

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN RAMNAGAR



## ***AN ECO-COMMUNITY CENTRE AND SCHOOL***

***A project for the people and the  
environment***

**PROJECT PROPOSAL**

**John Lally International Foundation 2012**

# **Contents**

Introduction

Vision

Services

Project Areas

Market / Need

Marketing Plans

Challenges

Operation

Management Team

Resources

Financial Projection

Summary

# ***“You must be the change you want to see in the world”***

**Mahatma Gandhi**

## **Introduction**

The idea of locating India's first environmentally sustainable community centre and school in the area of the Sunderbans came through an auspicious meeting in 2008.

Tarun Gosh of Immanuel Human Research and Development Programme in Kolkata met Gordon Campbell-Thomas of the UK charity, John Lally International Foundation. Gordon was looking for a place to establish an eco-sustainable community project, and Tarun was looking for a way to expand an existing school and health project in Ramnagar in the Sunderbans. So they joined forces

Talking with local people made it clear that the site had three of the four essential elements:

- *an area that would benefit from environmental and social initiatives*
- *a suitable plot of land in such an area already owned by IHR&DP*
- *local people with the will to create positive change for themselves*

This project proposal is an earnest attempt to obtain the final element:

- *funding*

A PowerPoint presentation about the project is available on request.

### Note:

John Lally International Foundation has now also established an Indian branch known as John Lally Foundation India, which is the organisation referred to in this document.

**JOHN LALLY INTERNATIONAL  
FOUNDATION  
&  
JOHN LALLY FOUNDATION INDIA**

**Two Names, One Purpose  
To  
Work for People and the Environment**

**LOCAL PEOPLE,  
LOCAL NEEDS, LOCAL BENEFITS**



**Spoken and Written English Lessons & Literacy  
Computer Training  
Health Programmes - Family Planning Advice  
First Aid - HIV/Aids Awareness  
Employment Opportunities - Traditional Handicrafts  
Agricultural Programmes  
Environmental Education - Garbage Collection & Recycling  
Sustainable Energy Generation – Tree Planting Scheme**



## Ramnagar Eco-Community Centre & School

### **A VISION OF RAMNAGAR ECO-COMMUNITY CENTRE AND SCHOOL**

The project's aim is to create an environmentally sustainable community centre and primary school in the heart of the Sunderbans, West Bengal. The centre will provide environmental, educational and social welfare programmes for people in the Ramnagar area, with a special focus on the empowerment of local women.

The idea for the centre is based on Britain's York Environment Centre which opened in the year 2000 and which, in 2005, Prime Minister Tony Blair called it **"A model of sustainable community development."**



York Environment Centre

*Britain's first sustainable community educational resource*

By setting up the Ramnagar Eco-Community Centre and School we will be serving the needs of the local communities of Ramnagar villages. These are

economically deprived fishing and farming communities that are currently suffering, and will increasingly suffer from the effects of global warming and have suffered from lack of proper development of infrastructure for the past 34 years.

From a biodiversity point of view, the Sundarbans is a fragile eco-system that needs to be protected and enhanced. Trying to enrich this particular area through an integrated environmentally sustainable development project would help enhance the current situation for both the people and the environment. Not only this, if a sustainable project could be modelled in this area, it would bring into focus how similar projects can 'help make a real difference' in other areas. This project is focussed on addressing several of the thematic areas of global problems as dictated by the Global Environment Facility, which is a long-standing United Nations Development Programme. This includes a focus on climate change mitigation and aspects of biodiversity conservation, our goals are specifically targeted for the needs of the Sundarbans region.

West Bengal's rural poor form a large and economically stagnant population, which, in general, has proven difficult to reach with anti-poverty programs. The current population of Ramnagar is about 4000 people; however there is no electricity connection, and these communities experience significant economic deprivation and generational cycles of poverty, and if steps are not taken now, the local people will suffer from the worst excesses that lack of sustainable development brings.

