



# DAAN

*Hindi word meaning gift or giving*

The newsletter of Kamla Foundation Autumn 2009 Issue 01



## WELCOME

I'm delighted to introduce you to this first ever edition of the Kamla Foundation Newsletter. We have made fantastic progress in our first full year of operation. Developing a strong partnership with the FORD Trust (Foundation for Rural Development) in India has been key to the inroads made. We've facilitated a number of projects and initiatives that have already begun to bear fruit as you will read later. Plus, there are further exciting innovations in the pipeline.

As we begin to roll out forthcoming programmes, I would like to encourage you to join with us on our journey, in whatever capacity, and help us to reach out to the many people living on the margins of society in India. Our aspirations are to support these communities in a self-sustaining manner, to improve their well being and livelihoods.

In order to achieve our ambitious plans, we need to continue with and build upon the fundraising efforts begun by our wonderful supporters. Please help us widen this network of support to more individuals, companies and trusts. We want to raise both awareness of the work being done and money to increase our capacity to really make a difference.

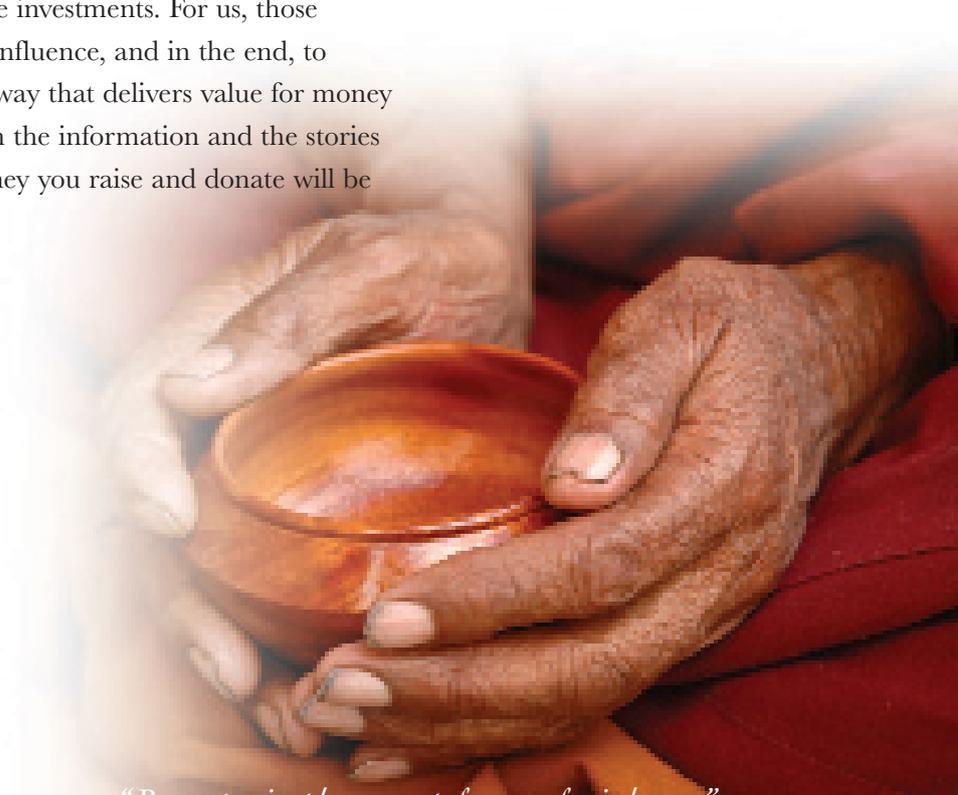
It is fair to say that it is not the investments that determine how any great organisation is judged, but the outcomes of those investments. For us, those outcomes are guided by our ability to innovate, influence, and in the end, to generate impact. Doing this effectively and in a way that delivers value for money will continue to be our priority. I hope that, from the information and the stories we have gathered here, you will see that the money you raise and donate will be used wisely and providently.

**Bhupendra Mistry**

Founding Director

## Contents

- **Welcome**
- **The Ford Trust**
- **Projects**
- **Volunteering**
- **Fundraising**
- **Thanks**



# THE FORD TRUST



The FORD Trust is an organisation involved in community empowerment and development, working principally with groups on the margins of society within rural locations. It currently works in 27 under developed villages and hamlets in Sivagangai and Pudukkottai district in the State of Tamil Nadu, India. It's mission is to "promote and protect a Humanistic society" irrespective of caste, creed, region, religion, language or ethnicity. Therefore their services are extended to different communities including Dalits, who are the erstwhile "Untouchables" and other low caste communities.



