealth inequalities. For our sanitation and waste treatment projects to work, we need at least one dynamic and leading fellow to be continuously on the ground in Kameshwaram, a nice but very small village. But the fact is, there is no problem finding dynamic people to give ‘orders’ to others to do the job. There are plenty who would like to stand and oversee the work of others. We don’t want such people. And the people who are willing to do these simple tasks are not very dynamic or skilled or used to coming every day to work. It’s really a chicken or egg problem here.

4.1.2. *FIN team participates in study on Climate Change and Poverty*

February 1



Climate change or global warming is going to (negatively) impact developing countries more than the developed ones and within any country, the poor are likely to suffer the most. However, in research on climate change, mitigation and adaptation strategies vis-a-vis the poor remains an understudied subject. Moreover, the poor are rarely consulted or involved in policy design. So this study aimed to be different as Paranjothi from FIN interviewed farmers,

fishermen and other service providers in Kameshwaram to gauge their ideas on climate change. Their perceptions....see <http://www.merit.unu.edu/economists-facing-climate-change-.../>

4.1.3. *A private ecological house and a not so clean government school Action Research Intermediate findings*

6 Jul 2015, 17:50



Have you ever seen an ecological house? Mr. Subburaman has one in Trichy: rainwater harvesting, waste segregation, solar panels, biogas generator, ecological toilets. This is also the office of his social enterprise, SCOPE, which aims to spread properly constructed ecological toilets all across Tamil Nadu and provide training to masons for the same. FIN has built many ecosan toilets in collaboration with SCOPE in our target village, Kameshwaram.

From Trichy, we went to our target village. Once arrived in Kameshwaram, the first thing we did was to visit the village's school (St. Sebastian school), on which FIN is trying to work on a continuous basis. We had the pleasure to meet a highly motivated headmaster and to witness the beginning of a change, but there is still a long way to go regarding sanitation and waste

management. There is a difference between thinking and doing. The change we wish to bring would not only be infrastructural but would also have to trigger a change in mentalities. Working with government school with students belonging to economically backward society, has its own challenges of budget constraint, not too motivated teachers and in - general not so very developed intellect level of the students.



One of our tasks for the upcoming weeks would be to create a pathway for future FIN interns to impart effective sanitation and waste management knowledge to the students and to make St. Sebastian school a model institute for similar government schools in India and elsewhere as far as implementation of proper sanitation and waste management practices are concerned.

4.1.4. Lessons from trip to Auroville

Exploring Model village Auroville
24 Jun 2015, 09:16

Hi, We started our discovery with a visit to Auroville, a township experimenting with technology and practices for ecological sustainability near Puducherry in Tamil Nadu. According to its website, "Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity." This is our 3rd full day in Auroville and we are meeting amazing people every day. The first one was Dr. Lucas Dengel who has created Eco Pro, a social enterprise that deals with many sanitation issues and this innovation seems to come naturally to someone like Lucas, who is so motivated.



We also discussed with some of his staff like Niranjana and Klara, who are working very hard to develop sustainable sanitation as well as effective waste management system in rural villages. We also met Kathy Walking the woman behind 'Eco Femme' - another social enterprise. She is working for improving the sanitation related issues of menstruation. She and her staff have designed a reusable cloth pad that can also

serve to promote environmental hygiene, health, education and income related issues. These people are giving us ideas and perspectives that we are eager to test in the reality of other villages like Kameshwaram.

Waste management from cradle to grave

1 Jul 2015, 18:44



On our 4th day around the Matrimandir (a temple for the universal mother), we met Gillian from Eco Service, which is the Auroville's self-sufficient waste management service. She explained to us how they collect and segregate waste and especially how tough it has been – and still is – to change the mindset of people. She is excited to see that our generation is willing to pick up the torch, and that there are people who are having quality education and yet settling in Auroville for social benefit. We found the exact kind of a person Gillian was talking about: Ribhu, founder of Wasteless, a social enterprise that teaches students about waste reduction and segregation. He

has chosen the perspective of education as a way to build a strong and sustainable change in the perception we have of waste.



But if challenges in Auroville are like a hill, then challenges in Kameshwaram and other rural Indian villages are like mountains - very high mountains, and it would require a lot of research to adapt such initiatives to Kameshwaram. However, the common features in both are likely to be education and change in the mindset of children and adults towards waste segregation at the source.

4.1.5. The great low-cost toilet challenge!

March 17

What's happening in Kameshwaram:

From time to time, we have an evaluation of our projects by well wishers. These are folks, who do not participate in our day to day activities, but are willing to spend time and effort to help us periodically by giving feedback. Thus, recently, we had three extremely sincere evaluators, Dr. R.S. Venkataraman (former Chairman and Managing Director of Engineers India Limited), Mrs. Vaijyanthi (his spouse) and Mr. Manoj Kumar, the co-founder of Pratanute – who is our web master <http://www.pratanute.com/> visiting the village.

They made a great team! Vaijyanthi with her affable manners and outreach put the families at ease and got the ladies to talk openly. They evaluated both our toilet construction and waste management project. With respect to the former, the team studied the location and condition of toilets and probed the users about the perceived and actual problems with the ecosan toilets and reasons for many preferring septic tank toilets.

The great low-toilet challenge is as follows. We co-sponsored the construction of a lot of urine diversion toilets in the village – the main sponsors were UNICEF and WATER AID and like a lot of other toilets sponsored by such reputed international agencies – they have been abandoned for a variety of reasons (and a number of toilets sponsored by the World Bank in the village have never been used).

Why? This is what our investigating team had to find out. Their findings in the next post!



4.1.6. The great waste collection challenge!

March 28

What's happening in Kameshwaram:

In Kameshwaram as in many other villages of India – there is no local waste management system. This is one of the features that the present Indian Government wants to tackle in its ‘Swach Bharath’ or ‘Clean India’ programme. In terms of implementation, this has translated into the hiring of two sweepers for 3 hours a day during the work week by the village council, the Panchayat. At dawn, they sweep the premises of the council house and any streets during the rest of the time available. In a unique public private cooperation with the Panchayat, we employ the same sweepers, at higher hourly rates, to collect non-biodegradable waste from house to house. This is what the residents dump on the streets or just about anywhere – while many compost the biodegradable waste. We are asking for INR 20 per month (this is about 28 cents in €) or (32 cents in US\$) for waste collection and we know that everyone (and I really mean every household!) pays INR 100 for cable television and the normal spending on alcohol by the men of the households is about ten times more. The payment for waste collection is used to buy garbage bins for the village and transport the waste to a compost yard in a nearby town. Yet, 177 households left the program in 2014. They refused to pay and after a couple of months of free garbage pick-up, we were forced to take out the tins.

So our evaluation team (refer to previous post) was to ask the villagers the following questions:

1) What are the benefits to you from getting your garbage picked up?

- 2) For those who are paying regularly.... – how can we induce others to emulate your example?
3) For those not paying... – what’s your problem? How come you aren’t paying? Can we help you in any way?

Answers in our next post!



4.2. Result of Action Research

4.2.1. Findings of investigating team about use of toilets

March 22

What’s happening in Kameshwaram:

What the investigating team found out about why toilets are not being used.... These are extracts from the notes of our evaluation team from their conversations with the villagers.

1. This is what the villagers said about why composting toilets are being abandoned:

“The composting toilets are so embarrassing to use. When guests come from outside – they make such a face when I explain to them how to use them and we have to be careful about the ash and water usage. My boys tell me, they won’t bring their friends home. So we are going to close this up and build a toilet with a septic tank.”

“Yes, I know we can use the compost for banana trees and other plants. But, we are not THAT poor – and so with the status we have reached now – we can build the septic tank and simply buy some fertilizer”.

In short – it is not convenient to use and it is viewed as poorest man’s toilet – thus signaling its position at bottom of the pecking order. This has to be changed for it to be used. Moreover, there is a need for plastering of the outside of ecosan tank instead of leaving it as just a brick and mortar

construction, because then it slowly erodes in the saline atmosphere of the coastal area. Such short term cost cutting measures are actually very costly in the long run.

2. Why septic toilets are being abandoned:

“They overflow; they stink and flies are around them” {here cracks were found on the septic tank; and many were found to be simple pits with a barrier and not a septic tank }

“Can you imagine? We are not city folks and these people just built the toilet next to the kitchen. Of course, we are not going use this toilet – but it did become handy as a store room once we closed up the toilet”.

3. And there are blatant faults and it is not clear whether the problem is due to households or the construction team. It is also not clear whether it is due to knowledge gaps or carelessness.

“There is no contamination from our toilet – why should we waste more money in plastering the inside of a septic tank? Instead of open defecation – waste is going into a tank. Where is the proof that this is bad?”

“What’s wrong if our toilet is very close to our pond ? This is furthest away from our house and it is easy to get water for the toilet then.”

4. In all underused or abandoned toilets – there are some common problems:

“Mortar is eroded, roof has cracks or gone after cyclones, door is displaced, latches are rusty or fallen off.”



So knowledge on construction needs to improve greatly, with attention being paid to details and built to last a long time. There is a crucial need for quality control of septic tank construction, especially of the inside and outside plastering (only for high water table areas) with quality material. There is also a need for greater awareness about contamination from wrongly constructed septic tanks to surrounding soil and water in high water table areas. Everyone needs to understand the importance of locating bore wells at sufficient distance from the septic tank.

5. Then there is the usual gender issue:

“Toilet is for women. Men don’t need it. The fields or beach with their open breeze beat any stinky cramped toilets in the morning.”

6. Still the biggest impact is not negative but POSITIVE! We find that toilets are now being accepted as a 'need' by all households at least for their womenfolk. This means that we just need to trigger behavioural change in men towards toilet usage – health status will not improve if only half the population uses toilets!

4.2.2. Findings of investigating team about waste collection

April 2

What's happening in Kameshwaram?

What the investigating team found out about our waste collection program....

1. They are clearly two populations: First, there are households, which love the waste collection program and are willing to pay the very nominal sum for it.



2. Second, there are those who feel it is their right to have their waste collected for free – like water in the village (which is also totally mismanaged as it is free). This group (the clear majority) feels that when the garbage becomes too much, then the government will do something about it. Till then – they can just litter wherever they please.

