

Profugo

9 Rittenhouse Place
Ardmore, PA 19003
www.profugo.org
info@profugo.org
Twitter: @Profugo_friends

The Kernel



Volume 4, Issue 5

July 2012

July Update

By Jenny Koeth

Inside this issue:

July Field Update	1
Open Hands to Open Eyes	2
An Introduction to Aquaponics	3
All About Co-ops	4

Field Update from Wayanad!

Dear Friends,

We've been in India for one month and are quickly settling down in our new hometown of Mananthavady, Wayanad District. We are about 25 km away from Prasanthagiri, where we are working with a community of 40 families. It's been a happy reunion and time of new introductions as our team reconnects with community members.



Isel Otero-Vera with ladies from the tailoring workshop

Joshua Keeney, our intern from last year, is fondly remembered and we are reminded of the impact that our time here can create. Every meeting is an opportunity – for better understanding, relation-building, and the cultivation of trust – aimed towards the strengthening of community resources and the improvement of their quality of life. We've been touched by the warm hospitality of the families who will not let us leave without a cup of chai, "Jacka" (jackfruit), or a plateful of rice. As the community members learn that Isel and Emily are here to work with them for one year, they smile in excitement and surprise. The mutual giving and receiving is right in the spirit of the kind of neighborhood that Profugo is building - a global neighborhood for a better quality of life!

This past month we've worked with an established production house in Bangalore (Jacobs Well) to produce 80 beautiful bags in 7 different fabric combinations. We are now working with our own tailoring workshop in Prasanthagiri to produce matching wallets that will be available in the US this fall. There is a limited supply for this first production run, so please reserve your bags ASAP! We've also met with the aquaculture department at St. Albert's College in Cochin and Sweet Water Foundation from Madison, WI. We will be developing a prototype of our own aquaponics system. Aquaponics is a sustainable food production system that combines the farming of fish and vegetables in a symbiotic environment. After the research and development of our prototype, we hope to implement this in our community on a larger scale. This will introduce a new local food source and income generation opportunities. Exciting stuff! To receive updates from the field, please follow our blogs, Twitter, and FB group.

~Greetings from one profugo to another!

Open Hands to Open Eyes

By Victoria Peltonen

Open hands to open eyes. This is the title of this article, my blog, as well as my first photo album documenting my journey in India this summer. With just two weeks of experience to draw from, I can tell you that I thought of this title because it best summed up my journey so far, and I have no doubt that it will apply to much of my time here. In my mind this phrase has several meanings, none of which stands on its own.

Open hands are for giving. Open hands are for taking. A young boy with dirt on his face and a snotty baby on his hip reaches with an open hand, wanting food, pointing to the baby saying, "sister, sister." Open hands reach out to offer unwanted leftovers of American corn, bought simply to quell the whines of a well-fed but overly tired, antsy child.

Open hands display fruit, shoes, maps, jewelry, purses, vegetables, and mini plastic bicycles, asking, *Madam? For you, only 300 rupees*. Open hands glide over piles of fabric, searching for exactly the right weight and texture of 100% cotton.

Open hands seek one another as children cross the street, as foreigners meet wonderfully hospitable host families, as a friend consoles another who has fallen on hard times. Open hands lend themselves to others to help them pick up and put together the pieces to get back on their feet. Open hands are for praise and celebration. For me, open hands mean all of these things.

With open eyes I have arrived in a new place and I have met new people.

Open eyes squint at the flourish of dust created by an old woman sweeping trash aside on the street. Open eyes strain to take in the sight of colorful clothing, walls, produce, and fabrics that line every inch of my surroundings. Open eyes quickly scan fabrics for the perfect pattern.

Open eyes search the darkness, restless from jet lag.

Open eyes are glued to the screen as they take in their first Bollywood movie without subtitles. Open eyes search the faces of foreigners for understanding when the language barrier threatens to overwhelm all parties with frustration. Open eyes mind the auto meter and scan the streets to ensure a timely arrival to their destination. It is because I have open eyes that I can experience all of these things, but it is not always easy to keep hands and eyes open.

