



Dining for Women

Center for Women's Development and Research: Message from the Director

On Friday, March 2, 2007, Dining for Women received an email message and program update from Renuka Bala, director of CWDR. We thought members would like to hear what she had to say.

"Thank you for your email supporting our Tsunami rehabilitation work with women. At this point of time we find it difficult to raise money for Tsunami rehabilitation work, because two years have gone and people have forgotten it. This timely help motivates us further to continue our work with women with lot more hope."

With regards

K.R.Renuka

Director CWDR (email received 2-2-07)

The following program update was also received from Renuka Bala.

Centre for Women's Development and Research Tsunami Rehabilitation work with women, children and adolescent girls Revised Proposal

We wish to introduce new income generation programs for women, continue our life skill and sexuality education for adolescent girls, and improve the quality of government schools:

1. Making dry fish using solar energy.

There is a good market for dry-fish in India, now women are processing the fish that is drying it in the sun in an unhygienic way. We wish to introduce solar dryers so that they can dry the fish in a hygienic way and quickly. We wish to train 20 women in making dry fish using solar driers, and provide a solar dryer and enough capital so that they can start the business.

2. Seaweed cultivation:

Seaweeds (red algae) are rich in vitamins and minerals and are consumed as food in various parts of the world. Seaweeds yields a substance called carrageenan, which is used in the manufacture of several food products, drugs and cosmetics. Growing seaweeds is an ideal vocation for the womenfolk of the fishermen community. The fishermen can also take it up as an alternative means of income when they do not venture out for fishing.

3. Producing handmade soaps using locally growing oilseeds

Soaps are used by all people everyday. We are planning to raise oilseed bearing tree seedlings (Jatropha, Illupai, Neem trees) extract oil and make soaps from it. Soap making involves very simple technology and oil is the major raw material.

Planting oilseed bearing trees will enrich the environment; women can earn income by raising nursery and also by growing and selling oilseeds. They can also find employment in soap production; they will also get eco-friendly natural soap at the lower price.

4. Create and/or strengthen the livelihood sources of 100 single women:

Many of the relief and rehabilitation work do not reach the single women in the fishing community. In the fishing community all those who goes for fishing has to pay a village tax to the local village panchayath (Traditional village group). Most of the relief and rehabilitation work is done through this village panchayath, they have given the benefits to those who pay the tax, because there is no one going for fishing form single women headed families they did not get the benefits. We realized it latter and made sure that our programmes reach single women. Now we wish to provide trainings and capital for single women to create or strengthen their livelihood sources.

5. Life skill, sexuality education, vocational skill and tuition classes for adolescent Girls.

We are already providing life skill and sexuality education for adolescent girls we wish to continue that. Many of the high school girl children also expressed that they need tuition classes in English, Mathematics and science. Usually if a girl child fails in a class the family will discontinue her education, or if a girl attains puberty she is stopped from school, in this Tsunami condition the economic condition will also force the family to discontinue girl children's education. Many girls also expressed interest in learning computer skills. So what we are planning to do is use computers to educate girl children. In addition to that we will also organize special weekend Tuition classes for girl children studying in 8th and 10th standard; we will also organize special camps before the final examination. We will also initiate a learning resource centre where girl children can come and learn computer, use the library, meet the resource people and learn. We already have infra-structure to provide computer skill training and tailoring training. We need support to pay for the instructors and to conduct weekend workshops on sexuality education. Nearly 300 adolescent girls will benefit from this program.

6. Workshops and trainings on Human Rights for Women

Ultimately our idea is to empower women and create a gender just society, so all Our activities are means to achieve this aim. So in all our activities we would try to educate women and adolescent girls about the importance of equality, justice and human rights. In addition to that we also wish to organize specific weekend workshops/trainings on women's rights to women and adolescent girls.

7. Improving the quality of education in Government Primary Schools

In most of the schools there is no proper infra-structure and enough teachers, usually two teachers manage 5 classes, but that is the state of schools in all over India. Initially we were running supplementary education classes in Tsunami affected areas, that time it was relevant and it also helped children to come out of trauma. Now we want to improve the quality of government school in our working area by providing additional teachers and infra-structures like learning/teaching materials, and toilets. So that children will get good education and do not drop out. Already we have appointed a teachers in a school, these appointments are done through the PTA-Parents Teachers Associations, we wish to extend this to other schools in our area. In rural area where we work there are 4 schools in 6 Tsunami affected villages. We wish to appoint 4 teachers in these schools we also wish to build two toilets each school so that children can use it. We also provide additional teaching learning materials like books, charts, and play materials. Nearly 1200 children will benefit from this program.