

A dignified solution

Celebrating 30 years of Rural Development

Annual Report 2008 – 2009

Inside

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- *Gram Vikas' stories: Top outcomes & field stories from our holistic development programs*
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What Gram Vikas is

Gram Vikas, literally meaning “village development” is a non-governmental organization, working towards making sustainable improvement in the quality of life of poor and marginalized people of Orissa. Founded by a group of student volunteers from Chennai, under the umbrella of the Young Students Movement for Development (YSMD), Gram Vikas is being actively involved in development since 1979 and has grown to be the largest NGO in the region.

It operates through one Head Office and 22 field offices. With 522 employees, Gram Vikas reaches out today to 895 habitations in 22 districts in Orissa state. It has also initiated the programme in 2 districts in Madhya Pradesh state and one district in Jharkhand state .

Vision

An equitable and sustainable society where people live in peace with dignity.

Mission

To promote processes which are sustainable, socially inclusive and gender equitable, to enable critical masses of poor and marginalized rural people or communities to achieve a dignified quality of life.

What do we mean by dignified quality of life?

In our perception ‘dignified quality of life’ of people or communities would be characterised by:

- Options for appropriate family and community infrastructure and sources of energy;
- Sustainable use and management of natural resources;
- Food security and access to secured livelihood opportunities;
- Assured access to basic education and adequate health services;
- Strong self-governing people’s institutions with equal participation of men and women;
- Conscientisation, self reliance and self-esteem.

How our logo defines us

Two hands together forming a heart is how we believe our logo defines us: *cooperation with concern and care for people.*

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Our guiding beliefs: MANTRA approach

Our mission is realized through MANTRA - Movement and Network for the Transformation of Rural Areas, an integrated habitat development programme, guided by the belief that, all people deserve to live in peace, with dignity.

MANTRA facilitates united and capacitated communities to undertake development activities, in the following focal areas: self-governing people's institutions, health, education, livelihoods and food security, livelihood enabling infrastructure.

What MANTRA stands for?

MANTRA core values:

- 100% Inclusion
All households must be involved in the development process and must benefit equitably. Participation of all households is a non-negotiable condition of the programme.
- Social Equity
Representation of all sections of the community in decision-making processes across caste, economic status and other barriers to ensure that a level playing field is created.
- Gender Equity
Equal representation and participation of men and women in community level decision-making and control.
- Sustainability
Development processes have built-in institutional and financial mechanisms for sustainability, and are necessarily based on sound environmental values.
- Cost sharing
Poor people can and will pay for beneficial development services, but there are some social costs which society at large must meet.

Under MANTRA, Gram Vikas facilitates village communities to establish, operate, and manage their own habitat including disaster-proof housing, water supply and sanitation systems, and appropriate water recharge mechanisms. The facilities are created with their own efforts and resources and with some assistance from external agencies.

MANTRA uses water supply and sanitation as an entry point and core-rallying element for all families in a village to come together, cutting through social barriers. MANTRA is undertaken with clear social, economic and environmental sustainability mechanisms. A typical programme cycle is between three and five years, after which Gram Vikas withdraws from the habitation. Thereafter, the community takes full responsibility for the management, operation and maintenance of all systems.

The MANTRA is designed in such a way, that it enables the community to be self-reliant. Once the development of physical infrastructure is completed, Gram Vikas staff accompanies the village committee to take care of the system, develop norms for operations and maintenance and support participation of all sections in the decision making process.

Gram Vikas' interventions are directed at raising critical consciousness and energizing whole villages.

Gram Vikas implements integrated activities aiming to alleviate the most urgent needs, while, at the same time, setting up the foundation for progressive improvement of the living conditions of the rural people. It creates unity in the village, fosters leadership among people and addresses gender inequity, in order to create an environment for the people to take up the initiative for development work, which they themselves decide upon, direct and manage.

A 30 year of development journey

Gram Vikas reached 895 villages

For three decades, Gram Vikas had given a chance to the poor to achieve a better life and had enabled communities to gradually emerge from the vicious cycle of poverty, into a spiral of sustained growth, where people gain confidence to take charge of their own development.

30 years of development interventions translate in long-term commitment in empowering people to fight poverty. It is a celebration of achievements and lessons we learnt, facing diverse challenges. Success stories had constantly motivated us and made us reflect on further steps we must take, to carry on, what we have started back in the 80's.

And our journey will continue...

We aim to reach 100,000 families by 2010. In this way, the 100,000 families will be 'critical masses' with the power to influence government policies, negotiate market relations and truly function as 'village republics'. We also aim to form critical masses, by reaching at least 20 percent of the population, in each Gram Panchayat (local government system at village level) that becomes part of MANTRA.

A brief history

Gram Vikas's history is a long and inspiring journey: from its organic roots as the Young Students Movement for Development, to settlement in Mohuda campus and the pioneering works of the Integrated Tribal Development Programme, then, through the biogas boom years and expansion across the state and out of it, the success of Rural Health and Environment Programme and more recently, to the launch of the integrated MANTRA approach and emergence onto an international stage.

The Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) had been an incubator for Gram Vikas's innovations in community development. The goal of ITDP is to help the tribal people become self-reliant and adapt to the changing conditions of their environment. During the early to mid 80's, the ITDP remained committed to advocate for adivasi communities.

1983 – 1992 was a period of exponential growth for Gram Vikas. The success with the biogas programme, building nearly 60,000 plants, during 1983 – 1993, had unexpectedly raised Gram Vikas profile.

The years leading up to 1999, were primarily defined by the growth and development of the Rural Health and Environment Programme (RHEP), on the belief that water and sanitation would be the single most effective way of improving the condition of people's lives, directly impacting morbidity and increasing productivity and, as well, addressing a holistic and an inclusive development of the community.

Since entering the new millennium, Gram Vikas has also known a rapid increase in profile, strengthening national and international partnerships and new networks. On the ground, the number of operational villages expanded and, the need for an integrated intervention that can address the water and sanitation issue, had driven Gram Vikas, in 2001, to develop and implement MANTRA programme. Since 2004, RHEP and ITDP are united under one umbrella – MANTRA (Movement and Action Network for Transformation of Rural Areas).

Over the past years, MANTRA approach had demonstrated how rural communities can be involved in sustainable and affordable development of their own village. By March 2005, Gram Vikas has covered 211 villages, providing toilets, bathing rooms and uninterrupted piped water supply to more than 16,000 households. By the end of March 2009, 44,697 families were assisted in 698 MANTRA villages, reaching a population of over 240 000.

Over the past years, our work has been acknowledged through various awards including:

- Most Innovative Development Project Award for the Rural Health and Environment Programme (Global Development Network of the World Bank, in 2001);
- World Habitat Award for the Rural Health and Environment Programme (Building and Social Housing Foundation – UK, in 2003)
- Kyoto World Water Grand Prize for MANTRA (Kyoto Municipality and Soroptimist International at the World Water Forum, in Mexico, in 2006);
- Ashoka Changemakers Innovation Award for *How to Improve Health for All and How to Provide Affordable Housing* (in 2006);
- India NGO Award (in 2006);
- Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship (in 2007).
- Alan Shawn Fienstien World Hunger Award (in 1995)
- K P Goenka Memorial Award (in 1993) for significant efforts in renewable energy technologies

The contributions of Gram Vikas' Executive Director, Sri Joe Madiath have been also recognized through several awards:

- Outstanding Social Entrepreneur 2001, 2002 and 2003 by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, Geneva.
- Social Lifetime Achievement awarded by Godfrey Philips at the Red and White Bravery Awards, in 2005
- Life time achievement in the field of renewable energy from the solar society of India.

