



## Herald Hindustan



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## Official News letter of Projects Abroad | India

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# Country Director's Note



*Vaanakkam from Projects Abroad India.*

*November was filled with festival of lights. Shops and temples in Madurai were packed with people on the eve of celebrations. Children, young and old dressed in glittering colours welcomed the festival. As usual the annoying crackers restricted my movements during the festivity.*

*The few November showers have initiated lots of sprouting activities in our conservation project at Chinnupatti. Volunteers at the model farm have sprung in action digging, ploughing and plantation activities. The farmers with hopes on the showers started farming activities.*

*I had the opportunity to interact and support volunteers in their placements. Pro-active participation by the volunteers in delivering their services was commendable. The alternate and systematic approaches that were presented by the volunteers were appreciated and executed by the placement supervisors. I witnessed new developments from the mindsets of the local teachers, doctors and nurses. India needs such volunteer support in education and health care.*

*You would all be looking forward to the December holiday season. We have tons of fun and creative activities for the volunteers who are going to be in the country. I wish you fun and joy filled year end with you near and dear ones.*

*Greetings for the Season.*

*Thank you*

**George Heston**

Country Director  
Projects Abroad | India





# Asian companions: JAPAN AND INDIA

**Story By** Haruko Kawabe

Japan

It is said that the relationship between Japan and India is historically strong. It started in the 6th century when Buddhism came to Japan from India. Then during World War II and Indian independence, we fought together. Now, India is the largest recipient of the Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Now I understood why Japan and India were historically connected with each other. I'm the only Japanese volunteer in Madurai, in India. I have come here to do my project in Journalism. Sometimes, I really feel a few things that are done here are also done in Japan and I really feel at home because of that. I am now happy to be sharing those points with you.

Am I in India or Japan?

At first, I was surprised and also felt happy that Indian people take their shoes off at home. When I came to my host family from the Madurai airport, I asked my host mother if I should take off my shoes. I had thought this culture existed only in Japan and Korea. My host mother answered "Of course, it is India!" It is done for the same reason of climate as in Japan also, like India, have a rainy season, unlike European countries. I really like this culture because it makes me feel very calm and warm, just like I feel in Japan. Indian people told me that there are gods at home and they take shoes off to respect them. Also at home, I love my host family telling me "Take care" or "Have a good day," when I go out for the day. When I was living in London, I didn't stop and always passed through the entrance because that is how the culture is there. In India, I noticed that before anyone in the family leaves for the day, they will say proper



'good-byes' and will greet each other before they all leave for the day. In an Indian home, I feel like I'm in Japan. It is said that a lot of foreigners are surprised by the Japanese culture and their way of life. But now, India has surprised me, a Japanese girl.

Secondly, when I was talking with Indian people, I noticed they tried to read my feeling. Usually Japanese people don't speak honestly and always have some secrets in their heart. But I think Indian people can read our honest feelings or notice them. I also can because I'm Japanese. But they always ask me if I have any doubts or anything that I am not saying and ask me to talk honestly. They really know about Japanese and the way we speak. When I talk with volunteers from any other countries, they understood only what I said. It's

natural because it's too difficult to understand what people think without words. But Indian people do. I'm really comfortable and happy when I talk with Indian people.

Nowadays, globalisation is changing Japan to be westernised although the basis is on Asia. In Japanese, we have an expression, "India, which is a close and far country." It means that if you open a map you might think India is close to Japan but if you go there, you will think India is far from Japan. But, here in India, I feel nostalgic about Japan. I strongly feel we are very great pals! ❀

# A Song of Light and Firecrackers

Story By IMichael Van Waveren

Netherlands

The Festival of Lights has just ended in India. I can tell you that it was an experience of its kind.

Basically, the Indians celebrate the triumph of the God of Light, Krishna, over the killing of the demon of darkness. The whole festival is meant to celebrate the triumph of good over evil. It's done by lighting fireworks. A lot of fireworks! For four days in a row, people go to the streets and light firecrackers everywhere, till deep in the night. I was happy to be spending Diwali in Rameshwaram, the tip of the Indian peninsula.

Indian fireworks

I've lighted some of the fireworks myself and was surprised by how strong it was. You could never find this kind of firework in my country, the Netherlands. It would be banished as soon as possible. The explosions are actually aptly named. The sounds leave your ears ringing. In summary, it's good stuff. I lighted one of the bigger pieces of firecrackers, which are basically balls of blasting powder with green ropes around it to hold it together. When I lighted it, the fuse went off in less than a second, and it almost exploded in my face. I had jumped around just enough to not be hit by it. Phew! Good timing!

We went out on the streets and there were explosions everywhere. It was like being in a war zone. Most of the buildings in this town looked like they had seen several wars, so that added to the feeling. We had to look out, as people were very busy and excited with lighting the firecrackers, which led to much chaos on the streets. It was fun in a way also, as you had to keep your eyes open constantly lest you be hit by one of the firecrackers. Good fun!

