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The Kernel



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Profugo's First COD!

Dear Friends,

It's been much too long since the last issue of The Kernel – our apologies! It's been a busy year for us with the launch of Profugo's first Center of Development in Wayanad, India. The inaugural community is a group of 42 families in the Prasanthagiri district of Wayanad. We are dedicated to building a safe, healthy, and economically viable community there.

The group plans to implement Profugo's three-pronged approach to community development. Through business development, microfinance strategies, and health & wellness interventions, the Wayanad COD will promote progressive improvement in the lives of these families.

There are serious needs in this area as many of the families have a guaranteed income of only 15,000 INR or \$340 per year! Though individuals are available for work, there is a shortage of day labor opportunities. The typical "cooley" or day labor job pays 150 INR or \$3.40 per day. Imagine supporting a family of multiple children as well as grandparents on that income.

Most of the jobs are manual in nature, such as cutting big boulders of rock into gravel to prep for road repairs and construction.

Groundwork is also being laid to establish a business run by Profugo. It would provide training and employment for members of the community, as well as generate income to



Two ladies that we met in Valaad

fund the COD's initiatives in Wayanad. Some of us just returned from a trip to India to set up a tailoring workshop. Please read the next article for more information on this and other income-generating opportunities in Wayanad.

You may not know that Profugo's US office is 100% volunteer-run. This being said, we are always in need of faithful individuals passionate about economic development, armed with skills and interests in various areas. Our doors are open, so please drop us a line.

~Greetings from one profugo to another!

Community Visit January 2011



Many of the homes are located in forested areas.

On January 10, we packed a rented mini-van with our belongings and various supplies for a family of six (inclusive of one “ammachi” or grandma and three children under the age of 5). The drive down to Wayanad from Bangalore (approximately 6 hours) is becoming a fairly familiar one, though the last stretch is through a national forest and always unpredictable (almost got run over by an elephant on our way back).

The COD’s 42 Families

The COD (Center of Development) is located in a section of Prasanthagiri called Valaad. There we were guided by members of the leadership team, visiting the 42 families one by one. Seeing the stats of a community in need, on paper, and seeing first-hand with one’s own eyes, is a completely different experience. Meeting individuals in person, being greeted with such “southern” hospitality, I felt dumb-founded at times. We were there to survey their needs, yet they were offering anything in their possession to make sure that we were welcomed and comfortable.

The families that have agreed to be part of Profugo’s first COD all live in two subsections of Valaad. It was nice to see a sort of cohesiveness amongst the community members—this will serve as a support network as we start different programs., likely increasing the success rate. We saw diversity of religion and creed, yet a common concern for one another. The two basic means of livelihood for the people in this commu-



One of the COD’s families.

By Jenny Koeth

nity are: 1) farming and 2) cooley or day labor. The government has some schemes in place where they guarantee employment for 100 days for one person per family/year at the wage of 150 INR/day. The average pay for day labor is also 150 INR. Many are having difficulties finding regular employment and live with the uncertainty of a job for tomorrow.

Some in this community have a farming background and we saw rubber, bananas, coffee, tea, pepper, herbs, and dairy, but on a small scale to be managed by the family. Much of the land around the homes were forested and currently not in a condition to be cultivated. There was also a common problem of water access. There were some water wells around, but many were damaged and in need of improved technology.



L, Rubber tapping; R, One of the area water wells.

Business Opportunities

We are in the process of setting up a tailoring workshop. The initial training will be for 6 months and will start with five students. The workshop would be training for the local tailoring market as well as sewing handbags for the US handicraft market. The budget for this program (inclusive of instructor, all sewing equipment, and utilities) is \$3000. Please consider supporting this endeavor!

The other opportunity that is being investigated is poultry farming. Some private companies are offering programs where one day old chickens are given, with the needed feed, to be cared for until they are 45 days old. Participants only need to provide the space and coops, along with the daily care of the chickens. Discussions are underway to have families participate in groups, so responsibilities can be shared. Only building costs for the coops would be needed for this opportunity. More on this in the near future.

There are some other ideas such as computer classes, running an internet café, and teaching English (tourism is growing in this area). We will see if and how these ideas develop in the near future.

Overall, we had an amazing trip to Wayanad. We were received as guests, but left as family! We look forward to a fruitful relationship with the families of Profugo’s first Center of Development.

Interview with Mana Tanaka

Mana Tanaka is a Project Manager with the Government of Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan. She is a former World Vision Ethiopia Grant Project Manager and had stints in Bangkok, Thailand; Kigali, Rwanda; Rajasthan, India; and Vientiane, Laos from 2001 to 2008. She speaks Japanese, English, Hindi, and Urdu fluently. Profugo spoke with her about her experiences in the field of development.

Profugo: What is your definition of effective international development?

