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Ekal Launches First-of-its-kind Sustainable Farming Program in Rural India
Project Fully Funded with Charitable Gift from Raleigh-based Shah Capital

HOUSTON, Texas (April 28, 2011) – The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, a non-profit service organization supporting education and village development in rural India, is proud to announce a pilot program engineered to introduce self-sustaining farming practices to impoverished villages in the Indian states of Orissa and Maharashtra. The two trial phases of the Vermi Compost Project are being financed with a \$30,000 seed, donated by Raleigh-based financial firm, Shah Capital, with plans for expansion of the program in the works.

Centered around a technique of organic fertilizer production known as vermi composting, the pilot phase of this innovative program is being implemented in 100 agricultural communities in underdeveloped regions of India. It is projected to directly impact the lives of more than 300 families currently living below the poverty line.

With an entrepreneurial ideal at its core, the program is derived from the “teach a man to fish” philosophy in that its objective is to become both empowering and self-sustaining by using the composting system to fuel higher crop yields while creating a continuous and previously non-existent source of revenue for the program’s participants. To drive the multi-tiered program, three families from each of the 100 villages will be charged with managing operations that include cultivating, bagging, storing, transporting, and selling the compost. The families will also be using the compost on their own crops.

Until now, these villagers have only been able to obtain costly non-organic fertilizer and only by purchasing it from outside sources – a practice which has led to widespread debt among rural farming families as well as soil and groundwater pollution. In addition to providing an added revenue stream for the farmers, the Vermi Compost Project will drive down debt by eliminating the need to buy fertilizer. Due to its organic nature, the use of vermi compost also diminishes the release of harmful pollutants into the environment.

“We are so excited to be involved in this unique initiative,” said Shah Capital founder and CIO Himanshu Shah. “One of the things that many people don’t necessarily realize is how far a donation will go in India to help those in need. With our phase one contribution accompanied by the follow-on investment, we are able to extend our support to a total of 1000 families. In anticipation of this pilot project’s success, it is our hope that the program will continue to grow from there.”

“This project will serve as a model in our crusade to curb the poverty that is endemic in the remote and tribal villages of India,” said Subhash Gupta, president of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA. “Our organization is highly appreciative of Shah Capital’s generous assistance in funding this program; it will, no doubt, aid in speeding the economic development of these marginalized and largely forgotten villages. As the program continues to grow, it is our hope that more philanthropists will join us in creating financial independence and alleviating health risks for these deserving people.”

About Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation

The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation is a non-profit organization that operates single-teacher schools and sponsors village development in rural India. The foundation is a volunteer-only, non-governmental education movement in India, operating in over 34,000 villages and educating over 1,000,000 children in the India tribal belt. Ekal's philosophy is to take a holistic approach to social and economic development, providing primary school education for children, as well as health care, livelihoods and empowerment education for the entire village. For more information, visit ekal.org.

About Shah Capital

Shah Capital is a leading investment management firm located in Raleigh, NC. In addition to serving the needs of its clients with the utmost care and professionalism, Shah Capital aspires to serve its community in philanthropic endeavors that can strengthen society as a whole. For more information, visit shahcapital.com

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