

Gram Vikas Annual Report 2011 – 2012

OUTLINE

Section 1: GRAM VIKAS HISTORY

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE LEADS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Young Students Movement for Development (YSMD), a Madras University based students' organisation came to Odisha in response to the cyclone and tidal wave that ravaged coastal Odisha on 30th October 1971. In 1973, after relief work, YSMD took up Lift Irrigation activities in the affected area. In 1979, YSMD began an institutional transition from supporting disaster relief efforts in cyclone hit rural Odisha to full-time developmental assistance for indigenous tribal communities in Odisha's coastal Ganjam District. With a leadership team of YSMD alumni, the organisation began by assessing tribal livelihood issues at Mohuda, a village on the fringes of the Kerandimal hills.

Confronting the YSMD team was the sheer scale of rural indebtedness among tribal communities. Despite repeated calls for tenancy protection and subsequent nationally enacted land alienation acts, at the time of YSMD's initial interventions more than 95% of all tribal assets in Ganjam had been illegally or usuriously appropriated by liquor merchants, money lenders and landlords. The cycle of agrarian poverty, while rooted in infrastructural underdevelopment, was compounded by generational insolvency and a lack of access to regulated credit networks. Dependency and destitution worked to erode the social fabric of tribal communities, making many of them hostile to outsiders and distrustful of even the most well-intentioned programmes for social development.

YSMD was successful in gaining the trust of many of the tribal communities in Ganjam by recognising the importance of social networks as a determining factor for local and state-wide tribal impoverishment. Economic capacities for the improvement of marketing, agricultural livelihoods, non-agricultural wage labour, access to natural resources and access to fair credit systems were contingent on a community's capacity to negotiate with government officials and non-tribal communities as empowered partners. While interventions in livelihood diversification, health and environmental regeneration were immediately necessary, YSMD understood that enacting real change meant helping tribal communities to strengthen themselves.

YSMD's transition from a relief organisation to Gram Vikas, which literally means *village development*, began with the implementation of the bio-gas programme. By using animal manure to generate methane gas for cooking and lighting, Gram Vikas was able to experiment with technologies that eventually gave way to new interventions in water and sanitation. These initial programmes served to clarify Gram Vikas' commitment to sustainable poverty solutions that are directed at environmental and health related concerns shared by entire communities. Gram Vikas began to address the challenges of poor water retention, contaminated water sources, environmental degradation and water-borne illness to enable each villager to act as a concerned stakeholder. Identifying what

these challenges are and the best practices for solving them create an *entry-point* for discussing Gram Vikas' role as a facilitator of community-led development.

Gram Vikas' growth into a fully fledged development organisation, covering over 315,000 people in 1129 villages, is attributable to the sustained vision of a just and equitable society. *Decentralisation* is the core component of this vision, as it allows beneficiary communities to use technological know-how and organising capacities to develop according to the principles of self-governance. Under our current umbrella programme, the 'Movement and Action Network for the Transformation of Rural Areas (MANTRA)', Gram Vikas is at a new stage of growth. While our focus remains on decreasing the prevalence of water-borne illness and sustainably raising the water retention capacities of rural watersheds, MANTRA gives us the flexibility to assist interventions in livelihood, prenatal and maternal health, credit networks and rights-based advocacy. These efforts allow us the resources to approach development holistically and to use our experience in the development sector to further link tribal communities with other non-governmental organisations, international aid projects and government development agencies. By extending these networks outward, tribal communities are better able to leverage funding and development programming towards new areas of need. These new networks are the basis for the evolving potential for social integration that Gram Vikas envisioned for tribal communities some 34 years ago.

Section 2: MANTRA

Movement and Action Network for the Transformation of Rural Areas (MANTRA) is a comprehensive habitat development and governance programme that uses the common concerns of clean water and community sanitation as a tool to unite and empower communities, to launch development initiatives and to improve quality of life through better health. MANTRA is based on the core values of inclusion, sustainability, cost sharing and social and gender equity.

MANTRA APPROACH

100% Inclusion: Participation of all households of a habitation is non-negotiable, which assures that all community members, including the poorest and most marginalised, benefit from MANTRA interventions equally.

Social Equity: All villagers, regardless of gender, caste or economic status, must be proportionally represented in the Village Executive Committee and there must be no hindrance for the participation of marginalised groups in the Village General Body. All villagers must have the opportunity to participate in MANTRA's planning, implementation, operation, management and maintenance.

Gender Equity: Equal representation and participation of men and women in community level governance is essential. Women must play an active role in community governance

institutions by assuming positions of power and responsibility equal to that of their male counterparts.

Sustainability: Development processes are based on sound environmental values that have built-in institutional and financial mechanisms to ensure that all infrastructure is properly maintained. A corpus fund is generated at an average rate of Rs. 1000/- per family – the poorer families contributing less and the better off more. This fund is invested in a bank at the best interest rates. While the principal amount will remain intact, the interest can be used to subsidise new families that may come up in the village for meeting part of the cost of external materials.

Cost Sharing: Communities contribute to the cost of development and maintenance of MANTRA facilities by choosing to make monetary contributions and by participating in construction activities. Certain social costs, however, can and must be met by society.

MANTRA helps to unify villages by inspiring leadership, creating an environment that fosters community initiatives and by facilitating development projects that are community driven and directed. MANTRA programmes target health, education, livelihood, food security, self-governing people's institutions and livelihood-enabling infrastructure.

Coverage of MANTRA:

As of March 2012, Gram Vikas has completed water and sanitation coverage in 988 villages, encompassing 57,790 households and a total population of 314,764. Standards for project completion include: 24 hour potable, piped water supply and 1 separated toilet and bathing room facility for each family.

