



1 Chemin des Érables
Gatineau, QC
J8V 1C1

Tel: 819-243-3616 or 1-866-443-3616

Fax: 819-243-6280

E-Mail: sopar@sopar.ca

Website: www.sopar.ca

To help the people help themselves !



More and more Canadians want to ensure the long term survival of the organizations that work for the causes that they hold dear. SOPAR is a member of the *Leave a Legacy* campaign and we encourage you to visit their website at:

<http://www.leavealegacy.ca/>

To make a charitable bequest to SOPAR please consult your notary, your financial advisor or SOPAR staff to learn how to proceed.



Making a difference !

Compassion, simplicity, respect for human beings regardless of their culture or religious background, are some of the values that Sister Gisèle Lambert holds dear. Sister Gisèle Lambert, a member of the Christian community The Daughter's of Wisdom, is a good friend and has been a volunteer for the past 14 years of Sopar.

It all began more than 25 years ago, when Angèle Gingras, Founder of SOPAR, visited the Daughter's of Wisdom congregation to ask for support for our work in India. At the time, Sister Gisèle was provincial of the congregation. This first encounter marked the beginning of a long lasting friendship between the two women who have since shared

many ideas on solidarity work. According to Angèle, Sister Gisèle is a woman filled with warmth and compassion towards others. Sister Gisèle lived for several years in India with the Daughter's of Wisdom and it is based on this experience that she got involved as a board member of SOPAR. She was President of SOPAR from 1997 to 1999. Her experience, her strong values and vigilance significantly contributed to the development of SOPAR. Sister Gisèle,



Gisèle Lambert

along with many other congregation members, is also recognized by the community for her involvement in the long and difficult struggle to preserve the Montfort Hospital in Ottawa, the only French Canadian hospital in Ontario. Sister Gisèle volunteered her time to the hospital in the laboratory and on the board of directors, thus accumulating a great number of years of service with the institution. This year, after her long involvement with SOPAR, Sister Gisèle Lambert has stepped down from her function as board member of SOPAR. However, she will always remain a true friend of Sopar. Thank you Gisèle for your time, your dedication and for having contributed to the well-being of thousands of individuals in India!



Partners Newsletter

MAY 2009

Do you know Gangadevipalli ?

By Ashley Johnson

The village of Gangadevipally is not often found on Indian travel brochures or "Top 10 Destinations" lists, but frankly, it should be. Awarded *Gram Panchayat* (Municipality) of the Year in 2007, Gangadevipally has received local and international attention as an example of a "Model Village." And the assistance of SOPAR in supporting this community has not gone unnoticed.

SOPAR was first approached by residents of Gangadevipally in 1992 when they attended an inauguration of a water tank in a neighbouring village. The following year, Gangadevipally was celebrating the inauguration of its own tank and the partnership

between the community and SOPAR had begun. Now, Gangadevipally boasts two



Women in Gangadevipally are learning to read and write their names.

water tanks, a purification plant, a renovated irrigation tank, access to satellite television, a bore well, a tap and toilets in every home, tree-lined streets, a plantation, and a community hall. But a village, especially a model village, is much more than the sum of its physical compo-

nents. Gangadevipally has significant funds in its coffers because of responsible economic management, charging initial membership fees for water and satellite TV use. The community can use this money to help fund its 16 separate committees, focusing on aspects of sustainable development as varied as health, family planning, justice, education and agricultural development.

Every adult member of the community can write his or her own name. School attendance is at an all-time high, with no dropouts. Property taxes are paid on time. Prohibition and family planning is enforced with excellent results. Every home has access to clean water.

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SOPAR invites you...

SOPAR's ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
June 11th at 19h00
1 chemin des Érables
Gatineau, in the basement of the St-Alexander Church

Did you know that by donating to or/and volunteering for SOPAR you become a member of the organization?

This allows you, amongst other things, to participate in the Annual General Assembly

and in the election of Board members of SOPAR.

Please join us in celebrating the many achievements of our collective work over the past year.

“If India lives in the villages then let there be but one ideal village so that it may serve as model for the whole country.”
Gandhi



A water tank. The project that marked the beginning of a new era for Gangadevipalli

People as agents of change and builders of communities

Last month Mario Bouliane, reporter for Le Droit, wrote in his column: “In spite of the actual crisis, solidarity is on the rise.” He explains that even with the world economic crisis, people in the Outaouais persist to stay involved in support of community initiatives. This is good news! When people pull together to achieve a common goal, a positive energy can be felt by the group. Have you ever experienced this? India also bares communities that fos-

ter this energy, who can serve as a model for us. For example, the village of Gangadevipally brought forward important changes that will have great impact on future generations. This village quickly realized that people were the corner stone in bringing about these improvements and made sure that the community remained involved, united, and motivated. When doing community development, it is important to focus our attention on the

most important asset: the Individuals. When individuals change their way of thinking, realize that they can bring about positive change and develop the confidence and motivation to take control of their lives, they become the foundation for community development. Why not have our own success models here in the Outaouais, in Quebec, and in Canada? It is in our power to make a difference.