3. Willingness to pay has nothing to do with income status – some very poor households are among our most loyal customers.

4. Our team noticed that those who have their men folk working in Singapore and Malaysia (and who see all the photos on whatapp and email) have greater exposure and seem very enthusiastic for Kameshwaram to become as clean as Singapore!

5. But the evaluation team also noted that our team doesn't pick up the trash on the same day every week and there were weeks when nobody came to pick up the trash. Why did this happen? That story is for another day.

Anybody got ideas on how to make unwilling households with full payment capacity join the waste management program? We are takers....

5. Teaching and Training

5.1. Training through internship

5.1.1. Shankhajit Sen

Introducing our academic FIN intern – Shankhajit Sen

23 Nov 2015, 12:04

Can you tell us a bit about yourself? I have completed my Masters in Economics and am currently engaged as Research Scholar with the department of Women Studies (Gender Studies) at the University of Calcutta. So you can guess that I live in Kolkata! But I am also a real Kolkata native - in my free time, I enjoy writing short stories and plays. What are the themes that you explore in your writing? Has the study of economics influenced your writing in any way? Apart from politics, I am passionate about writing. Moreover, by that I mean all sorts of writings. I am a joint editor of a little magazine, a trademark of Calcuttan intelligentsia, RUPAK (literal translation is ‘Abstract’). I enjoy writing plays for stage and short stories. The reason that persuaded me to take up Economics is the same reason that I write for.



I find reflections of life in both Literature and Economics. Socio-economic-political scenarios and their changing facets, and their reflections in the common masses encourages me to write, be it plays, stories or even article or for that matter academic papers too. Literature taught me to imagine and the study of Economics has taught me to relate the imagination with the ground realities. I see Economics not as the analysis of cost and benefit, rather as a study of the lives of people thriving amongst the push and pull of desires and fulfilments, and this is what I write about. Devoid of any political affiliations, I believe in colorless politics! Come – come - there is no such thing as colorless politics! So what do you mean? Ma’am, by colourless politics I meant the politics for change based on the strategic and immediate needs, without any affiliations from any certain political party. The core idea behind this colourless politics is based on the freedom to criticize or praise any policy of any party/ideology that is endorsed by them, which I feel, would serve the need for the common people and their betterment. Friday was not a tool for

Crusoe’s survival; Friday was the reason behind Crusoe’s survival. And that is the reason I felt this incessant urge to work with Friend in need, as it does not promise to ‘end all form of ills from

the face of Earth by 2050', rather it promises to stand by, in the moment when someone needs them the most. And I dream of doing the same!

5.1.2. Lucile Rogissart

Meet our new interns and follow them as they travel through Tamil Nadu and work on our projects in Kameshwaram!

17 Jun 2015, 09:12

We asked them some questions – and here are their answers: Can you introduce yourself please? My name is Lucile Rogissart, I am a 21-year-old Masters student in Economics and Public Policy in Sciences Po Paris School. I chose to study economics, because I love it intellectually speaking, and because, I feel that it is a powerful tool to understand reality and change it for the better. So what are you doing with Friend in Need? I have just joined the internship and during June, I will be essentially working with the rest of the team on answering the three research-action questions of Pranay presented in the last facebook post. Thereafter, I will be carrying out a survey of the available literature on the types of government interventions for sanitation coverage in both developed and developing countries.



Let us remember, universal worldwide sanitation coverage, even in Europe, is a post World War II phenomenon. What makes you interested in doing all this? Why do you think it is worthwhile? I was born in Paris and I have always been living there. I began very early to be aware of how lucky I have been. This awareness grew a lot these past 4 years, leading me to devote my life to do something for those who are not as lucky as I am. I am also extremely concerned about climate change, and the high vulnerability it can imply. I know I am young and still filled with illusions but I am eager to accomplish some things which I feel are fair, just and worth working for. I have never visited India though I have travelled a lot and I am struck by the present lack of sanitation coverage and its consequences, especially for women. I am thus highly enthusiastic about working with Friend In Need, and I hope my energy and devotion will contribute to its wonderful purpose.

5.1.3. Pranay Jain

Meet our new interns and follow them as they travel through Tamil Nadu and work on our projects in Kameshwaram!

13 Jun 2015, 09:21



We asked them some questions – and here are their answers: Can you introduce yourself please? Hi, I am Pranay Jain. I am a native of Patna, Bihar. I am pursuing a dual degree (B.tech in Civil Engineering and Masters in Economics) in the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. I love playing cricket and working in teams. So what are you doing with Friend in Need? Despite the launching of a full fledged waste management plan (under 'Swachh Bharat Abhyan'), proper waste management still remains a major problem affecting health and sustainability in rural India. I would be trying to bridge the gap between the Government and the village Panchayat and village members, who are the targeted beneficiaries. My objectives under the guidance of Prof Shyama are three: (i) To learn about government incentive programmes for waste management and develop a presentation that explains it simply

to Panchayats; (ii) To formulate a project proposal for a compost yard for waste segregation in Kameshwaram; (iii) To explore if and how a local team of villagers can make a decent livelihood from waste collection, waste segregation and resale – and with dignity. Our mission is to find a solution, especially for (iii). What makes you interested in doing all this? Why do you think it is worthwhile? I believe that many common problems of Indian society can be partially tackled through new technology introduction with a humanitarian approach. Theorist or a corporate world professional, wherever I may end up, I may never have this opportunity again to test what I believe in, and in the process, fulfill my duty towards society. The motivation and skill sets that FIN team members showcase, are not easy to replicate and it is a learning experience for me to match their standards. I am devoting the two coming months to FIN, in order to utilize and further sharpen my skills, while working with a competent team under a highly motivated leader, to solve the problem of sustainability and waste management at the grass roots level of Indian society - taking Kameshwaram as our challenge.

5.1.4. Manon Palomo

What's happening in Friend In Need? Meet our new interns and follow them as they travel through Tamil Nadu and work on our projects in Kameshwaram!

9 Jun 2015, 15:56



We asked them some questions – and here are their answers: Can you introduce yourself please? My name is Manon Palomo, I am 24 years old, and from France. I have completed my first year in a Master of Economics at ENSAE Paristech (Paris Graduate School of Economics, Statistics and Finance). I am a very curious, motivated and social person and after a scientific bachelor's degree, I discovered economics and I fell in love with this field! I am currently in a gap year, during which I first worked for the IMF and for the French Ministry of the Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy. As a third internship, I thought it would

be interesting to work with an action-research based venture like Friend In Need, because I want to offer my skills to help people in need, to improve social and economic conditions of life in developing countries. So what are you doing with Friend in Need? I am specializing in Environmental Economics and Climate Change and our school encouraged us to engage in personal reflections on economics and develop real competencies to analyze and model economic and social processes. But, during my first two internships, I only improved my theoretical knowledge because they took place in governmental organizations. Now, I want to apply my knowledge to develop local capacities and local projects. Exactly what Shyama Ramani calls “action research”. For me, to be a volunteer in the NGO “Friend-In-Need” is a perfect opportunity to reach my goals and to act concretely, at a micro level. This first humanitarian experience could encourage me to pursue my wish to help people and lead me to work specifically on the field of social and solidarity economics. Well, in FIN, we had planned on one thing, but I ended up during many other things – which were all needed for FIN and were more important. First, I did a survey of the literature on innovation adoption – to understand why it is such a challenge to persuade people to invest in a toilet or use them. Second, we do not understand clearly how low cost toilets are built – the documents that have been written – are not by those who have built a toilet themselves. So Shyama has been working with the masons to record the process as recounted by them. I have entered all the data (painful job) so that others can try to build the production and cost functions for low cost toilets. Third, I have analyzed data on Kameshwaram on perceptions about toilets and health impacts and I can tell you that toilets really matter according to the data! Morbidity and incidence of sickness is less in families with toilets! Fourth, I have worked a lot to

organize this wonderful trip to India! We will be sharing our adventures with you! What makes you interested in doing all this? Why do you think it is worthwhile? I am very interested in all topics related to sustainable development and global solidarity. The fight against climate change and against poverty is so important for me. I feel that environmental and Development matters concern each and every country in the world; they require a specific attention. Concrete and effective solutions cannot be achieved without worldwide consultation. That's why - for example, last year in my school, I voluntarily organized and animated a public conference about energy sources and climatic change in order to raise awareness among students on these topics. This year I participated in the Sciences Po's student simulation on climate negotiations Make it Work. This project is related to the 21st United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP21) on Climate Change, will take place in Paris in December 2015. So I am very glad to be in India, a country which according to experts is at high risk with respect to climate change and do my little bit for the fight against poverty too.

Project RISHI (Rural India Social and Health Improvement)

9 Sep 2015, 09:08



Meet the new FIN student volunteers from the US! Project RISHI (Rural India Social and Health Improvement) is a student run organization that partners with project sites in India to implement long-term, research driven projects addressing disparities in education, sanitation, and access to various resources. Our work with FIN consists of conducting a targeted sanitation education campaign that motivates villagers to practice better sanitation habits and improve overall toilet usage in Kameshwaram. We are looking forward to traveling to India and meeting our project partners! We would also like to thank Dr. Ramani for her support and advice as well as Lucile, Manon, and Pranay for their valuable research and insight in the project design. The objectives in Kameshwaram are as follows: 1. Workshops in Saint Sebastian school to teach about WASH i.e. waste management, sanitation and hygiene behaviour - in the form of fun games that also induce learning and hopefully trigger behavioural change. These will be assessed for effectiveness and fit to local context by the Nagapattinam Child Protection Commission and Sangeeta Venkatesh of FIN. 2. Meetings with members of households who are anti-toilet - to understand why they do not want to or cannot have a toilet and to persuade them to have one. 3. Meeting with Panchayat or

village council members in Kameshwaram and few other villages to assess the nature and impact of community led sanitation drives held so far in their villages. And of course - writing face book posts to let you know of our progress!