The Indian guys we met at the beach



deserve a special mention. As everyone was pretty cautious with the Indian fireworks by this time, it was really good to suddenly meet a group of eight very enthusiastic Indians and I felt that they had maybe, under estimated the Indian crackers. They started lighting our most suspicious fireworks, crowding around it and then running away screaming when they lighted one. We could not actually speak to each other, as they did not speak English, but we understood each other very well through body language and unsaid words.

Once again, Chaos

What also deserves mention is a piece

of firework called the Paper Bomb. Adorned with Dwayne 'the Rock' Johnson on all its sides, this is the single loudest and most impressive piece of firework I've ever lighted. If you stand within three feet of it when it goes off, it is very dangerous and can also be fatal. But we got 10 of these, just for the fun and thrill! We were safe! The whole experience was my greatest encounter with Indian chaos. This whole country seems a chaotic place, but it never became more apparent than during the festival of Diwali. ❄





# Eco- Awareness – A Luxury

Story By Isak Adolfsson

Sweden



When walking to the office today, a man casually crossed the street and emptied his trash can in a ditch. Another man, on his way to work, forgot to get rid of his rubbish. He had to stop and walk back a few meters to throw away a bag of trash in the corner of a crossroad.

Some fellow volunteers and I have got a common joke. Whenever we are out travelling, we always say that we can smell the city border, in other words, the pollution. And unfortunately, it's said with black humour, because we really can smell city borders. Outside the apartment of where I'm staying, we have got a huge swamp that de facto serves the use of a dumping ground. And our neighbourhood is not in any way a bad neighbourhood. The truth is, sometimes you cannot see the ground because of all the litter. And that is for all of Madurai. By estimate, the major cities of India emit 100 million tons of solid waste, a

year. The amount of waste is caused by the last years rising consumption and due to lack of administration, both on a municipal and state level. Although, there are precedents from the supreme court of India, which are obligating all Indian cities to enrol a waste- management programme, these have been neglected. Instead, the solid waste is still seen on the pavements, in water bodies and in every little nook and corner, providing disease vectors, such as flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches and rats, which breed in these.

Organized pollution

It's not uncommon to hear European people, in India, taking pride in the absence of solid waste pollution in Europe. But Europe is not necessarily more environmental. I am saying this only with respect to the absence of solid waste. You should not let the eye

fool you. Instead, in Europe we have got 'organized pollution.' Our waste is getting hidden; polishing the facade. In Europe, ninety million tons of food is wasted in a year. An average European emits food loss and waste to an amount of 280 kilos a year. While industrialized Asia, which is including India, amounts to 240 kilos a year, in food wastage.

When it comes to more directly invisible pollution, according to estimations done by the UN in 2008, the European Union stands for almost fourteen percent of the total carbon dioxide emissions. Meanwhile, according to the same estimation, India stands for almost six percent of the global emission. Concurrently, India has a population that is larger than the population of the European Union. In Europe, it is very much in vogue to be environmentally conscious. While the emissions are just increasing, people try to show that they are conscious, by 'environmental compensation.' People will separate their trash at the source and buy eco-friendly products. And the quota is all of a sudden filled. Sure, individual responsibility is important but more important is the structural changes and international collaborations and commitments. Eco- awareness is something a society can engage itself into, when it has secured its basic needs. When man does not have to fight the nature on a daily basis, he can engage himself into something redundant, as for instance taking care of the nature. Before you present any verdicts on others, please, judge yourself and let us improve ourselves and create awareness among the people. ☒

# Eco-farming and Conservation :PROJECT UPDATE

**Raisa DAWOOD**

Eco-farming and Conservation Project Manager

## September and October Update:

The Model farm team has been continuously exploring new methods, concepts and opportunities that would add to its Integrated Conservation and sustainable development approach; there were loads of new activities in the months of September and October. New improvement plans were put forth and the feedback forms for farmers were re-organised by the team of volunteers.

**Work at SJDT Girls Orphanage:**

A skills training workshop that creates an awareness on organic farming, an insight into eco-friendly gardening (recycling of bio-waste) and also a measure to reduce anxiety and stress in children was given to a team of 5 chosen girls of SJDT orphanage by the model farm team. In early September, they were trained in vermi-composting techniques. We normally use red earth worms (*Eisenia fetida*) for our processes. Once we helped them to build their own unit, we made repeated follow-ups to make sure they understood the whole process. Their over excitement has resulted in too much moisture in the unit but their continuous effort has yielded them results at the end of 40 days; they were able to collect the digested compost. The girls had their own garden of flowers and a small kitchen garden in which the volunteers planted more native vegetable seeds.