The Chronic Poverty Report 2008-09<sup>1</sup> describes five poverty traps that must be considered for those attempting to tackle chronic poverty, as seen in the economically deprived villages of the Sundarbans, West Bengal. Research such as the above in regards to a general state of deprivation of the poor has led to a renewed focus on development indicators in the areas of:

- A) Education
- B) Health attainment
- C) Social protection
- D) Gender empowerment and
- E) Building individual and collective assets<sup>2</sup>

The Chronic Poverty Report 2008-09 states that preventing illness and impairment among chronically poor women and children is key to the interruption of life-course and intergenerational poverty. Currently there is a general lack of public facilities such as health and medical services in the Ramnagar area; for example, the nearest properly equipped hospital is nearly a half hour's drive away. There are currently no existing spoken English classes or free computer training available in the area, and there is a lack of affordable basic numeracy and literacy programs, all of which are essential to empower local people to meet the demands of development. Research shows that a high literacy rate with the added impact of spoken and written English skills creates a class of



more skilled workers, who can procure a superior wage and better the lives of their families<sup>3</sup>. The need for a focus on gender empowerment in West Bengal, and indeed India as a whole, is very clear. The burden of poverty generally falls most heavily on women, as they shoulder responsibility for much of the workload in poor households, with even less access to education, health care and remunerative activities<sup>4</sup>. The communities have limited or no access to shared productive assets and resources.

The goals and vision of the Eco Community Centre have been developed around addressing these needs and issues in our dual focus of environmental sustainability and community development/social welfare, all with the aim of empowering the local people to create positive change both in their environment and living conditions.

## **If it can be done in the UK, Why not in Ramnagar, West Bengal?**

### **SERVICES OFFERED**

#### **Environmental**

##### *Goals:*

- 1. To model environmentally sustainable building and living, with a focus on climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation*
- 2. To empower local people in actively minimising environmental impact through providing various environment conservation and educational programs*
- 3. The building techniques used will minimise the Centres eco-footprint*

##### *Services:*

- Refuse Collection*
- Recycling Service*
- Tree Planting Scheme*
- Sustainable Energy*
- Pilot Bio-Diesel Project*

Local residents and business premises will be provided with containers for separation of waste; i.e. glass, plastic, metal, paper, kitchen and garden waste, which will be composted down for sale. The centre will operate a weekly refuse collection and recycling service in co-operation with the local Panchayat. Waste will be sorted at the centre and recycled materials will be sold on or manufactured into saleable items at the centre. There will also be a tree planting scheme, which will, over time, has plans to be developed into community woodland for the enjoyment of local people.

The centre building itself will model sustainable living in every aspect possible. Photovoltaic panels will provide energy to run the centre's recycling and manufacturing operations. Surplus energy may be sold on to the local community. As well as sustainable energy generation, we will initiate a pilot bio diesel project based on using the tree **Millettia pinnata** to produce the seed oil. The plant **Millettia pinnata** is a native Indian tree that requires a minimum amount of water ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millettia\\_pinnata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millettia_pinnata)). It also helps to hold the soil together, thereby reducing soil erosion by the elements. This project could help reduce dependency on conventional oil based fuels. Not only this, it could increase employment opportunities in the area, and therefore sustainable income generation for local people.

## Educational

### Goals:

1. *Increase the capacity and potential of local people to achieve gainful employment*
2. *Empower local people with the necessary skills to meet the demands of development*

### Services:

#### School of Learning and Technology

-Primary School

-English Lessons

-Computer Training

-Environmental Education

-Literacy and Numeracy Programme

The centre will run as both a Primary School and a base for Learning and Technology, where local people will be provided access to spoken and written English lessons and computer training. There will be a focus on the education of children and women in the community; however this will not be exclusive. There will be a small fee for computer training and English lessons, which may be waived in cases of financial hardship. The centre will provide environmental education programmes for schools and colleges. Dependant on resources, we aim to establish a literacy and numeracy programme for local people.



