

The Good Sight

Issue 2- August 2019

facebook.com/thegoodsight/

Dignified Dwelling:

Mahila Housing Trust's slum improvement efforts

Young Turks:

Nalini Paul, Country Director, Restless Development, on youth power

CONCRETE STEPS:

Ambuja Cement's road to rural development





Grow-Trees Testimonials



Roland Folger, Managing Director & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India

"Mercedes-Benz has always been an environmental conscious automotive brand. We want our customers and citizens in general to be aware about the environmental challenges like global warming and ecological changes. We have planted 50,000 trees that will offset the carbon footprint of our production process. The plantation will bring significant changes in the lives of the villagers who will not only find a livelihood, but will also benefit from the increased vegetation in the area. This initiative will further create awareness about the ecological benefits of afforestation, thus contributing to environmental sustenance."



Dia Mirza (Bollywood Actress)

"Celebrating occasions has become so much more meaningful for me personally because I get to do so now with Grow-Trees! The gift of nature to loved ones is the greatest gift one can share. And I am truly grateful for this opportunity to Grow-Trees that aid in conservation, empower livelihoods and contribute to a healthy future."

Tel: +91-22-2288 1301 / 2284 2897
info@grow-trees.com

For more details log-on to
www.grow-trees.com

Let the stories of change inspire you

Thank you! It was a matter of great satisfaction for us that the first edition of The Good Sight was wholeheartedly appreciated by all the readers and all those who trusted us and contributed stories for the inaugural issue of the monthly e-publication. The words of appreciation sent by some of the people, especially Dr Bharat Vatwani, Ramon Magsaysay Awardee and the founder of Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre, are invaluable for us. We are grateful to Dr Vatwani who guided us on several fronts when we were preparing for the first issue. We continue to get his inputs. He has now become a mentor for us. We feel privileged.

We reached out to CSR arms of corporate houses in search of their community initiatives and found inspirational stories. Prison Project by Jaipur Rugs Foundation was one among them. We hope NGOs, corporate houses and individuals across the country would draw inspiration from the stories featured in The Good Sight.

This edition of the The Good Sight again brings you a blend of development projects undertaken by

NGOs and social enterprises in fields like health, education, agriculture, women empowerment et al. You will also get to read about some interesting community initiatives undertaken by companies like Ambuja Cement and Larsen & Toubro.

CSR is emerging in this country. The government is trying to make it a serious effort. A recent notification has made it clear that companies would not be able to get away with casual spending of their CSR budget. Corporate houses shouldn't be worried because of it; instead, they should take it positively and focus on making an impact through their development projects. They can do wonders if they really want to. And we, at The Good Sight, would continue to feature such wonders in the upcoming editions.

Editors

Asit Srivastava
Bhesaja Choudhury

Team TGS

Editor

Asit Srivastava
Bhesaja Choudhury

Creative Head

Rajnikant Sinha

For contribution, feedback or queries,
reach us at

tgoodsight@gmail.com

Contributors

Akshaya Patra Foundation

Ambuja Cement Foundation

Indo Global Social Service Society
(IGSSS)

Jaipur Rugs Foundation

Larsen & Toubro

Mahila Housing Trust

Orbis

Restless Development

Welthungerhilfe India

INSIDE



06 'Ambassadors of Change' create nutrition smart villages



10 Building Communities, Changing Lives



26 Fight for sight



20 Investing in Rural India...



16 The Young and the Restless



30 Infrastructure – An imperative for students' holistic development



34 Rural artisans weave magic, receive European Product Design Award



42 Small farmers to Smart farmers



36 Housing with trust

‘Ambassadors of Change’ create nutrition smart villages

100 volunteers create waves of change as they pledge to develop a malnutrition-free state

More than 40 per cent of the children under the age of five are underweight (weight-for-age) and stunted; and cases of intergenerational malnutrition are rampant in the state of Madhya Pradesh located in central India. The target areas where Welthungerhilfe India works are remotely located and challenging because of high poverty, illiteracy and social backwardness. However, to make food and nutrition security a reality, 100 self-motivated

volunteers are playing a vital role in identifying and eradicating the ‘hidden hunger’ in Sheopur and Chhatarpur districts of Madhya Pradesh.