## Work at Dayavu Boys' Home:

We did a similar kind of training with the boys in Dayavu Boys Home too. But in this home our objective was to help



them towards self-sufficiency in food production as their 9 acre farm was the only source of income. To accomplish this, we decided to donate the essential stuff to the home from the money we raised in our fund raising camps. Mr Joshua, the person in charge, believes that farming civilizes men and when children get to work along with nature they develop patience. Also, he believes in the nutritional richness of native seeds which was interesting to us too.

Grape vines, Moringa trees, Mango trees, Guava trees, Jasmine, lily and many wood-value trees were the prime occupants of the boys' home farm. To begin with, we built them a concrete vermi compost unit, worked out a circular plot of vegetables intercropped with lentils and greens, built cattle fodder plots, trained them in preparing organic liquid fertiliser and helped to replant their vine vegetables damaged by rats (*Rattus rattus*). The model farm team sponsored the seeds from its native seed bank for the vegetable

garden, sprinkler irrigation system towards better water management, and also a pair of country chicken to their poultry unit. We made a 3 days home-stay at the orphanage and got to interact with the young and energetic kids of the home.

## Educational campaign:

Our theme for the educational campaign was the pollution by plastic wastes and other industrial emissions. Volunteers prepared charts explaining the impacts on the surroundings and correlated it with loss of species, organized games to insist on the degradable and non-degradable wastes, and finally there was an interactive session on the food chain too. We chose kids of age 9-11 years old for this session. The children made a wish at the end of the day: "We want to plant tree saplings," and we promised that for the next month's session.



## Siddha Medicine camp:

We also attended a workshop on traditional Tamil medicine, the Siddha Medicine Camp in Palani. The camp was attended by more than 40 practitioners and decisions were made to organize camps in different parts of Tamil Nadu to propagate the system. An exposure on 'varma', the acupressure therapy, which is practiced by applying pressure with finger tips on pressure points in human body, was demonstrated to the gathering. The practitioners also shared their knowledge and experience in different herbal medicine preparation and their application methods. Siddha Medicine normally administers herbs in the form of dry herbal powders, churans, medicated oils, decoctions and tonics. The India conservation team has plans to be a part of this traditional medicine protection group by cultivating and propagating specific herbs essential for this group or for free distribution to the public in their camps.

The camp was also useful for us as we got to know more about particular herbs and in their identification too. For the practitioners the camp was all about medicine and curing. For the team it was about conservation of native medicinal plants.

## Pollinator field study:

The month's pollinator field study was interesting as there were a variety of insects quite different that from the previous month. As beginners we had difficulty in identifying the species. Leaf cutter bees (*Megachile rotundata*) were more interesting and very active. It was so difficult to get a clear picture of them as they stopped but hardly for few seconds. While there was this Green bottle fly (*Phaenicia sericata*) was contrary and it remained still for few minutes at least. We also saw the Blister beetle (*Mylabris pustulata*), Lesser Zebra butterfly (*Graphium macareus*), Plain tiger butterfly (*Danaus chrysippus*). Also we spotted the giant Indian velvet mite (*Trombidium grandissimum*) which feeds on pests and hence has been recommended as a biological pest



control tool.

The most interesting pollinator of the month was the Humming bird Hawk moth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) feeding on that lantana nectar spotted during our field work in Dayavu boys home.

## A case of Human-elephant Conflict:

We visited the farm of our local veterinary doctor which was in the Western Ghats nearby Kodaikanal Hills. He had interesting plants and fruits like avocado, coffee plants, tomato fruits, lemon, guava, hill bananas, Indian gooseberry and oranges, silver oak and etc. The farm had all the richness of a forest and no wonder it was attacked by elephants. A small herd of Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) have recently started to visit the farmlands in the region and were damaging the farm crops especially the wild banana plants. The elephants have been trespassing the farmlands in search of fresh crops and water. We were able to hear gunshots fired in to the air to chase away elephants. This year this might be the last case in the region as rain has picked up these days but if we didn't receive sufficient rainfall, this conflict is going to be more intense in the future. No measures have been taken to avoid the increased exploitation of forests resources in the region. Instead, more occupation by humans has been noticed in the form of resorts

to promote tourism. Time to prepare for Human-elephant co-existence (HECx)!

## Ptero-count project update:

We counted around 260 fruit eating bats (*Pteropus giganteus*) in September in one of the roosts and 150 in the other roost which was much less than our count in August. While in October a total of 120 bats alone were counted in one of the roost. The decreasing numbers was the result of continued failure of rain in the region.