## **Social Welfare (Health)**

Goals:

- 1. To increase the basic health and health awareness of disadvantaged persons and families, with a focus on HIV awareness and Mother/Baby services*
- 2. Provide low cost health care and first aid facilities for local persons and families, and thereby increase its accessibility*

Services:

- Medical Clinic/First Aid*
- Health Education*
- HIV Awareness*
- Family Planning*

The centre will provide a medical clinic and various health education programmes. This will involve weekly free medical clinics with a qualified doctor, and will also include public awareness and educational programs. These programs will be advertised and directed towards the general population and will provide information, awareness and strategies for the treatment and management of common illnesses and diseases, including a focus on HIV awareness. It will include family planning and mother/baby information and advice.

## **Social Welfare (Employment)**

Goals:

- 1. Increase the earning potential of local men and women*
- 2. Increase the agricultural skills and knowledge of the local farmers*
- 3. Increase community connection and provide access to shared productive resources and assets*

Services:

- Handicrafts Workshop*
- Agricultural Programme / Tree Planting*

The project will operate two income generating, community development programmes for local people in the community. The first will be an on-site handicraft workshop, focusing primarily on women and girls. They will use traditional crafts to create high quality products for the local growing tourist market and for international export. Income generated will pay worker

salaries and workshop overheads, and any available profit will be invested back into the centre. Some government aid is anticipated to help fund the scheme. The second project is an agricultural programme, which will train people from the community in income generating projects such as growing mushrooms and breeding rabbits, planting trees. Through onsite training and modelling by experienced professionals, the local people will be fully assisted to set up such income generating projects in their own homes, and also to sell their products in the local markets.



*Types of products like these can be sold in Kolkata, and also be exported to retailers like Shared Earth, York, UK*

## **MARKET/NEED**

The centre will operate on a Fair Trade basis. All income generated will fund centre projects and initiatives as well as developing infrastructure and paying worker salaries. The centre will be supported by two NGO's operating on a non-profit basis: **John Lally Foundation India and Immanuel H R D Programme.**

## **MARKETING PLANS**

Research into current market trends will ensure the smooth running of the centre's handicrafts marketing operation and the agricultural initiatives. Advice and support has been sought from organisations producing handicrafts already operating in the marketplace, including *Silence* in Kolkata and *Asha Handicrafts* in Mumbai. Links with Fair Trade organisations in the UK are already in place.

## **CHALLENGES**

Regular project evaluations and performance appraisals of centre staff, operations and infrastructure will identify and solve problems as they occur.

## **OPERATION**

The operation of the centre will be monitored by the Board of Trustees of John Lally Foundation India and Immanuel Human Research & Development Programme.

The centre will adhere to stringent Equal Opportunity, Health & Safety and Child/Vulnerable Adult Protection policies.

Financial accounts will be transparent and externally audited. The centre will have full and appropriate insurance cover for all its activities and operations.

### **Centre Staff**

#### **Project Director**

*Areas of Responsibility:*

Overall control of project including external relations, funding, press & media and centre staff (in conjunction with Boards of Trustees).

#### **Centre Manager**

*Areas of Responsibility:*

Management and maintenance of centre buildings, Health & Safety, security, computer equipment, and procurement (in conjunction with department heads).

#### **Environment Manager**

*Areas of Responsibility:*

Delivery of environmental projects including environmental education (now mandatory in most curricula). Introduction of composting toilets, and small scale horticultural projects. Schools and colleges will be charged a fee for the service.

#### **Education Manager**

*Areas of Responsibility:*

Delivery of education modules: computer training, spoken and written English, etc. A small fee will be charged for most courses, although some education will be provided free of charge.

#### **Social Welfare (Employment) Manager**

*Areas of Responsibility:*

Delivery of handicraft training, maintenance of workshop area, and procurement of materials.

## **Resident Homeopathic Doctor**

### *Areas of Responsibility:*

Delivery of HIV/Aids awareness programme, family planning information and advice, First Aid, maintenance of project area, and procurement of materials.

