



Emmaus Asia Regional meeting

Date: 14-15 February 2012

Venue: AEP, Beirut - Lebanon



Emmaus Asia Regional Board meeting took place at AEP office, Beirut – Lebanon on **14-15 February 2012**. On behalf of Emmaus International, Mr.Simon Grainge from UK, and Mr.Alain Fontaine, Executive Director, and other members from the region participated the meeting, except Mr.Raihan who could not attend due to his health reasons and Mr.Suwarto from Indonesia due to his work obligations. This meeting contributed in consolidating regional activities for the World Assembly in March 2012. Ms.Moon Sharma chaired the meeting. She welcomed all the members & introduced the agenda.

Members reviewed and approved the minutes of the last Regional Board held at Thanapara Swallows, Bangladesh from 20-22 November 2011,

and its circulation throughout the region. While discussing about the **collective political programmes**, member groups shared in brief the utilization of funds that has been transferred to the groups during Nov 2011 in supporting the ongoing education programme. Thereafter Ms.Moon Sharma shared with the members through the powerpoint slides the various stages of **mutual health programme** that is in progress in Tara Projects. She shared about various health talks and health camps that had been organized at regular intervals. After her presentation, all the members present shared in detail about the involvement of their groups in addressing the issue of **migrants** - the issues of refugees in Lebanon and CARITAS involvement in addressing this issue, the problems faced by Tibetan refugees, the problems

of Srilankan refugees and the problems of unskilled workers who have migrated in large numbers within India from South to North etc. Members have been informed that they should continue in raising awareness on the issue of migrants, strengthen their linkages with the organizations who are already working on the migrants related issues, and show that in Emmaus movement, we have some proposals to solve the bad situation the migrants are facing

all over the world. Afterwards, discussion was held on the applications for **trial membership** received from the organizations in India and Bangladesh.

Thereafter Alain explained to the members the practical details about the **World Assembly (WA)** to be held from *19-24 March 2012 in Anglet, France*, and the three type of working documents for the WA, which has been circulated to all the member groups in the movement. All the member groups have been requested to

spend enough time in going through the working documents for their effective participation in the WA. He also shared with the members the details regarding the election of the President of

Emmaus International, election of the Wise persons' committee, presentation of the new Board and Executive Committee members during this WA, and the Board's first official meeting to take place after WA.

Discussion also took place about **solidarity related matters**, emergency appeals, and the implementation of the collective programmes on water, micro credit and eco tourism. Regarding the implementation of the **Eco tourism programme**, all



the member groups explained about their involvement in developing their infrastructures, identifying the tourist locations, and in developing the brochures depicting the developmental activities in their organization along with the tourist locations, as an alternative to the existing commercial tourism. This initiatives would contribute in enhancing the income of the member organization by receiving larger number of guests from Emmaus groups worldwide, and could also share with the people in Europe associated with Emmaus, the impact of Emmaus solidarity initiatives.



Thereafter *Mr.Simon* shared with the members regarding the **Planet Emmaus** - a multimedia & user-friendly website that has been specially created by Emmaus International, which is available in six languages for Emmaus members to bring together the information on all groups in the four corners of the world.

In an effort to understand and to learn from the experience of AEP, a field visit has been arranged after the Regional meeting to interact with the micro credit beneficiaries. All the borrowers the team met expressed the efforts of AEP in enhancing their entrepreneurs skills and positioning themselves in the market.



The first term of 2012 revealed a secure situation in Lebanon. This allowed AEP to keep on its activities. The number of active borrowers as on **March 2012** were **790 in number**. An increase of **9%** occurred in the number of loans given in comparison of first quarter 2011 and first quarter 2012.



The **General Assembly of AEP** took place on **29th January**, during which activities and programs carried out by AEP during 2011 were informed to the members. Business plans and budgets for the year 2012 were approved. During the Assembly, new Board members & the new Administrative committee which will remain for the next two years were elected.

Between **12-17 February**, *Emmaus Asia Regional meeting* took place at AEP office, Beirut, as well as field visits to some borrowers in Batroun. And in **March 2012**, *Mr.Chady Rached and Ms.Léna Sayad* participated to the World Assembly of Emmaus International held at *Bayonne, France*.