MANTRA Coverage in Comparison

	Villages	Households	Population
2010 – 2011	943	55,422	299,815
2011 – 2012	988	57,793	314,764

New MANTRA Coverage for 2011 – 2012: 45 villages and 2,313 households

Total Coverage:

	Villages	Households	Population
2010 – 2011	1089	66,564	354,131
2011 – 2012	1129	68,518	366,999

Gram Vikas - MANTRA projects include partnerships with OTELP and other non-governmental organisations that operate in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh

and Jharkhand. They also include those project areas where we have extended our intervention from water and sanitation to work on livelihood development, education, health and land management. During the year we have also phased down our operations from Bargarh, Mayurbhanj, Deogarh, Sambalpur and Koraput districts of Odisha with a plan to reach into the tribal areas in Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Rayagada districts more intensely.

Gram Vikas has set an ambitious target: By 2015 we plan to cover **100,000 households comprising roughly of 500,000 individuals**.

Section 3: SELF-GOVERNING PEOPLE'S INSTITUTIONS

The goal of every successful development intervention is sustainability by allowing communities to lead the process. Development professionals working with underserved rural communities must ask themselves: "How will this intervention live past my involvement?" Gram Vikas believes that people's participation is the most important tool for realising the goal of sustainability. Empowering local people to establish democratic institutions within their village helps to strengthen the community and to address many of the root causes that underlie developmental challenges. Gram Vikas uses common concerns about sanitation, clean water and the natural environment to build self-governing people's institutions that help to manage resources, promote livelihoods and increase community access to basic health services.

VILLAGE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (VEC)

For the MANTRA programme, the process of creating a self-governing institution begins with the formation of a Village General Body where every adult member of the village is represented. This body becomes the platform for community decision making. Once consensus is reached and the community agrees to be responsible for implementing the MANTRA programme, the members of the general body elect a Village Executive Committee, or VEC. Guidelines for VEC participation call for equal representation across gender and proportional representation across economic demographics and caste groups. The VEC then forms a registered Village Society, a legally recognised body that enables the village to undertake financial transactions, leverage development resources and enter into agreements. In 2011, Gram Vikas registered 36 new Village Societies which are actively receiving funding support from the State government.

GENDER EQUITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Although women are traditionally underrepresented in village decision making, Gram Vikas believes that promoting women's involvement in community institutions is essential for changing attitudes about health, education and household expenditure. Women's involvement also broadens the interest of community stake-holders by strengthening and enriching democratic dialogue of self-governing people's institutions. In Gram Vikas

working villages, women have led the way in building local support for MANTRA and have successfully used the Gram Vikas governance model to oversee the implementation of developmental interventions in education, immunisation, maternal and prenatal health and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). Gram Vikas has supported these and other efforts by helping women to establish Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which allow women to increase their savings and become micro-entrepreneurs by accessing credit networks through local branches of banks.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES

Gram Vikas staff provide leadership training in participatory governance, communication, accounting, secretarial skills, public speaking and gender sensitisation. These types of trainings help Village General Bodies, Village Executive Committees and Self-Help Groups to lead the communities towards realising the equitable vision of *Panchayati Raj*. Well-built institutional capacities are the foundation for our MANTRA programme. In the long-term, these skills strengthen a community's ability to understand and obtain the framework of developmental entitlements promised to them by the government. Gram Vikas supported villages have led efforts in collaboration with local government to secure and monitor the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act (Indian Forest Rights Act), the Right to Education (RTE), the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and many others.

Power of the people

Salaptaila village in Kokoloba Grama Panchayat of Jaganath Prasad Block is home for 28 tribal families. Farming is their principal occupation which they did mostly on government land. Education standard is low which made the people unaware of their entitlements. They thought that they were at the mercy of government officials and therefore quietly accepted whatever was meted out to them. Until 2009 there was no electricity in Salaptaila village. At the end of 2009 it was selected for electrification under Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana. The people of the village collected Rs. 10,000 that had to be deposited for the connection and handed the money to the contractor. After bringing the poles to the village the contractor disappeared from the scene. They desperately tried to contact the contractor and other government officials, but each time they returned disappointed. In early 2011, Gram Vikas organized training on leadership for the village leaders in which Santosh Mallick from Salaptaila had participated. In the training the participants were informed on use of RTI for public work. Armed with the information Santosh returned to his village and discussed the use of RTI with the village president, Pandav Mallick and other committee members. They decided to use this right to get information of the status of electrification of their village. In March 2011 an RTI application was sent to the District Collector's office requesting information on status of RGGVY in their village. Initially the government officials gave a quiescent response which prompted the community to file a new application to the District Collector. It had an impact as they got a positive reply saying that the work would begin soon. After waiting for a few months and seeing no work being initiated, the villagers decided that they had enough. After a meeting in the village the men and women came together and staged a road block (raasta roko). This ensured the arrival of the BDO (Block Development Officer) to the village and he promised that the electric work would be started by the next day. The work did start day after and by June 2011, Salaptaila was electrified. The success gave a tremendous boost to the confidence of the people and now they have decided to be more proactive to receive patta (land records) for their agriculture lands.

While the men took proactive steps, the women were not mute onlookers. Jayanti Behera of Maa thakurani SHG in Salaptaila narrates an incidence where the women came together to warn the teacher to come regularly to the school. The teacher used to forge attendance sheets and send it to the higher authority while the school remained closed for most days and children were found playing in the village. The women under the leadership of Jayanti pleaded several time to the teacher to attend to his duties responsibly, but the teacher was not interested. One day when the teacher came to the school, the women rounded him up, locked him in a room and asked him to sign a declaration saying he would come to the school regularly. After this incident the teacher did not return, but the school got a new teacher who comes regularly and the children attend the school. The group members approached the BDO to take up the mid day meal for the school which was sanctioned. Jayanti says "Gram Vikas showed us a way, we have walked on it."