I thought of Open Hands to Open Eyes because I realized that these two things come together more often than not. Because I have never been to anywhere like India before, I knew from the beginning that I would need to constantly remind myself to be flexible and open to things that I may have never experienced before, things that may excite, surprise, or horrify me. Of course this was much harder than I could've even imagined. I had to fight the urge to bring my hands to cover my eyes several times, whether it was the sensory overload that is shopping and walking the streets of Bangalore or the overwhelming guilt and sadness felt seeing adults and children alike begging on the street. Reality sometimes threatens to bring my open hands to cover my eyes to shield me from what I think I can't handle. Of course you learn to manage and to open your hands to give when you can, which, in turn, opens your eyes to a more in-depth view into the lives of others and to a broader view on the spectrum of humanity. Using my hands, and my experience, taking an active role in improving the quality of others' lives, I hope to gain this perspective and to continue having my eyes and hands open to give and take from these two months and my work with Profugo.

Victoria Peltonen is from San Antonio, Texas. She is a junior at Bryn Mawr College, where she studies Psychology and Child and Family Studies. This is her first summer working with Profugo, and she is currently on a two-month internship at the COD in Wayanad, India. There, she is assisting with the research, preparation, and development of the tailoring workshop and co-op, the English language school, the Water for Life project, the community supported agriculture project, and the aquaponics project.



An Introduction to Aquaponics

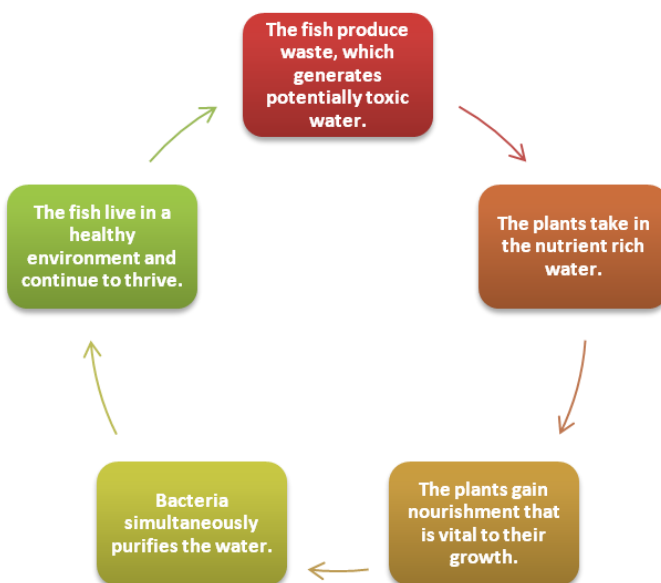
By Rachel Flood

What is aquaponics?

Aquaponics is a sustainable system that combines aquaculture, fish farming, and hydroponics, soilless plant cultivation, in order to grow fish and plants. It is a cycle in which the plants act as a natural filter for the water and the waste produced by the fish serves as the food for the plants. The plants purify the water and in return the fish waste provides crucial nourishment for the plants. The result is fresh, organic fish and plants. Depending on the size of the aquaponics system, it can produce enough to feed a family, feed a village, or as a profitable farming enterprise. No matter the size, it is a very efficient system that minimizes the use of water and space while making use of waste.

How does it work?

Through the combination of aquaculture and hydroponics, both the plants and the fish receive nutrients vital to their growth. The fish's waste causes the water to be rich in ammonium compounds. Too much of these compounds can be toxic to fish and plants alike. Certain nitrifying bacteria will help the plants in the aquaponics system convert the ammonia to nitrate, which the plants then consume. This process benefits the fish and the plants by keeping the water safe for the fish to live in and by providing essential nutrients to the plants. This structure operates as a mini ecosystem allowing for the growth of both species.



What are the benefits of utilizing aquaponics?

- No chemicals, such as herbicides or pesticides, may be used in the aquaponics system; therefore, all plants and fish are organic and safe to eat.
- Aquaponics makes use of the nutrient rich water that would have otherwise gone to waste.
- The possibility of soil borne disease is removed since the system operates without soil.
- No water is wasted when growing aquaponically, which is both cost-effective and environmentally friendly.
- Aquaponics systems gives users the ability to grow vegetables throughout the year, even during the dry season.

Why does Profugo support it?

The introduction of an aquaponics system in Wayanad or any other developing nation would present the community with many opportunities for improvement. First, it would provide a constant source of nutritious food for community members. Putting an aquaponics system in place would also afford the residents of income generation and economic growth through selling the fish and various vegetables they grown in a local market. In addition, it would increase economic security. Generally, subsistence farmers of developing countries depend on a single crop for their livelihood. If this crop fails, the effects can be destructive. Aquaponics is becoming more and more popular as people begin to realize how beneficial it is in developing and developed nations alike.

How does it fit into our plan?