## **Visiting Doctor**

A visiting doctor will supplement the services of a resident homeopathic doctor based at the clinic. The visiting doctor will come twice a week to hold medical clinics

## **RESOURCES**

The centre's primary resource will be its people. Investment in regular staff training programmes will enhance the centre's ability to develop the potential of those who use the centre. Staff will be selected on the basis of their experience and dedication to providing a first class service to the people of the local community. The centre will also provide the most up to date equipment as possible, e.g. computers and teaching materials, as well modern renewable energy materials etc

## **FINANCIAL PROJECTION**

After the start-up period, and stabilisation period of maximum 3 years, capital and running costs should be covered by project income and fundraising. The project will be funded initially by donations, local businesses, and benevolent sources both abroad and in India.

The aim is for the centre to be self-financing within two to three years of opening.

### **Cost Estimates**

The Ramnagar Eco-Community Centre and School can be up and fully operational and running for 5 years for an approximate sum of

**Rs 253,20,000/- (£316,500)**

This includes both capital and running costs for five years. This figure, given the parameters of the project, is very reasonable. The timescale for completion is less than one year.

## Cost breakdown

A donation of land has been made, and the cost of the foundations and access road, so the remaining building cost itself is needed, plus overheads and running costs for five years. Everything else follows from that.

## Capital

- Building cost, including Renewable Energy installation, Vehicle(which will act as an ambulance as well)
- Fixture and Fittings (furniture, security, equipment, etc)
- Computers, Internet connections etc
- Project areas- e.g. handicraft workshop, and education classroom, recycling and composting bays, health promotion area
- Fees, surveys, permissions etc
- **Rs 40,00,000/- (£50,000)**

## Running costs

- Project Staff 5 years
- Insurance over 5 years
- Training for staff and beneficiary 5 years
- Building maintenance over 5 years
- Contingency
- **Rs 177,99,680/- (£222496)**

**Microfinance Rs 30,40,000/- (£38000)**

**Total Rs 253,20,000/- (£316,500)**

## Summary

York Environment Centre - the model for the Ramnagar Eco-Community Centre and School - has proved to be a valued community resource in the UK. Creating a sustainable community centre here in India will set a pioneering precedent for a greener future. Again, the question,

## If it can be done in the UK, Then why not in here in Kolkata, West Bengal?

Global warming is humanity's greatest ever challenge. We alone cannot turn the rising tide, but if we show that it is possible to build in a sustainable way and if we can pass on the fruits of our effort to the local community - not as a hand out, but as a hand up - we will be fulfilling our true purpose as human beings.

We hope to make a lasting contribution to the social and educational welfare of the people of Ramnagar; but to do so we need financial assistance. We therefore recommend this project to all astute, socially aware, business people, local and national government officials and charitable organisations. There is a small financial profit to be made by investing in the Ramnagar Eco-Community Centre & School; it won't be huge profit, but it will be sustainable. **Most importantly of all, investment in this project will bring tangible and enduring benefits to the local community.**



### References:

- 1) The Chronic Poverty Report 2008-09, *Part A Chronic Poverty as a Key Policy Issue*, Chapter 1, pg 4
- 2) The Chronic Poverty Report 2008-09, *Part A Chronic Poverty as a Key Policy Issue*, Chapter 1, pg 4
- 3) A State-Level Examination Of Rural Poverty in India From 1983-1994, Sumir Meghani, May 2003  
Stanford University
- 4) Fighting Poverty in Asia and the Pacific: The Poverty Reduction Strategy, Asian Development Bank, 2004,
- 5) Contact Information : Gordon Campbell-Thomas John Lally International Foundation Project Advisor, email [gordonct@gmail.com](mailto:gordonct@gmail.com), 0091-9874755954 /0044-7927921450
- 6) Contact Information : Tarun Ghosh Immanuel Human Research & Development Programme Secretary, [ghoshtarun8@gmail.com](mailto:ghoshtarun8@gmail.com), 0091-9830378155

Copyright Gordon Campbell-Thomas & JLIIF 2008 & 2011/ 20012