## The major activities of the Trust are

- **formation of women's self help groups (SHGs) and micro credit services**
- **skills training on local resource based and eco friendly economic activities**
- **capacity development of women leaders**
- **bio diversity conservation and animal welfare**
- **health promotion including prevention of STDs, HIV and AIDS**
- **restoration and renovation of old water resources and promotion of organic farming**
- **child rights and development**

The programmes of work are planned and implemented by a locally elected "Advisory Committee" of which the women group leaders are members. At present, there are five paid staff members working across various rural locations. There is at least one volunteer in each village assisting the field staff in reaching out to the most vulnerable members of society.



Ford Trust training centre

## Partnership Work

Kamla Foundation and the FORD Trust are working towards social justice, sustainable development and human rights. Both organisations are committed to the dissemination of information and promotion of development initiatives, in response to the needs of marginalised sectors of society. These are the core values which initially attracted us to work together.

## Key issues

### The Caste system

Despite the constitutional abolition of the caste system some 60 years ago, caste based discrimination remains one of the most severe global human rights problems, affecting at least 260 million people, including 170 million Dalits in India alone. It can be concluded that along with widespread poverty, the persistence of discrimination against Dalits is one of the most important challenges facing modern India today.

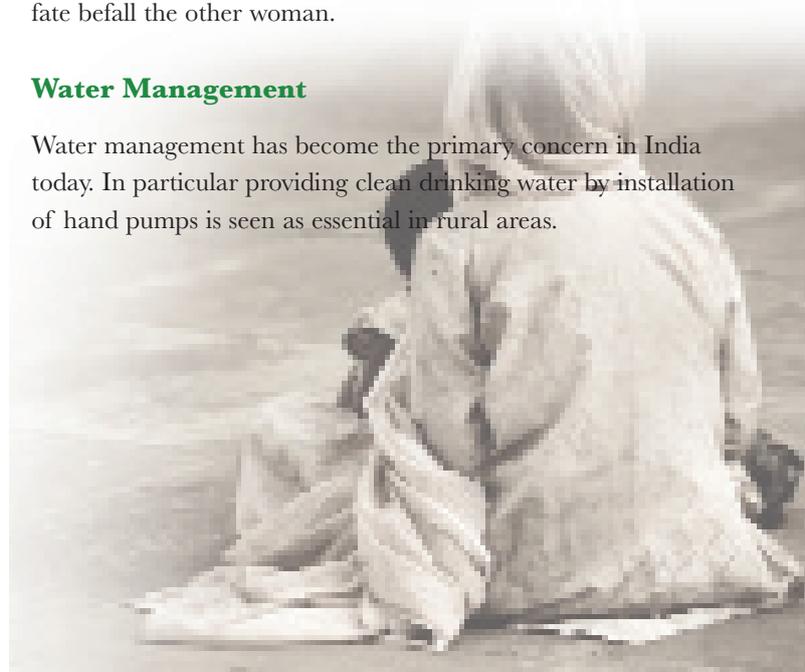
### The plight of widows in Indian Society

It is estimated that there are 33 million widows in India; it is the country with the largest widow population in the world. Many are thrown out of family homes by their children or abandoned by their in-laws as 'evil' women who caused the death of their husbands. Unfortunately, without a man by her side a woman has no respect in large parts of Indian society. It is part of a patriarchal culture where a woman is only accepted if she is a mother, daughter or a wife.

Although the horrific practice of Sati-requiring widows to throw themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres-was abolished in 1829, widows still undergo ritual humiliations. After the death of a husband, a woman is shorn of her bridal ornamentation, her head is shaved by the local barber and her body is wrapped in a stark white sari so she may not arouse carnal pleasures in other men. Her very presence is considered so inauspicious that even her shadow may not fall on a married woman lest her 'terrible' fate befall the other woman.

### Water Management

Water management has become the primary concern in India today. In particular providing clean drinking water by installation of hand pumps is seen as essential in rural areas.



# PROJECTS

## Sewing Training Centres

Kamla Foundation has funded and supported three training centres based in the remote villages of Maruthangudi, Sirugappatti and Velayuthapattinam in the district of Sivagangai in Tamil Nadu. Each centre has been furnished with stitching machines, a cutting table and the necessary furniture. These centres have enabled girls and young women from marginalised communities to learn about garment making, embroidery and related skills training.

The Sirugappatti centre started with 5 participants, now some 32 girls are undergoing a variety of training. In Velayuthapattinam, the newest centre, 11 girls are learning the trade. At the Maruthangudi training centre 12 young women are registered and this number is expected to increase as the year progresses.

## Micro - Enterprise Projects

Kamla Foundation has led on the development and support of micro-enterprises. These are small, local resource based businesses that give the owners a measure of independence from the existing sources of livelihood. These sources can be precarious, for example with subsistence level farming communities where a bad harvest could wipe out all resources. Or they can be exploitative, as with the construction business where manual labour is cheap, low-skilled and often dangerous. Most micro-enterprises require very low start up costs and rely on simple, easily sourced equipment. The level of training required will vary with the nature of each business.