Our team of leaders and interns in India recently met with the aquaculture department at St. Albert's College in Kochi, Kerala, Sweet Water Foundation, and University of Wisconsin at Madison. They have been collaborating to construct a prototype of a Sweet Water aquaponics system. In our visit with them, we were able to learn a great deal. It set in motion our research to development an aquaponics prototype of our own. Part of the process will be deciding on a fish, or maybe even shrimp, and produces that would be both nutritious and considered valuable in the local market. The demand for fish is very high in Wayanad; however, it is often expensive because it brought in from Kozhikode, which is over two hours away. As mentioned earlier, the goal of putting an aquaponics system in place is to better the nutrition of the Wayanad community and to generate income. If everything goes according to plan, we hope to implement an aquaponics project in the near future, so keep an eye out for future updates on our aquaponics project!

Rachel Flood is a senior at Villanova University double majoring in Sociology and Honors with a minor in Peace and Justice Studies. She hopes to work in education or the nonprofit sector in the future believing that education is the key to creating change. Rachel is currently an intern at Profugo.

All About Co-ops

By Rachel Flood

What is a co-op?

Cooperatives are self-governing enterprises that are owned and controlled by their members. They are established to meet the needs of those very same members. The element that distinguishes co-ops is the ownership formation. The members of the cooperative are the owners themselves. This aspect influences the entire co-op structure. Members reap the benefits of the cooperative by working in the establishment or through the products or services made available. Benefits are allocated proportionally to the amount that each member participates. The division of ownership gives each member one vote, which means that all members have equal say in the decisions of the co-op and that the weight of their input is not dependent upon their financial investment.

As defined by the International Cooperative Alliance, co-ops operate under the following seven guiding principles:

1. Voluntary and open membership: Co-ops are open to all people who agree to the responsibilities of membership.
2. Democratic member control: Members have the right and obligation to actively participate in making decisions and establishing policies.
3. Member economic participation: All members must contribute to and manage the co-op's assets. No one member profits from another's losses.
4. Autonomy and independence: Co-ops will always remain autonomous and independent. Even if they join in a partnership, the members must preserve democratic control.
5. Education, training, and information: It is essential that the co-op educate and train all of its members in order to ensure the most effective involvement. They should also enlighten the community on the benefits of cooperation.
6. Cooperation among cooperatives: For their own benefit as well as that of other cooperatives, co-ops should work hand in hand with other local, national, and international organizations.
7. Concern for community: Co-ops seek sustainable development for their communities by enacting policies put forth and accepted by their members.

What are the different types of co-ops?

There are various forms of cooperatives each with a slight variation on the governing structure. Each type aims at supporting the community in a different way.

- Retailer Cooperatives (also known as Purchasing/ Share Services or Consumers' Cooperatives): This type

of co-op purchases items from manufacturers in bulk resulting in discounted prices. In this case members are usually businesses. Retailer co-ops are very popular in the agriculture and healthcare industries.

- Worker Cooperative: The owners and workers are actually the members themselves. This type of co-op utilizes the one member, one vote method mentioned earlier.
- Volunteer Cooperative: The members of volunteer co-ops work towards an objective that aids the community in some way. The volunteers and the recipients of the efforts work and make decisions together.
- Social Cooperative: In this model, the co-op functions to bring about social services that benefit the community as a whole. It also follows the one member, one vote method. It is often used for health or educational services.
- Business and Employment Cooperatives (BECs): BECs help promising entrepreneurs start their own businesses. They provide economic support and skill development as an investment in these new businesses.

What are the benefits of a co-op?

Cooperatives benefit both the individual and community in their various forms of work. The first advantage is that the co-op was created with the sole purpose of helping its members. Co-ops provide employment security and the opportunity to generate income. Members own the establishment, so they take addition interest in its success. Along these same lines, no one member or investor can dictate decisions made. All members have an equal say which ensures that the cooperative will be operated with the best interests of its members in mind.

How does it fit into our plan?

Currently, Profugo is looking to expand our tailoring workshop into a successful cooperative. We are examining the different possible co-op models to guarantee the best fit for our community in Wayanad and its members. We are in the process of business training, market research, and product development with our tailoring workshop. We will be sure to keep you updated on the development of our tailoring cooperative!

Rachel Flood is a senior at Villanova University double majoring in Sociology and Honors with a minor in Peace and Justice Studies. She hopes to work in education or the nonprofit sector in the future believing that education is the key to creating change. Rachel is currently an intern at Profugo.