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## INTRODUCTION TO THE ANANDA MARGA MISSION

### Intent

Ananda Marga was formed with the intent to create a congenial habitat for the full expression of people's 5 physical, mental and spiritual potential.

### Values

Our work is inspired by the following values:

1 a belief in the oneness of creation. We therefore strive for a harmonious co-existence of all people and their natural environment and reject any discrimination based on race, gender, creed, class, nationality or species.

2 no person should suffer for want of the basic necessities of life: food, housing, medical care, clothing and education.

3 a appropriate economic and social development requires community participation and must occur within the cultural framework of the beneficiaries. It must enable everyone to gain the independence to determine their own future.

4 we view life as an ongoing quest for personal improvement that culminates in spiritual fulfilment. Well-being is a person's harmony of body, mind and spirit that depends on a balance in the surrounding eco-system.

### Strategy

The strategy of our organisation has been to develop a global grassroots structure of volunteers that are driven by a desire to attend to their inner growth as much as to that of their communities. Our approach is based on the assumption that personal transformation is the starting point of social change. Consequently we stress consciousness raising and education. We operate over 700 schools around the world. As a result of our holistic philosophy, Ananda Marga's 5 programs strive to provide comprehensive support to people's endeavour to uplift their quality of life.

### Programs

Our programs include:  
education.

women's and children's support

integrated rural and urban development projects

co-operative economic growth

agricultural advancement

environmental protection

disaster relief

health care

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scientific research  
promotion of art and indigenous cultural expression  
youth service and sports  
volunteer leadership training  
personal growth through yoga and meditation  
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#### History

Founded in India in 1955, Ananda Marga spread during the 70's all around the world to over 80 countries. It is today a United Nations recognized Non-Governmental Organization. We began in South Africa in 1981. Our activities started with nutritional assistance programs in informal settlements and later expanded to creches and pre-school . Our work was recognized with the Indicator Human Rights Award in 1988. We are operating now 10 schools in both the Kwa-Zulu and Johannesburg area. Currently our main focus is on an integrated development project in Orange Farm.

#### The Orange Farm Neo-Humanist Centre

Orange Farm, situated in the lVaal Triangle, is part of an extensive resettlement project by the government for over 1.5 million people with low-income. In 1989, Amanda Marga acquired here 21 acres of land to establish the Neo-Humanist Centre. The Neo-Humanist Centre intends to be a demonstration project to facilitate community self-sufficiency in a non-racial context.

#### The Need

Orange Farm was conceived in the late 80's as a result of the governments new policies to prevent illegal squatting and to respond to increased urbanization. It recognised for the first time the right of Africans to own their own land. Plots of about 220 sqm are offered for sale to residents of squatter camps that are moved to Orange Farm. For a monthly fee of about R65 for land repayment and service fees, they receive only the most basic facilities like water (one tap for every 30 homes), graded roads, with no streetlights and sewage system. In terms with the governments policy the area will only get what the residents can pay for.

Statics show that they can not afford much. 37 percent of households have an income of less that R500 which reflects the high unemployment in the area. 46 percent of the people live in shacks. One third of the people completed standard four or less, which makes the chances of finding employment slim, especially during the current recession. Of 30,000 school aged children space is available for only 10,000 in public schools. But there is also good news. From all around Johannesburg people move to Orange Farm to find home in a township that has stayed free from most of the current political unrest and violence. People are busy improving their own houses and lives. The certainty of not being moved has inspired in them a great will to take the advancement of their community into their own hands.

In a short time over 70 self-help organisations have been formed. Orange Farm is one of the first new townships developed that put the needs of the residents first. It is an experiment and opportunity, that leaves the legacy of apartheid behind and so symbolizes the struggle to build a new nation. Through surveys, numerous community meetings, interaction with its leaders, our work and living in the community' we have identified the following needs that mirror those of most townships:

1. Quality education must be made available to cultivate the knowledge and skills to find employment and success in life.
2. Economic opportunities need to be created to provide the purchasing power for people to be independent.
3. Decent housing must be affordable to all.
4. People's ingenuity and resources have to be acknowledged and coordinated to secure a healthy environment conducive to everyone's self-expression.

#### Current Programs

Convinced that social development starts with the growth of individuals and happens over decades, our project began with a creche, pre- and primary school with classes up to standard two. Today about 500 children are taught in morning and afternoon shifts and receive one meal per day. We see the family of a child as the real place of learning and have therefore tried to support it as a whole. We provide 350 hampers of food per month to families of the students and the larger community, who can not provide for themselves. To avoid dependency, we have started a program that will help families to organise themselves in gardening clubs to grow their own food. The school garden serves as a training site. Garden and kitchen waste is recycled in a bio-gas plant that produces methane gas for the school kitchen and organic fertilizer for the garden. Much time has been spent with other community organizations to find common strategies for the development of Orange Farm.

#### Planned Programs

Our program grows out of our vision that fulfilled individuals make up happy families that built strong communities.

Comprehensive support is therefore needed for each person so that s/he can unfold his/her full physical, mental and spiritual potential. As a result our project integrates the various aspects of life into a symbiotic whole to enable each individual to contribute to the progress of the community.

The next phase of our project aims at upgrading our present informal buildings to accommodate the creche, pre- and primary school, the adult education and teachers upgrading program. At the hub of the school will be a multi-purpose hall for school and community functions.

It includes room for a library and a kitchen for the nutritional assistance program. Preventive health education links nutritional aid, the gardening program and school with an attached clinic that provides primary health care. The curriculum will not only focus on academics but will stress the formation of life skills to help the child overcome the dependency effect of apartheid. An emphasis on African language, culture and history intends to help the child regain its pride. Experiential learning activities are included to enhance self-esteem, creativity and social skills. The theme of the oneness of all creation builds a unifying thread throughout the curriculum to help bridge social division. The students will be involved as volunteers in service activities and the gardening program to foster a sense of community with people and nature. When building the facilities we will try to use as much local human and material resources to keep wealth in the local community. Bricks will be made on site and unskilled labour will receive instruction in the building trades as the construction progresses. The initial setup will be eventually expanded into a full scale vocational training centre with use of the school facilities for instructional purposes. At the end of the construction of the school a building and training infrastructure will be in place that can now be directed towards community housing.

At the heart of the community housing program will be the stockvel principal. A group of families will together invest 25% of their income and 500 hours of labour to built houses for one another. Their combined payments will provide the security for outside financing. We expect the already established gardening clubs to expand into a network of stockvels that can mobilize community wide housing and provide support to the start-up of small businesses. Our project site will initially demonstrate low-cost and energy efficient housing techniques. Various community owned cooperatives will be able to produce and distribute building supplies. For this plans to succeed, extensive community organizing will be required to unite people and organizations to move together to unlock the dormant assets of the community.

#### Financing

Searle Pharmaceutical, together with Otis Elevators a sponsor since the beginning of the project, has given a long term committment to materialize the above vision. It has taken the initiative to form a trust, understanding that it will take the experience and resources of a larger coalition of developmental partner to accomplish the set goals.