Message from the Executive Director

It is like last year that I feel today, that I went to Cuttack to register this new entity called Gram Vikas. Hard to visualize that 29 years have come and gone and that we are in the 30th year.

What a journey!!! Initially, the small group that we were, were categorized in all sorts of ways: Die hard Christian missionaries only interested in proselytising the tribals and other innocent poor; naxalites recruiting poor people for their subversive purposes; people who have come to snatch away the land properties of adivasis; people who wanted to establish a political base, etc/

It was a case of “Give a dog a bad name and hang it”. As our work even initially was questioning the status quo, it was uncomfortable to a lot of people. So the best option was to impute motives and spread wild rumours and canards.

We persisted with our work, organised the adivasi people, fought along with them against land lords, money lenders, liquor merchants and land grabbers. We began to build biogas plants all through Orissa. From five people we grew to over a thousand people. From community life and living in a single mud house, several houses came up and ultimately the Gram Vikas campus came up.

Initially we would call ourselves voluntary workers, then in became activists, development workers and the all too pregnant ‘development professional’ was the catch word. Whatever be the nomenclature, we remained the same as far as power, especially bureaucratic power, is concerned. We were expected to bend, polish and scrape. That we spoke for the poor and voiceless was suspect.

Through these changes one thing was constant – the poor people’s faith and confidence in us. This gave us the courage and the audacity to go forward.

Today after 37 years of developmental work in the field, when policies are enunciated for the rural poor as if they were vermin, your blood boils – but you have to keep cool. The proposition and acceptance that poor people need poor solutions and the poorest need politically miserable solutions is a concept that is gaining ground. This concept is sold through the fallacy that ‘cheap’ is economical and ‘cheapest’ is the most economical. It is against these sort of perfect rounding concepts as a panacea for all developmental ills that today we have to resist and fight against.

I have spent 37 years in the development field in Orissa out of which 30 were with Gram Vikas. I am keen that a rather young person, wiser, more qualified and dynamic takes over as the CEO of Gram Vikas.

I have enjoyed leading Gram Vikas always from the front. This was because the great co-operation and understanding that I received from the governing board members, my colleagues and the people with whom Gram Vikas worked.

I was also lucky to have a fantastic bunch of Indian and foreign donors, who understood us, and were patient and more than anything, trusted us.

It is with love devotion and admiration that I recollect Mr. J.B Singh, who served on the board as Chairman for long years; Mr. N.S Ayyengar, who was one of the first persons to join the board; Prof Kisan Kanungo, who was ever ready to help me and Gram Vikas in any way. It is on account of the contributions of stalwarts like them that Gram Vikas is what it is today. There are also several dear colleagues of mine, who have left us in action, the list is a long one to put here but I salute these brave souls. I acknowledge gratefully the contributions of colleagues who are no longer with Gram Vikas.

It has been great. It is indeed a great and humbling feeling to be the Executive Director of Gram Vikas. We shall march forward. We shall overcome.

Joe Madiath
Executive Director

Governing Board

Governing Board

The Governing Board has 13 members, development practitioners, academicians and professionals – bringing rich and valuable experience and expertise. The Board plays a significant role in periodic review and policy guidance.

Dr. Rajesh Tandon (Chairman)

President of PRIA – Participatory Research Institute in Asia, an organization based in New Delhi, Dr. Tandon is a social worker, who joined Gram Vikas Board in 1984.

Prof. Debi Prasad Mishra (Treasurer)

Mr. Mishra is a professor at the Institute of Rural Management Anand in Gujarat. He served Gram Vikas since 1998.

Sri. Vijay Mahajan

Mr. Mahajan is a development consultant and the Managing Director of BASIX, in Hyderabad. He joined Gram Vikas Board in 1990.

Sri. Basant Kumar Panigrahi

Lawyer as profession, Mr. Panigrahi works in Berhampur and has served on the board of Gram Vikas since 1998.

Ms. Neelima Khetan

Ms. Khetan has background in social work and joined the Board in 2003. She is currently the Chief Executive of Seva Mandir in Udaipur

Dr. Saraswati Swain

Physician as profession and director of NIAHRD, an organization based in Cuttack, Dr. Swain joined Gram Vikas Board in 2003.

Ms. Rita Bhatia

Ms. Bhatia had served Gram Vikas Board for 19 years, since 1990.

Ms. Soma Dutta

Regional Coordinator of Energia South Asia , Ms. Dutta has recently joined the Board, becoming a member in 2008.

Mr. Ashoke Chatterjee

Mr. Chatterjee, a freelance consultant is member of the Board since 2008.

Mr. Lalit Mansingh

Former Foreign Secretary of Government of India, Ambassador to USA and High Commissioner to UK, Mr. Mansingh had joined Gram Vikas Board in 2008.

Mr. Ravi Narayanan

Mr. Narayanan, former Director of WaterAid is a freelancer consultant and a Board member since 2008.

Mr. Ram Sankar

Chartered Accountant businessman and exporter, Mr. Sankar joined Gram Vikas Board in 2008.

Dr. Joe Madiath

Dr. Joe Madiath founded Gram Vikas, and has been the Executive Director since 1979.

GRAM VIKAS and MANTRA grow global

After years of experience, with national and international recognition as a world class development organization, Gram Vikas has begun to grow its MANTRA model nationally and internationally. With increasing scarcity of natural resources and the expansion of aggressive capital markets, through globalization, now, more than ever, Gram Vikas' tried-and-true approach will be an essential ingredient in providing marginalized village communities, with the tools and resources to address new challenges, in this modern era.

INDIA's NEW FRONTIERS ...

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and in the state of Gujarat

Gram Vikas is strengthening and expanding its programmes in these areas, by establishing partnerships with the national, state and local governments, as well as, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) such as: Haritka, Pradan, Maganlal Sangrahalaya, Loka Sakti Sramajivi Unanyan Samiti.

Sub-Saharan Africa's NEW FRONTIERS

The MANTRA model offers a development opportunity, not just for India and South Asia, but also for many other parts of the world. Gram Vikas had started a partnership with another like-minded NGO in Gambia, called Riders for Health, working together to build a strategy for applying MANTRA, in the African country. During 2008 -2009, Gram Vikas had trained staff from Riders for Health on general software and hardware aspects of MANTRA approach. The executive director visited Tanzania at the invitation of an NGO to study the feasibility of taking MANTRA to that country.

Self Governing People's Institutions

People in poor communities have limited access to basic resources and fewer opportunities. Often they are not involved in the decision making process that goes into making decisions that affect their lives. In order to give people the chance to improve their lives, Gram Vikas facilitates the building of self-governing people's institutions. In order to do so, Gram Vikas tries to generate a sense of community in the village by uniting people around the needs of drinking water and sanitation. Needs that can only be fulfilled if the entire village decides to come together as one group to work towards attaining access.

Formation of Village Executive Committees (VEC)

The process of creating a self governing institution begins with the formation of a Village general body – a body where each and every family in the village is represented. This body is the platform for community discussions, which lead up to consensus building among households to implement the MANTRA programme. A Village Executive Committee (VEC) is then elected from among the members of the general body, with equal representation across genders and proportional representation across economic categories and caste groups. Each village then forms a registered Village Society – a legally recognised body that enables the village to undertake financial transactions, leverage development resources more effectively and enter into agreements.