5.1.5. *Aditi*

Meet RISHI member Aditi interning with FIN

14 Sep 2015, 09:00



My name is Aditi Shastry and my major is Biomedical Engineering at UC Davis. Throughout my high school and college career, I have joined clubs such as Red Cross to try and help others, but realized that I want a more hands on approach for developing healthcare solutions and just generally helping others in any aspect that they might need me to. My goal using my major is to create biomedical devices that are cheap enough to use in developing countries and so that everyone can have affordable access to healthcare in less developed areas. For this project, I have helped to develop some ideas that can be used in the classroom to teach children about good sanitation and unsafe sanitation practices. I have helped to contact some locals that have had experience specifically in sanitation and in education that can help us understand what works when teaching students and

even adults. I am interested because after going to India every couple of years, the differences in sanitation practices become quite evident between India and the United States. Things like practicing good sanitation have been drilled into our heads both by the school system in the United States and generally by our parents as well. However, in India, this was never the case. Open defecation seemed to be the norm and for years, I was appalled that India even had signs saying "Please do not urinate here." I knew that there were diseases associated with this, and without fail, I would get sick every time I went to India. I think that it is worthwhile because I want the children and future generations of the village and the country to understand the ramifications of their actions, and to try and make them understand why it is worth it to change their ways. I want them to be able to change the future so that good sanitation becomes the norm for them too. I really enjoy working towards developing a project of this caliber and trying to make a lasting change on society. Going to some country and trying to change something for a short trip does not have the same impact that Project RISHI tries to make every time they go to India. These lasting and sustainable solutions to problems are truly the only way to solve any issues.

5.1.6. Sahana

Meet RISHI member Sahana - interning with FIN

10 Sep 2015, 09:00



My name is Sahana Rajan, and I am a fourth year Pharmaceutical Chemistry major and a Middle East and South Asian Studies minor at the University of California, Davis. As a member of Project RISHI at UC Davis, my team and I have worked to develop long-term, sustainable initiatives that function within the village ecosystem. I have always had a deep interest in working with rural populations on public health measures, and working with FIN has given me the opportunity to critically analyze these issues. Through school interventions, baseline research for a community led total sanitation program, and further data collection at the schools, we hope to understand current hygiene behavior to generate demand for toilets. These issues have both cultural, economic, and health implications, so a research driven project design is necessary to determine the best course of action. I eagerly look forward to interacting with schoolchildren and learning more about Kameshwaram on our upcoming trip!

5.1.7. Aditya

Meet the youngest FIN volunteer!

12 Aug 2015, 09:00

The children of India are also rising to the challenge of bringing about positive change! Can you introduce yourself please? My name is Aditya Parekh, I'm a 17 year old Grade 12 student studying in Inventure Academy, Bangalore. I love learning new things, reading, travelling and of course-



sports! So what are you doing with Friend in Need? I first heard about Friend in Need's work through my mother's friend (Sangeeta Venkatesh; Research & Student Relations, FIN Trust). I was interested in their work and decided to do my internship with FIN during my summer holidays in June 2015. I am now working to create awareness about good WASH behaviour and answering a few research questions on the availability of WASH resources in Indian schools. There are powerful tools on the Internet for advancing hygiene in India and I've been finding interesting and fun videos and songs to promote sanitation in a way that will stick with children. What makes you interested in doing all this? Why do you think it is worthwhile? Upto a certain age, you're shielded from the harsh reality of things and remain 'blissfully unaware' of the true state of the world. I feel I'm at an age where I need to take it upon myself to deepen my understanding of the way things really are and there's no better place to start than right here in India! During my internship, I've interacted with some really

interesting people and learnt many new things. Soon, I'll get to visit Kameshwaram, a trip I'm excited to make, both for learning and adventure purposes! I feel that everybody dreams of changing the world, but taking the first step and starting small is the hardest part. This internship is my metaphorical first step and I've been extremely fortunate to have been able to help FIN.

5.2. Training

5.2.1. Learning again about the different perspectives and learning to be a model guest

What's happening to our interns?

20 Jun 2015, 12:13

We have a shoestring budget and we rely on the good will of Paranjothi's family and my extensive family to receive our interns and host them for a few days from time to time. Receiving spontaneous hospitality is soul food - it is proof of goodness in the world and a source of spiritual strength to work towards further good. More technical stuff will come – but I want to share a wonderful note from them first!



A big thanks to our amazing hosts!

As soon as we - French girls - arrived in Chennai and took our first steps in India, we had the pleasure of experiencing the warm welcome of Paranjothi and his brother's family. All were so extremely kind to us, feeding us and taking us out and we couldn't imagine being introduced to the south Indian culture in a better way!



Now we are in Chennai and again there is so much to learn from the second family for the 3 of us (i.e. Pranay, Lucile and Manon), while we are here to see Manon off to France: being humble, caring, getting along with strangers as if you know them since ages and having intellectual and interesting talks. They are the cousins of Shyama ma'am. There is a lot that can be written about them and the time they spent with us, but we don't find apt words for it.

Sincere thanks to you all and please stay connected! We are so very thankful to you for receiving us in your homes and making us also feel like at home and we hope we can do the same for you someday!

Manon, Lucile and Pranay

5.2.2. Building new toilets in Kameswaram

Everybody had to work for at least 2 hrs for 3 days to understand and respect the work done by the masons. They also learn the meaning of social inclusion by practicing it.

27 Oct 2015, 08:45

We had the opportunity to visit toilet construction sites of both ecosan and septic tank toilet. It was incredible to see the steps taken to ensure proper construction of the toilets. The mason told us that the distance between the septic tank and the groundwater source was 30 feet--ensuring that there would not be contamination.



The importance of toilet construction was further reinforced when we accompanied Sumathi ma'am to observe the status of latrine usage in the fisherman colony. Many latrines had fallen into disuse as a result of improper construction--using too much cement rather than brick leading to erosion and damage during the rainy season. With the effectiveness of the new construction sites, these old issues can be avoided.

5.2.3. Exploring the nearby St. Sebastian School

11 Jul 2015, 17:48



The first week in Kameshwaram was made easy with Raji ma'am being there with us. She was being our personal translator, a guide and a guardian. This week in Kameshwaram was dedicated to meeting with people occupying important positions namely the Panchayat President, Vice-president and the school Headmaster, and to present to them our vision for Kameshwaram regarding sanitation coverage and waste management. This was the week in which we went to the St. Sebastian school for the first time. Those meetings and visits convinced us of the necessity to acknowledge the precise initial conditions of the village. This check up helped us in the design of the several projects we are working on. During the week, we also went to different waste collection sites, both governmental and private in order to find the feasibility of generating employment and revenue from waste. It was also the time when we went to FIN's office in Kameshwaram for the first time. We were excited about it and also noted some crucial points about FIN's structure as a whole, to advise upon it, as making FIN sustainable and effective is also one of our deliverable. Sadly for us, Raji ma'am had to leave us on

Thursday and we knew how tough would it be for us to communicate with local people without her, so we tried to finish every meeting beforehand and postponed all else for the time when Shyama ma'am joined us.

5.2.4. *Aditya addresses St. Sebastian school*

Independence day and beyond!

FIN helps you to develop science communication.

22 Aug 2015, 09:36





On August 15th, Aditya (see previous post) was the special guest at the independence day celebrations in Saint Sebastian School in Kameshwaram! I picked him up very early that morning from the hotel so that we could be at the school on time at 8.30 AM.

“Hi Aditya, you’re going to be asked to hoist the flag. And you might be asked to make a speech.”

“Can I please skip that ? – that’s really not my thing”.

“Sure, you can just answer questions” and he agreed and his mom wished him “best of luck” and we were off.

In addition to identifying videos appropriate for Indian kids to teach hygiene practices – he had worked over the last few years to gather newspapers from his own home and those of family friends. Aditya had sold these for recycling – and with the funds generated, we were planning to start a financial support scheme of rupees 500 for six kids, who would be in charge of monitoring hygiene at the school. But on discussing with the school director, it was decided that the money would be used instead to buy big waste bins.

Mr. Das, the school Principal explained: “How can students of the hygiene committee tell their friends to put waste paper into bins – if we don’t have enough of them? We need some big strong bins in the school yard so that the students can dispose of trash without having to go to their classrooms”.

And so that was that. You will see pictures of the garbage bins bought in some future post.

Aditya answered the student’s few questions very well. I still remember one of them.

A kid asked: “What do you think is essential for India’s economic growth?”

I was quite surprised at this question from a 15 year old and I was equally pleasantly taken aback at the answer given by Aditya without a second thought (and he’s only two years older) : “skills building – that’s what we need – skills building”.

I couldn’t agree more.

5.3. Internship Feedbacks

5.3.1. What did you learn? FIN Interns speak out.....

1 Aug 2015, 15:13

This experience has taught us a lot, on the professional side as well as on the human point of view. Now each of us will tell you what we think are the most important lessons we got out of the FIN internship experience.



Manon:

- Having only a few but clear and specific objectives is very important so that we are able to achieve them.
- Working in a team can be very efficient in terms of division of labour. Each person has particular capacities and fields of expertise: to understand these differences and to mix them lead to a better work.
- The communication between a team and the ability to listen and to adapt are essential to progress.
- The most important is the passion we put in a project. To overcome the – numerous – obstacles, it is fundamental to love and to believe in the work we do.

Pranay:

- A common goal can unite people speaking different language, from different countries and following different cultures. Work ethics also plays a key role here.
- It is more important to find one's passion, the work done accordingly would automatically be more efficient.

- Every person has his/her own comfort zone and the way to work with them would differ. Success of a project depends sometimes more on inter-personal skills than technical know-how.

Lucile:

- Synergy is crucial regarding team work. The recipe for it is a subtle balance between hard work and chill time, individual and common work, as well as a good knowing of each member's capabilities and aspirations.
- Cultural differences are mainly affecting the software of people's mind, but the hardware (the values, the ethic...) can be very close between two people from opposed parts of the world.
- I learnt how to work in very autonomous way, under numerous constraints and how it can improve creativity among the team and the individuals.

