



1, Chemin des Érables
Gatineau, Québec
J8V 1C1
Enregistrement/ Registration:
119156578RR0001

Téléphone / Phone : 819 243 3616
Sans frais / Toll Free : 1 866 443 3616
Télécopieur / Fax : 819 243 6280
Courriel / Email : sopar@sopar.ca
Web / Website : www.sopar.ca

Solidarity Trip to India 2011-2012

Trip to the heart of international development

1. What is SOPAR

SOPAR is an international development organization based in Gatineau, Quebec. Since 1977, SOPAR's mission has been to support community development in India, more specifically in the State of Andhra Pradesh and to promote cooperation in Canada. Our approach is to help people help themselves, by using the assets and resources of communities to effect lasting community change. For SOPAR, the key asset of a community is its people, their willingness to work together, to improve their living conditions and to care for their own most vulnerable ones, orphans, aged, widows, etc.

SOPAR offers financial, technical and administrative support to its main sister organisation in India, Bala Vikasa, a non-profit development organization without religious or political affiliation and recognized by the Indian Government. Bala Vikasa, based in Warangal in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, is one of the largest development Non-Governmental Organization(NGO) in South India, working for integrated rural development in collaboration with a large number of local partner NGO's.

2. What is a SOPAR Solidarity Trip?

SOPAR offers Canadians the opportunity to visit India in order to discover its community development programs. Our solidarity trip is a form of alternative tourism which enables donors/visitors to witness the reality of life in a poor rural village in a developing country, to witness what SOPAR's community development activities do to help those villagers improve their own lives, and to make a contribution to those villagers efforts to improve their own lives. As you will see later in this brochure, part of the cost you will pay for the trip includes a small financial contribution for which you will receive a tax receipt donation. We will return that money to the villages, In this manner, you can see yourself as a dynamic part of what you will witness in the course of you trip, This will allow you to experience a reality of life in a manner that is not offered in traditional tours.

3. What will I visit?

You will arrive at the Hyderabad airport to be picked up by the SOPAR team in India and driven to our head office in the city of Warangal. After a day of rest with some presentations, SOPAR will take you off the beaten track and you will visit small villages where people work as best they can to earn a very basic living. You will have a first hand opportunity to see and experience the life of those villagers in the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh and the work they do with SOPAR to improve their living conditions. Each day will take you to a new village to witness different kinds of projects such as:

1. Drinking Water projects
2. Watershed management
3. Rural Poor Women Development Program - Micro credit
4. Care and Share with widows - Justice and equality to Widows

5. Education for Orphans - Solidarity with Orphans
6. Old & Destitute - Humanitarian program
7. Capacity Building program
8. Women program staff monthly training, where you could share and ask any questions you may have.

At the end of your trip, you will be taken to the capital city of the state of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, to visit some of the wonderful features of that old city to finally fly out from the Hyderabad airport.

4. What can I expect?

Throughout the whole trip, you will be escorted and guided by the staff of SOPAR's sister organisation, Bala Vikasa from your arrival at the airport until you departure at the airport. Before each visit, you will be briefed about the program of the day, where you will go, what you will see and can expect. You will sit among the villagers and be free to ask any questions through our interpreters who speak fluent English. You will be surprised at the readiness of those villagers to answer any and all of your questions. You will also visit their village and their homes, witness the lives of people and how the SOPAR projects changes their lives. You will see the methods, approaches, motivation, people's involvement, local people taking charge of the programs, results, sustainable development etc. Upon returning, you will be given an opportunity to ask any questions about what you saw or would like to know.

Throughout your visit, you will be treated with Indian hospitality wherever you go. You will learn more about culture, customs and everyday living in the communities.

SOPAR is about people in development. So is the solidarity trip. You will be visiting people first. Yes, there will be some monuments to visit and appreciate but the focus will be on meeting people. Experience tells us that this trip can be an emotional experience. It is one thing to see a documentary on life in a poor developing country village; it is another thing to be in the middle of it and be with its people. The people are not images any more but real people talking with you. Through the discussion, you will feel that you are feeling closer to them. You will be touched and many former visitors tell us it made them take a second look at their own lives. Based on experience, you will come back with a lot of positive energy because you will know that, as poor as those people may be, with us they have great hope for a better tomorrow. They will tell you that their lives are getting better, that they are confident it will continue to get better and better. Their hope, energy and determination will impress you. You will be inspired.

5. How does it work?

- The group will be made up of a maximum of 10 people.
- The entire trip, including the visit of Hyderabad, will last 10 days.
- A coordinator from SOPAR will accompany the group.
- The final destination is Bala Vikasa's office in Warangal, a city 3 hours drive from Hyderabad airport.
- The entire group will leave together from Ottawa/Montreal/Toronto and arrive the same time in Hyderabad.
- Bala Vikasa & SOPAR will coordinate the visit of its programs in Andhra Pradesh and a visit to Hyderabad.
- Donors/Visitors must pay a non refundable deposit of \$ 500 to SOPAR by registration deadline. SOPAR refunds only if SOPAR cancels the trip. Should you decide to cancel, you will receive a donation tax receipt for you deposit.
- SOPAR will organize an information session on **Thursday, August 25th 2011, from 7 pm to 9pm, at SOPAR office, 1ch. des Érables, Gatineau, J8V 1C1**
- Donors/Visitors are free to visit other parts of India after our 10 day trip but they must arrange their own itinerary and plans. Guidance could be given during information session.