Finally various sub-committees are elected to support VEC's and to manage particular developmental activities such as: sanitation, water, health education, fish farming, forestry, etc. The activities, expenses and people's contributions are publicly displayed, thus maintaining transparency.

Gender equity and women empowerment

Traditionally women are not involved in the village decision making process. A key to the capacity building of women is to ensure that they have a voice and are involved in taking decisions that will impact the people in a village. This starts with the establishment of small Self-Help groups (SHGs). The objective behind these groups is to help women increase their savings and access small credits, but gradually this evolves into a platform where women speak out and gain confidence, enabling them to voice their opinions in village meetings and become active participants in the village development process. Women often play a large role in building the support for the MANTRA programme and are essential to the proper monitoring of government services such as: education, immunisation, childcare programmes, village cleanliness etc.

Building capacities

Strengthening a village committee requires effort and Gram Vikas works towards building people's capacities, through training sessions, workshops and practical support. Capacity building includes gender sensitisation, health training, training on Panchayat Raj Institutions, public speaking and leadership skills development among other things.

It is vital for the long term institutional sustainability that the village committee is capable to handle the responsibilities that come their way; hence Gram Vikas expends great effort in the capacity building programmes. Often, exposure visits in neighbouring villages are organised in order to reinforce the principles of MANTRA.

Financial Stability

Successful implementation of the programme is contingent upon raising the 'village corpus fund'. The corpus fund is created with contributions of an average of Rs. 1,000 per family, from all families in the village. As an average of Rs. 1,000 is needed, poorer families would pay less and instead contribute in other ways – such as collecting raw materials or providing labour, while more affluent families would pay more to maintain the average.

The village committee then invests the corpus in the local bank. The interest generated is to be used by the Village Executive Committee, only for the purpose of subsidising the construction of toilets and bathrooms for new houses, ensuring 100% coverage, at all times. Increasing capacity of water tank or any other major infrastructural capital expenses that may come up are to be borne by the village.

“Gram Vikas has given me the confidence to speak out at village meetings.”

(Sushila Karji a 27 year old woman from Tumbo village, Gajapati District)

For 30 years we are strengthening communities to become self-reliant

- 404 registered village societies have been created.
- Over 1,200 Self Help Groups have been established, involving over 15,800 women.
- Around 700 Villages have raised a combined corpus of over 50,700,000 INR.
- Through widespread civic education campaigns, people have been informed of their legal rights and were able to successfully claim access to land resources.
- Gram Vikas is promoting partnership between Village Committees and Gram Panchayats. The aim is to encourage the sharing of responsibilities, resources and skills to achieve community aspirations. To date Gram Vikas has worked with 355 Gram Panchayats.

Self Governing People's Institutions

Forest Rights Act

In 2008, Gram Vikas began to take an active role in supporting the implementation of the New Forest Rights Act. The Act recognises the rights of tribals and other forest dwellers to forest land traditionally used in one form or another for agriculture/cultivation up to a maximum of four hectares of land per family. Gram Vikas worked with tribal communities to lodge their claims for lands that they have been cultivating and assist them with the formalities involved in making these claims. 133 villages filed more than 3,000 claims for forest land.

“Forest is our life. We have promised to protect it, as without it, we cannot live.”

(Ram Chandra Malika, Village Committee member)

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

- Over 100 capacity building training sessions were delivered reaching more than 4,000 participants;
- Around 40 Village Executive Committees (VEC) are active registered societies;
- An increased women's role in community development initiatives;
- Raising awareness on New Forest Rights Act, Gram Vikas organized workshops across tribal areas and assisted families from 133 villages in filling forest land claim forms.
- Over 3,000 applications under New Forest Rights Act were submitted, ensuring tribal families and other traditional forest dwellers will be able to utilize forests for their livelihoods and habitations, while taking responsibility to conserve and maintain an ecological balance of the forest.

Villagers in Nuasahi believe they can make things happen

Nuasahi tribal village in Ganjam district is home to 30 families, all belonging to the Khondh tribe. The families here primarily depend upon seasonal agriculture for their source of income. One of the problem faced by the people of Nuasahi was access to drinking water. In summer, the villagers faced water scarcity, and in the monsoon they had to drink from a muddy stream. This caused a variety of ailments among the villagers. Women were the most affected by this problem, as they faced the double burden of collecting water, and washing and drinking in the dirty water. Livestock too was affected by the scarcity of water causing severe impact on people's livelihoods.

In 2004 – 2005, Gram Vikas' water and sanitation programme was extended to the village. Community mobilisation and capacity building were essential aspects of the programme as it empowered the villagers to manage and develop their community. Besides capacity building, Gram Vikas also provided assistance to the Nuasahi community to enable them to access other resources such as government funding schemes to aid them implement the programme. Technical aid, predominantly involved training village youth in masonry and assistance with actual construction of the water supply system and facilities, including the overhead water tank.

It is hard to believe the transformation the village has undergone. People are healthier as with the improved water supply people are able to grow fresh vegetables in their gardens. An improved diet and reduced vitamin deficiency in children are among the results of the programme. There are other benefits too, as Subash Pradhan, a 21 year old man says: *Gram Vikas is encouraging and supporting us in getting education. My brother is now studying for his engineering degree in Berhampur [the nearest town]. We never even dreamed of this.*

Women too have benefited immensely, as now they can defecate and bathe in privacy, avoiding the shame that usually came with it.

Health

Water and Sanitation

Like food, access to protected drinking water constitutes a fundamental need. According to international standards, an individual needs access to at least 40 litres of clean water per day, in order to satisfy his/her minimum requirements. Some people don't even give a second thought to the clean water that flows out of a tap, not realising that for a large section of society access to clean water is a privilege – which many are yet

to gain. This privilege is an important one, for the lack of access to safe and clean water is the root cause of morbidity and mortality in rural populations.

Through the water and sanitation programme, Gram Vikas is attempting to facilitate access to safe water, and dignified and hygienic sanitation. Gram Vikas aims to mobilise communities to build their own water and sanitation systems. A direct link between safe water and sanitation exists, and clean water will remain a distant dream until open defecation is eradicated throughout the community. Therefore, toilets and shower rooms are built first before the water is turned on.

As part of the programme, every household is provided with a toilet and bathroom along with running water supply via an overhead water tank. The programme emphasises sustainability of such a system without outside intervention. Hence, community contribution and management of the system are essential. Gram Vikas helps in providing skill building, training and education. Furthermore it creates the financial and institutional mechanisms that ensure that the facilities are available to all families without exception. Future growth in the community is also planned for, by the creation of a corpus fund, created by collecting an average of Rs. 1000/- per family, which is invested. The interest is used to ensure that new families that come up in the village in the later years get the same incentives to build their toilets and bathing rooms and thus ensure 100% coverage of all families at all times in future.

The current social structure that exists in villages would not enable all the members of the community to access clean water; rather it would restrict this commodity to the exclusive use of the most powerful members in the community. In order to ensure that there is universal access, Gram Vikas challenges the established social order, and makes mandatory that all households are included in the programme and that the female head of the household are also involved in the decision making process. The concept of 100% inclusion does serve the purpose of keeping villages clean, eliminating sources of water contamination. However, it is important to remember that it is also the first step in the process of breaking down caste and gender barriers in a community. Furthermore it is the first step in giving marginalised people a chance to have self esteem and think of themselves on the same level as any other person in the community.

Collaborative Action & Cost Sharing

As part of the programme communities are required to cover part of the cost of the bathing room, toilet and water supply. The community is also expected to contribute towards building the structures, aided by trained masons and Gram Vikas they collaboratively establish their water supply systems. Costs of operation and maintenance of the system are borne exclusively by the community.