5.3.2. Observations and Recommendations of FIN interns

Follow FIN interns on their tour of Tamil Nadu - Their Recommendations for FIN

1 Aug 2015, 14:55



Hopefully, our mission was not only to make a list of all the problems we faced, but also to suggest solutions and recommendations for the challenges mentioned as follows:

1. Even though less than 5% of the Kameshwaram households are registered in the waste management program, there is no point in stopping now. So we must work towards increasing waste collection program coverage.

2. To motivate people to join, the best customers must be made 'Programme Ambassadors' and they must be honoured at public functions.

3. Reorganize lunch time at school, seating arrangements with installation of washbasins, so that children wash their hands before eating.



4. To motivate people to use ecological toilets, change the design to make it attractive to users. It should not be forced but desired.
5. Find a mason who is also an ecosan champion.
6. Make at least some of the staff go for English classes so that they can communicate with non-Tamilians.
7. Give staff training in time management, project management, waste management, composting and marketing.
8. Reinforce the link between the different volunteers and what they have done, and make sure the next teams will also be international.

We are thrilled to see that our staying there and that even small cheap changes can really have an impact.

5.3.3. Experience

Challenges we faced doing our work – as student practitioners!

27 Jul 2015, 22:49



When your work has always consisted of essay writing or presentation making – in which the only constraints are the abilities of your brain – doing some fieldwork for an NGO in India is quite a challenge. First you have to face the language issue,

especially in a village like Kameshwaram where very few talk or even understand English. Thankfully, Raji ma'am was our translator for a few days, but once she left, we (Pranay and Lucile) were only equipped with Hindi, English and French – i.e. not equipped at all – to communicate with the villagers who all spoke only Tamil!

We also had to face problems related to the essence of an NGO, which implies limited budget, and the combination of long term horizon and punctual missions by different volunteers. It is very hard to know exactly what already has been done or tried, what worked or not, who was already contacted and what came out of it etc. Without a proper communication and connection between the different missions and inters, you quickly waste time and energy. And when international groups work with villagers, especially if they are used to certain levels of



efficiency in time and resource management, they quickly figure out that this is definitely not a concern of all! The cultural differences are very apparent at work, especially the conception of time and its management are very different. As it is hard to bring that point without being too general and simplistic, we will let this Ted Talk lighten it up!
http://www.ted.com/talks/devdutt_pattanaik

5.3.4. *Feedback from RISHI Intern at FIN- Sahana*

Follow our FIN Interns - a final word from UC DAVIS student Sahana Rajan!

12 Dec 2015, 08:44



Working in India this summer has added to my perspective of the nation I call motherland and how I can volunteer in a meaningful manner. The trip felt both like an adventure but also like returning home after a very long time. Prior to leaving on the trip, I felt very nervous about speaking in Tamil as my American accent breaks through, divulging my varied experience despite the background I hold so dear. Upon reaching India, I spoke Tamil more freely than I ever have with my own family. I found immense pleasure in making small talk with rickshaw drivers, shopkeepers, and people I met on the bus ride to and from Kameshwaram. A question I heard most often was “if you are from America, how do you know Tamil?”, and it always started a conversation about culture and mother tongue (and a special thanks to my family). I remember I got that question on the schoolyard one day, and a whole group of children heard me talk about the importance of respecting your heritage. It was an exciting moment, and I never realized how strongly I

felt about my background until then. It felt refreshing to hear the perspective of children as well as I spoke with hundreds of students on this trip, especially to do with WASH. Once we started talking

about water borne diseases, they devoured the information and wanted to know more immediately. What about ebola? What about the cold? If it weren't for exams and other time constraints, we would have been there all day discussing health and science. Regarding development interventions, I realize now it takes a village to raise a project. After this experience, I understand to a greater depth of how a project should be articulated and framed. A good intention is a small step towards realizing a greater goal, which demands introspection and critique. Projects should be founded in thorough research, but beyond that, they should take into account all the varying viewpoints of those involved. A sound project design needs no convincing, all the players and goals will fall in place. When on the field, it's a time to be adaptable to new information and assume the role of an objective observer, and I learned as much about myself as I did about Kameshwaram. I would also like to thank all of those who have accompanied me on this journey, both literally and in spirit. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the guidance of Professor Shyama Ramani, who inspired me from the very first time I saw her TED talk on my Facebook feed. I have loved connecting with her as a great-aunt and a mentor. Through her, I was introduced to other FIN interns—Rushva, Shankhajit, Lucile, and Pranay, who all provided valuable insight in realizing the intervention plan. Sangeeta ma'am was truly wonderful to accompany us on field and her consistent feedback provided necessary evaluation and validation of the work completed. In Kameshwaram, I felt so thankful to be under the watchful eye of Paranjothi sir, Muthu sir, Sumathi ma'am, and Vijaykumar sir. I'd also like to thank the headmaster and staff and St. Sebastian, who allowed us to present at the schools. Without community members invested in sanitation, the intervention could not have been achieved. Closer to home, I'd like to thank my team at Project RISHI for their tireless and dedicated work, my family for their sponsorship and support, and all who have been following this experience for your kind words of encouragement.



18 Oct 2015, 11:43



As I leave India, I reflect on the whole adventure undertaken beyond WASH and project plans. To me, India trips are long days in saree shops, getting spoiled by grandparents, and all the various five star restaurants Chennai offers. This trip has allowed me to fall in love with Tamil Nadu in a new and remarkable way. Some parts were very nostalgic—filter coffee, bumpy auto rides, and the wandering street cows. However, this time, I miss all that I had once avoided on India trips—hole in the wall eateries, midday walks under the blazing sun,

and the strange charm of public transport. As I've been telling my largely Chennai based family—the people of Nagapattinam are probably the nicest people I've met. I was quite nervous about my accented Tamil before the trip, but I felt so encouraged and supported despite being a foreigner, and I feel closer to my roots than ever.

- Sahana

5.3.5. *RISHI Intern at FIN- Aditi*

Follow our FIN Interns - a final word from UC DAVIS student Aditi!

28 Nov 2015, 09:37



I know for a fact that my life is easy. I was born and brought up in California, and including my trips to Bangalore and Mumbai, my life stayed very much on the side of convenience and modernity. My trip to Kameshwaram this past summer was my first visit into rural India, and as cliché as it is, it was the most eye opening experience of my life. Every person I met and everything I saw in the village offered me a fresh perspective on life. Day one of the trip itself had me more humbled than I've ever been before. Everything, from the classrooms of St. Sebastian School to the handmade fences of twigs and leaves, made my life in California seem artificial. The students at Saint Sebastian were the happiest kids I've met, and although I was incredibly glad to be able to teach them about good sanitation and hygiene practices, I felt that they

had a lot to teach me too. This made me realize what it meant to do a development intervention in a village. The village is fully functional and runs on its own, without help from outsiders. As much as an intervention project can be useful in increasing their quality of life, it needs to be something they accept as well; something they are willing to work on rather than something you force upon their life. And above all, an intervention project needs to be tailored to the specific village. One has to be careful in making assumptions about villagers as helpless people, awaiting outside intervention. Among my family, there was a lot of hesitancy surrounding my going to a rural village, especially coming from a life so drastically different from that in Kameshwaram. They brought up the fact that I inevitably fall sick every trip to India, but to everyone's surprise, I did not while I was working with FIN. Ammu's and Manju's mess did not disturb me as most places in India do, and working as a volunteer in a foreign place, I'm more than grateful for it. I understand so much more about the world and the country of my heritage. Every time a topic from this trip comes up with my family or friends, it launches a new conversation, and I never stop learning. Now that I am back in California, it is hard to forget the simplicity of the lives of the people that I crossed paths with this summer. When I think back on this trip, I almost forget that I went there to teach the children because it seems to me that I got everything back in return.

5.4. Training workshop on methods of survey

What I am doing with Professor Ramani – Shankhajit explains

12 Nov 2015, 11:59

Professor Ramani is heading a research project, whose objective is to assess the impact of sanitation on the livelihood of the rural population through improvement in health. To do this actual surveys have to be done in some diverse Indian states. FINISH Society standing for 'Financial Inclusion Improves Sanitation and Health', is the partner carrying out the surveys. Now each survey is preceded by a training workshop for the surveyors. The surveyors were taught about sanitation, water, waste management and hygiene behaviour – in very interesting and interactive ways, so that they would conduct the survey mindfully and truthfully. I was one of the assistants in the workshop and I was in charge of writing up the conference notes (among other things!). 'Play is equal to learning', is the only phrase that comes to my mind to describe the workshop to train surveyors on the impact of sanitation on health. Very very serious issues that can make the process of survey implementation complicated were made easy and enjoyable and yet with fullest achievement of the objectives. Circumventing the theoretical banalities, the main purpose was to elaborate the effect of the availability as well as usage of the toilets, and also the issue of waste management. Though I was diligently taking notes, sometimes the interaction in the conference became so much interesting that I kept listening and I missed writing and later I had hunt for them in my memory!

**But on the 5th and last day of the seminar, I was to get back to my home city and I began preparing to give a novice yet exuberant lecture on the topic to my fellows, thus was my interest generated on the issue post-conference.

PS - Note from ma'am: Shankha - What's this? – would love to see this also on post!



My answer: ma'am, writing about this would be a bit difficult because that would lead to book in itself! But nevertheless, I had a talk with a friend of mine, who completed his masters in technology, and asked him if he can contribute to the ideas of building a new advanced economical form of Ecosan, and all this when we met in a local train packed with daily commuters till brim and evading the elbow dodges of fellow passengers!

5.4.1. Results of training workshop

Trained and Motivated Surveyors as a result of interactive workshops - Shankhajit explains
12 Nov 2015, 12:03

Did the recruited surveyors learn their lessons well from the workshop? [Please see previous post to know what we are speaking about] To check this there were no tests – but they had to make up songs and messages and skits.

These were the 10 messages they came up with to teach the surveyed households.

1. To sit, we have a motorbike, to wear we have a saree but to relieve ourselves, should we go to the open? No! We should use a toilet.
2. A home with clean water is a home without sickness.
3. Give your baby breast milk rather than formula for better health for at least six months.
4. Start segregating waste at home and see your village prosper through waste management.
5. If you have a toilet – your health will improve.
6. If there is a toilet in your home – then your health will be within your reach in the yard.
7. Don't throw baby stools into the open – bury or throw them into a toilet.
8. Clean home means a beautiful environment.
9. Going in the open lowers the pride of your village.
10. Build a toilet – Your daughter will be safe and strong!