'Be the Change award'



Ms.Moon Sharma from Tara Projects has been conferred with "*Be the Change award*" on **26th March 2012** for her social and economic contribution in the society. The award instituted by '*Believe India*' is given to recognise outstanding contributions of various personalities in the field of education and livelihood generation.

The main topic of the programme was, "*Vision 2020: Fair Trade and Social Enterprises and Role of Social Enterprises in Skill Development*", attended by more than 1800 persons including the eminent guests, social workers, educationists, economists, business leaders, government officials, producers, students and volunteers. On behalf of *Ms.Moon Sharma* who was participating in the Emmaus World Assembly in France, *Ms.Ruksana* received the award from *Sri Sri Ravi Shankar*.

PROGRAM WITH street & poor children

MILK SUPPLIED TO SCHOOL CHILDREN IN INDONESIA

With the support of *Emmaus International & Emmaus Ruffec Group in France*, **YAYASAN PENGHIBUR** (YP), *Indonesia* since April 2008 has been helping more than 6000 school children by giving fresh milk to promote their health. This project has been run for the school children who come from the poor families. Every day, one of the staff from Yayasan Penghibur bring 10 litres of milk for distributing to 100 Kindergarten and Elementary school children, at the villages in *Donorojo Sub district, Jepara Regency*. So far, each child receives 100 Cc of milk, and their health result was quite good.



Since **April 2008 until December 2011**, there were more than 30 elementary schools, from which their children receive fresh milk from Yayasan Penghibur. Some of the school masters have expressed their thanks to Yayasan Penghibur for distributing milk for their children. The children who have been drinking milk have become more active physically, and their intelligence has also become stronger. YP expresses its sincere thanks to EI and Emmaus Ruffec Group in France for supporting this project.

DISTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION MATERIALS



Florance Home Foundation in Cuddalore, South India has been involved in the promotion of education for poor children. It is running two children home for boys and girls, providing food, education and shelter. Also educational fee is paid for poor school going children in *Cuddalore District* with the support of an organization 'Gift a Future'.

In early this year, Cyclone Thane affected the coastal districts of Tamilnadu. School children who lost their education materials

during this cyclone have been provided with stationary items and note books with the support of another organization 'AKSHYA & REACH', facilitated by FHF.

Around 250 children studying in *St. Mary's Middle school, Manjakuppam, Cuddalore*, received this support on **5th February 2012**. *Rev.Father. Alphons Santhanam, Headmaster Mr. Vincent, Secretary of FHF Mr.Alexander & staff team*, and the school teachers participated in the distribution programme. FHF expressed its gratitude and appreciation for the support of REACH and AKSHYA on behalf of children.

Republic Day Celebrations



The Republic day was celebrated in various Tara community learning centers at *Badarpur, Indira Camp, Jattowalan, Nikau village and Labour colony in Firozabad on 26th January 2012*. More than 1000 children along with their parents participated in the programmes. Tara social workers interacted with the children and informed them about the Constitution of India during the occasion at *Tajpur Pahadi centre in Badarpur, Delhi*.

Tara team informed the students and the parents about the importance of education and relevance of imparting human values among the children. The students were informed about the importance of respecting the elders in the society. Later, the students presented role plays, depicting the importance of unity among different castes and religions. The role

plays focused mainly on the challenges faced by our society, need for peace, communal harmony and unity. The children sang various patriotic songs, danced and enjoyed the cultural programme. Later the children and their parents enjoyed the refreshments and requested Tara team to organize a study tour to the science museum in the coming future.

Training programmes organised by Indian groups

KUDUMBAM in Trichy, South India has been associated with several national and international networks to share and exchange sustainable agriculture alternatives as well as its experience in campaign against pesticides and genetic engineering. Following are some of the briefing of its interventions along with the network SAGE (*Southern action on Genetic Engineering*) during the period January to March 2012.

