

Ms. Gouthami, CEO, Travel Another India

Providing an Income for Local Communities

Ms. Gouthami (42), Indian social entrepreneur and CEO of Travel Another India, offers experience-oriented regional travel and aims to improve the lives of people in rural areas. We interviewed her during her visit to Japan for the “Women’s Initiative Forum in Tokyo,” which aimed to provide an opportunity to think about women’s entrepreneurship.

“Business and social commitment are two wheels of a vehicle, and if even one is missing, we cannot continue. I started to explore ideas from a business point of view. There is a growing need among people living in urban areas, where the upper-middle class is growing, for domestic tours. I saw a business opportunity there.”

“However, I wanted to create a mechanism that not only pursues profits but also provides an income for local communities. Our business goes like this: Interested people in local communities take the lead to establish a tourism venture, hire local residents at appropriate wages, and sell products such as handicrafts. This mechanism allows self-sustaining economic growth. In the meantime, we are engaged in support areas such as consulting, marketing, and staff training.”

“In Hodka, a village in western India, our guests stay in mud-walled guesthouses and enjoy the nearby ruins and beaches. The village now receives 1,600 tourists annually, the profits from which have enabled it to start providing education for girls. We plan to expand this business to at least 35 domestic locations by 2014, with the goal of bringing in about 120 million yen in income to these areas.”