## Mrs. S. Lakshmi....My Story

I am 32 years of age and come from a very poor family. I was married to a relative when I was 25 years old. My husband is a sick person who is unable to work (except very light manual work). Being illiterate we've had to struggle for survival. A year ago after becoming a member of the women's Self Help Group (SHG) based in our village of Pillaiyarpatti, I was recommended by a friend to train in the Brass Rod Tinkering trade. These, essentially, are small sticks with sharp edges and are made for mending lighted Holy Lamps (Mangal Jyothi) in temples and in the majority of Hindu homes. As this is a temple village, these sticks are sold through local shops.

## Examples of Micro Enterprise support includes:

- **Small vending - vegetable, milk and milk products**
- **Small pan shop and snack bar**
- **Grocery and general stores**
- **Plant nursery raising**
- **Vegetable garden promotion**
- **Goat or sheep rearing**
- **Garment making and handicraft items**
- **Other local resource based enterprise activities**

For the first phase of the programme, 18 women and a number of youths have been identified by a Community Panel (made up of local women), to enrol. Kamla Foundation has provided capital assistance, in the form of machinery and equipment, and facilitated the training and mentoring required.

Each beneficiary has been supported according to their independent needs in line with their chosen occupation. They have been allocated start-up money and put on related training opportunities. The FORD Trust has co-ordinated the whole programme through to evaluating the project.

By providing support for a range of micro-enterprise activities, we hope to create skilled members in the community who will themselves provide sustainable improvements in the quality of life for their immediate family. As well as covering the basics, adequate food, shelter and clothing, they should also have more freedom to consider education and health care. This will, in turn, permeate through to the wider community as the emergent micro economy allows more resources to circulate locally.

## Seed Money Support Fund

The Support Fund provides a much needed lifeline when families experience extreme hardship in one form or another, are unable to cover emergencies and all other options have been exhausted. To this end, we have planned to pool a sizeable pot of money in recognition of when individuals fall on hard times.

Initially, I was working for someone else and earning a meagre wage. Now, I am trading independently after the support offered by Kamla Foundation and the Ford Trust MEP. I now make between INR 100 to 150 (£1.20) per day and sell it to the shops surrounding the temple. Currently, space is a premium and I do all the business preparations in the small house that we rent.

Eventually, I would also like to expand my enterprise and build on the opportunity given to me by Kamla Foundation.



### **Mrs. Jayalakshmi's story . . .**

I am 32 and have 3 children between the ages of 5 and 9. I used to earn INR 40 (30p) a day. Kamla Foundation kindly donated INR 3000 (£40) which covered my training costs under the Micro Enterprise Project (MEP). Through the training and support provided I am now selling roasted rice (Pori) to make a living, earning INR 100 (80p) a day



### **Mrs. Vasuki's story . . .**

I am a small vendor selling handicrafts in the village of Pillayarpatti. Kamla Foundation supported me with a grant of INR 3000 (£40) for this start up business. I have two children and a husband who is unable to work as he suffers from mental depression. I am now able to earn a comfortable living of between INR 75-100 (80p) per day by this trade.



### **Seed Money Support Fund cont'd**

It takes the form of an interest free repayable loan from Rs.100 (80p) to Rs.1000 (£8) per beneficiary. This is called a Revolving Fund System. It may be used for a range of reasons e.g. the education of children, medical needs, religious festivals, marriage ceremonies, for getting food stuffs during periods of unemployment etc. and is on condition that it is paid back whenever the borrowers gain sufficient income from other sources.

This Support Fund will be maintained by a newly formed Committee of beneficiaries along with an appointed Coordinator from the FORD Trust. At any given time it is envisaged that up to 20 families will be supported through this initiative.

### **Kamla Foundation Resource Centre**

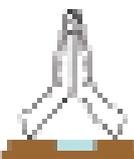
The concept is for a cluster of villages, within a rural setting to have a community centre library which can also act as an information point. Ideally housed within this would be the resources of different agencies engaged in literacy programmes, adult education, public health, local self-government etc. The need for information may vary under different circumstances but its requirement is essential and universal. This, in essence, is why the Foundation has led on developing this much needed facility.

**The main objectives for setting up such a centre are as follows:-**

- To enable the local community to remain fully informed about issues which affect their lives.
- To act as a focal point for collective activity and local campaigns.

- To provide a base for education and training.
- To facilitate other activities which may be channelled through the resource centre.