Further, the skit is in a mix of Hindi and Marati and as will be evident if even if you don't know these languages – they had learnt about the importance of sanitation well!

Skit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuRsbVO7QqM>

6. Advocacy

6.1. Advocacy through social media

6.1.1. Awareness campaign

February 14

It is question time!

We have a big question for you! What do these firms (whose logos you see in the picture) have in common with our cause?

Curious? Well - keep thinking and watch this space for the answer!



February 19

You have waited patiently for the answer - and so here it is....or at least some of it....

What does Amul whose butter and other dairy products feature daily in Indian meals and Hindustan Zinc a mining company have in common with our cause?

Well, they are both building toilets in rural India for their employees! Amul focuses on areas around its headquarters in Anand, Gujrat; and Hindustan Zinc targets its efforts in Rajasthan. These are clear illustrations of firms heeding to the clarion call of governments to contribute to improve sanitation coverage.

Indeed, more companies may be convinced to follow their example if helping the cause of sanitation increases their brand equity.

We want to test this hypothesis, by asking if you, our readers, would be willing to support a firm and its brand - if you knew they were supporting the sanitation cause. Give us your views by answering this survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/57DLG38>

It will only take a few minutes and your answer will be very precious to give insight on this important question. Thank you!

6.1.2. Thoughts for World toilet day

One of the most important days of the year is coming up for us - World Toilet Day on November 19!

9 Nov 2015, 11:03

As a run up to the day, here is an inspiring story about water less toilets!

The Dry San Hygienic Rural Toilet is a waterless system where waste doesn't have to be flushed. Prof Dr Kishore Munshi, senior professor and former dean of the Industrial Design Center at IIT-B, has developed the Dry San to reduce open defecation, improve hygiene, and help vulnerable sections including women and children.

The project has been developed for rural India, targeting mainly the farming community with the basic premise that there is dearth of water in most rural areas. Thus, the flush toilet cannot be part of the solution.

Read more about his interesting innovation here: <http://www.ndtv.com/mumbai-news/waterless-toilet-by-iit-b-professor-hopes-to-put-an-end-to-open-defecation-in-rural-india-slums-1225856>

6.1.3. Technology for safe sanitation

Interesting News from Around the World

9 Nov 2015, 16:14

The innovators of San Francisco are waging war on peeing in public! They have invented a wall coating that uses nanotechnology to repel urine and spray desperate offenders. Currently piloted on 9 walls, this hydrophobic coating is already creating waves!

Read about the whole story here: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3175929/Waging-war-peeing-public-Wall-coating-uses-nanotechnology-repel-urine-spray-desperate-offenders.html>

6.1.4. Creating awareness about new innovations on sanitation?

Technovation 2015

9 Nov 2015, 16:08

A fantastic new app has been developed by school girls from the city of Bangalore and it has won the prize at the Technovation 2015!

The app is to stimulate market creation in exchange of waste.

See their video pitch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UE3Dxbv7_s

You can buy the app here :

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=appinventor.ai_pentechan.Sellixio&hl=en

Kodos to you Team Pen-tech-an.

6.1.5. Story from around Kameswaram

May 2

What's happening not in Kameshwaram – but in the nearby town of Nagapattinam...Holy Cow!

The best waste management service ever!

It's a typical in-between meetings call to Kameshwaram from Maastricht:

“So what's happening Paranjothi?”

“Madam, I got you pictures of the cow – look into your dropbox.”

“Which cow Paranjothi?”

“That cow Madam. The one I told you about when you asked me how I take care of our biodegradable waste at home in Nagapattinam.”

“You keep a cow, Paranjothi? This is news to me – especially as you live in town!”

“No Madam. There’s a guy who keeps cows and he sells their milk too. And he has trained some of his cows to come at the same time in the morning through the streets in our locality. We keep buckets of our biodegradable waste.

He has asked us to keep all cooking waste water also in the bucket. Only vegetarian food of course.”

By this time I was staring at the pictures – which I have shared for your benefit.

“Yes, sorry for forgetting – of course – I remember you telling me about the cow guy. This is terrific.”

“And see, Madam, how clever the cow is – it does not tip the bucket over and dirty the place.

The cow guy has taught it to eat correctly without spilling. Such good eating manners - this cow has Madam.”



“I don’t know, who’s more clever - the cow guy or the cow. What’s the name of the cow, Paranjothi?”

“Madam, we don’t give cows names – they are all Kamadhenu – the givers of bounty. And the ladies say they prefer Kamadhenu to a waste collector – cow gives them nicer smiles.”

“Paranjothi – could we train a cow to go around the fishermen colony in Kameshwaram?”

“Madam, please cows are vegetarian - remember mad cow disease happened because they fed

meat to cows in foreign countries. We will need to ensure separation into vegetarian and non-vegetarian waste then.”

“Oh yes, sorry. I’ve got to go. But I will put this up on Facebook – I’ve been kind of busy and not written anything for a while.”

“Ok – bye till next time.”

6.1.6. *Women Day Message- Do not be afraid of being the change you want to see....*

March 8



There is a furor in India, indeed one that has been brewing for some time now, over the status and security of girls and women in India. This follows after the release of a film by the British journalist, Leslee Udwin, who has produced a very hard hitting documentary on the gang rape of a simple girl, an aspiring young physiotherapist, returning home by bus in Delhi, entitled 'India's daughter'. The documentary includes the view point of the rapists, who have absolutely no remorse, despite being sentenced to death by the Indian courts. The saddest part however is the despicable mindset of some important societal actors, like

defense lawyers, and even other women in power - whose statements represent extremely backward perspectives.

While this does show the terribly harsh and depressing side of India, let us not forget to see and keep in mind, what the film fails to show, namely the many torchbearers in India and the light they shine by helping women every day.

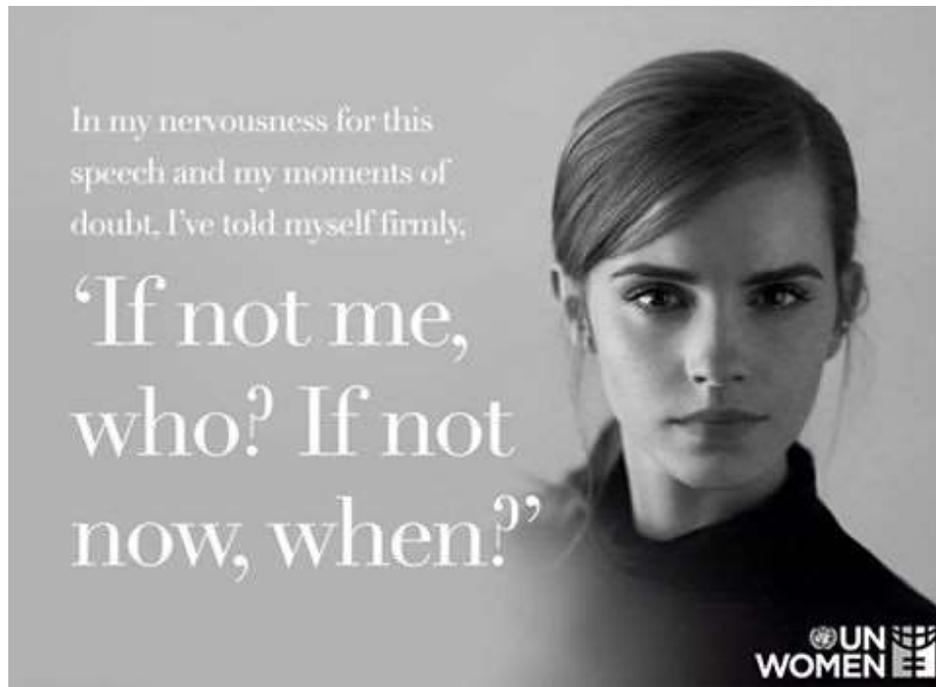
So let us not be afraid. I am a daughter of India, too, and there are many others, who like me, travel all over India, sometimes alone, sometimes in company – and have never been harmed. There are many very good men and women in India and I do believe these are the majority. And therefore, taking heed of the real existence of danger for women, drawing insight from the documentary, we must work together to remove this threat in India and elsewhere - by being the change we want to see and not losing courage to exercise our freedom of movement.

Today, on International Women's Day it is time to take a stance. The freedom for women to feel safe in their own homes, villages, towns and cities is imperative to the idea of equality for women. It is not a movement for women but a human movement.

We would like to borrow words from Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women, Emma Watson: "Men, Gender Equality is your issue too! Men should take up this mantle so that their daughters, sisters, and mothers can be free from prejudice, but also so that their sons have permission to be vulnerable and human too and in doing so, be a more true and complete version of themselves."

It seems apt then to quote Statesman Edmund Burke, "All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for good men and women to do nothing."

So on the International Day of the Woman, We, at Friend In Need invite you to think and step forward and take a stance. We close with the same words Emma Watson used when she launched the HeforShe campaign “If not me, who? If not now, when?”



6.1.7. Changemaker- Be the change you want to see- you can run at any age

January 20

Friends of FIN – Raji



'A healthy mind in a healthy body' is a maxim in almost all cultures, and since time immemorial men have been encouraged to keep themselves fit at all ages. On the other hand, with respect to

women, 'keeping fit' through exercise was part of the social culture only in Western countries. Thanks to economic development and globalization, in developing countries with democracy and recognition of women's rights, more and more women are striving to keep fit. In all Indian metropolitan cities, running has become a means for keeping fit, fostering learning and sharing and friendships. Raji - one of the pillars of Friend In Need India - is an inspiration for all women and especially mothers, grandmothers and would-be grandmothers showing that it is never too late to start running.