Mana Tanaka: Ideal “international cooperation” requires local people to feel ownership in the development result. For example, people don’t generally associate UNICEF and the World Bank with Japan’s economic recovery after WWII. Most people believe the Japanese achieved rapid economic growth and development through their own hard-work and effort. However, Japanese children were grossly malnourished after WWII and relied on UNICEF for vaccinations and powdered milk. Most people are also unaware that the Japanese government received long-term loans from the World Bank to construct the Shinkansen (bullet-train). This is an ideal “international development” model, in which foreign money helped people in a developing country to be self-sustainable. On a micro-level, I always look for honest, hard-working, and motivated locals and allocate as many resources as possible to provide an enabling environment to them. This, I believe, is the most effective way to achieve development.

Profugo: Tell us about a success story in the field, including an overview of the program, how it benefited others, and any hurdles you faced along the way.

Mana Tanaka: Much of development work is a long-term process, so it’s hard to gauge the success of projects immediately. In one instance we were able to improve effectiveness and outcomes: seeing many rural outcaste Meo-Muslim girls in Rajasthan pass their Grade 5 exams after attending 2-3 years of non-formal NGO-sponsored schooling. Something fun that I initiated during my free time in rural Rajasthan was a project to donate mirrors to 22 NGO-sponsored girls’ schools in rural Rajasthan. The schools are located in a sensitive area where girls are not allowed to sing, dance, or draw live animals and flowers due to their religious beliefs. It was just a fun experiment where something new was introduced in school and the results were very positive. It also shows that in general NGOs do not need much money to do meaningful work; however, just-in-time support and creativity are key.

Profugo: Compare your development experiences in Pakistan and in India.

Mana Tanaka: The main difference lies in the position of NGOs. In India, local NGOs are a major driving force of development, while in Pakistan, the people and the government are skeptical about NGOs, since many of them represent specific interests and extreme religious or political views. In terms of day-to-day life, Lahore is certainly my favorite city and an exciting town. It’s a center of culture, great food, and entertainment. When I’m feeling burned out and missing the comforts of life, for example, I can get a pedicure at a five star hotel, watch the musical Chicago, or shop at a mall until 2:00am.

By Sharon Kim



The Samadhi of Emperor Ranjit Singh in Lahore, Pakistan

Profugo: Describe a typical day at your current job.

Mana Tanaka: On a day when I’m making a field visit, I wake up at 7:00am in the morning, make fresh squeezed juice, hop into the car at 8:00am, reach the field office at 10:00am, check financial documents and visit 2-3 villages till 15:00pm, drive back to the Lahore office by 17:00pm, write reports and take care of the accounts until 19:00pm, go home, cook Japanese food, check e-mail and finally sleep. When I am not going to the field, I prepare training modules for the community, visit other donors, attend meetings, meet with local government officials to discuss policy and programs, and prepare reports between 9:00am – 17:00pm at the Lahore office. In terms of working hours, it is quite reasonable. The reality is that long hours are less feasible in a world of 120 degree Fahrenheit weather and frequent power outages. ☹

Profugo: Any advice for people who want to get involved with international development?

Mana Tanaka: Learn the local language, literally and figuratively. I know it is not always the highest priority for donor agencies or development workers. But I firmly believe that it is an essential requirement for any development work. Whether or not you are good with learning languages is unimportant. The process of learning the local language enables you to absorb the very ideas and culture of that country and people, and makes you more culturally sensitive and sensible. It also helps you to step outside yourself and see things from another perspective, which prevents the trap of self-righteousness, common among many frustrated development workers who are unable to communicate directly to the local people. I was one of these “self-righteous” aid workers in Ethiopia, where I was often frustrated with the local people who would say “I have done the work” when in reality s/he hadn’t. It took me one and a half years to realize that in the local language Amharic, the expressions for “I have done it” and “I would do it” are the same. The most amazing development workers I’ve met in Laos, Calcutta, Ethiopia and Rwanda all managed to make themselves understood in the local language. I feel they understood the core development issues on a much deeper level.

Interview was done in May 2009, Mana Tanaka has since completed her assignment in Lahore.

Up Close: Get to Know Our Families!



Mr. Vellan and family, Makkuzhi House

Adivassi (Tribal)

Immediate Needs:

- Child's education
- Toilet facility
- Home repair

Mr. Shivakumar and family

Kurunjikattil House

Immediate Needs:

- Drinking water
- Toilet facility
- Children's education
- Home repair



Upcoming Events & News

March 19, 2011—Café Profugo, Philadelphia, PA

This will be a monthly event (3rd Saturdays) on the theme of international development. May take the shape of a movie, musical guests, art show, and more—always to enlighten, encourage, innovate, and connect.

Summer 2011—Wayanad Service Trip, India

Are you a healthcare professional? Are you interested in business development? Would you like to join us in Wayanad this summer? Email us at info@profugo.org.