“Now, I get more time to take care of my children. I do not have to go and fetch water and go to the stream to wash clothes. I use the toilet and bathing rooms with total privacy. This, now, is very important to me.”

(Ranjita Mallick – woman living in Chanabagada)

Health

Social and Economic Sustainability

In order to create a strong sense of ownership among the villagers, each family is required to contribute towards a corpus fund. The corpus fund is then invested in a bank and the interest generated is used to cover the costs of extending water and sanitation facilities to new households, in order to maintain full coverage, at all times.

External sources of funds that are tapped include: government programmes and international and domestic donors. Government programmes are a key source of funding, especially for financing the piped water supply. If there is a gap between funds generated from government programmes and donors and the cost requirements of the project, the gap is met using Gram Vikas' resources.

Hygiene and Sanitation Education

Water and sanitation infrastructure is pointless, unless a comprehensive hygiene education programme goes alongside it. Traditionally, people in these communities have defecated along river banks, in the open, by the wayside, near pond banks, etc. As they are not accustomed to toilets, the change from open defecation to more hygienic options will not happen just because the infrastructure exists. Community social pressure is brought in to see full compliance.

In order to complement the sanitation programme, Gram Vikas has launched a wide-scale school-based hygiene education programme, to instil hygienic practices in children. If children were to adopt these practices, they in turn could influence their parents to change. At the very least they would grow up comfortable with the concept of a toilet, signifying the first step in an evolution of the sanitary expectations in the community.

After 30 years ...

Since the start of the project 44,697 families have benefited from access to toilets, and 21,947 families have access to 24x7 protected water supply.

- An 80% reduction in the incidence of water-borne diseases in MANTRA villages.
- A reduction in morbidity rates in MANTRA villages
- Regular immunisation has resulted in lower infant mortality.
- Villagers now are more aware of hygiene issues, both personal and environmental

Health

Environmental Sustainability

In order to reduce energy consumption and ensure sustainable water supply, the programme uses a variety of different sources, depending on the circumstances and resources of the village. Where feasible, Gram Vikas uses zero-energy gravity water supply and water recharging systems.

Furthermore environmental education is imparted to the community for it is an important key in encouraging people to adapt to more hygienic solid and liquid waste disposal options and keep the village clean.

Community Health Management

Training and capacity building are among core components of the MANTRA health strategy. Health workers are trained to identify various illnesses, such as Tuberculosis and Malaria and provide medications to treat these patients. In an effort to make childbirth safer, traditional birth attendants (TBAs) are trained in improved delivery practices.

In order to ensure that communities can access government health services, Gram Vikas organises health camps along with the staff at the Primary health centre and other village level health staff in remote regions. With malaria being endemic in many areas of the state, Gram Vikas prioritises efforts that attempt to stem this disease. For example Health Committees distribute mosquito nets, promote early blood testing to prevent death, have Drug distribution centres, carry out chlorination of wells and foster awareness regarding government treatment programmes. Health Committees also pressurise government officials to provide basic services in remote areas.

Insuring Lives

In cases where the main breadwinner of a family passes away, the family is usually left destitute. Gram Vikas is promoting low-cost life insurance of LIC as well as other government and private insurance providers, to protect women and children from destitution, in case of accidental or natural death.

Health

Life can be good at the top of the hill!

The story of tribal villagers, who proved that, despite the odds, they can also access safe water and sanitation in their remote community and so much more... -

Upper Landu Sahi is a remote and isolated tribal village in Gajapati district, the nearest road is 3 kms away!

However, life today is good and villagers feel proud of their village water tank, a landmark for the area. The tank however is more than just a landmark, it enables the residents of the village to access 10,000 litres of clean, safe water, 24 hours of the day, every day of the week. Every household has piped water supply and the number of water borne diseases has been dramatically reduced. All this has resulted in people feeling healthier, happier, more self confident and being more productive. Another result of the water supply is that the economic situation of the families have improved significantly in the last few years as they are able to use some of the water for irrigation.

It is hard to believe that people in such a remote location could improve the situation of their community. Given the general context of rural Orissa, where less than 20% of the population has access to protected water and less than 5% to sanitation facilities, the achievements that this village has made are truly remarkable.

It was a long journey to come to this point. After Gram Vikas first contacted the villagers, over 15 meetings were held, discussing the close connection between water-borne diseases and lack of sanitation facilities and poor hygienic practices. These meetings led up to the village reaching a consensus to implement the water and sanitation programme. Once there was a consensus among the villagers, work on the sanitation blocks and the water supply system began. Gram Vikas provided the necessary technical support and engaged the people of the village in capacity building programmes. The capacity building included training in masonry – so that the villagers would be able to construct the sanitation facilities they would use.

The electric grid does not extend to Upper Landu Sahi, and hence a gravity flow water supply system was implemented. The construction of the water supply system was funded by accessing a government funding scheme along with Gram Vikas' financial support and people's contributions, both financial and, through labour and locally available materials.

Once every household had agreed to implement the programme, the villagers worked tirelessly, and the project was completed in the short span of six months. Importantly women played a key role in the project, for they not only actively took part in the decision-making process, but also provided labour and were instrumental in motivating the community to stay involved in the project right until the end.

The village has undergone a complete transformation. No longer is filthy water tainted with human waste the only available water source. No longer are diseases as prevalent among the villagers. Now they have access to clean drinking water 24/7. They are healthier and live in a cleaner environment. Each villager can now boast of having running water in his house 24 hours a day, and also claim to own a toilet and bathroom. These are things that over 80% of the citizens of Orissa cannot say.

The programme has inspired the people of Upper Landu Sahi, and now they are already planning on accessing housing loans and building irrigation facilities. This happened in a village that just a while ago, lacked even the most basic sanitation facilities.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

A breakthrough year in delivering access to water and sanitation

- The programme reached out to 9,267 families in 176 villages.
- A “Barefoot Hydrologists” programme was started. The initiative aims to ensure that, not only is the quantity of water guaranteed, but also the quality of water is of drinking water standards.
- 19 health awareness camps were organised, gathering a total of over 1,600 people.
- By regularly monitoring people’s health and checking for malaria, children are now healthier and happier.

Facing challenges

Water and Sanitation is Gram Vikas’ key programme. The programme emphasises on 100% inclusion and is a keystone to the goal of bringing about inclusive development. The programme has achieved significant results over the year, yet the organisation realises that there is more that could be done. As we progress we have also observed that there has been shortfall of water during the summer months in villages where gravity flow systems have been established. We realise the need to take up intensive recharging mechanisms especially at a watershed level. Watershed development and water recharging activities must be run complimentary to the water and sanitation programme in order for the programme to achieve more and be sustainable.

Education

Access to education, both practical and theoretical, represents an essential milestone in the development potential for an individual. On a larger scale, access to education is a necessary condition for a country's economic and social development.

Gram Vikas' education programme facilitates access to education for all eligible children. In isolated areas, where government schools do not exist, Gram Vikas establishes its own education centres. In areas where government schools exist, Gram Vikas works to strengthen the existing schools, while also empowering the community to hold government officials accountable.

Long-term sustainability is of utmost importance to Gram Vikas. To this end Gram Vikas worked with communities to transfer responsibility through initiatives, for all education programmes. Responsibilities include generating village school funds from collections and community horticulture in order to meet the school expenses.

Regular classes incorporate active approaches to education and extra-curricular activities. Children are also introduced to the concept of savings and children's saving groups are established across all operational areas. This encourages children to begin saving, a practice that hopefully will become a habit.

