

# The Shirpur Vishwa Mandal Sevashram

SHIRPUR 425405 DHULE DIST. MAHARASHTRA (INDIA)  
July 27, 2004

Mr. Chidambaram Narayanan  
Institut fuer Energietechnik  
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CH-8092, Zurich

Dear Mr. Chidambaram

Last week when at Xavier's College, Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas gave me your email (dt. Sat. July 3, 2004) to which I essayed an initial response -handwritten and aerogrammed to you on July 20. By now that letter must've winged its way to you.

With this letter I enclose the documents you asked for ("hard copies"), viz. A Copy of our Memorandum of the Trust, Certificate of Registration and the Trust's FCRA permission (all copies)\*. I am sorry that the Memorandum reads like a stoneage archive with apologies to the stoneage!...The Memorandum corresponds to your term of "the charter of VSD". The FCRA clearance will allay all doubts about our ability to receive foreign donations directly. *\* your suggestion to "scan" wasn't feasible. We got photocopies made.*

To return to your more probing issues: Change in Shirpur's situation over the last 12 years.

In addition to what I have written about the need for NGO involvement if tribal and mass education is not to become a hopeless task today and into the future (near or far?), I would also state the positive signs of community growth in self-reliance over the years of our association with development issues. The tribal communities we work with have learnt to contribute towards any service or activity we organise for development. In the beginning it was <sup>(perhaps)</sup> the hand-outs that enticed participation. Today, the communities reason out their benefits and agree to make an appropriate contribution for the activity they find useful. Beginning from the educational centres where parents contribute Rs.5/- per child towards the class, besides buying personal learning materials, on to the agricultural and watershed development activities of these very communities in which they contribute 25% of their labour wages to the programme and purchase seed-treatment cultures, compost enhancing cultures, set up vermicompost units without government subsidy, all in the interests of sustainable agriculture, and on to credit societies where they have learnt to abide by the strict rules of paying back what is borrowed (after surrendering the tradition of being defaulters harrassed by moneylenders). These are the new and humanly enhancing principles of community participation in our developmental activities.

We have the active support of the Government machinery and the banks - besides other sundry officials - in working out our present-day development strategies. We have also linked with the expertise of NGOs like AFARM-Pune and AFPRO-Ahmednagar, with media professionals and other field-based NGOs to keep our strategies up-to-date and closely adapted to peoples' lives.

The local communities we work with are being motivated to take up this integrated package: Education - Sustainable Agriculture - Watershed and Environment - Credit Unions - Indegenuous and Modern Health inputs. We hope that our strategies will make the future more livable for greater numbers of poor who struggle against great odds, yet struggle spiritedly.

Please send us a copy of the proposal Subashree and Shanmuga sent you. They don't seem to have sent me a copy of the same. After receiving their copy I'll make the needed changes.

And I, we, welcome a visit from anyone you should send to share our adventures here! Hoping to hear from you again. With my salaams to you and kindred souls.....

*Fr. Godfrey D'Almeida*

Enclosures: ① Certificate of Trust Registration  
② Memorandum of Association  
③ FCRA Clearance