Gangadevipalli followed...

Toilet use is comprehensive. There is increased equity between male and female children and no caste discrimination, leading to fewer dowries being required and more inter-caste marriages. And Gangadevipally was the very first Indian village with its own website. Also all of the women in the village are members of SOPAR’s women groups. With the support of SOPAR, this farming community of al-

most 400 families has taken ownership of its own development, becoming involved in every stage of the process—from identifying their needs, to participating in the design of development activities, implementation, and monitoring and evaluating their own progress. But even though SOPAR has contributed financial, educational, and logistical aid, the success of the community lies in its empowerment and ownership of its

development. Many villages around Gangadevipalli have followed their example. As accolades and increased attention grace Gangadevipally, the villagers feel a greater sense of responsibility to maintain the high standards they set for themselves. And though they may face difficulties in the future, SOPAR has equipped them with the tools they need to sustain and succeed in any future endeavour.

SOPAR’s interns share their story...

Not long after the Christmas holidays, we three students from *l’Université du Québec en Outaouais*, Dominique Marchessault, Marilyse Cournoyer and Jérémie Gérard-Duchesne, all passionate about international development, have benefited from the biggest opportunity since the beginning of our studies.

We were on the road to the Bala Vikasa People Development Training Center in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, to pursue a special training.

All of our sense would soon be challenged by new cultural realities and by a symbolic way of seeing the world that we do not en-

counter here. We were immediately stimulated by this new and welcoming environment in which we quickly needed to get adjusted.

The most vivid memory for us is one filled with the tremendous wealth that we gained from sharing with the 30 other participants

A dictation, with bugs...

A group of students were sitting on the floor, each with a sheet of paper and a pencil, as I gave them a dictation. This was a short experiment I made with a class of the Gentilly school in Longueuil. After no more than fifteen minutes, most found themselves squirming, moving from side to side, trying to find a comfortable position. All wanted to return to their chair, behind their desk. After, we all watched the DVD provided by Sopar that shows Indian students going through a similar exercise, but for them, it wasn’t an experiment. This is what they

live, day in and day out, with bugs crawling on the floor. Suffice to say that every Canadian student felt very fortunate. This is how we raised awareness with our students for Sopar’s program Schools Working Together. In addition to the commitment made to earn a few dollars at home that went towards equipping a school in India, it is without a doubt, the raised awareness regarding the inequalities between children in the world that has been the most valuable learning for our students. They were also excited to be recognized for their contri-

butions by seeing the name of their school on a certificate hung on the walls of a classroom in India. The recent financial crisis increases the need for awareness of situations such as these Indian school students. Their needs are of great importance. Thank you and congratulations to Sopar for promoting this program and having provided such useful and educational material.

Roger Tremblay
Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin, Longueuil

Students in India enjoy their new desks and seats !



How to plan solidarity !

You contribute to SOPAR’s work because you are filled with compassion towards social injustice, you strongly believe that solidarity between nations is important...What if you were told that your donation could help achieve more and could last longer...Have you heard of “planned gift” ? Planned giving is a way of giving to a charity by taking into consideration financial, fiscal and estate con-

siderations. There are many types of planned gifts, however the charitable bequest is one of the simplest and commonly used. A charitable bequest means that in your will, you can leave a specific amount, a percentage of your estate, an asset, a product of a life insurance policy, or a RRSP to a charitable organization such as SOPAR. One does not need to be wealthy to make a charitable

bequest; most individuals will own an estate consisting of a house, savings, an RRSP or personal assets. Any amount, small or large, will make a lasting difference for the organization. More and more Canadians want to ensure the survival of the organizations

« While visiting the villages supported by SOPAR, we realised the importance of community solidarity in the context of holistic and global change...»

Interns from the UQO

Interns followed ...

that came from all around the world: from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania, Germany and Canada.

Together we became more aware about what kind of strength is needed to develop and empower agents of change locally. These agents of change give rise to a unique and crea-

tive process locally which can in turn have a global impact.

In fact, an abundant availability of resources cannot on its own bring forth social or economic development. It can only do so if it is combined with the efforts of individuals to create and share these opportunities.

Dominique, Marylise and Jérémie were part of a group of SOPAR Interns that traveled to India in January 2009 to follow a certificate in Community Based Development.