



Subject: Letter to the School / Parent's Committee

Dear Committee members,

The program *Youth Changing the World* engages students in an enriching adventure of international solidarity. The objective is simple: guide the students in understanding the issue of poverty in the world and motivate them to take initiatives to alleviate it. For example, Canadian schools can help a village gain access to safe drinking water through the construction of a village well.

Since 1999, SOPAR has offered this program to schools to assist teachers and school administrators in awakening young people to the life realities of other people in the world. The program aims to educate and create a sense of solidarity. Since the program's inception, more than 750 schools in the ten provinces and territories of Canada have participated in this program. *Youth Changing the World* is not an ordinary fundraising event; it is an educational experience with real-life results.

The students organize awareness and fundraising activities with the goal of building a bore well in a remote village in India. We encourage children to participate voluntarily and, above all, to earn their personal contribution. It is important for the project to be the fruit of their own efforts.

By participating in the program *Youth Changing the World*, schools contribute to alleviating poverty in India in a tangible way. The program is built upon the theme of drinking water and includes the following:

- a) water and geography
- b) health, hygiene, and nutrition
- c) water conservation and the environment
- d) fundamental human rights
- e) the comparison of cultures and lifestyles
- f) the moral aspects of basic needs, sharing the wealth and solidarity

SOPAR offers an educational kit to assist teachers of the participating schools. This package includes:

- A teacher's guide
- A short video about water
- Information about India
- A booklet of pedagogic activities
- A sample of an explanatory letter for the children's parents
- Suggestions for fundraising events and activities

Since one objective of this project is for students to develop a sense of collective pride through solidarity and participation, parental support is a key factor in achieving success. At the end of the school year, SOPAR awards the school with a commemorative plaque displaying the photo of the newly constructed well in India. To register in the program, the participating school must:

1. Register by February at the latest (to receive the plaque by the end of the school year)
2. Set up and support the students in their fundraising activities in order that they obtain the **\$900** goal necessary to construct each well.
3. Provide SOPAR with the funds raised before the end of the school year.
4. Ensure that the raising of funds stems from work or a revenue generating activity undertaken by the students (sale of handicrafts, artistic endeavours, contests, or garage sales).

What is SOPAR?

SOPAR is a non-profit organization founded in 1977 by Angel Gingras (a Quebec resident originally from India). It is headed by a board of directors composed of volunteers elected by SOPAR's members and donors. Our work is concentrated in India, a country of 1.3 billion inhabitants where one finds over a third of the world's poor. Our approach is to help people help themselves by focussing on the assets and resources of the community to create a long-lasting change. Our activities include:

- Assisting in rural women's financial and personal independence
- Teaching literacy and basic adult education to women
- Developing savings, micro-credit and family business ventures
- Supporting the education of orphans and the eradication of child labour
- The rehabilitation of natural water reservoirs that collect rainwater and the sustainable development of water resources.
- The drilling of drinking water wells and the installation of water purification systems

Students and school personnel who have participated in the Youth Changing the World program since 1999 have said they found the experience enriching and motivating. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us. We hope to have the pleasure of working with you and the students of your school.



Shobha Singareddy,
Director, SOPAR