There are three types of schools that Gram Vikas runs. Each type of school is for a particular age group of children.

Balwadis (Pre-school)

Situated in isolated habitations, these centres impart essential social skills and the basic skills needed to commence formal schooling. Classes usually consist of playing, singing songs, dancing and story telling. Children are also taught about cleanliness and hygiene and are provided with one cooked meal everyday. Furthermore, nature classes are held within the local environment, to ensure that the knowledge imparted is interesting and relevant in to the local setting.

Day Schools (Class 1-3)

These schools provide elementary school level education to clusters of isolated habitations. Classes are scheduled keeping in mind regular habitation routines in order to maximise attendance. Locally appointed facilitators run most of the day schools. The facilitators regularly attend Gram Vikas capacity building programmes, to ensure that they are trained to handle their responsibilities.

Residential Schools (2-10)

Gram Vikas operates 4 residential schools. In these schools tribal children live and learn together, under the care of teachers residing at the schools. Enrolments are on the rise, and every year more students join as the rural population is coming to increasingly value education. The residential schools provide free education for girls and this has led to a significant rise in the enrolment of girls.

Three decades facilitating access to education for rural children

Gram Vikas has been active in education sector for the past 30 years, providing access to educational opportunities to both children and adults.

- Over the years, students have gained valuable skills which give them the potential to improve their lives.
- Barriers to school attendance have been removed, particularly for girls.
- There are instances of children from tribal villages who have pursued higher education.
- Every year, children attending the residential schools have received awards in various competitions, both at the district, state, and national levels. The awards have been given for academics, sports, drawing among others.
- 123 Balwadis, and 132 day schools were established in a total 166 villages
- A total of 1,271 students have gained education through Gram Vikas' education programmes.
- A total of 214 students have passed the 10th Standard Board Exam, with 71 of them passing it last year.

"We are getting facilities from Gram Vikas for the development of our education. My brother is now continuing his engineering degree at Berhampur. never even dreamed of this"
(Subash Pradhan, 21 year old male from Nuasahi village)

Education

School of Excellence

A number of students who attend the residential schools that are run by Gram Vikas have remarkable skills. Students have been seen to possess great potential in both academics, and extra curricular activities. Some of the extra-curricular activities that students have excelled in are athletics, team sports, traditional dance forms and theatre. Gram Vikas sees the potential in many of these children to be professionals in their respective aptitude. In an effort to develop this potential, guidance needs to be provided to the children so that they can channel their efforts in the right way.

In order to support these children, Gram Vikas started the 'School of Excellence'. Within a centrally located 'School of Excellence', selected children are given the opportunity to excel. Through systematic training and orientation in their areas of skill, the school aids children in developing their talents. The school allows students to access various opportunities to display their talent at appropriate fora. Through such activities the school also plays a role in promoting a wider understanding of tribal culture and heritage.

Adult Education

Recently more and more adults have become interested in learning how to read and write. As awareness about the importance of education increases so does the demand from adults to learn how to read and write. In villages where there is found to be a significant demand, adult literacy classes are held. From learning to sign their names on village registers, adults have progressed to become neo-literate.

Village and resource libraries

An important aspect of education is access to knowledge. In order to enable people to get as much out of education as they could, Gram Vikas started a project that aims to provide people with the opportunity to explore books and enrich their knowledge and horizons. Over the years, village and resource libraries have attracted a large number of members.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

- Education programmes have covered 121 villages assisting over 1,500 children;
- 47% of the children enrolled in 2008 were girls.
- Over 600 students successfully passed their exams, representing a percentage of 76% of all children enrolled.
- 91 % of students passed 10th grade from Gram Vikas' Konkia High School
- 67 children's saving groups, with over 1,200 members, reaching a collected Rs. 27, 500 and a total closing balance of almost Rs. 200,000.

Awards and achievements gained by students:

- Three national champions in weightlifting.
- One bronze medal at the state level weight lifting competition at Puri.
- First prize in story writing at regional level competition.
- Five Orissa Talent Scholarship Awards.
- Best at Sanskrit recitation competition at district level.
- Achievements and prizes in various drawing competitions.
- Awards received during Science exhibitions at Buguda.

“Jyotsbna is a remarkable girl. She is now known widely for her performance in sports. She is the best athlete of the year!”

(Mahendra Tanaya Ashram School Koinpur)

When dreams become reality

Sambara Sabar lives with his family in Parisal village, a tribal village in Gajapati district. Having to endure a daily struggle with poverty, he often felt that his family would be deprived of education and other well being. He dreamt of seeing his daughter Jhunubati becoming a teacher, as he saw that she had a strong interest for studies. He encouraged her to join Gram Vikas’ Mahendranaya residential school, which she did, join in the third grade. She went on to successfully pass her 7th class and was admitted into the Gram Vikas’ Konkia Residential High School. She impressed everyone with her perseverance and dedication towards her academics. Eventually she wrote her 10th Board exams and passed securing the 3rd division. Having passed her 10th she was admitted in +2 Arts stream (12th standard) at MKCG College. She successfully completed her Bachelor degree at same college and chose to become a teacher.

She then chose to come back to a Gram Vikas school, except this time she joined as a teacher. She now teaches at Gram Vikas’ Vidya Vihar School, in Rudhapadar, where she feels proud to help and inspire tribal children, as she believes that education is powerful and can make dreams come true.

Livelihoods and Food Security

PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

In order to reduce the vulnerability of rural communities, it is vital that people are capable of taking up occupations that provide sufficient income. Land, water and forests are the three most prevalent resources. For this reason Gram Vikas channels its efforts towards enhancing food security through sustainable land, water and forest management practices. Gram Vikas promotes fish farming, horticulture, livestock development, Self Help Groups, small community businesses and other income generating activities.

Community forestry

Social Forestry is an environmentally friendly method of forest management that involves the local community as part of the management process. Social forestry recognises the rights of individuals to forest resources. Gram Vikas promotes Social Forestry because it supports sustainable livelihoods. Social Forestry gives usufructory rights on the produce of previously unproductive wasteland. On this land adivasi people are encouraged to grow fuel wood, timber, fruit trees and fodder.

Gram Vikas motivates communities to collectively manage their social forestry plantations: These activities raise the income of the community and the community-management and sharing of the benefits develop community unity.

Integrated watershed development

The aim of watershed interventions is to ensure a greater protection of land against soil erosion and to improve the water recharge in the region. This programme has the potential to raise the water table in the area and help better vegetative growth and improve agriculture productivity. Several land development mechanisms are undertaken in order to make land that was previously barren, suitable for plantation of certain crops and trees. As part of the programme, ponds are excavated to harvest water. As the land becomes more and more viable, the focus shifts to translating the enhanced natural resource base into improved livelihoods.

Horticulture and agriculture

Gram Vikas assists tribal communities in the development of agricultural land, reducing their dependence on “*Bogoda*” or “slash and burn” agriculture. Depending on the soil conditions, appropriate plants are chosen. The cultivation of cashew, pineapple, mango, jackfruit and vegetables are promoted and supported through field training, credit support and seed distribution. Horticulture has enabled families to have a steady source of income when compared to the uncertain income from “shifting cultivation” on degraded lands.

Livestock development

Gram Vikas enables villagers to access improved varieties of livestock. Training is imparted in the concepts of livestock shelters and stall feeding. Aside from that Gram Vikas also provides practical training in animal husbandry practices and appropriate vaccination procedures. A key intervention of the organisation has been to motivate people to insure their animals, and Gram Vikas facilitates this by acting as a liaison with insurance companies.