MOBILISING RESOURCES

The MANTRA approach emphasizes cost-sharing as a way to mobilise active stakeholder involvement. Households work collaboratively to leverage funding for the project while also applying for additional support from government schemes. Part of strengthening the self-governing capacity of the village involves the development of strategies to help poorer households make their contribution to the corpus fund. These families can choose to contribute by providing labour, while wealthier members of the community often help by cross-subsidising them. Once the corpus fund is collected, the Village Executive Committee will invest the money in a local bank. Interest from the fund will be used to subsidize the construction of future toilets and bathrooms as the community expands, ensuring ongoing 100% sanitation coverage at all times in the future also.

2011 – 2012 Highlights

1. 77 villages received Rs.45.10 lakhs under Total Sanitation campaign
2. 36 new Village Societies registered
3. 10 leadership trainings for a total of 418 participants organized
4. Community corpus fund of Rs. 3.80 crores mobilised in villages
5. Government released Rs. 3.97 crores towards Water supply projects and Rs. 20.2 lakh was accessed for sanitation under MLA Local Area development fund.
6. Land record (patta) received by 1900 tribal families for 2700 acres of land under FRA.

MANTRA Case Study: Lanjigarh, Kalahandi

Delayed Justice: Reconciling the *Process of Democracy* with the *Demands of Development*

Lanjigarh block of Kalahandi is a Scheduled Area with dense forest growth and sloping dryland-cultivation fields that run along steep hills. The block is home to Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Caste, Other Backward Caste and Protected Tribal Groups who share forest and water resources for their livelihood needs. Despite ample rain fall and significant land acreage under cultivation, nearly 80% of all families in the block face food insecurity; having only 6 – 7 months of predictable household income. Many areas of the Lanjigarh block were not surveyed by the State government until the 1960s, an issue symptomatic of the general developmental neglect this region has faced in post-independence India and a challenging infrastructural factor for present-day development interventions.

Gram Vikas began working in Lanjigarh in 2007 in partnership with the government funded Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihood Programme (OTELP). Following from the targeted developmental relief programme for Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput (KBK) region, OTELP is a unique framework that matches participatory development methods with holistic and environmentally sustainable livelihood interventions. In line with MANTRA's network approach, Gram Vikas offers watershed technology to OTELP projects and helps to implement several phases of their watershed development programme in 2 districts of Odisha – Gajapati and Kalahandi.

In Lanjigarh, Gram Vikas project facilitators began the OTELP project by organising community meetings to discuss MANTRA's 100% inclusion and cost-sharing model. In a watershed shared by 5 villages, the facilitators were able to bring group consensus in 4 of them, while 1 village refused to cooperate with the principles of cost-sharing. This village, led by a strong village elder, argued that people living in urban areas are not required to pay for initial water and sanitation infrastructure as the facilities are considered preexisting. Paying the monthly water bill is the only necessary contribution a household gives to access the shared water resource. "Why," the villager asked, "should tribal people be asked to pay for something that is the responsibility of government?" As Gram Vikas is sympathetic to this line of reasoning, it was initially difficult for the project facilitators to offer a reasonable justification for their position. Nevertheless, these staff recognised that even when inequality persists, communities can still work together to solve many of the most pressing developmental concerns.

To begin construction on the intake well, Gram Vikas had to have agreements from all 5 villages that they would contribute equal amounts of labour and funding, since all of the villages would ultimately benefit from drinking water from this single water source. With one village holding out, the work could not begin. Project staff continued to hold meetings with the dissenting village and over the course of 2 months convinced each household that MANTRA's benefits outweighed the cost. The staff demonstrated that the initial cost was minimal and that the long-term effects of recurrent water-borne illness were far more burdensome, particularly to young children. The community also noted that with the economic development programmes proposed under OTELP, the village would put itself in a better position to negotiate with local government offices for fair treatment and appropriate implementation of schemes like MGNREGS and the Indian Forest Rights Act. While the village shaped its identity as a community working towards justice, they were able to recognise that through self-governance they could independently realize their own developmental goals. Following their agreement, the water and sanitation project was successfully implemented in all 5 villages, bringing clean water and sanitation facilities to each individual household.

Section 4: Health

According to health indicators provided by UNICEF and the Government of India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Odisha has made substantial strides in recent years to improve key health indicators. However, substantial challenges remain. UNICEF estimates that 40% of all children under 3 years in Odisha are underweight, and 60% of all adolescent girls are anaemic. Infant and maternal mortality continue to be the second highest in the country. Although there have been efforts to increase the reach of village-level health infrastructure in the Scheduled Areas, through programmes like the National Rural Health Mission, the Government of Odisha estimates a shortfall of nearly 4,000 community health workers in 2012.

Following the World Health Organisation's assertion that "the combination of safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities is a precondition for health," Gram Vikas has partnered with government and non-governmental organisations to ensure that the MANTRA programme addresses the primary health issues of beneficiary communities. As 80% of diseases in rural Odisha are water-borne, Gram Vikas is uniquely positioned to impact health and hygiene indicators for many of the state's most vulnerable groups.