Read about her in:

<http://epaperbeta.timesofindia.com/Article.aspx...#> and the community-organization that is teaching running is 'Runner's High' at <http://www.runnershigh.in/index.php>

6.1.8. An unsuccessful fundraiser for Nepal

May 9

Helping Nepal with Ecosan

Exactly two weeks back, on April 25, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Nepal at midday local time, causing fatalities, injuries, and significant structural damage. More than 7,500 people are now known to have been killed with the injured being in excess of 14,500. An estimated 2.8 million people have been displaced by the earthquake, as hundreds of thousands of people are afraid to return to their homes. More than 70,000 houses have been destroyed, a figure that is expected to rise. Only 14 survivors have been saved from the rubble.

However, the threat does not end here. Nepal's infrastructure has been severely damaged by the earthquake and the following aftershocks. Consequently, many water lines and sewer lines (often built in close proximity to each other as in many countries) have been broken and the water has been contaminated by sewerage. Therefore, an estimated 4.2 million people are in urgent need of water, sanitation and hygiene support.

We can't just carry on without doing something, right? And showing sympathy means taking action. So we are going for the usual. We will do our bit through improving sanitation – the ecosan way. The target is to raise 1000 Euros. We think this will be enough for our modest contribution = 4 ecological/ecosan/urine diversion/dry toilets. That'll be 2 for women and 2 for men in some isolated zone that needs it.

There is no need to give a lot – but do give a little – it's little drops of water that makes an ocean. Please go to <http://friend-in-need.org/donate/> to make your donation. We will update you through this website on progress.

If you are wondering what's an ecosan – here are some useful links:

What's an ecosan? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV-1To9DkJQ>

Who's doing it in Nepal? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jrtg1vRCKn0>

Hear a farmer in Nepal <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qf8axMyDqOw>

And why can't we have nice models like these – and also make them low-cost, for washers and not needing electricity? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7B_O3FFnZVM

Many thanks in advance. Remember we are friends of those in need.

May 14

According to a recent article published in the New York Times, one of the primary concerns for Nepal after the devastating earthquake is sanitation and the illness that the lack of it will stem.

It had taken the officials in rural Sindhupalchok district a lot of effort to persuade nearly all of the 61,000 households to each build a toilet. The earthquake struck, destroying most houses — and the very toilets that could have helped stave off the diseases that can run rampant after natural disasters.

We are gravely concerned and want to do our bit for Nepal. We aim to help improve the sanitation facilities the ecosan way (To learn more about it, please look at our previous post). The target is to raise 1000 Euros. We encourage you to help by donating to our cause on our website.

There is no need to give a lot – but do give a little – it's little drops of water that makes an ocean. Please go to <http://friend-in-need.org/donate/> to make your donation. We will update you through this website on progress.

In the mean time read the entire article on the New York Times website here : <http://www.nytimes.com/.../monsoons-near-nepal-focuses-on-san...>
#PrayforNepal #NepalEarthquake #Donate

May 25

Result of fund raising drive for Nepal

Sorry - but we drew a blank and got no funds. Guess everybody has already given funds to some charity. I had kept the previous post on for a long time in the hope of raising funds and still drew a blank. But, this is OK as well. It is OK to fail - one cannot always succeed or win. And one cannot save the world. So I share a wonderful video on failure that was suggested to me by a well wisher. John - before, I used it for my class; and now, for this Facebook post. Thank you! We move onto happier themes from the end of the week, with a presentation of our interns past and present !

http://www.ted.com/.../david_damberger_what_happens_when_an_n...

6.1.9. Solidarity with terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo

January 8

We are Charlie – expressing our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the Charlie Hebdo (and related) assassinations – many of whom are legendary French artists, and our solidarity with the people of France.

L' Association Un-Ami and Friend In Need India – sister organizations also pays homage to all artists, of all nations, of the present and of the past, who are being or have been persecuted by power groups for raising the level of awareness of humanity through their art. Art cannot be killed. Art will always live on to serve humanity, to heighten our level of awareness of the world and make us more tolerant of its diversity.



6.1.10. Solidarity with the victims of terrorism in Paris

14 Nov 2015, 13:44



We pray for Paris. And we pray for ALL similar victims in other countries. We pray for ALL. We are with you. Peace, Love and Respect of Fellow Humans are globally held values that nourish mankind and are at the foundation of human progress. We pray and offer our condolences.

6.1.11. Story of a social entrepreneur

28 Sep 2015, 10:09



Due to an inadvertent mistake - our last post got deleted. We apologize for the inconvenience. It was largely enjoyed by many

We would still like to share the story of Mr. Deewan while we wish our readers happy Eid.

Two weeks back I had to give a talk on innovation in India in Vienna to firm representatives and policy makers and I was extremely worried. Not about the talk, but about where I would be able to eat afterwards, being a strict vegetarian, with a clear preference for Indian vegetarian food! After the lecture and the question answer session, I was requested to give an interview for an Austrian newspaper and the reporter was a nice young doctoral student working at the interface of physics and philosophy.

“Would you mind if you ask me your questions over lunch? And by the way, is there any place where we can get vegetarian food, preferably a bit spicy at least” I asked her.

“No, not at all – there is a Pakistani restaurant near the university, where we students eat our lunch. Shall we go there?” she enquired in return.

In the restaurant, which was simple and clean – six dishes were displayed and three contained lobia, pumpkin rasa sabji, aloo gobi, one was full of rice and two with meat and next to it was stacked a salad and a desert plate with rawa halwa with sauce in a bowl next it.

I asked the guy at the counter, “How much is lunch for?”

And I was informed, “You can pay whatever you want.”

First, I thought I had misheard something. But that indeed was the answer! So I requested to see the manager and he came eventually – and the food was simply delicious! I am not too fond of pumpkin, but this was simply out of the world. And it wasn't oily at all. I felt I was eating home food – ‘ghar ka khana’.

Mr. Deewan explained, “When I came here as an immigrant many years back, I survived doing

many things and my wife and I decided to open a restaurant. But we decided that we wanted to do things differently and give back to this society that had helped me. Therefore, we decided that instead of asking people to pay a fixed price, we would let them pay whatever they wanted to. We placed our trust in them.”

I couldn't understand, “Deewan-ji, I do not understand your business model at all, Sir. Your pricing strategy goes against all laws and postulates of economics and management. Yet, you seem to be surviving. How is it?”

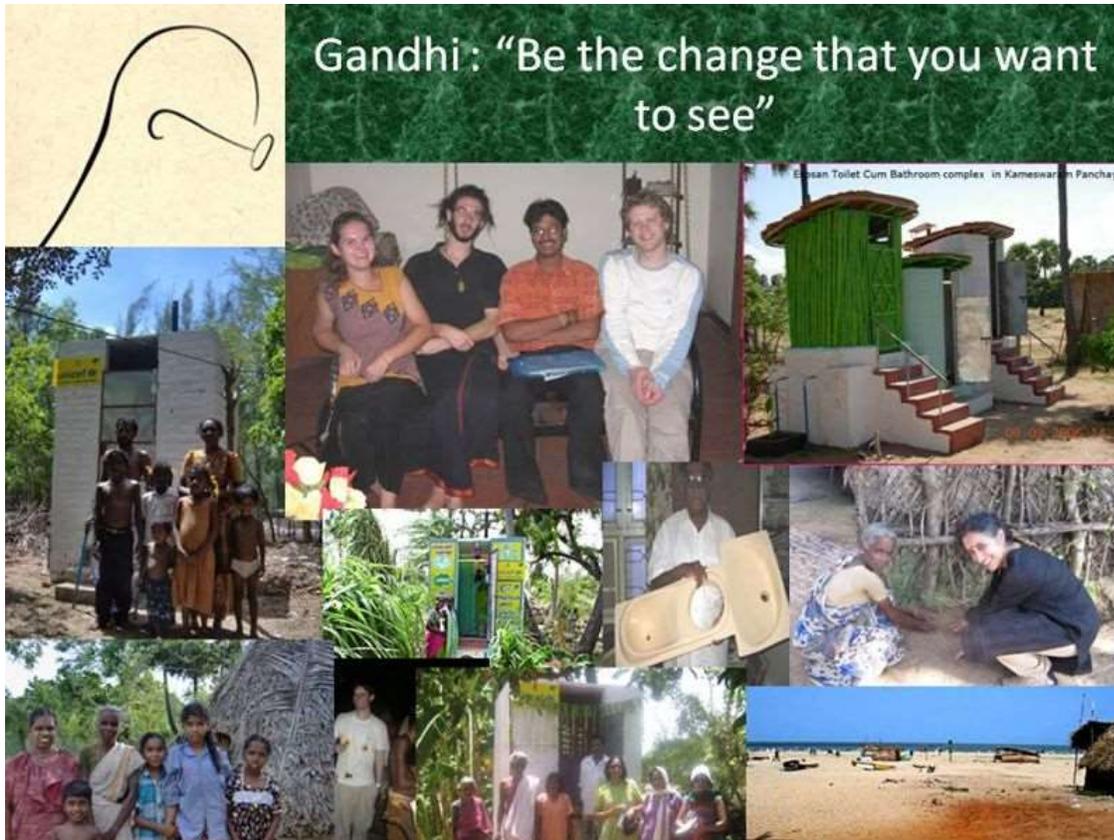
He smiled, “Madam, we are doing very well and our employees are paid well above the minimum wage and this has been our pricing strategy since the last 10 years. This is because, when people learn about how we are conducting business, they become our loyal clients and they also bring friends. The poor do not come here and eat food for free – because they understand that this is what feeds us also”.

I wouldn't mind going to Vienna again – now I know exactly where I can get good vegetarian food offered in the true spirit of serving fellow men and women!

6.1.12. Reflections on the Clean India Mission

2 Oct 2015, 09:04

To celebrate Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary, this day - last year, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the SWACHH BHARATH or Clean India Mission. But sanitation and hygiene are not only Indian problems, but also a challenge for many developing countries, and thus they were highlighted among the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations. And is all this on the right track? To find out, read below. Goal #6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all For universal sanitation coverage, the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represents a very positive step forward. It is a far cry from that of the Millennium Development Goals, where the issue of sanitation coverage had not even figured at the outset. It had taken mounting evidence and arguments on the positive impact of sanitation coverage on hygiene, health conditions, environmental security, and ultimately poverty reduction, to include “increase in sanitation coverage” as a target in 2002. At the start of the millennium, 51% of the global population had no access to a functioning toilet; this now stands at 39%, with about 2.4 billion people still lacking access to sanitation. Thus, including water and sanitation as a stand-alone goal, instead of merely a target, highlights a real effort to address a real need. In Goal 6, sanitation figures thrice. First, the SDG aims to “achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations” by 2030. It is not clear what “adequate” and/or “equitable” should translate into, and likewise “those in vulnerable situations”. An important factor highlighted by its absence is “safety”. Millions of ill-conceived latrines are being built in developing countries every day, and these are going to become millions more points of contamination in the future — unless the issue of proper construction is addressed.



