



Building Houses One Village at a Time

The Friends of LAFTI Foundation has partnered with the Jain Center of Northern California and "Passports with Purpose" to build houses in the villages of Orathur and Karunganni in South India. Construction is expected to begin in late January. Within 3 or 4 months, 50 families will be able to move from dilapidated mud huts into small brick homes. In anticipation for this awesome event, the future homeowners have been busily making bricks and transporting them to their villages.



Making bricks

"Passports with Purpose" to Build 25 Houses in Karunganni

In November 2010, Passports with Purpose launched a fundraiser for the village of Karunganni.



Typical mud hut in Karunganni

Passports With Purpose was founded in 2008 by a group of Seattle-based travel bloggers as a way to build community among travel bloggers and to give back to the places they visit. In its first year, they raised \$7,400 for Heifer International. In 2009, they raised almost \$30,000 to build a school in Cambodia, including a well that provides safe, clean water. Their goal for this year is \$50,000 to help LAFTI build 25 houses in Karunganni. For more information, visit the Passports with Purpose website: <http://www.passportswithpurpose.com>.

Jain Center Comes to the Aid of Orathur

The Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC) is providing funding to build 25 houses in Orathur, a village that was devastated by the 2004 tsunami. Water entered the village through tidal rivers sweeping away houses and crops. Families stayed in schools until their mud huts could be minimally repaired. Although eking out a meager living was a struggle before the tsunami, it became even more difficult in its aftermath. They slowly began to rebuild their lives, but their living conditions were dismal. With the help of LAFTI, most families in Orathur now own an acre of rich farmland for growing rice. Thanks to the generosity of JCNC, the future is looking much brighter.



This family in Orathur will build a new house

It Takes a Community to Build a Village

Thousands of families in rural Indian villages are desperately in need of decent housing. Do you belong to a large group, organization, or a community that may want to take on a special project? LAFTI could assign you a village and identify 5, 10, 15, perhaps 25 families, who will build their own houses with your financial assistance. Each house is 400 square feet and costs \$3,000. We will monitor their progress and provide reports and pictures. Contact the Friends of LAFTI Foundation (friendsoflafti@gmail.com) to discuss the possibility of re-building a village.

A New House Means "Pride and Safety"

We are often asked what a new house means to the people living in these villages. Does it really improve their lives? Meera Shanti, who interned with LAFTI in July, sat down with Aravalli and Thakaraj in their new home in the village of Sikkavalam. When she asked them what they valued most about their new home, they responded "Pride and Safety." "We feel much more financially safe because we are not spending 4,000 rupees (\$88 USD) every year to replace the straw that held together our hut."

Their 13-year-old daughter, Bhuvanewari, added that having a quiet and comfortable place to study has helped her stay ahead in school. In the past, she found it difficult to complete her homework on rainy nights in the family's damp and leaky hut. Her mother continued: "We are so very happy that, with the help of Krishnammal and LAFTI, we were able to help ourselves. Although we continue to work the same jobs as

before even if they are unorganized and inconsistent, we are no longer struggling to stay above water. We feel safe and proud that we have built our own home, a home that our children leave from in the morning and return to at night to complete their homework. We now live in peace and safety from the rain and sun that used to make our lives such a struggle."

The family's old one-room hut was made of mud, thatch, and straw. During the annual monsoons, the mud ran, and the family often scooped out ankle-deep water. Now they are the proud owners of a solidly built 400 square foot home with two bedrooms.



(Note: A generous donation from Kim & Bruce McIntyre of La Mesa, CA made this family's dream of a reality.)



CONTACT US:
619-284-5372
FRIENDSOFLAFTI@GMAIL.COM
WWW.FRIENDSOFLAFTI.ORG

Together everything is possible!

A Gift of Sewing Machines

AIMS India donated 10 sewing machines with tables and stools to LAFTI. LAFTI established a tailoring training center in the village of Ottathattai in the Nagapattinam District. During each six-month course, 20 village women and girls develop basic tailoring skills, under the guidance of a professional teacher. The women then take their products to town to sell or export. This important skill, enables the women to make a substantial addition to their family's income.



Women Purchase Goats

Thanks to the efforts of Aruna Sethupathi of Chicago, 200 women received microcredit loans to purchase goats. AIMS India donated the money to purchase 100 goats, and a supporter in India provided the other 100 goats. Each woman received a loan of 1200 rupees (\$26) to purchase her goat. She is repaying the loan at the rate of 100 rupees (\$2.20) a month. LAFTI oversees the project and monitors the repayments.



LAFTI Opens a 4th Hostel

Life was a constant struggle for the families living in and around the village of Ottathatti. As Krishnammal said, "For nearly one year we tried to move the hearts of the landlords." All this began to change last December when twenty landlords agreed to sell 340 acres of very fertile farmland, and LAFTI began the tedious process of buying and distributing the land to women. The heart of one landlord was so moved that he donated his large house to LAFTI. LAFTI's friends in the UK provided the funds to renovate the house and turn it into a hostel for 37 boys, ages 7 to 14. LAFTI covers their basic needs, helps them with their studies, and transports them to school, 3 kilometers away. LAFTI hopes to someday open a hostel for girls in this area.



New hostel (left) & some of its 37 residents (right)



LAFTI and the many families they serve greatly appreciate your continued support. Please visit our website for information about making a donation or participating in our charitable gift giving program.

A Few Words from Amma (Krishnammal Jagannathan, Founder of LAFTI)

My Dear Friends,

What a joy to attend to the duties of empowering the women. This is my mission and vision. From my childhood I have painful memories of suffering women. She feels she is a condemned creature. By receiving land from LAFTI and becoming the owner of the land, she is no longer a slave to the landlord.



Today (October 14, 2010) about 15 women were released from bondage, so they no longer need to go the landlord's house, standing on

his door-step, waiting for a meager daily wage. With broad smiles on their faces they touched my feet in gratitude. Tomorrow about 50 more women will come to the registration office where I will meet them to create documents for their land ownership. It is an opportunity for me and our LAFTI workers to help the women obtain economic power and enjoy freedom.

Obtaining the land is a very complex process. LAFTI staff

have to go around and meet the land owners, returning again and again, sometimes up to 20 times. Finally it is my chance to negotiate the price. With intense appealing, we will reach an agreement with the landlord. Then we go to Madras to get the funds to purchase the land. It takes at least 3 or 4 months to come to a settlement and finally to register the land.

It is a great and wonderful surprise that the Indian Government agreed to waive the stamp duty (i.e. tax levied on documents) for all our land purchases. It took us 3 months to get this agreement.

Our housing program is also running successfully. The women are engaged in brick making. What enthusiasm they have! Their efforts are a great inspiration to all our LAFTI workers. Every worker has a strong desire to see a social change and is working very hard to empower the women and free them from the economic oppression. We continue to reap the good wishes of our dear friends around the world who have so generously helped to make this program possible.

With Grateful Appreciation,
 Krishnammal Jagannathan