Cashew, mango and coconut trees – an income generating source for tribal villages

Sanyasi Sabar was the first person to take the initiative to plant fruit trees. He did so on his small piece of land, in Tumbo village. Today, he is the owner of 500 cashew trees, 40 mango trees, 20 tamarind trees and a few coconut trees. His earnings have risen since he shifted away from shifting agriculture. His success has inspired other families to plant fruit trees and has resulted in the community developing a community horticulture garden, which generates income for the development of the village.

Looking back after 30 years

- By imparting skill development trainings and supporting income generating activities Gram Vikas has contributed towards long term economic sustainability.
- Over 3,000 rural vulnerable youth have been trained in masonry and are engaged in full time work.
- After the cyclone of 1999, Gram Vikas was actively involved in the reconstruction and rebuilding of government schools, training a 100 people in scaffolding and wire bending and another 100 in plumbing.
- Above 1,200 Self-Help Groups have been formed, with predominantly women members, enabling communities to increase their income and be more self-sufficient.
- With savings and access to loans, members of Self-Help Groups have initiated income generating activities like: dairying, livestock rearing, fish farming, etc
- Gram Vikas has promoted sustainable management of natural resources, by helping villagers to improve their cultivation techniques and adapt to the vagaries of the weather.

Livelihoods and Food Security

Skills development

People face many challenges in raising their income. This is, especially, true of unskilled labourers who depend on seasonal demand for work. Gram Vikas provides vulnerable young men and women training in masonry, plumbing, bar-bending, stone dressing, brick moulding and house-painting. The trained men and women are then competent to access employment opportunities. A few of them even start entrepreneurial activities.

Skills like masonry, carpentry, stone cutting, and wire bending are in great demand in the construction sector. Gram Vikas wants to make the best use of this opportunity to aid people in making the most of it. On an average a person after training has doubled his/her wages and after a year or two has tripled or quadrupled it.

Self Help Groups and their savings

Gram Vikas supports the formation and strengthening of Self Help Groups. These groups can collectively make savings for starting income generating activities such as agriculture, livestock rearing, fish farming, horticulture, etc. A typical self-help group unites 10 to 15 members of the community, who commit to jointly make savings every month. As the fund grows, the members may borrow money from the fund.

To support these self-help groups Gram Vikas provides support and capacity building, including basic record keeping and financial training and supports groups to undertake income-generating activities. When the group gains the ability and confidence required, they are linked to local banks. By linking them to local banks they are able to access external funds and avail loans provided by government schemes.

Although self-help groups are not restricted to being exclusively for women, the majority of Self Help Groups are women's groups. The groups provide a social space for women to discuss common concerns, in addition to wider issues. This space enables women to develop the confidence that they need to be able to speak out even when men are present. In a village council meeting, this allows women to play a greater role in the decision making process.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

- Appreciatively 15,000 women from 1,239 Self-Help Groups have raised 3,100,000 Rupees as savings; and over 11,800,000 Rupees were accessed through bank loans.
- We helped over 400 people from very poor settings to gain skills in masonry, agriculture, horticulture, plumbing.
- Approximately 180 rural youth were trained in masonry, out of which 6.35% women.
- We assisted 81 villages with watershed and land development activities.
- Our horticulture and social forestry projects helped over 1,300 individuals and approximately 370 community groups to develop profitable plantations.
- Helped build community infrastructure and assets in 77 villages under O'TELP.
- Over 11,800 cattle, goats, sheep and poultry were immunized with appropriate vaccination.

The benefits of masonry training

To understand the effectiveness of the masonry training, a survey was carried out, interviewing 210 people from six districts (Ganjam, Gajapati, Keonjhar, Bargarh, Bolangir and Dhenkanal), for people trained in masonry during the period 2006-2007.

It was found that people who attended the mason training, on an average were able to earn more than three times their monthly income prior to training. There are cases of masons who have earned up to seven times their previous income. The survey also showed that out of the 210 trained masons interviewed, 73% continued to work as masons, after the completion of the course and that around 80% of these masons were interested in continuing in a more in depth masonry training programme.

The survey brought out the fact that increased employment opportunity and a rise in income due to new skills gained, resulted in several social benefits. People felt more independent, and were able to access more rewarding sources of employment. Opportunity for employment in the local area increases and last but not least, people had increased self- esteem and gained respect from other community members.

Gram Vikas also actively encourages the participation of women in this programme, as experience has shown that trained women masons can significantly increase their income. However, masonry is still an unconventional domain for women. In tribal areas women are coming forward to be trained in masonry.

“Our daughters have done what our sons could not do”

(Suda, and Kala Sabar, parents of two 22-24 years old daughters who have significantly increased their income, after learning masonry and engaged in full time work)

Changes in monthly income before and after masonry training

Average monthly income before training	Average monthly income after training
865 INR	2,625 INR
Difference in monthly income	Percentage change
1,759 INR	303 %

**210 people were surveyed during 2005-2007*

Livelihood Enabling Infrastructure

By establishing community based decentralised renewable energy platforms, Gram Vikas is addressing environmental sustainability and equity within the realm of climate change and rural electrification. Using a participatory approach that encourages local people to become aware and take ownership of their development, communities have been able to make use of useful technology to improve their quality of life.

Renewable energy

Gram Vikas has been actively implementing community-based energy programmes. Using bio-diesel, biogas, micro hydro, smokeless chullas and solar photovoltaic applications Gram Vikas is attempting to provide rural households with renewable energy. Interventions in the energy sector help communities to develop and extract value from their natural resources, in a sustainable manner.

Community based micro hydro systems

Gram Vikas promotes micro hydro for rural electrification. Micro Hydro is the most cost effective option for decentralised electrification. The aim is to build the capacity of local youths and technicians so that they are able to design, fabricate and manage the implementation of their community/ region's micro hydro systems. Therefore, the programme also empowers them to become entrepreneurs and has a positive impact on increasing the socio-economic conditions.

Solar LED lighting systems

The LED lighting system is targeted primarily at individual households. The system is providing lighting in a sustainable way, and brings many benefits to villagers who have had no option but to live without artificial lighting until now.

Gravity flow systems

By using Gravity flow design for the water supply system, it becomes extremely sustainable. By using gravity to transport the water, the energy requirements become zero, and the financial viability of the project increases. The combined benefits make this innovative system the most viable and sustainable (both environmentally and financially).

Promotion of bio-diesel as a sustainable alternative

Pedal powered production of bio-diesel at the village level was pioneered by CTxGreEn, a Canadian not-for-profit organisation. In collaboration with Gram Vikas, the organisation has managed to use this bio-diesel as an alternative energy source for providing running water in washrooms. The project uses locally available underutilised seeds for producing the fuel. The fuel generated can be used in regular diesel pump and generator sets.

The village-level bio-diesel project was initiated through the World Bank Development Marketplace Award in February 2004.

The needs of the community changed over time, and now the community has a gravity flow water based supply system. Hence the bio-diesel is being utilised for providing lighting, through a hybrid system of a bio-diesel generator, charging a battery, and a system of LED lights.

The project is unique in promoting local-production of bio-diesel for local-use. It has revived the use of oil cake (a by-product from oil seed pressing) as organic manure and the glycerine – a by product of bio-diesel production has been successfully converted to soap. Bio-diesel is currently being used for diverse agricultural activities like ploughing, irrigation, threshing by a multi-purpose tiller.