That said, it is most laudable that the challenge of “open defecation” has been brought centre stage. Increase in sanitation coverage does not automatically guarantee the usage or maintenance of toilets. In rural areas, where space is not a problem, moral suasion and education is needed to convince men to use toilets. Developing countries are also cluttered by thousands of fossils of abandoned toilets, which are in various states of disuse due to poor construction or maintenance. These add to visual pollution, give off bad odours, and add to contamination. Thus, to improve health status, not only does sanitation coverage have to increase, but this has to be accompanied by behavioural change. The latter includes toilet usage and toilet maintenance as well as other hygiene behaviour such as hand washing. Second, under goal #6, by 2030 there is to be expansion of “international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes”. It is not clear how this will be achieved. Over the last three decades, there has been a perceptible shift in public policies to promote sanitation coverage through multi-stakeholder platforms involving public–private partnerships. However, there is a clear knowledge gap in the necessary elements for a delivery platform: one that ensures all partners have a stake in making the social mission a success. Third, SDG #6 also aims to “support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management”. But how, exactly, is this to be done? Based on the experiences in sanitation accumulated through the MDGs, what are the most effective management systems? How should individual governments share the responsibilities of water and sanitation infrastructure management? How should the coordination be handled between different levels (central, state, and local) as a function of the local context? Or should it be outsourced to private actors? If so, how should they be monitored and incentivised? Finally, should it simply be left to the market or local communities — with a minimal role for public authorities? A variety of experiments are already underway worldwide. It would be worthwhile

to study the outcomes of these as a function of the context and the management design. In sum, toilets are a classic pro-poor innovation. They empower through imparting “social dignity”. Further, by improving the health status of citizens, universal sanitation coverage can also boost economic growth. The challenge of sanitation is that it needs to be tackled from a multitude of facets. On the one hand, we need to guarantee that the toilets built are safe, usable, and non-polluting to the environment. On the other hand, we have to ensure that the toilets are being maintained and used. It must be kept in mind that sanitation feeds into nearly all the other sustainable development goal targets, such as health, child mortality, gender disempowerment, poor income generation facility, absenteeism from school, etc. Thus, the achievement of this seemingly simple goal could hold the key to others as well. Ensuring access to safe water and sanitation will promote human equality and dignity. This, in turn, will drive the participation of the poor themselves to eliminate poverty. This is a blog we wrote for the United Nations University series on the SDG which can also be found on <http://www.merit.unu.edu/ending-open-defecation-doing-it-properly/>

6.1.13. Hygiene behaviour – an interesting letter from the past

7 Oct 2015, 09:00

Interesting letter written more than 100 years back... You May Check the Authenticity of This Letter by Simply Googling... COMPLAINT LETTER TO THE RAILWAYS IN 1909!!!-----
----- Okhil Babu's letter to the Railway department: Date: 2 - 7 - 1909 Divisional Railway Officer, Sahibgunj, Respected Sirs, I am arrive by passenger train Ahmedpur station and my belly is too much swelling with jackfruit. I am therefore went to privy. Just I doing the nuisance that guard making whistle blow for train to go off and I am running with lotaah in one hand and dhoti in the next when I am fall over and expose all my shocking to man and female women on platform.



I am got leaved at Ahmedpur station. This too much bad, if passenger go to make dung that dam guard not wait train five minutes for him. I am therefore pray your honour to make big fine on that guard for public sake. Otherwise I am making big report to papers. Your faithful Servant, Okhil Chandra Sen ***lotaah = mug of water; ***dhoti = pant-equivalent worn by men Okhil Babu wrote this letter to the Sahibganj divisional railway officer in 1909. It is on display at the Railway Museum in New Delhi. It was also reproduced under the caption Travellers Tales. Any guesses on why this letter is of historic value? Wait for the answer tomorrow! :)

8 Oct 2015, 09:00



Thank you for guessing! The answer is: The letter led to the introduction of TOILETS in trains in India.....!!!! So remember - NO idea is stupid enough to be discarded without reflection! We should always speak up!

6.1.14. Urban Legends from Japan

Did you know about the toilet Ghosts of Japan?

26 Aug 2015, 13:17



Japan has a number of other popular cultural references about toilets too.

The most famous of them is perhaps Aka Manto (literally translated to Red Cape). He is a Japanese urban legend and is a malicious spirit who haunts public and school toilets, often described as a beautiful man in life and hounded constantly by admirers, he now wears a mask to hide his face.

The legend of Aka Manto goes like this: if you are sitting on the toilet (usually the last stall), a mysterious voice will ask you if you want red paper or blue paper. If you answer red paper, you will be sliced apart until your clothes are stained red. If you choose blue paper, you will be strangled until your face turns blue. Any attempt to outsmart Aka Manto by asking for a different color will result in you being dragged to the Netherworld. The only correct answer is to say no paper and he will leave you alone.

Besides Aka Manto there are some other toilet related Urban legends in Japan. There is one called Hanako-san or Toire no Hanako-san (literally translated to Hanako of the toilet) which is about the spirit of a young World War II-era girl who haunts school bathrooms. She allegedly appears when one shouts her name.

Following the theme of girls in toilets there is also Sanbonashi no Rika-chan or the Three-legged Rika Chan. Here the legend goes as such If a girl enters a toilet at her school, and finds a Licca-chan doll on the floor with a purple third leg, she will lose one of her own legs shortly after. She can then grow a purple leg, that is not functional, which will eventually take over her body, causing death.

One cannot help but wonder why there are so many urban legends in Japan that haunt toilets?

Is that why they have such wonderful toilets?

What role do these legends play in ensuring sanitation in the country?

Tell us your thoughts

6.1.15. Advocacy for Health

February 28

Recently Shyama (FIN founder) was in Delhi in an international conference on Innovation for Economic Growth and Inclusive Development organized by UNU-MERIT along with the World Bank and the OECD. We share the video of her interview below. Please note two addendum. First, there are various ways to measure 'poverty'. The figure of 40% of Indians living below the poverty line is an average of the percentage living on less than 1.25\$ per day and those living on less than \$2 per day. Second, the statistic on child mortality from diarrhoea is wrong - Please excuse me (it's difficult to remember these figures - when someone interviews you suddenly! the child mortality rate of 1000 per day is for a larger set of countries). For India, child (less than 5 years of age) mortality from diarrhoea is estimated to be around 140,000 children every year =11,600 per month = 383 children per day = one child every 4 minutes. Note that diarrhoea can be very greatly reduced by sanitation, waste management and good hygiene behaviour (which is our mission!).

Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XnicQ3w7aA>

6.1.16. Advocacy through Events

Talk by Prof. Shyama Ramani on Modern methods of energy production
25 Jun 2015, 04:28

Today, about 1.3 billion have no access to electricity. Further, nearly 38% of the human population (roughly 2.6 billion) relies on biomass for cooking. Since women are mainly responsible for this activity, this means they are forced to search or buy the biomass which takes time and money and burdens them more. Finally, smoke from rudimentary cooking stoves using biomass fuel triggers respiratory problems and the WHO points out that about 4 million people die prematurely every year from illnesses attributable to household air pollution. So why should we change this reality? What should be kept in mind at a micro or macro level to bring about change? what's the relation between sanitation and these questions?

This is what Professor Shyama explained in Milan recently. All feedback welcome. See <http://www.merit.unu.edu/towards-modern-energy-for-all-milan-expo-2015/>

6.1.17. Friend of FIN: Meet Manoj!

April 8

Actually, Friend In Need recently started a non-profit wing that is focused on transforming the experiential knowledge generated by our activities in Kameshwaram into models and tools for documenting and teaching processes for facilitating reflection and optimal choice. We believe that there is a real need for such models and teaching tools that can be applied at the village level. Our non-profit is called Sti4Change (see www.Sti4Change.com). Manoj, co-founder of Pratanute (see <http://www.pratanute.com/>) designed our website and he is our mascot in tools building for village use. This is a big challenge that most web business developers would totally shy away from. So why did Manoj do it?

This is what I asked him.

“Manoj, I have only vague ideas at the moment about the tools and models that can be developed for representing and teaching how to achieve clean villages – and yet you have agreed to work with us. And, you have come to the village and are absorbing all the details. Why? Especially, when you could be sitting in a nice office, and building a nice app for a mainstream company and earning a lot more!”

This is what Manoj had to say.

“Well, from the beginning working with your team was different. I got respect for the work that I did. Somehow in our culture, if someone has money – and he/she pays for a service – they think respect is not necessary. And then, I was made to feel part of a process for social change rather than being just a service provider. Finally, when I came to know about the activities which you are doing in Kameshwaram – even before the Prime Minister declared them at national level, and the importance of these issues for our health and our children, I was driven to support you!”

“Besides now, more and more people are aware and ready for change. But, we don't know how to make this happen. So, even if there is nothing now, I am confident that thoughts/ideas will come – and keep coming and then these will take us further and further as we make improvements again and again – till we get something good.”

“Of course, we can’t replace manual processes with digital tools, but even with very simple software we can create applications that help to constantly and evaluate the process. This is where learning will come from and it will be more sure and faster than through memory.”

“When we build tools that can be used by many – then we can have ‘knowledge sharing’ – we can compare different ‘stylized processes’ and identify ‘good practices and role models’. These can be the drivers of change. Yes, we can make them so that they are very simple to use.”

“We can also build simple tools for impact monitoring – and these should create clear representations easy for all to understand. Our impact images should convince some of our reluctant villagers to join the waste management program and maybe even use toilets!”