## Update on our Bird watching records:

Our bird watching trip to the Lakshmipuram tank comprised only of large egrets (*Ardea alba*). The Painted storks and the pelicans were missing as the water level was very low. In the local tank of Chinnupati, before rain, laughing doves (*Spilopelia senegalensis*), peacock (*Pavo cristatus*), apart from other commonly appearing Indian jay and fly catchers were present while in our neighbouring tank, we spotted little cormorants (*Phalacrocorax niger*) and Spot-billed Duck (*A. poecilorhyncha poecilorhynch*) and crow pheasants (*Centropus sinensis*) as the tank received water from the Vaigai dam.

## Inside Farm Activities:



- **Agroforestry unit enhancement:**

About 800 seedlings have been bought from a women's self-help group. These seedlings are being focused on the upcoming rains and other festivals in the following months of the year. These seedlings will be used for the expansion of our agro-forestry units and for promoting local tree planting activities. About 21 different varieties were purchased and all are native varieties. We have plans to replant them in bigger bags and grow them as more healthy seedlings so that the loss we faced due to weak seedlings could be avoided. Also, we could boost their growth by adding more nutrients at the farm.

More vegetable seedlings were produced considering the upcoming rains. Shade nets have been procured specially for the nursery plants care. Under this, we hope to raise more herbal seedlings, our own tree saplings and more successful vegetable seedlings in the dry weather.

- A small concrete pond was built for our cute little friends, the Indian runner ducks (*Anas platyrhynchos domesticus*) of the farm to swim around and cope with the heat. This would also serve as a water pond for other farm birds and wild birds visiting the farm.

- Sadly, we lost 3 soft shelled turtles (*Lissemys punctata*) and 1 hard shell turtle (*Melanochelys trijuga*) out of the 27 turtles sheltered in the temporary habitat in the farm. The post-mortem report reported of an intestinal infection. The vet gave medicine to be mixed in the water. Furthermore, we decided to change the set-up of the present habitat by adding a more natural touch to the existing unit. We planted a small garden with cucumber and other vegetable seedlings and also added some lawn grass, along with a distinct sand bed and a partition in the unit for water holding area instead of just water and stone (for sun basking) set up. The flap shelled turtle buried itself in the sand as soon as it was released in to the new set up. Also we have planned for a light trap for the turtles to increase their protein

requirement.

- We fenced our sprinkler irrigated area to protect it from our own farm birds and planted vegetable seedlings which were raised in our nursery like Moringa (*Moringa oleifera*), Sesbania grandiflora, cowpeas (*Vigna unguiculata*) were planted in the sprinkler irrigated area and the week that followed received some heavy showers of rainfall which gave an intense boost.

- New medicinal tree saplings were planted in the model farm natural farming plot.

- A PhD student studying on the composting duration of meat based bio-waste, both cooked waste and raw waste, approached us for getting red tiger earthworms/red wigglers (*Eisenia fetida*) from our vermin compost unit. Her study results might help us improve too. Though she came to us looking for African night crawler earthworms (*Eudrilus eugeniae*)

- The Masala bolus veterinary camp was as usual the most welcoming camp among the cattle growers for treating anorexia in cattle.

- Other activities:

1. The team also extended its support to the ongoing building project in the village whenever extra hands were needed. Very soon we hope to build concrete vermi units for farmers.

2. The whole team had fun celebrating the birthday of our Community building volunteer, Jennifer Mcvey, USA.

3. The small Telugu speaking community people in Rettiyapatti village invited us for their new temple inauguration function. Another colourful celebration

chosen organization to meet their essential need. The September dirty day was organized by the medical team. It was a painting job in the Family Planning Association of India. The model farm team participated in it and contributed significantly.

The October month's Dirty Day was organized by the Model farm team. The venue was a 90 year old government primary school building. The work was fixing the traditional roof that leaks in rainy season and helping the school in raising the foundation of the compound wall. There were 46 volunteers and 12 staffs who participated in the dirty day. The local society was totally astounded by the dedication and sincerity of the whole group of foreign volunteers while the volunteers were happy for the children who are going to be the beneficiaries. The day ended with an hour of heavy showers of rain.

That is all for now. Thank you very much for reading and I will get back to you with more news soon

## The Dirty Days:

On the fourth Wednesday of every month, all volunteers of Projects Abroad India gather for a common cause. This is observed as a dirty day where everyone gets dirty as they work in helping a



# *Dirty Day Pictures 27th November* *At Icds Southgate - Madurai*



Volunteers in action  
at Painting the school  
walls

Volunteers  
from various projects  
enjoying painting



Volunteers  
enjoying the painting



# On coming events

## ALL THURSDAY WE HAVE SOCIAL EVENTS

5 th December by Community

12 th December by Care

19 th December by Medical

26 th December by Journalism

all volunteers can participate on the on coming social events.

# On Coming out reaches

## CARE & COMMUNITY

3rd & 17th December for Care and teaching Volunteers

## MEDICAL

28 th December for medical Volunteers

## DIRTY DAY

27 th December for All Volunteers