HYGIENE AND SANITATION EDUCATION

While providing physical access to water and sanitation facilities is the key component of the MANTRA programme, the usefulness of these facilities depends on education modules that help communities to identify the social practices contributing to poor health and hygiene. The practice of open defecation, for instance, persists in many of Odisha's rural areas due to lack of awareness about its detrimental impact on community health. Gram Vikas works to promote hygiene and sanitation education that address these challenges. Through village-wide consensus, people's institutions enforce new health standards and develop systems to monitor the appropriate use and cleanliness of toilets and bathing rooms. Gram Vikas also partners with government schools to teach children the importance of good hygiene practices. Under the MANTRA programme, villages that partner with Gram Vikas are 100% free of open defecation.

WATER SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY

As part of Gram Vikas' continued commitment to sustainability and innovation, Gram Vikas only taps renewable sources of water. Gram Vikas' induced gravity-flow water system transports water from a higher elevation to village beneficiaries, requiring zero energy for the entire sourcing process. Independence from external energy sources allows Gram Vikas to reach more remote communities and gives villagers the know-how to repair and monitor their own water systems.

Water source sustainability is ensured by recharging the catchment area through water harvesting technologies and the strategic placement of intake wells. Our methods have raised soil retention capacities and raising of water tables in some of Odisha's most

drought prone areas. We also encourage water recycling in order to help villages identify use-practices which contribute to water loss. In one example, waste recycling is achieved by encouraging families to plant soft-rooted plants, like banana, drumstick or papaya, around the soak pits of their household toilets. As the root systems take in the waste water and nutrients, the plants provide food and income for the family, thereby closing a cycle that began with unprotected water sources and ill health.

Gram Vikas protected water systems are monitored by local community members who are provided with easy-to-use test kits. Villagers are trained to identify changes in microbiological composition. These test kits are provided by private partnerships with international water organisations. This year, Gram Vikas has joined with the Canadian organisation 'One Drop' to install water purification systems in 48 villages.

LIFE INSURANCE

Gram Vikas enters its third year of partnership with the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). With support from LIC, Gram Vikas continues to help rural families plan for unforeseen circumstances, such as the death or illness of a family member. In economically vulnerable households, the death of any family member can have tremendous consequences on the surviving family members. LIC provides life insurance to rural populations at a low premium and offers substantial payouts to families that are required to claim their benefits. In the last year, 1212 policies were taken by rural families making a total of 4633 policy holders.

Two villages in Mohana block had 100 percent coverage of families under micro insurance and received Rs. 25,000 as incentive under Madhur Bima Gram. 27 death claims have been settled during the year.

In areas that were not covered by the local branch of LIC, Gram Vikas facilitated insurance under Janashree Bima Yojana in which another 1241 beneficiaries have been covered.

VISION SPRING

Astigmatism, presbyopia and other minor eye problems can prevent rural people from participating in livelihood activities that are essential to the income and well-being of their families. Activities like everyday farm work, milling, weeding, stitching sal leaf plates, cooking and reading are made far more difficult for individuals suffering from eye problems.

In partnership with, Vision Spring, Gram Vikas offers high-quality, low-cost eye glasses through an innovative social-entrepreneurship model. Local people are trained to organise eye testing and optical health camps that can assist in diagnosing vision problems. Individuals who are suffering from more serious eye issues, like cataracts or glaucoma, are referred to block or district level health professionals.

These social entrepreneurs are paid a portion of the sales generated from the eye glasses and help to train members of other communities in appropriate techniques for optical diagnosis. As very few members of rural communities can afford to pay for eye glasses, Vision Spring's good quality, yet low cost eye glasses provide rural people a basic service that is often overlooked by epidemiological or illness based health interventions. This year, these sight entrepreneurs have provided spectacles to 1491 people who were screened and tested in the eye camps organised by Gram Vikas.

OTHER HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

Gram Vikas' health staff continue to focus on Mother and Child health care – providing support to antenatal mothers, monitoring immunisation, screening TB patients, mosquito net distribution under malaria control programme, health and hygiene education, training Gaon Kalyan Samiti members etc. Over the last year health staff have experimented with Artemisia annua anamed plant for malaria control. 63 patients were provided with dosage of Artemisia for malaria and the feedback has been quite encouraging. The staff have also prepared ointments from Artemisia which have proved very effective for healing wounds, especially burns, scabies and piles

In a government study to identify the cause of the minor dysentery outbreak in 2011, many health professionals pointed to the washing of soiled clothes in stagnant water sources that were used by both villagers and livestock. By identifying these practices as a cause of potentially life-threatening illnesses, communities were made acutely aware of how changes in their everyday behaviour could address the root causes of poor health.

Cleft-lip Surgery Camp, Thuamul Rampur, Kalahandi

In the rush to meet funding deadlines for project growth, it is challenging for non-governmental organisations to retain the human touch which must be, of course, the basis for any altruistic sentiment. The construction of physical infrastructure -- the most visible and highly touted sign of a development intervention -- has become a far too privileged metric in our own calculations of what counts as growth. As Gram Vikas continues to emphasise in its own work, growth should be measured by how a society recognises the values of equity and dignity, not necessarily by how many buildings or bathrooms spring up across a rural landscape.

In the villages in Thuamul Rampur project area, Gram Vikas staff found that there were a number of persons living with cleft-lips and palates, a congenital deformity that unfortunately results in ostracism and ridicule for those who are born with it. While the World Health Organisation estimates that 1 in 700 children are born with the deformity, in villages of five Gram Panchayats in Thuamul rampur, our staff identified 12 persons with cleft palates. Normally, persons living below poverty line would never think of paying for a corrective surgery that is largely cosmetic. Tribal families living in Thuamul Rampur have hardly enough money for treating life threatening illnesses, and even then most hospital visits require families to borrow money to get any medical attention.