6. To register & Travel Dates

- To Register for the upcoming trip, contact us:
By Email at: sopar@sopar.ca
By Phone at: 819-243-3616 or Toll Free at 1-866-443-3616

Solidarity Trip November: Nov. 18- 28 2011

Registration deadline: Sept.1st, 2011 (with \$500 deposit)

DATES	ACTIVITY
Nov. 18 th	Departure and arrival in Hyderabad and then to Warangal on the 20 th
Nov. 20 th	Day for relaxation and visit the facilities (the PDTC) and the Capacity Building program
Nov. 21 st to 25 th	Daily field visits and programs accompanied by an orientation and debriefing before and after each visit.
Nov. 26 th	Assist to Women Coordinators Training and Wrap-up.
Nov. 27 th & 28 th	Tourism in Hyderabad and shopping for 2 days. Departure on the night of 28 th to Canada or other regions of India.

*** A detailed schedule of the whole trip will be giving to each participant upon arrival in Warangal

Solidarity Trip January: Jan. 15th - 25th 2012

Registration deadline: October 1st, 2011 (with \$500 deposit)

DATES	ACTIVITY
Jan. 15 th	Departure and arrival in Hyderabad and then to Warangal on the 17 th
Jan. 17 th	Day for relaxation and visit the facilities (the PDTC) and the Capacity Building program
Jan. 18 th to 22 nd	Daily field visits and programs accompanied by an orientation and debriefing before and after each visit.
Jan 23 rd	Assist to Women Coordinators Training and Wrap-up.
Nov. 24 th & 25 th	Tourism in Hyderabad and shopping for 2 days. Departure on the night of 25 th to Canada or other regions of India.

*** A detailed schedule of the whole trip will be giving to each participant upon arrival in Warangal

7. Cost of the trip

- Donors/visitors pay their Air Fare ticket: \$1500.00 (approximately)
- The cost per Person/Day is \$200 for a total of \$1800: \$500 at the time of registration and \$1300 by Oct.15th
- SOPAR will give you a receipt for all payments
- SOPAR will issue you an Official Charity Receipt of \$700 for Income tax purposes, issued in January.
- \$ 200 /per person/day includes:
 - Accommodation: room for 2 with two single beds (for an extra \$30 you can have a single room);
 - Air conditioning and internet;
 - Three (3) meals per day: Indian food at will;
 - Transportation to and from airport;
 - Transportation to and from the villages;
 - Arrangement of Field visits to get acquainted with SOPAR's programs;
 - Tourism in Hyderabad, Capital of Andhra Pradesh: Hotel, Food, transportation and fee entrance for 2 days.

Note: Any extra drinks, meals bought at private sites, and souvenir shopping are at the cost of donors/visitors.

8. Responsibilities of both parties

SOPAR/ Bala Vikasa will:

- Arrange information meeting at SOPAR and provide information kit;
- Reserve tickets for the group;
- Receive the visitors upon arrival at the Hyderabad airport;

10. Additional information

To visit India you require a Tourist Visa. -Your passport must be a minimum of 6 months before expiry and the cost of the Tourist Visa is \$62.00.

For more information go to www.hciottawa.ca (click on “Consular Services”, then “Visa Services” and “Tourist Visa”) The Online Visa application is available at: <http://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/>

The Indian Visa and Consular Services Center office is at the following address:
384 Bank Street, Suite 220
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1Y4

Submission of Application: 8:00 AM - 2:30PM
Passport pickup: 3:30 PM - 7:00 PM Monday-Saturday
Toll Free Number: 1 877 599 8071

To fill the visa form, you will need an address and contact person, you should use the following:

Bala Vikasa SSS 1-1-867 Sidharthanagar Kazipet, Warangal, A.P. 506-004 Tel: +91+870-2459-287 cell: 98491-65890	Contact person S. Shoury R. cell: 98491-65890 Mrs. Latha: cell: 98660-63355
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Weather - Warm and between 23-33C

Clothes - During the day summer clothes is recommended: Cotton loose clothes, light pants or jeans, knee length skirts, hat, dress code casual. During the nights it tends to be cooler, warmer clothes are recommended: a few long-sleeved shirts, pants and warmer clothes.

Language - Telugu, Hindi and other local languages; most states have their own language. English however is widely spoken; you will always find someone to translate.

Electricity voltage - 220v. You may want to bring a voltage and socket adapter if you bring any electrical appliance. Laptops normally only require a socket adapter.

Currency - Indian rupee. \$=46 Rs. We suggest that you purchase rupees in India upon arrival should you want to buy gifts and make other expenses. ATMs are available in larger centers. The following credit cards are accepted: Visa and MasterCard.

Immunization - We strongly recommend that you visit a health/travel clinic in order to have all the information about immunization and medicine.

Food - Rice, curry, eggs, Indian bread, chicken, lamb, vegetarian.

11. Agreement & Release from Liability Form Signature

Effective Date ___/___/___

Between SOPAR Limbour, further referred to as "SOPAR",

A Non governmental organisation,

Located at 1, chemin des Érables
Gatineau, QC, J8V 1C1

And [Participant's Name], further referred to as "Participant"

A Participant of the Solidarity Trip 2011-2012,

Located at [Address]
[City], [State] [Zip Code]

I, the undersigned agree and does hereby release from all liability and hold harmless SOPAR -Canada and its partner NGO Bala Vikasa-India and any of its employees representing or related to SOPAR and Bala Vikasa. This liability release is for any and all liability for personal injuries including death and property losses or damage in connection with any activity or accommodation of the above mentioned organizations. I also free them from any liability of damages that may result from my own actions.

The undersigned does hereby further agree to abide by all the rules and regulations that are presented by SOPAR.

Applicable Law

This contract shall be governed by the laws of the Province of _____, Canada and any applicable Federal Law.

_____ Date
Signature of Participant

Print Name