Young people are trained to run bio-diesel based electricity system in their villages

Ramesh, the bio-diesel bare-foot technician anchoring Kinchlingi village, moved on to set up a diesel based rice-huller within 200 yards of the village. He hopes that one day, he will be able to buy bio-diesel from Kinchlingi and run his huller on bio-diesel, instead of diesel. He believes that bio-diesel is not only a better option ecologically, but that it also helps the local economy.

To take on the work of Ramesh and in keeping the spirit of the CTxGreEn – Gram Vikas’ bio-diesel project, six people from the Kinchlingi village were selected for an intensive training on the technical and log-keeping aspects of the bio-diesel technology.

Suresh and Raju are two young boys who successfully graduated the training programme. They now run the bio-diesel based hybrid electricity system in their village. Suresh assists his father in farming activities, besides supporting bio-diesel unit in the village, while Raju who is in grade X school, balances his studies with his time at the bio-diesel unit. For their contribution, they received certificates, along with the four other trainees from the village and were additionally awarded “Pedal-shakti” (pedal-energy) labelled bicycles, recognising them as young “voices” of the village.

30 years experience of innovative, environmental - friendly projects

- Between 1983 to 1993, Gram Vikas built 55,000 bio-gas plants, representing 80% of all biogas plants constructed across Orissa, in that period of time.
- After five years of partnership with CTxGrEen. The bio-diesel local production and use model was successfully demonstrated in three villages and is poised for replication as an enterprise, in an area with strong community level institutions.
- Chullahs have made a difference for more than 12,000 rural women in improving cooking practices, reducing harmful effect on their health and their families because of indoor air pollution.
- Since 2007, over 170 LED lighting systems have been installed.
- Gram Vikas has implemented four community-based micro hydro projects in Kalahandi district.
- Five Solar powered water pumping systems are functional and three others being installed.
- Wood based gassifier and Steam cooking systems have been installed in two schools for cooking

Livelihood Enabling Infrastructure

Smokeless chullahs

Gram Vikas aims to reduce indoor air pollution and the consumption of fuel wood in rural homes. Gram Vikas aims to work towards this goal through the promotion of smokeless chullahs (improved cook stoves that use wood as fuel). These are much safer and can have a significant impact on the health and lifestyle of rural women. The smoke generated is safely carried out of the house using a pipe, and therefore mitigates the harmful effect of smoke. Local women are trained in making of the chullahs.

Rural housing and community infrastructure

Gram Vikas provides financial assistance through bank loans and technical support for building permanent and disaster-resistant houses. Communities are encouraged to leverage funds from the government for building community infrastructure such as: community halls, schools, grain stores, etc.

Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln

The Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln is a cost effective, energy efficient and environment friendly brick kiln. The method of firing bricks used enables the production bricks throughout the year, providing stable employment and income for those who work at a kiln.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

- More than 1,800 smokeless chullahs have been built improving cooking practices and mitigate negative impact on women's health and their families.
- LED lighting systems were introduced to more than 30 villages.
- Two micro-hydro systems are being constructed in Kalahandi district;
- Village level bio-diesel production is actively being promoted with the involvement of rural youths.
- Six solar powered water filters have been installed in the residential schools
- Four solar water heating systems have been installed in the residential schools.

Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid

Increasingly, companies today are seeking to sell products to the poor to tap “the fortune at the bottom of the pyramid”. They do so without thinking of the poor as becoming anything more than mere consumers. Gram Vikas’ micro hydro work has shown that the process of technology implementation *with* the poor can trigger empowerment that lives far beyond the end-product.

Technical challenges that were faced in the early micro hydro projects occurred because of an over reliance on developers based in far away cities. With business commitments in various parts of India, outside developers had no commitment or incentive to return to rural Orissa to address technical failures. Another social challenge occurred due to an over-dependence on project administrative staff, whose own insecurity often prevented them from facilitating genuine community leadership.

To address these challenges, Gram Vikas modified its approach, and started working towards empowering genuine stakeholders to implement and to sustain the project. Just as trained local fabricators have a greater stake in producing reliable technology than suppliers based in Delhi, end-users have a greater stake, in sustaining their technology. The results of applying the new approach are promising:

Firstly, with support from *Practical Action (PA)*, an international NGO focused on community-based technology, Gram Vikas facilitated the fabrication of the Purna Guma project’s turbine in a town only 35km away from the village. This has ensured prompt servicing and successful trouble-shooting. Similarly, the induction generator for the system was also set up by a trained local motor expert. Since the trained local experts now have strong interest and skills to fabricate, modify, and install the system, an innovative curriculum can now teach these people how to design micro hydro systems. The effort required to train local fabricators to design is less than what is needed to plead with outside developers to remain committed to the poor!

Secondly, the new approach has revealed that young people are natural leaders to promote green technology. Young leaders have become involved with the project and have managed to maintain a drive towards the successful implementation of the project in ways that have not been seen before. The youth were able to manage the field implementation of activities such as corpus fund collection, labour, procuring raw materials, fabricating transmission line poles and wiring houses among other things.

The challenge for Gram Vikas is to facilitate the formation of a team consisting of the youth and the local fabricators. This team could then design and implement micro hydro and other rural energy applications in the area. The vision is to establish such teams in various rural regions. To aid these teams a support network would be set up consisting of civil society members, local governments, private sector leaders, etc. The teams along with the support network could then promote rural technology implemented *by the poor*. This allows “the fortune at the bottom of the pyramid” to remain with the rural poor.

Human and Institutional Development

Over the years skill development has remained a core theme to the activities of Gram Vikas. Gram Vikas will continue to empower people through capacity building and awareness campaigns. By encouraging and empowering women's self help groups, enhancing skills development for rural youth, establishing and strengthening village committees, and through employment generation training, Gram Vikas can create villages that are empowered and have the capacity to take on new developmental challenges.

In doing so, the capacities of the staff of Gram Vikas need to be continually enhanced. Every year we hold several training programmes and exposure trips. The core team has grown, from the handful of five energetic people in the early 80's to 522 employees. In the last three decades, more than 100 volunteers from around the globe have worked with it, on various projects.

Resource mobilisation is another aspect which is essential to generating the necessary resources to meet the requirements of MANTRA. Gram Vikas attempts to mobilise diverse resources to fund its projects, such as: communities' own contribution (from 15 - 50%), government schemes (particularly in the livelihoods and infrastructure sectors), loans and external grants (generally, funds for capacity building, as well as innovative projects).

Constant interest in progressing and improving Gram Vikas programmes and capacities have led to various valuable partnerships with other like minded organisations.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

- Capacity building training and workshops reaching more than 4,100 people.
- Training sessions on documentation, planning & monitoring, logical framework approach and nutritional analysis addressed the needs of Gram Vikas staff members.
- 58 staff members were recruited this year.
- A partnership with Context International and Context India who conducted workshops on SROI – Social Return on Investment – and ALCs – Action learning Case Studies;
- Through fruitful cooperation with TNO, a Dutch research company, Gram Vikas learnt about the process of impact monitoring and about water quality testing to determine the safety of water.
- Vision Spring has supported Gram Vikas in training entrepreneurs from villages to make and sell spectacles for people affected by presbyopia.
- A fruitful partnership with Prayas has raised awareness and involvement on issues related to electricity;
- Vasundhara had facilitated a learning workshop on New Forest Rights Act;
- Gram Vikas hosted students through it's partnership with TATA "Jagriti Yatra".
- 20 volunteers, from all over the world, worked with Gram Vikas on different assignments, as a result of our collaboration with various organisations such as:
 - VSO – Volunteer Service Overseas
 - KOPION – Korean Pioneers in Overseas NGOs
 - National Foundation of India
 - Institute of Rural Management Anand
 - Xavier Institute of Management – Bhubaneswar.
 - PRIA – Society for Participatory Research in Asia

Human and Institutional Development

30 years celebrated

On January 22nd 2009, Gram Vikas attained 30 years of existence, a great milestone, providing a chance to look back upon a wonderful past and look forward to a future full of promises. To celebrate the occasion, Gram Vikas held a two-day event, where nearly 4,000 participants were present including: former and current staff, people from the villages Gram Vikas works with, NGOs, networking partners and official dignitaries. On the occasion the most significant achievements and lessons learned by Gram Vikas were highlighted. The celebration also provided an opportunity for guests to interact and share thoughts and experiences.