Workshop for the Newly Elected Panchayat leaders:

In an effort to democratize the Genetic Engineering debate, Kudumbam organized a one day workshop for the newly elected panchayat leaders. Two workshops have been organized, one on *30th January 2012 at Kolunji* in which 25 panchayat leaders participated, and the other on *11th February 2012 at Velanganni* where around 15 participants took part. They were oriented on



basics of Genetic Engineering, its negative impacts of genetically modified crops to human health, farmer's right to save their seeds, its ill-effects to environment and bio safety using power points and video documentary films. They were also oriented on the sustainable agriculture alternatives and on the importance of reviving our traditional food system based on millets which are economically viable and ecologically safe. All the participated panchayats leaders have extended their support and solidarity for SAGE campaign and assured to pass resolution banning the entry of genetically modified crops in their panchayat region.

Consumer Awareness on Safe Food through Ethnic Food Court and Exhibition of Organically produced products:

Based on the joint decision taken at the SAGE Steering committee meeting, all SAGE members participated in the “*Youth Health Mela*” organized by *Cancer Institute of Adyar* from *22-26th February*. This event helped to show the audience, especially to the younger generation to see, learn and taste the diversity of millet foods. More than 30 different millet food items were sold at nominal price. More than 1500 people at the rate of 300/day, visited the Ethnic Food Court, obtained information on the nutritional values of millets and enjoyed the taste of different recipes. SAGE has also



displayed organically produced grains, traditional seeds and other information & publication materials in a separate exhibition stall. On the last day, i.e., on *26th February*, the Cancer Institute of Adyar honoured *Dr.G. Nammalvar*, one of the Founder of Kudumbam and a well known eco farming proponent with a *Youth Champion Award* for his tireless contribution towards organic agriculture.



Training of Trainers on GM

issues: This 2 day programme of Training of Trainers on *1-2 March 2012* has been organized by *Women's Collective* at *ICSA (Inter-Church Social Action) Training center, Egmore, Chennai* and around 30 participants were participated. The purpose of the training is to update the participant's knowledge and understanding on Genetic Engineering issues, its present scenario and their role as trainer in disseminating the learning to their respective working areas.

Seminar on minor millets cultivation: On *21st January 2012*, a seminar on minor millets cultivation and its benefits was organised by *VCDS Karasanur centre in Tindivanam, South India*. Farmers, women and children from the high schools took part in this seminar. *Mr.Rajagopal, Advisor for rural development* and *Mr.Aasaithambi, Yoga specialist and organic food dietician* shared the information on minor millets cultivation and about the nutritional values of the minor millet consumption.





International Women's Day was celebrated at **TARA** in *North India* on **8th March 2012**. The theme of this year was, "*Empower Rural Women - End Hunger and Poverty*". As per the theme this year, a programme was organized with the rural women at *Pataudi in Haryana*. The programme was attended by several artisans, vocational tailoring students, SHG members and the staffs from TARA.

Ms. Alka Rawal, Asst. Director Dept. of Social Welfare Administration, Delhi Government and a volunteer cum advisor to TARA led the event together with *Vikas Kumar, Kailash Joshi and Sazma* a local community worker at Tara Development centre at Pataudi. *Ms. Alka* began the meeting by welcoming the participants and informed them about the importance of International Women's Day, and how this day evolved. *Mr. Vikas* shared with the participants about the value of women in all facets of life, and he talked about the evil practices in the society such as Female Foeticide and how the girl child suffers from discrimination by their own parents. Thereafter *Ms. Sazma* spoke about her own life and opposition she faced by her family and the society to come forward and work in the vocational training centre. Likewise, several women artisans came forward and shared their experiences and feelings on the day.

A cultural programme was also organized on this day. Women pledged to be more aware and to give their girl child equal importance and the best education. They sang and danced whole heartedly and enjoyed the refreshments.

World Women Day Celebration by VCDS, Tindivanam, South India: On **10th March**, World Women's Day was celebrated by VCDS in *Karasanur center*. *Thasildhar of Vannur block, Ms. Inbavalli from Mukiya Seva, Presidents of Karasanur and Perumbakkam Village Panchayaths, and GB members of VCDS* were invited as chief guests for this celebration. Awareness on Women's right, Domestic violence, Child Marriage, Bonded Labourers & Child Labours and Migrants were shared with the participants.