As Gram Vikas staff recognised the social burden of living with a cleft palate, particularly for children and women who are preparing to marry, they alerted the head office and provided support to Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS) to run a screening camp in Thuamul rampur. 12 patients were identified of which 8 patients underwent successful surgeries at the hospital run by TSRDS at Belpahar, Sundergarh district. The remaining 4 operations are scheduled at a later date. Villagers with clefts in their lip, nose and gums received state-of-the-art reconstructive surgery to set right the deformity.

Gram Vikas has a long history of running ad-hoc health programmes to meet community health needs and to assist those suffering from everyday ailments to achieve standards of dignity that the rest of society often takes for granted. Over the past 34 years we have run screening camps and treatment programmes, with the generous support of philanthropic organisations like TSRDS, to identify and treat diabetes, heart disease, broken bones, cerebral malaria and many other health related problems. One of the most exciting parts of implementing water and sanitation based programmes in remote tribal areas is being able to meet the unforeseen challenges that intimate connections with our beneficiary communities inevitably bring. The most powerful gift of all, of course, is the smiling face of 11 year old Parakhita Gouda of Thuamul Rampur who, after surgery, returns to his primary school with new confidence and self-respect.

Section 5: Education

Education

Education is a tool for development. The education programme of Gram Vikas aims at access to education for all children in the tribal regions. This began by establishing village education centres in the tribal villages where children under the age group of 6-14 are enrolled. These centres enable access to quality education in areas where most government schools remain defunct. Over the years while focus on quality education continued, we also played our role in strengthening the mainstream government supported education system. This led to a shift in focus where communities were enabled to make the teachers in government schools accountable and to see that their children received quality education in government run schools. With the shift in focus we also downsized our own village schools and limited them to only such areas where government schools did not exist or where children found it difficult to go to the nearest school due to difficult geographical terrain.

Table of Village schools supported by Gram Vikas

District	No. of Village education centres	Students enrolled		
		Boys	Girls	Total
Ganjam	5	67	48	115
Gajapati	6	148	105	253

Curriculum development

Retention of children in schools is linked to encouraging learning and having a child centred approach to learning. There is a significant thrust on innovations in teaching-learning methods. “Joyful learning” has become a credo of all the staff associated with the education programme. This has involved a lot of efforts in lesson planning, innovating examination systems, and education materials. There is also an attempt to create a child friendly non threatening environment, with appropriate playing materials which are low cost and made from local resources.

Teacher training

Since most of the facilitators in the village schools are locally recruited people, training on imparting teaching methods and understanding child centred approach become essential. Regular trainings are held for the facilitators where they share their experiences and gain knowledge on new concepts.

Community contribution

Education is seen as a process where the family members and community as a whole aspire for their future generation to be educated and internalise a value for education. This is done through regular interaction with parents on a monthly basis and imparting training to Village Education Committees from time to time. This process has involved the family and community members and in all the village education centres the stipend, for the facilitator is paid through community contribution.

Bridge course

In addition to the village schools, three month bridge courses are conducted for children who have dropped out of formal schooling. This year 221 students (62% boys and 38% girls) were coached through the bridge courses. The objective is to bring them back to formal schooling. Intensive coaching takes place during the bridge course where children are given special attention based on their level of understanding. Teachers also emphasise on joyful learning methods and use this to generate interest in learning amongst the children. All the bridge courses in the project locations were supported through parents' contribution. Following the bridge courses, the children who pass out are enrolled in Gram Vikas residential schools or government schools.

Residential Schools

There are four residential schools of which the Konkia School is till Class X. The schools cater to the higher education of tribal children in the southern and south western districts of Odisha and are operated under the Gram Vikas Rural development Trust, Gram Vikas Health and Education Trust, Gram Vikas trust and Kerandimal education Trust

Education brings power

Did Sibram Karjee, a 25 year old tribal boy think that his maiden opportunity in public position would be at the Zilla Parishad level? His village Khalasahi in Ankuli Gram Panchayat of Patrapur block in Ganjam district hardly has a functional primary school. Gram Vikas' early intervention in the village was through a day school where Sibram and other tribal children received formal education. Thereafter he was admitted to the residential school at Konkia where he studied till Class VII. His parents had six children and although they wanted all of them to receive formal education, Sibram could not continue his studies after Class VII. He came back to the village to help his family in their domestic chores and agriculture. Gram Vikas staff motivated him to learn masonry by joining the masonry training programme which is a 75 day course. He joined the training and after completion took up work available in the village and in the nearby villages where Gram Vikas was implementing its water and sanitation programme. He started earning Rs. 200 per day through masonry work. Sibram showed signs of leadership from early days; he always came forward for any community work in his village, was keen to learn new things and would attend different training sessions conducted by Gram Vikas. He also took up the issues of people in his village and represented them at the Gram Panchayat level. In the last Panchayat elections in February 2012, the seat from the zone was reserved for Schedule Tribe candidate. Sibram was selected by the ruling Biju Janata Dal to stand for the Zilla Parishad election and he won the contest by a margin of 5000 votes. The people of his area believe that he will work for the development of the area. Sibram has all the enthusiasm to live up to the expectation of the people who put him to power. Apprehensively he adds "I need more training on government schemes and Acts to discharge my duty in a better way ". A new journey begins.

Some facts:

In Koinpur project of Gajapati district, of the 283 students who passed Class 10 in the last 15 years, 195 are pursuing higher education and 52 are in government jobs.

In Tumba project in Patrapur block of Ganjam district, before Gram Vikas ' intervention only 6 students from 3 villages had passed their Class X examination. 111 students have passed the examination from the 21 villages at the end of March, 2012.