6.2. Friends of FIN - e-conversation with Howard Hudson!

17 Jul 2015, 14:07

Hi Howard,
I'm off to India for the usual research - you're in Tokyo?
Howard I believe Japanese toilet seats are out of the world - if you find some extraordinary ones, may I ask you for a blip for our Facebook page?
Shyama

Hi Shyama,
Yep, even those in the hotel are monster-machines! Built-in bidet, seat warmer, etc... See attached pics :)
H

Howard -
OMG - what on earth? I've got questions for you.....when you have time please blip me the answers. Thanks so much!
Shyama
PS _ and here are his answers folks.....



Hi Shyama,
How's it going back in the homeland?
Hope all's well.
Here are my answers.
Cheers :) H

What are the buttons for?
There are buttons for the following actions:
- Seat warmer
- Deodorizer
- Water pressure
- Bidet
- Spray
- Stop
[Plus flush handle].

What is the skillset required to operate them?
Put simply, knowledge of English or Japanese (although some buttons do have pictorial explanations). In any case, my first impressions were not good. I simply sat on the thing after a 10-hour flight and didn't realise that it was set to automatic – at least for the seat warmer. I was not happy, seeing as it was already a hot day! Another automatic function is to release a trickle of water when it detects pressure on the loo seat. This was actually quite nice!



How much does such a contraption cost?

Mine was made by a company called Toto. "Washlets in Japan cost from US\$200, with the majority priced around US\$500 for washlet upgrades for existing Western-style toilets. Top-of-the-range washlets, including the ceramic bowl, can easily cost up to US\$5,000."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toilets_in_Japan#Economy

Is this the norm for the privileged few?

Mine was in a 4-star hotel, so I assumed it was a kind of privilege. However, a colleague of mine was caught short and had to use a toilet in a metro station. She said it had similar buttons -- and was absolutely immaculate.

Will you miss it back in Maastricht?

Not at all! I'm neither a purist nor a luddite, but I simply use the basic function. I used to live in Italy, where most homes have bidets and I never wanted them either! From another angle, I wonder about the environmental impact. There's clearly a fair amount of electronics and plastics going into making these things, plus the automatic water trickling. But then again, I wonder how much toilet paper is saved by the people who do use the full functionalities.

7. Community interventions

7.1. Community intervention workshop on hygiene

Showing good hygiene practices to students of St. Sebastian School

Follow our interns Sahana and Aditi, from UC Davis (USA) in Kameshwaram!

18 Oct 2015, 11:31



After a couple days of meeting the students at St Sebastian school, we gave our presentation about good hygiene practices to the eighth standard class. Our presentation was very well received, and the post presentation survey revealed that the children really enjoyed and learned a lot from our presentation. Not only did we give teach them about possible water borne diseases they could contract if they did not follow good hygiene

practices, but we also played a game with them. We put glitter on two students' hands to symbolize bacteria and viruses that can spread. We then had the students shake hands and within five minutes, all the students had glitter on their hands. The students enjoyed the game and understood that diseases are spread very easily. All in all, a successful presentation!

Follow our interns Sahana and Aditi, from UC Davis (USA) in Kameshwaram!
12 Oct 2015, 12:22



Starting from the first day we spent in Kameshwaram, we visited St Sebastian school.

At lunch time for the past three days, we have been going to the school and meeting the children. The kids have been very excited to have visitors and have been crowding us. We have seen their classrooms, learned many names, and even had them sing and dance for us! We have bonded quite well with the model class at St Sebastian, many of whom have invited us to their homes. Since one of us does speak Tamil, we have been able to have lengthy conversations with these children but even for those of us that do not, the hospitality is the same. We are welcomed by open arms by all the students when they greet us with "Hi Akka!" These past few days we have realized that the kids at St Sebastian do not allow language to pose a barrier to friendship, and they are some of the happiest children we have ever met.



7.2. Community intervention for showing solidarity – Tamil Nadu Floods

Let us pray for the rains to stop in Chennai <Showing solidarity>

5 Dec 2015, 08:54

Helping Children

Mahesh at relief Camp



Relief by Boat

Collective Silent Worldwide Moment of Prayer is sought at 18:00 Indian time which is 13:30 Paris time. Atheist or Believer of any faith - Anywhere - Please send your good vibrations for the rains to stop at Chennai. Seeking Grace does have an impact.

Dear Friends,

The residents of the city of Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu continue to be besieged under rains which have been pouring since the beginning of November. It is not war that is leading to the closure of shops, the shutting of schools and offices, the evacuation of hospitals, the misery of the residents and the anxiety of parents as they strive to find water and food and shelter for their young and old. It is rain and the greed and myopic vision of politicians, urban planners and construction companies, and alas, even the residents of Chennai themselves who never foresaw a nature triggered crisis of this gravity in such a renowned and old city (with settlements since 2nd century).

India has the maximum number of cities at high risk from climate change. Today it is Chennai – but, tomorrow it could be Kolkata or Mumbai. Our cities cannot be expanded through drying natural lakes or closing traditional catchment areas or expanding our infrastructure to create roads that are totally impervious to rainwater. Our ditches cannot be filled with garbage that clog the rain waters from reaching the rivers and oceans. Resilience to climate change through water harvesting, waste water drainage and waste management has to be built into our fastly expanding cities. Finally, behavioural change with respect to littering, wasteful consumption, water preservation and toilet usage has to kick in. Otherwise, the infrastructural investment will be a waste.

I created Friend in Need India in the aftermath of the Asian Tsunami of December 2004 – when my family (i.e. siblings, cousins and all their families) were in a hall attending a wedding on Chennai beach. The waves stopped a kilometer from the wedding hall. The wedding was quickly finished as it was realized something very strange had happened. Not being there – and yet feeling for them – I created this organization to rehabilitate at least one village. I never imagined that a decade after the tsunami, again my family, all living in urban areas, would be at such high risk. This time, I am just in a neighbouring state and yet I am not able to do anything to help them, except to make a donation to the relief workers and support my siblings, nieces, nephews, cousins besieged in Chennai through whatsapp. Of course, this is a trivial contribution. So through Friend In Need India – I will strive to initiate a long term project, this time for an urban slum in Chennai. FIN India is small and slow – because it takes a long time to make deep changes and it is a volunteer driven organization. But we will try to make at least one street in one urban slum resilient to climate change through water harvesting, water drainage, sanitation and waste management – such that we create a replicable model. This will require not only astute use and installations of low-cost technology but also behavioural change (e.g. not littering in rain water drains). Watch out for this project in a few months.

A crisis is a time when innate characters and the strength of relationships are revealed. The public authorities in the city have been praised for their selfless work. At the same time,

anguished friends report that thugs and goons are forcibly pasting stickers of specific political parties on boxes coming from other states with relief supplies. However, the people of Chennai, are rising far above such sick practices of their politicians as the following poem sent by my niece shows, and maybe such crises will serve to generate true leaders of the people, so that all present politicians can be given an opportunity to retire in their swanky homes built with their ill gotten gains and we can make greater progress in improving the lives of the people. All photos are from my cousins.

It's raining in Chennai.
And it's not just the skies that have opened up...
Many homes are letting in water, but quite a few are letting in guests.
The First floors are embracing the Ground floors.
Malls are welcoming footfalls, and that too without wallets.
Movie halls are counting box office numbers differently.
Hotels are giving out foods that aren't leftovers for a change.
Marriage halls are solemnizing more marriages of souls than ever before.
Social Walls are tearing down their Civil counterparts.
140 characters are travelling faster than a '108'.
Taxi services are plying boats, MTC buses are plying like taxis.
Religious differences are being doused in a relentless downpour.
Politicians are knee deep in water and politics has sunk.
But Leaders are being born at every waterlogged junction.
Soldiers are being born at every dangerous turn.
And humans are being born at every deserving instance.
It's raining in Chennai.
And it's not just the skies that have opened up.

7.3. Community intervention – Workshop by FIN interns at Chinmmaya school

Follow our interns Sahana and Aditi, from UC Davis (USA) in Kameshwaram!

18 Oct 2015, 11:37



We have also accompanied Sangeeta ma'am to visit



Chinmayandanda school in Nagapattinam to present on sanitation and hygiene to 6th and 7th standard students. After presenting back to back to three sections, we have received ample feedback to review the content! The kids participated and asked several questions, which made presenting fun and interactive. The headmistress at Chinmayananda mentioned that some of the students may want to volunteer to show our presentation at other schools for community service. This prospect is very exciting as when students hear materials from their peers, there can be greater scope for behavioral change.

I look forward to working with these students and making this collaboration come into fruition!

8. Achievements of FIN

8.1. #100Women honour for Prof. Shyama Ramani

28 Sep 2015, 11:52

Friends, I just nominated Prof. Shyama Ramani for the #100Women contest organised by the Ministry of Women & Child Development. Do show your appreciation by liking it as it requires a 100 'likes' to be considered for nomination. Would mean a lot to us!

PLEASE CLICK ON THE PHOTO and 'like' it! (Please note that you should click on the 'photo' to reach the correct link. Clicks on the post will NOT ADD to the nomination. :)) We need to reach 100 by September 30 and so please hurry to like!

Thanks. Sangeeta Venkatesh

7 Dec 2015, 16:56

You may recall that I had nominated Prof. Shyama Ramani for the #100Women honour. I am delighted to announce that she has been shortlisted in the field of sanitation and hygiene, by a jury of experts.

However, there is yet another round of public voting. Hence, I would like to request you all to vote for her again on this link (please scroll to the section Sanitation and Hygiene).

<https://www.facebook.com/ministryWCD/app/892345240838861/>

<http://bit.ly/100womenvote>

Please click on the 'Vote' button which will further ask you to confirm your vote. So please do vote as soon as possible as the deadline is not too far away (and let us know too! That will give us an idea about how many votes have been registered).

And don't forget to spread the word! This would really mean a lot to Prof. Shyama Ramani and all her colleagues at FIN Trust who are working relentlessly in Kameswaram in Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu, India to create a model village & also to our research organisation Sociotech Innovation4Change which is actively doing research in the field of sanitation, waste management and hygiene. Thanks so much again.

With Best Regards,