

The Village Development Project

Each year since its conception in 2009, The Village Development project has worked with one overarching goal; to push itself harder each year to provide a better life for people living in some of the harshest conditions imaginable. And, as always, the team this year has not only achieved all the goals they set for themselves, but gone far beyond. We have made significant progress in all three of the pillars we stand for; infrastructure, empowerment and education.

The primary focus of our work this year has been the construction of the Primary school in Kumbharghar. 'Sustainability' is our buzzword and we have spent the last few years perfecting the art of stabilized mud architecture. We're finally able to make the perfect brick; it weighs in at 9 kilograms and it is just the right mix of sand, clay, gravel, cement and a dash of lime. We've also become much quicker and we're now able to produce around 150 bricks in a day.

These bricks have been used to build the Primary school as well as a number of the houses in the village. It makes us very happy to see the houses go from simple mud and stick huts to sturdy brick and mortar structures, providing far more shelter against the vagaries of time and weather.



This year, as in the past, we were fortunate to have passionate, committed people from various parts of the world to assist us. Early in the year, in October we hosted the Junior RoundSquare service project and had middle school students working in the village. Watching these younger students work tirelessly day after day was absolutely encouraging. They did not let the heat nor the work get in the way of their determination to do a good job. It was interesting to watch them learn about themselves through the lens of hard, physical work which was quite unlike anything they had experienced before. Each student came away stronger, both physically and mentally and with the satisfaction of knowing they had done something to help someone in need.

We also had older students coming on to the project late October from the Liceo Farnesina School, Italy and the Open Gate School, Prague. Both teams acquitted themselves with élan, whether it was building steps into the hillside of Hassachipatti or slogging for hours under the harsh Kumbharghar

sun. Despite only spending a few days in each village, the testament that each of these groups have left behind will endure for many years and that is indeed something each one of our visiting students can be proud of.

Admittedly, the feather in our cap has been hosting the RoundSquare International Service Project for the second year in a row. This year, we had a team of students from 8 countries working together on site.

Long days, heavy work and being away from family and friends for so long is usually a recipe for grumpiness and complaints, but not for these guys. There was singing, cheerful banter over passing bricks and daily competitions to see which team could churn out the most bricks per day. Bonds of permanent friendship were forged over cementing walls and digging foundations. The team managed to finish building the primary school as well as two houses in the village, which is probably the fastest work we've seen yet.



The pillars of education and empowerment are still going strong. We have developed a curriculum that will be implemented in the Kumbharghar primary school once it starts operations in the near future. We have also spent time coaching the children in Hassachipatti in English. Our empowerment projects are also doing well, like the bag-making venture in Hassachipatti. We have also begun work on a nursery in Kumbharghar where we plan to grow vegetables and herbs for consumption as well as for sale.

A special mention must be made of our dedicated core team of students and teachers who have given up their time on so many weekends to contribute to the lives of the people in both villages.

At its core, the Village project aims to bring development and growth to some of the farthest reaches of the country, but it also manages to bring growth and development to those who participate in it, giving us a sense of purpose and a feeling of unparalleled joy when we see the kids in the villages benefiting from the work we did with our bare hands.