Twelfth Emmaus World Assembly

Bayonne - France

A high point for the Movement is Emmaus International's World Assembly which meets every four years, and this year it took place from 19 to 24 March at Anglet, France on the Atlantic coast, for a week of discussion, debating and decision-making. Nearly **480 people of 35 different nationalities** including delegates, elected representatives, interpreters, staff members and volunteers actively took part to decide upon the future of Emmaus International, under the theme of '*Emmaus, a credible alternative in a difficult world?!*'.



During the busy week, plenary sessions and workshops were held in order to analyze the commitments and activities carried out over the last four years, and to choose guidelines for the future. Also a public campaigning event was organized in front of *Bayonne town hall*, a kind of demonstration from Emmaus groups and from other local associations of the *Basque country*, to give message to the public authorities in favour of freedom of movement. Throughout the week, there were also visits arranged to French and Spanish Emmaus groups in the region, film screenings and other events. Election for the President of Emmaus International, for the EC and the Board took place. Political action areas that movement need to focus for the next 4 years had been decided.



The event now over, the elected members will focus on several work areas and decisions at their next meetings, starting with the Executive Committee, which will meet between 4 and 6 June, followed by the Board that will meet in October 2012.

Health Programmes Organised by Indian groups



WORLD TB DAY
24 MARCH 2012

Florance Home Foundation in Cuddalore, South India organized an awareness programme on this day at *Municipal office, Cuddalore* with the vulnerable population in the society, who were scavengers. 31 men and 27 women participated in the event, most of them living in slums and in poor environment conditions who were directly

involved in cleaning the drainage, garbage etc., and were drug addicts or chain smokers. Because of their economic difficulties, they do not have access to healthy and nutritious food, and therefore have high level possibilities of being attacked by contagious diseases. Hence FHF decided to organize an awareness programme with this poor section of the society.



World Tuberculosis Day on **24th March 2012** raises awareness about the global epidemic of tuberculosis (TB) and efforts to eliminate the disease. One-third of the world's population is currently infected with TB. This day is an occasion to raise public awareness on a contagious disease that is treatable and preventable and yet has spread to epidemic proportions and continues to kill millions of people each year, especially in the developing world.

The event started at 11 am with the welcoming address of *Mr. John David, the Vice President of FHF*. *Ms. Usha Rani, the President* briefed about the reasons for selecting the municipal workers in order to make them aware about the TB. She also explained the initiatives taken by FHF in eradicating TB in Cuddalore district networking with the organizations - AKSHAYA and REACH for the last 2 Years.

Thereafter *Mr. Sundara Vadivelu, STS, General Hospital, Cuddalore* explained in detail the causes, symptoms and the treatment methods for TB, and also clarified the doubts raised by the participants.

After his presentation, *Mr. Vijayakumar, the Commissioner, Cuddalore District* addressed the importance of health and hygienic in their daily life and their environment. He distributed the caps with the slogans "*Let us create a TB free World*" to all the participants. After wearing the caps, all the participants took an oath to eradicate TB, stating that "*I want a world in my life time free of TB, Today's children, men and women should expect to see a world where no one get sick with TB*".

In continuation of Right to Health programme, a Health Camp was organized by Tara Project Association at *Tajpur Pahadi, Badarpur in Delhi area on 17th January 2012*. The purpose of the Health Camp was to provide health checkup, medicines, calcium, iron & nutritional supplements as well as Eye checkups for the community. Some of the seriously ill patients were also referred for specialized treatment to the nearby hospitals. Another objective of this Health Camp was to create awareness amongst the community members about the health hazards in the locality.

Health camp at Delhi



The Health Camp was attended by *Dr. Vichitra Gupta, Dr. A.K Rai and an Ophthalmologist*. It was attended by more than 286 patients from the community. The Camp was inaugurated by *Mr.I.Mallikarjuna, Executive Director, Fair Trade Forum India along with Ms.Moon Sharma*.

