

KHANDEL LIGHT REVIEW OF STRATEGY CONDUCTED IN 2006

1.1 Objectives of Review

To the review the priorities and application of strategy since the formation of the Trust and to consider whether those remain relevant and appropriate in the light of the circumstances applying now and for the immediate future in Khandel and in the context of the Objects of the Trust as subsequently interpreted in the Mission Statement as follows:-

1.1.1 The Objects of the Trust

“Such charitable purposes as the Trustees in their absolute discretion think fit and in particular(a) the relief of poverty, sickness and distress of people living in Khandel and the surrounding villages in Rajasthan, India, and (b) the advancement of their education” and

1.1.2 Mission Statement

“Khandel Light works to improve the lives of the vulnerable and disadvantaged families in Khandel and in its surrounding villages in Rajasthan. Working in partnership with the local NGO, Nirman Sanstha, the charity encourages people to help themselves by focusing on long term development projects including better health care and education, access to clean water and sanitation. It also aims to raise the status of women. In this way, Khandel Light aims to make a lasting difference not only to families today, but also to those of tomorrow.”.

1.2 Method of Review

The review was conducted by a combination of:-

1.2.1 The creation of a dedicated sub-committee with the remit to consider all aspects of the performance of the Trust to date, the circumstances as they have applied and currently apply in Khandel, the anticipated needs of families living in Khandel and the fulfilment of the Objects of the Trust and

1.2.2 Consultation with Nirman Sanstha and, in particular with Rameshwar Lal Verma, the Director of Nirman Sanstha, embracing the same remit as undertaken by the Committee

and as a result:-

1.2.3 A review by the Trustees generally of the discussions and consultation referred to above and a determination of the prioritisation of strategy for the next 3 years.

2. ***Discussions***

2.1 The Trustees' objective in discussion has been adhere to the Objects of the Trust, which are paramount, as interpreted subsequently in the Mission Statement in 2002, and then to recognise and observe the shifts in emphasis and priority that have in practice subsequently applied and to understand and evaluate the reasons for that. In particular it is recognised that for reasons of necessity over the period of the Trust the emphasis and priority have shifted progressively towards the provision of a supply of water and the provision of employment to provide sustenance given the increased and increasing desertification of the area. Without that increasing desertification the emphasis in the use of resources might have been different, but the need for water and for employment to provide income and sustenance has been increasingly important.

2.2 ***Topics Considered***

2.2.1 Water as an essential to life – as local supplies of drinking water have disappeared and as available water has become progressively more contaminated and more and more difficult to access, the supply of water has become increasingly more important. This has been achieved to date by a combination of:-

2.2.1.1 the provision of water houses and a supply of water brought in from outside the area by tankers and

2.2.1.2 the provision of employment for the provision of bunding and other earth works for the better capture and retention of such rain as does fall.

Whilst attempts have been made to identify water sources locally by deep bore holes, all efforts have been unsuccessful. The Trustees recognise that desalination is a possible means of converting available contaminated water to water that is drinkable, but that has generally been considered to be, in energy terms, unacceptably expensive. Discussions with Rameshwar Lal Verma suggest, however, that small desalination plants can be acquired locally at reasonable cost and powered by local electricity supplies which apparently are

not as expensive as had been feared. Provided, therefore, a programme of desalination can be managed at an acceptable cost, then this, at least for the immediate future, would improve local water supplies. It is apparent that the desertification being suffered by the area is a result of climate change which, at least for the moment, shows no prospect of diminishing, and the problem is likely to get worse rather than better. Notwithstanding that, however, Rameshwar Lal Verman is of the view (which the Trustees accept) that the Community will remain in place, notwithstanding the hardships, and that, therefore, its needs for drinkable water will continue. Since drinkable water is an essential to life, the provision of a viable supply of drinking water must be a main priority.

2.2.2 Education

The Trustees consider that the provision of education as widely as possible is an essential to an improvement in the conditions and prospects of the local community for a variety of reasons. Education is currently available to the community but take up of the opportunity diminishes due to a combination of (a) its relative inaccessibility and (b) the need of the families for children upon reaching a certain age to work. In particular, there are schools in nearby towns, but in the absence of a transport system, access to those schools can take as much as 3 hours in either direction, which is a clear problem. The children need to take food with them which is a resource taken out of the family, and this adds to the financial impact upon the family.

Since we are firmly of the view that education is an important priority, we considered as alternatives:-

2.2.1 the provision of a school locally by building a school, providing it with equipment, and employing a teacher(s)
or

2.2.2. acquiring (whether by purchase or hire) a bus or buses to convey pupils to and from the school, a journey probably of no more than half a hour in each direction.

Given the strong belief that education is a priority, the Trustees believe that it is important not only to make access to schooling important but also to recognise the needs of the families by considering the provision of food for the children and even perhaps some form of payment to the families as an incentive to them to allow the children to go to school and to compensate for the loss of the work which would have been carried out by the children if they had ceased education.

2.2.3 Self Sufficiency

In an ideal world a priority would be to bring about a situation in which, by the provision of resource or training, the local community could be made self sufficient so as to need no support or reduced support. It is clear, however, that this is not a realistic aim for the foreseeable future although in the long term, if circumstances were to change, this must remain an objective. Realistically a climate change is necessary before this is likely to be achieved but the Trustees believe that greater access to education may in due course assist the process.

2.2.4 Possibility for diversification

Following on from discussions as to self sufficiency, we discussed the prospects for diversification in terms of perhaps industry as a form of employment or the growing of alternative crops that may be more suitable to current conditions than those traditionally grown. Whilst the prospects of providing industry are remote, diversification of crops may be a step forward, but a great deal more advice is needed before any decisions could possibly be made.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 Although the review was undertaken with an open mind and with the acceptance that, if the review indicated this to be necessary, we should contemplate radical changes in priorities, nevertheless we have concluded that the strategy which has applied and which has proved flexible to changing circumstances is appropriate and should remain in place. Whilst we should remain alert to any changes in circumstances, and adjust accordingly, the general conclusion is “steady as she goes”.
- 3.2 The process of discussion and in particular the consultation with Nirman Sanstha has been extremely useful. It has also highlighted to the extent to which the problems faced by Khandel are not unique to Khandel, but have applied in many other parts of the world and there is available expertise and experience which can be drawn upon. We should, therefore, be open to wider consultation at every opportunity (e.g. Water Aid or plant breeding institutes) rather than by trying to resolve everything ourselves and, in effect, trying to reinvent the wheel.
- 3.3 Since water is recognised to be such an essential to the survival of the community, we should attempt to reduce dependence upon outside sources of water and should, therefore, institute a pilot scheme using a desalination plant. Such a plant should be acquired and, after an appropriate period for a pilot scheme, consideration should be given to expanding the scheme by the acquisition of more desalination plants, which would be effectively on the basis of one per family.
- 3.4 The conclusion reached is that education is so important to the future of the community that steps should be taken immediately. The provision of a school locally carries with it a variety of problems and, since there are schools available in local towns, we should utilise that

existing resource. Accordingly the Trust will acquire a bus which will be used to take selected children to and from school; they will be provided with food for the day, and, where appropriate, their families will be financially compensated for the loss of their labour. This is an initiative which had caused particular excitement and approval in Khandel, and that of itself is clearly an indication of the importance which they as well as we give to the education available for the children of the community.

- 3.5 A review of strategy is an iterative process and we should, therefore, review strategy in a similar manner again in about 3 years' time and so on successively.

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