The event was inaugurated by His Excellency Sri M C Bhandare, the Governor of Orissa who praised the philosophy and achievements of Gram Vikas and its contribution to the process of development in Orissa. He said that Gram Vikas had set high standards for other NGOs to follow, and congratulated it on its inclusive model of development

One of the most significant moments in the celebration was listening to the “Voices from Villagers” – field stories told by 30 community leaders. The event also included, an exhibition highlighting achievements in different focal areas, traditional and modern dance, drama and songs performed by local artists from various project areas.

Facing challenges

As an organisation that is growing quickly, Gram Vikas encounters several obstacles that must be overcome. One of the challenges it faced this year was the shortfall in staff, as the organisation did not have enough people to take MANTRA programme forward to the extent that had been envisaged. Furthermore, Gram Vikas faced difficulties in re-orienting present staff members and recruiting new members for its Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihood Programme. This was especially difficult because the areas of operation are isolated and have a high incidence of malaria. Therefore it becomes extremely difficult to find competent and committed people to work in such areas.

One of Gram Vikas' priorities is to strengthen the human capacities of its team, streamlining its human resource process in general and to run a larger recruitment programme to obtain the coordinators and managers it need to sustain its programmes.

Outreach and networking

Gram Vikas' work has required it to form various partnerships, and it values all of them. The most important partnership is with the communities themselves, who take and assume active roles in their development process.

Gram Vikas has built coalitions with the government and with like-minded organisations. Fruitful affiliations with national and international funding agencies have been made

In the recent years, Gram Vikas has increasingly developed new partnerships with the government and NGOs involved in the water and sanitation sector. These partnerships allow Gram Vikas to extend its interventions to new geographical areas in Orissa and in other states, thereby ensuring the long term sustainability of MANTRA.

While Gram Vikas' activities have proliferated, it continues to communicate and disseminate the lessons that Gram Vikas has learnt along the way. By sharing and connecting with civil society organisations, whether on advocating tribal concerns, strengthening grassroots level governance or water and sanitation interventions, it is hoped that a common and broader thrust can be given to the development agenda.

Networks that Gram Vikas is a part of:

- ODAF – Orissa Development and Action Forum
- PRIA - Society for Participatory Research in Asia
- VANI – Voluntary Action Network India
- INHAF – National Level Habitat Policy Advocacy Group
- Credibility Alliance
- WSSCC – Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council
- WASH – Water Sanitation and Hygiene for All Campaign
- FAN – Freshwater Action Network.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

Gram Vikas' profile has continued to grow, becoming more visible both nationally and internationally. In 2008, important headway was made in facilitating partnerships that would expand the MANTRA approach.

- MANTRA is to be taken to other states. Namely: Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra and Gujarat
- The MANTRA approach is to be recreated in Africa, through cooperation with Riders for Health, Gambia
- The partnership in Africa raises the possibility of expanding the programme to Tanzania and Kenya.

Gram Vikas is honoured by the visits of:

- The Governor of Orissa
- The Union Minister of State for Rural Development
- Australian High Commissioner
- Chinese 1st Secretary
- Representatives from various organisations like: Charity Water, USA, CEVA - Cyriac Elias Voluntary Association, SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Water Aid, SCOJO Foundation and PWX - Peer Water Xchange

Gram Vikas learned and shared experiences in national or international forums: World Economic Forum in Dubai, SACOSAN III, Skoll World Forum in Oxford and Volunteer Fair in Bhubaneswar.

Looking ahead

Seeking new perspectives and create new solutions

Whilst this had been a successful year, we will not rest on our laurels. Our challenge now is to develop team up with new partners – local NGOs to expand *Orissa Tribal Empowerment Program's* (OTELP) experience. We want to further assist remote tribal villages in accessing water and sanitation, establishing water supply systems, mostly through gravity flow, while building collaboration with NGOs in these remote areas to implement the program.

We will continue working in taking MANTRA approach forward to other five to six states in India, but also exploring the challenge in sharing our MANTRA experience abroad, to African countries.

We had identified the need to develop and bring more rigour to our Human Resource system and we plan to recruit more coordinators and managers with appropriate competencies and profiles that suit our values, so that we can support our programs effectively in the villages we work, majority in remote areas.

In the “perspective“ of withdrawal of one of our main donor after ten years of long term successful support, we need to identify new sustained funding sources.

Networking with other like minded organizations is still on our agenda and we believe that combined efforts bring greater legitimacy and impact. We will take the challenge in joining coalitions, whether contributing on strengthening local governance, making RTI – Right to Information Act effectively – by giving marginalized people voice to hold their governments to account in decision making and resource allocations, or improving water and sanitation interventions.

Gram Vikas aspire to work with 1% percent of the population of Orissa by 2010, reaching 100,000 families and 1 million households by 2020 thus, creating critical masses of people who are energized to seek their own development. Developing clusters of empowered villages, Gram Vikas is hoping to reach 20% of the population in each of Gram Panchayats, through MANTRA approach, mobilizing a mass of people who will be able to influence development processes for the benefits of rural communities and take effective control of the development processes.

Acknowledgements

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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation

Christian Aid

Skoll Foundation

Charity Water

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund – SCIAF

Korean Pioneers in Overseas NGOs - KOPION

Society for Participatory Research in Asia – PRIA New Delhi

Ekistica Pty Ltd. Australia

Jeevan Dhara Foundation

Blue Planet Run

WaterAid London

Schwab Foundation

KKS – Germany

Rajiv Gandhi Foundation

Orissa Development Action Forum - ODAF

French Environment and Energy Management Agency - ADEME

CTx Green – Canada

Prayas

Tata Social Welfare Trust

Government of India

Peer Water Exchange

Individual donations

Publications

Rural Health and Environment Program (RHEP) Construction Manual

Gram Vikas Safalata Samahar, a compilation of case studies

Electricity Regulation booklet

Compiled volume of Gram Vikas Samachar

Annual report for the year 2007 – 2008

Facts about Orissa

- Orissa state is home for 36,7 million people, out of which 88% are living in rural areas with a large tribal population
- 47% of the population lives below poverty line (BPL)
- Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) stands at 75/ 1000 live births
- Less than 7% of rural households have access to safe sanitation, less than 20% of rural population has access to protected water and no more than 1% to piped water supply
- 80% of the instances of morbidity and mortality cases in rural areas are caused by water-borne diseases
- Only 63% of the population is literate and among female population, the literacy rate is just 50%
- Orissa has less labour opportunities for female population – the total women workforce representing only 31%
- More than 70% households have no electricity connection

(Sources: Census of India 2001 & Orissa Human Development Report 2004)

Gram Vikas is working towards changing this status quo, in around 895 villages, together with individuals and local communities, helping people to access basic rights and create their own development paths.