As an outcome of the health camp, it was observed that more such health camps involving the community will be organized in *Tajpur, Badarpur, Delhi area*. Experience during the camp also brought forward a need for more Eye Checkups for the community. 'Prevention is better than the cure' stood out as the theme for forthcoming health actions in the community. Also a need was felt to create awareness amongst the community members to improve sanitation and hygiene level in their daily lives.

Fury of Thane Cyclone

Very Severe Cyclonic Storm Thane was the strongest tropical cyclone of 2011 within the North Indian ocean. On Friday **December 30**, Cyclone Thane hit the states of *Tamil Nadu and Puducherry* with heavy rains and wind speeds of up to 135 kmph (83 mph) and tidal surges of up to 1.5 metres (5 feet).

The cyclone hit the coast from *Chennai to Karaikal, and Villupuram district* was among the worst hit as the cyclone epicenter was close to *Puducherry*. The storm made the city inaccessible by damaging road network and the National Disaster Response Force and fire and rescue

services had difficulty in reaching the cyclone affected fishing hamlets. Hundreds of houses have been damaged to varying degrees, electric posts

twisted out of shape and transformers smashed by the very strong winds. The cyclone also disrupted rail and air operations, with services cancelled or rescheduled. It took more than a week, and in some parts, more than a month to normalise electricity supply throughout the district. The Agriculture Department recorded extensive damage to crops of various



varieties, which was close to 100 percent in some cases.

Also the storm totally crippled *Cuddalore district* posing a huge challenge to the administration. It lost almost its entire tree cover. With no power to run motor pumps, people faced severe shortage of water even for their daily chores. Hundreds of acres of standing crops in several districts including *Nagapattinam* have also been lost due to the pounding rains as the cyclone moved away. Initial estimates have put the extent of damages in *Cuddalore district* at Rs.1000 crores. A day after the tropical storm 'Thane' left a trail of



destruction along Tamil Nadu's northern districts and *Puducherry*, the total death toll due to it notched up to 43 on Saturday including 8 deaths in the union territory.



Emmaus groups in Tamilnadu (VCDS, FHF & KUDUMBAM) were actively involved in the relief works in the affected areas. Around 6000 persons in *Cuddalore*, *Villupuram*, *Nagapattinam*, *Tiruvallur* and *Kanchipuram districts* were shifted to shelters and were been accommodated in Emmaus Community Centers, Cyclone Centers, schools and marriage halls. Also in these three Emmaus communities, there were heavy damages to the infrastructures, the trees and nurseries in the farm were mostly uprooted, and the electrical and plumbing lines were heavily damaged.



Having made an assessment of the damages and to carry out the emergency relief operations, the three groups made an emergency appeal to Emmaus International. As an immediate response, Emmaus International released **4333 euros** to feed the victims of the cyclone, and then **9000 euros** to renovate the infrastructures and the farm of the three Emmaus communities, and in enhancing the people organizations in mobilizing the State support and equipping them with disaster mitigation techniques.

Thanks to Emmaus International for their timely support which has contributed in reestablishing trees and livelihood of the people in these districts.

Internship programmes

Orientation of SAGE activities to Swedish students:

A group of students from *Albin School, Sweden* came to Kudumbam between **5th and 19th March** for an exposure to the development issues, especially in agriculture and the interventions of Kudumbam with farming community. As part of their programme



planning, one day has been allotted for *Mr. Suresh Kanna, State Coordinator, SAGE Network Tamil Nadu* to share the network's campaign experiences in opposing Genetic Engineering. On **12th March**, he made a visit to Kolunji farm and interacted with the Swedish students and made a presentation about the Genetic Engineering debate in India, the role of SAGE in democratize GE debate through its activities. After the presentation few interested students had a detailed interaction and details of our approaches through an interview. They also interviewed him and recorded the same in video to show it to the students and general public in Sweden as educational materials.

Block Placement for MSW students: Block placement internship program was conducted for the MSW students from *Urumu Dhanalakshmi College, Trichy*. They were in VCDS for 23 days and they were studying about the history and development of VCDS.

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