Section 6: Livelihoods and Food Security

Promoting activities that sustain and improve livelihoods was part of the programme since inception of Gram Vikas. Measures to improve food security for the poor tribal households through agriculture and horticulture interventions proved successful. New initiatives were taken up to suit specific contexts which included non-farm activities like masonry , plumbing, para veterinary among many others. Presently holistic interventions in land and water management in specific watersheds are playing the role of torch bearer in this focus area.

After the successful completion of WORLP (Western Odisha Rural Livelihood Programme) project in 2011 in Bongamunda block of Bolangir district, the focus shifted to measure the impact of OTELP phase-1 in Thuamul Rampur block which is currently in the consolidation phase. An informal evaluation shows the results to be very similar to those found at the end of WORLP project. Regeneration of perennial streams, rise in ground water level, accumulation of assets at household level, rise in awareness of people to take better care of the natural resources around the village are observed as outcomes of the project which stand to be the witness for the hard work done in the last 7 years of project duration. There is chance that the OTELP phase-I be extended for a further period of three years.

The three ongoing watershed activities in Thuamul Rampur and Lanjigarh blocks of Kalahandi and one in Mohana block of Ganjapati are at the peak of the implementation stage in the 4th year of the project.

Fact file of OTELP Projects

	Thuamul Rampur Phase I	Thuamul Rampur Phase II	Lanjigarh	Mohana
District	Kalahandi	Kalahandi	Kalahandi	Gajapati
Block	Thuamul Rampur	Thuamul Rampur	Lanjigarh	Mohana
GPs (Nos.)	4	5	4	6
Villages (Nos.)	37	28	31	22
Households (Nos.)	1480	1227	918	1256
Population (Nos.)	7259	5093	4405	6772
Total area (ha.)	5550	5469	4711	6475
Treatable area (ha.)	5324	5230	4572	5042
Institutional profiles				
Village development Committees (nos.)	12	11	12	10
Village Sub committees (Nos.)	37	21	30	18
SHGs (Nos.)	126	109	68	82
Van surakhya Samitis (Nos.)	14	0	3	11

Agriculture

One of the major improvements of land based interventions has been in the agriculture sector where tribal farmers who hitherto did not cultivate vegetables on a large scale, have now taken up large scale off season vegetable cultivation. In Bafra and Thuamul Rampur project locations this year, 285 acres were brought under vegetable cultivation by

412 tribal farmers. This was possible because of piped irrigation provided by gravity fed systems as well as land development and water harvesting structures. Cultivation of new crops like groundnut and maize has been scaled up during the year. Drip irrigation was introduced in collaboration with IDEI for 650 farmers.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S SELF HELP GROUPS

OTELP being the watershed PLUS project, the focus of development is not restricted to 'Land and Water Management (LWM)' alone. The Rural Financial Services (RFS) component of the programme has provided enough leverage for women to take up small scale enterprise development and other key activities. By facilitating seed funds (a one time grant) and loans to start businesses (through revolving fund) for the SHGs, the programme ensured active participation of women in community level decisions. The profits derived from the respective activities have boosted confidence among women and also the village level economies. Several of these groups have taken up income earning enterprises like petty businesses, poultry, goat rearing, aquaculture, raising nurseries, managing mother chick units, operating mid-day meal and PDS schemes. In areas that are outside the OTELP location, SHG members are linked to nationalised banks to access credit at differential rate of interest for income generating ventures. Periodic trainings have empowered women to handle records and minutes and conduct SHG activities in a smooth manner. This has also changed dynamics within the village and household level with men acknowledging women's role in the economic process and women gaining economic freedom to a greater extent.

THE 'WADI' PROJECT

The WADI project is another major programme taken up by Gram Vikas in 2011 for achieving food security of poor tribal households in Ganjam District.

“**WADI**” (small orchard) is an initiative of NABARD to improve the quality of life of tribal families through individual horticulture gardens and other allied activities at the community level. The programme was launched in Rudhapadar project area of Ganjam district in 2011 with implementation period of 6 years. 690 tribal families are part of the programme and 156 landless families will benefit through non-land based interventions like skill training, livestock rearing and enterprise development. The project focuses on developing horticultural gardens for individual tribal households by providing financial and technical assistance to help the beneficiaries gain sustainable incomes in long term. Grafted varieties of mango and cashew are planted in the plots as part of the projects that start yield from 3rd year. Intercropping, border plants and other programmatic interventions would provide the supplementary income in the initial years of the project. 175 families were supported In 2011-12 to develop horticulture gardens of cashew and mango in 149 acres of land.

In OTELP Project locations also WADI was implemented in 123 acres involving 122 farmers. In Kalahandi district mango and litchi were promoted under the WADI programme. It is a novel initiative undertaken keeping in view the climatic conditions and we are hopeful that this model will be successful for further replication.

An ideal leader- Shanti Jani

Shanti Jani is an inspiring example. An ordinary tribal woman who is a school drop out has shown that change occurs when common people pursue with dedication every opportunity that comes their way. Shanti is an active member of the self help group in Gram Devati village of Jaganath Prasad block. She has taken initiative on many fronts and led the group to take up pisciculture which earned them reasonable profits, in turn earning respect of fellow villagers. The Wadi programme was introduced in Gram Devati village by Gram Vikas in 2011. Shanti was the natural choice of the people as President of Maa Bhagabati Udyan Vikas Samiti. When the preparatory activities for plantation were initiated, there was a conflict between individual farmers who were from different habitations of the same village. This led to a halt in the activities as the Wadi norms required that the orchards be developed in a single patch. The planting season was arriving and everyone was concerned about the delay. Shanti rose to the occasion and used her negotiating skills in convincing the two parties to come together for mutual benefit. It worked and people geared up for the planting activity. During the whole planting period, she coordinated efficiently amongst the 19 farmers for planting, staking, fencing, weeding and watering. With her motivation, all the farmers also cultivated brinjal as an intercrop in the wadi patch. It is her diligence that resulted in 93 percent of survival of the plants in Gram Devati. Shanti has other feathers in her cap –her oratory skills won her kudos of officials in a meeting conducted by the Forest Department and in turn the village received a generator and Solar LED lights from the government fund. Other women in the village say “when she speaks, we all listen to her. People come to her for guidance.” I feel blessed to be able to do some good”, comes a humble acknowledgement.

PARTNERSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

While working with the disadvantaged sections of society to enhance their living standards, convergence with Government schemes have become an effective tool in making the fruits of those schemes reach the beneficiaries without indulging in any corrupt practices. Gram Vikas enjoys credibility of both state and central governments because of the long term presence and work in Odisha.

- This year, Gram Vikas facilitated 1904 farmers to take up improved paddy cultivation practices, using the line sowing method in 2500 acres in two project areas within Ganjam district. This was supported by the Agriculture department under RKVY (Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana). An incentive of Rs 28,22,000 was received by the farmers for successfully demonstrating the initiative. Maize cultivation was done in 22 villages in an area of 360 acres benefiting 281 families. An assistance of Rs.5,01,200 was received by the farmers for this initiative.
- Training on Yam & Pineapple cultivation was organised under RKVY in Kalahandi district for 90 people under OTELP phase-1.

- Backyard cultivation of yam was done by 948 households under agriculture component of OTELP phase-2 and 200 households with the assistance from RKVY in Thuamul Rampur of Kalahandi district. Pineapple cultivation was adapted by 142 beneficiaries under RKVY.
- As part of WADI project, collaborations are developed with organisations such as KVK (Krishi Vigyan Kendra), Agriculture department, Horticulture department etc.
- Convergence under National Horticulture Mission facilitated 629 farmers to take up horticulture plantation of cashew and mango in 618 acres of land.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

With an ever-growing infrastructure sector in Odisha and elsewhere, the need for skilled workers has been increasing each year. Gram vikas has trained thousands of people as masons, plumbers, bar benders etc., over the last three decades to improve the living standards of people, avoid distress migration and meet these demands. People who were trained in these skills could be employed in the nearby villages in construction work of buildings, toilets and bathrooms, water tanks etc. This essentially had proved to be a remedy for distress migration that was rampant in the villages. Trainings were conducted earlier for women SHGs in making leaflet plates, raising nursery beds etc. as part of OTELP and other projects. In 2011-12 there were 369 youth trained in masonry.

CONVERGENCE

The implementation of the long term projects needs to be planned well in order to achieve the expected results. Demonstration of vegetable cultivation at Bafla office has raised interest among the villages around the project location. In light of this, convergence and collaborations with Agriculture department, horticulture mission and ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency) seem to be the appropriate options to take the development activities ahead. Besides ongoing watershed and horticulture based livelihood projects, there are some efforts in progress to initiate the natural resource management interventions in Bafla region of Kalahandi and villages near Karlapat wild life sanctuary.

Section 7: Livelihood Enabling Infrastructure

Self-reliance is a core component of the Gram Vikas model villages. 34 years of working for India's poorest has shown us that development is only possible when communities begin to recognise and use the inherent strengths of their communities. Although interdependence is a significant aspect of MANTRA's network approach, all MANTRA projects begin with this ethos of *self-reliance*.

This belief in the inherent strengths of rural communities has led us to develop interventions for *livelihood enabling infrastructure*. This infrastructure – like water systems and renewable energy – helps to provide rural communities with facilities they need to diversify their livelihood, improve their health and increase their connectivity with the world beyond their village. As always, all of these facilities are measured by their environmental sustainability and the capacities of the people to implement and maintain these schemes.

MICRO-HYDRO POWER

Our micro-hydro electricity programme is in a state of significant growth. In 2011, the Government of Odisha came out with a list of villages that were deemed too remote to be covered by the central grid. As a result, state agencies have renewed their call for decentralised energy sources that can be implemented by third party organisations. Gram Vikas' micro-hydro projects provide the state-wide model for low-cost, decentralised power generation that provides lighting for homes and streets as well as paddy and oil seed processing. Gram Vikas has so far established four micro-hydro projects in Thuamul Rampur Block of Kalahandi District and two more are in the making. The water after it generates electricity is used for irrigation.

Women, Energy and Values

In 2008, Gram Vikas had set up the microhydro unit generating 10-13 Kw power in Purnaguma, a small habitation of 56 families in Thuamul Rampur block of Kalahandi district. The community enjoyed electricity generated from the micro hydro unit and have also set up other enterprises – mills, cycle repair shops etc. Most of the households had contributed their hard labour in the entire construction process and had generated cash contribution for maintenance of the system. Three local youth were trained as operators to run the system and take up local trouble shooting. Gram Vikas' staff had spent considerable time to strengthen the community's involvement in the decision process with regard to energy use, tariff plan, contribution of labour and cash etc. However the richest man in the village, Mr. Ashoke Singh opposed from the start and was not happy to see the community take initiative. It would undermine his position in the village. He refused to contribute in cash or labour and did not agree to the norms established by the community over several meetings. Finally a decision was taken to exclude him from the benefits of the project- he would not receive an electric connection. The community went ahead and the system was commissioned in December 2008. Everyone was elated by the success. It went on for three years after which Ashoke Singh sought an opportunity to bribe the local operators and get an electricity connection in return. There was some minor uproar, but the men of the village did not take any strong action. Gram Vikas' staff stepped in to remind the committee on the norms that were established and the role of the local institution with regard to such misconduct. The women who were shunned off by the operators when they had questioned them for extending the connection illegally, now resolved to take action. In a quite show of determination, they organized themselves and went to Ashoke Singh's house and quietly disconnected the line. They even removed the pole that was put in front of his house. A request was made to Gram Vikas to train new people as operators as the current operators would be fired. The whole village witnessed the power of women. Ashoke Singh was informed that he would never receive any connection because of his corrupt practices. The system is running well ever since this incident. This experience was a learning to manage conflict situations and reaffirmed our value of strong local institutions and their ability to govern things in an equitable manner.

