

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER

2002



EKTHA - UNITY

The Newsletter of Save A Family Plan

Building Community Through Sangham Participation

Dear Friends,

Welcome to **Save A Family Plan's** first issue of our Newsletter "*Ektha*" which means "*Unity*". This title embodies the essence of our mission as our work focuses on building community and creating awareness and understanding between cultures. The word "*Ektha*" is in Sanskrit, the oldest language in the world, which originated in Northwest India. It is still considered the national sacred language of India. Through our newsletter, we hope to keep you informed and involved and to provide valuable information about the details of work in India.

We are grateful for your ongoing support of the Indian families and want to let you know that your donations really do make a big difference in their lives.

In this issue we will focus on the Sanghams in India that are integral partners with *Save A Family Plan*. We work with over 2000 Sanghams in order to implement our programs and to enhance community development. These groups are vital to the effective functioning of our organization.

A Reflection.....

- *The fruit of prayer is faith*
- *The fruit of faith is love*
- *The fruit of love is service*
- *And the fruit of service is peace*

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

All About Sanghams/Self-Help Groups

Sanghams/Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are community-based organizations composed of groups of marginalized poor people that are affiliated with *Save A Family Plan* throughout 41 different Diocesan Social Service Societies in southern India. They are formed and managed on the basis of democratic values and function primarily to enhance community development. Each Self-Help Group consists of between 10 to 20 people and every member participates in weekly meetings to dialogue and work towards integration and social change. They focus on many important aspects affecting their local village including awareness of local needs, gender equity, mobilizing local resources, microcredit mechanisms, linking with other financial and developmental institutions, and social advocacy. It is through these groups and a participatory approach that many of the needy families are chosen for our programs. After the selection process, the families receive training about our programs and are guided to utilize efficient use of project support. We have come to recognize that poverty needs to be addressed not only by redistribution of wealth but also by increasing the productive capacity of the poor and enabling them to participate in the development process.



A Womens Self-Help Group meeting in Thuckalay, Tamil Nadu, India



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*In Partnership with the Poor
for a Just World*



Save A Family Plan currently has over 600 Indian families who have been selected and are awaiting assistance.

Have you ever considered helping an additional family or sharing our program details with your family and friends?

Please help us in spreading the word....

A Family Reaches Self-Reliance Through a Cow Rearing Project

The Kattiplackal family – Jose and his wife, Elamma, and their daughters, Josmy (14), and Jyothi (10), their son, Appoos (7) and Mariyamma, their Grandmother.



The family pictured here live in the Thamarassery Diocese (Kerala, India) and applied for assistance through Save A Family Plan in June 1998. When a benefactor was found, through donations the family received a subsidy and were eligible for a bank loan in order to construct a cowshed and purchase two milking cows. The family now has a regular income through the sale of the milk and are also able to use the cow dung as fertilizer for their own farming. Through profits received they have been able to repay their loans, manage the family expenses, and pay for the education of the children. Jose also has savings in the local Sangham and is actively involved in social functions of the area. In January 2002, the family was deemed self-reliant.

This is but one of many examples of the families who are lifted out of poverty through our programs. In particular, with rural income-generating activities, it has been noted that greater success is achieved with the help of good training programs for the rural poor and by providing them with help in marketing their products. Our development projects are geared to assist with these vital programs and address the needs at the grassroots level.

A Save A Family Plan Employee meets the Holy Father

This past July 2002 at **World Youth Day**, one of our India office employees, *Sangeetha Joseph*, was chosen to represent the young people of India and to meet with our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. They are both pictured here along with Father Thomas Rosica just prior to having lunch on Strawberry Island.

Sangeetha holds a Masters Degree in Social Work and began working for Save A Family Plan in August 2001. She works as a **Program Support Officer** with our team in India to plan and monitor our projects that are partially funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and the Wild Rose Foundation. Her responsibilities include: Conducting field visits and planning workshops, facilitating Coordinator meetings, and interacting with the Sanghams, Self-Help Groups, and Diocesan Social Service Societies.



After WYD, Sangeetha came to our London office and had a full and eventful 3 week visit with us. We are all very proud of "*Sangi*" and she was very grateful for her first visit to Canada and learned much about our way of life.