

John Lally Annual Newsletter 2012

As another year drifts, or rushes, towards its end, depending on your viewpoint, maybe it is an opportune moment to reflect on what the passage of time has brought in its wake.

For me personally, and I think John Lally International Foundation (JLIF) as an organisation, it has been a bit of a helter-skelter year. We started the year with a mixture of both disappointment and hope. Disappointment due to the failure of our bid to the BIG Lottery fund, which meant that two years of planning, work, and investment on behalf of JLIF, including my own money, had been lost.

But we also started the year with renewed hope; I had met a brick wall, but had decided to go around it to reach our goals. Towards the end of last year I had met Tarun Ghosh, the driving force behind Immanuel Human Research and Development Programme (IHRDP). Yes it is a bit of a mouthful, but to cut a long story short, Tarun and his registered organisation offered a way forward. The path was this; JLIF would continue to try to initiate a sustainable programme of development in the fields of health, education, and employment, under the over arching umbrella of a eco friendly / sustainable community centre, like the one in York (<http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk/environment-centre.php>) in conjunction with IHRDP.

The new focus for our efforts was a small village in the Sundarbans called Ramnagar, a village of about 3000 people. A number of visits were made by me, a JLIF survey carried out, conversations and meetings using interpreters held, the result has proved very interesting. The needs of the village are these: there is a need to increase the rudimentary health provision, to increase primary education for school children, and a need to provide an employment programme especially for women. There are other environmental projects that would follow these three main programmes.

For the past seven years IHRDP have been working in the village. Over the years they have bought land and built a small school, they have employed a few primary school teachers, as well as a homeopathic doctor, all this they have done out of their own wages. It should be added that there is another village farther away that is also the focus of IHRDP attention.



Inside the existing school with volunteers



Proposed Eco Community Centre & School



Local Houses

On seeing what was being attempted it seemed that JLIF should try and assist IHRDP achieve its aims, which coincided, however where JLIF would be immense help would be the initiation and implementation of an environmental focus to all projects and programmes.

So JLIF started on another bid to the BIG Lottery fund, hoping that we had learned from our previous bid. Three months of work, getting acceptable quotes, consulting villagers, setting up operating mechanisms and procedures for the smooth running of the project, finally everything was ready, the bid was submitted in March, all that was left was to wait till BIG Lottery phoned us.

I went to England, to be ready for the call. It came in May, questions asked, and answered, it took nearly 3 hours. Waiting, waiting, days turned to weeks, and then finally the letter came, we had failed again, some minor reasons were given. Then it struck me, of course we would fail, we were a very small fish trying to swim in a very big pool, or to put it another way we had no financial clout. JLIFs total income from donations was less than £400 per year, yet we had the audacity to ask for over £300,000 over 5 years. Shear madness.

Anyway time to move on, at the same time this was all happening a contact I had made last year put an exciting proposition to JLIF. The proposition was this; would JLIF like to take over the lease and management of an existing charity shop? The shop called **Its Donated** was in York. It could be a source of regular income.



Outside JLIF Shop with Volunteers



Inside the shop, all items donated

Of course there were many hurdles to overcome, proving to the landlord we could afford to take on the lease, gaining acceptance of the members of JLIF, finding Holding Trustees that would be prepared to take on the responsibility, finding a long term manager to run the shop, finding the funds to refurbish the shop.

Suffice to say all hurdles were overcome, albeit with the loss of one Trustee. The shop opened in August.

Today the shop is up and running, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY JLIF ARE MAKING MONEY, not a huge sum by any means, but with the help of a dedicated team of volunteers we are doing ok. So much so, that next year I aim to apply to the BIG Lottery again, you never know, third time lucky?

Currently I am back in India trying to get the work programme for women up and running. We have started with 40 women making artefacts from newspaper.



Women wanting work



Some examples of artefacts made from newspaper



A Trainer showing how to make the artefacts

We have increased the salaries of the teachers and doctor, we have funded the purchase of medicines for the doctor, and the thing I like best, we are providing free school meals for 24 children five days a week. All this from the proceeds of our shop.

Only time and the dedication of our members and volunteers will tell if we succeed in building a truly sustainable project here in India. If we do then we are truly living up to the words of Mahatma Gandhi, by "being" the change we want to see in the world. The memory John Lally has also been lifted onto the international stage.

Lastly this is still a work in progress, and we do need YOU. If you can help in some small way, either by becoming a member of JLIF, or making a donation, or if in York, helping with the shop, then you will be helping to bring about the change in the lives of thousands of poor people.

You can always contact me at gordonct@gmail.com

I hope that as this year comes to an end your dreams also start to come true.

Gordon JLIF Project Advisor