**For progress and further information please log onto our website, [www.kamlafoundation.org](http://www.kamlafoundation.org)**

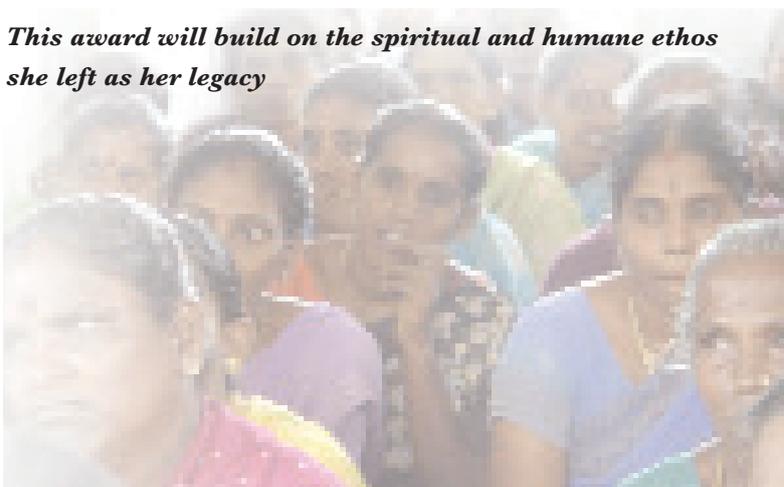


### **Kamla Foundation Award**

The Foundation has established an annual award to reward excellent achievement and to promote a stronger sense of community spirit.

This award will be presented to two villagers who have led the way in helping to improve the lives of others, or in their inspirational ability to battle adversity. These are qualities that were exemplified by the charity's namesake, Mrs Kamlaben Mistry.. The charity and specifically this award celebrates the memory of a remarkable woman, renowned for her dedication to her family, her resilience and her sense of duty and grace. She never lost the capacity to smile and laugh, nor to inspire others with her warmth, kindness and energy and commitment to help the wider community.

***This award will build on the spiritual and humane ethos she left as her legacy***



# VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

## Our Aim

The Foundation's ground level approach involves bringing people together to work side-by-side, sharing skills and perspectives and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Our Volunteer Programme sets out to make a long lasting impression in the lives of the local communities that are being

served and also enrich the volunteer themselves with a wealth of experiences. Living and working in the Tamil Nadu area of India, you will gain firsthand knowledge of the predicaments facing the neighbourhoods and witness tangible results from your efforts. There are a variety of projects that need your help and skills so please get in touch if you are interested.

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## COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

### Get inventive and raise money your way!

If running or jumping out of a plane is not for you, how about coming up with your own event with a group of friends or people in your local community? Every penny counts - so even raising a small amount will help towards our work and it goes a long way in India.

### Deciding what to do

Almost anything can be turned into a fund raising event so have a think about what you enjoy doing and how you can raise money from it. Invite people you think would enjoy it and make it as much fun as possible.

### Rope in as many people as possible!

Asking friends, family, people in your local community and colleagues to help is a great way of sharing the workload but also making sure your event has a big impact.

### Possible ideas and themes:

- **Host a themed event** and ask your friends to make a donation.
- **Hold a 'bring and buy' or 'car boot sale'.**
- **Organise a 'Pamper Evening'** in your locality and taster sessions from complimentary therapists, talks, raffle, cake stalls etc. Ask friends and local businesses to donate prizes.
- **Start a 'Food Chain'** - invite friends for food - perhaps a barbeque, 3 course dinner or afternoon tea. Each guest makes a donation and pledges to keep the chain going by hosting another foodie get-together.
- **Get dressed up with a 'Black Tie Party'** or Dinner Party with tickets sold to family and friends

### Volunteer your Time...

Have you got great skills to offer? Could you donate your time to Kamla Foundation?

We are working all year round to put on a calendar of fundraising events. We rely on creative and resourceful volunteers to help think of, organise and take part in these events. So, if you've got some time and energy to spare please contact us.



Sponsored slide event, cheque presentation at Offerton Hall Nursery



## Thanks to the following supporters

### **Offerton Hall Nursery, Stockport**

For their donation of £850

### **Ashton on Mersey Secondary School, Manchester**

For their donation of £800

### **Co-operative Bank**

For their grant donation of £1,000

### **Greater Manchester Police Authority**

For their donation of £350

## Other supporters

- All donors to the Foundation
- Family and Friends who have kindly set up standing orders
- Everybody who has purchased a Foundation t-shirt
- All the companies and retail outlets that have supported us with collection tins
- All those who gave up their free time to volunteer on our behalf

## Wider acknowledgement

- To our growing army of supporters, too many to mention but you know who you are

## How to donate

There are several ways to donate:

**Cheque** - Please make cheques payable to Kamla Foundation  
c/o Bhupendra Mistry.

**Online** - Go to <http://www.kamlafoundation.org/donate.html>  
If you are a UK tax payer, please don't forget to click the gift aid box to maximise the donation.

**Standing Order** - Make a regular, monthly contribution through your bank or building society. Contact us and we'll send you our details.

Please note that all the monies received go directly towards the work of the Foundation. There are no overheads as all concerned work on a voluntary basis.



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