

CONGRATULATIONS & THANKS

Our team from Valod & Dharampur convey best wishes when our Sister NGO Tuff is completing 50 fruitful years and celebrating well - deserved Golden Jubilee. Both our NGOs have a strong bond of cooperation with Tuff. We have as well friendship with dozens of Swedes for nearly last 4 decades - without a break. What a record in International Relations! Fondly but sadly enough I remember at this time, several devoted friends who have left this world. On this historic occasion it as well reminds me of my chance meeting [1979?] in Bombay with Ake Sandin and group. That was the starting point. Rest is history - known to all the seniors.

Let me thank Tuff from the heart of my hearts for your efforts to provide wonderful opportunity to the kids of our schools hidden in deep forest and mountains from day one - without a break. More than 10000 kids from underprivileged section of the society have been benefited so far. Dozens from them who otherwise may not have seen the face of the school have got decent jobs after completing University education. About 1000 are doing petty jobs or are self - employed [also progressive farmers] after finishing education. Few of them have joined like - minded NGOs, to serve the society.

'Operation Day Work' [ODW] is a unique and highly successful concept of Tuff - with substantial results for Dharampur and many needy communities. To observe the ODW in action in Kumla [from where Tuff began its journey?] is a memory of our life. We were so impressed. The outcome of the DAY from several schools [so many disciplined students] provided education to hundreds of kids in this illiterate society, changing their life. On account of the impact of our schools and schools run by other Sister - NGOs, there are now government schools in each and every village. Since last 10 years about 400 past students have taken up different vocational courses with the scholarship [initiated by Tuff] provided by many of our well - wishers. After completing Gymnasium, about 200 students have joined engineering – computer – nursing - social studies & general science. Some 10 past students have joined Dharampur project as teachers and social workers.

You may not be aware that this holistic project [2 major fronts : Education & Livelihood Opportunities] survived for the first ten years of its life solely on Tuff [& Sida] support. Of course, help also followed from other sources, for the rest of the years. But the first decade was so crucial, as we do never entertained government aid.

I cannot overlook deep [so emotional for some Tuff activities] involvement of Tuff in "Smile for a while" [Balwadies - Child Centers] program for the kids of under - privileged Koytas - sugarcane cutters, living around Valod, amidst inhuman camps. The voice of one lady activist is as if ringing in my ears at the moment. While in a ship [for quiet planning from Sweden to Finland] she spoke out - when she knew that we are shifting to far - off Dharampur Block to work ; 'Then what will happen to the small kids of our Balwadies?' Such was the concern for the poor and neglected. When finally we shifted [1987] to poorer and invisible Dharampur. I fondly recollect that Ake - Gunnar were witness to this turning point in our social work.

Second nice program [Mangograms] is the continuous support provided by many a Tuff members and other Swedish kind donors for mango plantation in Dharampur. At this juncture I will like to mention those 3 'Mango Girls' and an old lady [90] - 3 cheers to her - who asked their friends and relatives not to send gifts, but instead send the corresponding money to Tuff, finally to reach Dharampur for 'Mango Program'. What a love! In last two and a half decades, 144000 plants have been distributed [at half price] to poor aboriginal families - making a wonderful impact on the economy in this vast area, consisting of 180 villages. Tons of mangoes are grown - sold and eaten.

With Tuff support we are privileged to visit Sweden very often. We enjoyed great hospitality of many families. I will like most humbly to thank them. I am 87 and my wife Koki is 79; so now there are no

possibilities for us to revisit our beloved Sweden. But the memories of those exciting days are ever fresh in our hearts. The visit by about 100 [may be more] Swedes of our schools and community programs is a record in itself.

There is a sea change now in the educational scenario – when we compare with the situation some 35 years back, when we first entered this dark zone. Some government schools were there, but hardly few students attended them and the teachers visited schools only casually. Now every child goes to school even in the remotest and farthest corner.

Finally, let me congratulate Tuff and to be specific Swedish Sister Schools for making above - mentioned to happen. The MARCH is on. Fortunately we are still active. Tuff support is there and will continue - we are sure. The face of vast Dharampur is constantly changing I am happy to state. We foresee a bright future.

With many thanks again. We wish Tuff many many returns of the day and success as ever, in the mission.

Bhikhu & Kokila Vyas