SOLAR ENERGY

Gram Vikas is in the process of setting up a 75 kw solar photovoltaic power plant at its campus at Mohuda. This had become necessary because of the long hours of power cuts and break downs. The cost of electricity from the grid has also become very high. We are also in the process of setting up small solar photovoltaic plants at all the four residential schools and at Bafla project, which does not have as yet grid electricity.

Villages, where there is no electricity available, we are encouraging people to make small investments in solar LED lights. So far 3196 solar LED lights were purchased by people.

Section 8: Human and Institutional Development

Human and institutional development is one of the focus areas of Gram Vikas with regard to the fulfilment of value of 'Sustainability' of MANTRA. Where 'Self governing people's institutions' act as a foundation for bringing in sustainability, upgradation of skills and awareness of individuals. Existing institutions play a crucial role in sustaining the initial efforts of constituting the respective institutions. As part of this, training and capacity building of village level institutions and Gram Vikas staff are organised across the field locations that Gram Vikas works.

RTI and FRA campaigns especially occupy prominence in the operational villages of Gram Vikas under this intervention. 8 RTI trainings were conducted for staff and villagers during the period and 131 RTI applications were filed. Significant achievements through RTI have been electrification of villages, completion of FRA land survey post RTI application.

Different mediums are used in spreading messages to the communities effectively. Wall paintings in villages, campaigns and awareness rallies, village level meetings, organising social arts workshops are some of them. In Bafla, revival of existing BGS (Bafla Ghana Sanghatan) is being worked upon by interacting with the committee members and villagers at regular intervals.

New avenues are being explored to strengthen the understanding of communities on thematic issues like water and sanitation. With the aim of bringing about awareness about water, sanitation and hygiene, Gram Vikas partnered with 'One Drop' a Canada based NGO and organised workshops and street plays in about 45 villages. Educating and sensitising people about water and hygienic practices was tried out with the means of social art and some other creative activities. The workshops had clay moulding, community mural, a mobile library, storytelling, *Water Satsang*, movie screening, film making components etc. The workshops could capture the attention largely of school children and had positive impact. Documentaries made by the film making crew were appreciated by the villagers as they captured the perennial issues of the village in a short film. The follow-up sessions for workshops would be taken up to measure the impact and develop better strategies to spread the messages on social issues.

In 2011-12, trainings and workshops were conducted at village level covering a broad spectrum of topics such as PRI, village level leadership, health camp, school sanitation, SHG record keeping, better farming practices, masonry, smokeless chulha training etc.,

Section 9: Outreach and Networking

The dissemination of information of the work of Gram Vikas takes place through participation in various state and national level workshops and consultations organised by government, national and international organisations. Links forged by participation in conferences and meetings with other NGOs, government departments; visitors and volunteers often result in better networking and expansion of our mental horizons.

Senior staff of Gram Vikas took part in regular government meetings and various consultations regarding water and sanitation, livelihood and food security, disaster mitigation and renewable energy. With the visibility of MANTRA increasing, organisations and individuals within and outside the country are approaching us to facilitate implementation of the programme in their areas of operation. The Executive Director was the Chairman of the working group for Rural water supply and sanitation constituted by the Planning Commission to provide inputs and guidance on this aspect for the 12th Five year plan. This provided a great opportunity to push for effective sanitation and water supply plan for the country as a whole and give space to civil society initiatives to be recognised and experiences dovetailed in the plan. Gram Vikas was honoured by the visit of Honourable Minister for Rural Development, Shri. Jairam Ramesh to a few of the operational villages of Gram Vikas.

Senior staff members represented the organisation in national and international forums- ADB Partners meet at Manila, UNICEF, The Skoll World Forum etc.

Gram Vikas hosted the South Asian Regional Meeting of Global transparency Fund Project where the partners involved in this project came together for a mid term reflection of the project outputs vis-a-vis the overall project goal. The meeting brought forth diverse issues on governance faced by partners in Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha and helped to frame activities to address these in the specific context.

For the fourth consecutive year Gram Vikas hosted the Jagriti Yatra in December where young people from various parts of the country came to see the work of the organisation and understand development issues that are being dealt with by the organisation. Gram Vikas also hosted the IAS probationary officers who went to several villages and interacted with senior management.

Several other dignitaries from donor agencies and government officials and People's representatives visited Gram Vikas and its project areas to interact and see the work carried out by the organisation.

Students from TISS, XIMB, NFI, IRMA, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, Youth development Foundation, Bhubaneshwar underwent their internships at Gram Vikas. Several international volunteers from Germany, Quebec, Ireland, UK and USA worked

with Gram vikas for short and long periods and contributed in documentation, reporting, organisational development, teaching English in schools etc.

Awards

Gram Vikas ranked No. 51 in the global top 100 NGO's listed by Global Journal:
<http://theglobaljournal.net/article/view/548/>