Connecting communities to mitigate ‘hidden’ hunger

Mitigating malnutrition is a challenging process. In Sheopur district alone, approximately 55 per cent of the children under five years of age are underweight and 52.1 per cent stunted. In Chhatarpur, 41.3 per cent of the children under five years of age are underweight and 42.7 per cent stunted.

To address these issues of malnutrition at the grassroots level, Welthungerhilfe adopts a multi-sectoral nutrition-sensitive approach. It works closely with the local communities to bring out individuals and families from the shackles of malnutrition and create nutrition smart villages. It is a model village where communities understand and take charge of their nutrition requirements, integrating agriculture with natural resource management, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

To bring about a cultural change in the region, Welthungerhilfe’s partner Mahatma Gandhi Seva Ashram (MGSA) and Darshana identified a network of 100 self-motivated individuals who are being trained on various aspects of Sustainable Integrated Farming Systems (SIFS), nutrition gardens, community mobilisation, and childcare and feeding practices.

This network of 100 volunteers includes people from different strata such as farmers, youths and mothers who are working towards spreading

knowledge in their community. Most interestingly, it also includes individuals who were once under the ambit of malnutrition or still are.

The perennial cycle of malnutrition

Forty five-year-old Ram Charan living in Acharwala Seharna village in Sheopur has been a victim of intergenerational malnutrition. He belongs to the ‘Saharia’ community – categorised by the government as a particularly vulnerable tribe. Despite covering 94 per cent of the total population in the area, low food security and undernourishment have been their long-standing problems. Ram Charan had a stunted growth and one of his grandchildren, Raj Adivasi, who is only two and a half years, is also diagnosed as Moderately Acute Malnourished (MAM).

“Situations have changed visibly in the past few decades. Earlier we were primarily dependent on the forests and cattle rearing for our survival. But with the change in regulations, our access to forest produce became limited,” shares Ram Charan.

In all, 260 nutrition smart villages will be developed across some of the most backward districts of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal under Welthungerhilfe’s multi-country project titled ‘Regional Programme on multi-sectoral approach to promote Nutrition Smart Villages’.

▲ Ram Charan (third from right) with some of his family members





▲ Volunteers undertaking a group task to map crops

In 2001, Ram Charan was allotted 2.4 acres of land by the government of Madhya Pradesh. However, it was only in 2016 that he was granted possession. “I practised mono-cropping on my land. And from February to May when cultivation became difficult due to lack of water, we migrated to nearby towns in search of work and food,” he explains. With no land to cultivate and regular livelihood options, Ram Charan and his family gradually fell into the trap of malnutrition. Ram Charan

lives with his wife, three sons and six grandchildren.

Despite all the odds, Ram Charan is one of the most active members in the network of 100 volunteers. He is not only changing his agricultural practices following regular trainings but is also promoting his knowledge amongst his fellow communities.

Redefining agriculture and ensuring dietary diversity

Ram Charan has been trained on an approach promoted by Welthungerhilfe India called Sustainable Integrated Farming Systems (SIFS) that promotes agro-ecological practices to support smallholder farmers in producing and consuming enough nutritious and diverse food while improving their environment, economic and social situation. Regular farmer meetings are organised to record, analyse and collect first-hand information on the current

cropping patterns in the region.

A workshop held on SIFS in February 2019 helped farmers-cum-volunteers like Ram Charan, who is also a master trainer, to adopt multiple cropping systems, create key-hole nutrition garden by recycling biodegradable household waste and grey water for cultivation of seasonal vegetables and fruits, thereby producing enough nutritious and diverse food for their consumption.

“I can now cultivate my land based on different food groups available locally and I am also developing a ‘key-hole kitchen garden’. This summer, instead of migrating to other places, I will adopt the integrated farming system on my land. I already got my field fenced with boulders and as part of the workshop received seeds for vegetables that can be grown in summer like bitter gourd, lady’s finger, bottle gourd, coriander and chillies. The recent workshop gave me new innovative ideas which I wasn’t earlier aware of. Interacting with agriculture specialists has given me clarity in optimally using my resources for maximum output and in achieving a nutrition balanced lifestyle for me and my family,” explains Ram Charan.

Ram Charan is also a member of the farmers’ field school. He is going the extra mile and is also the lead farmer in conducting SIFS training for his fellow community members. He also coaches them on various soil treatment methods, using bio inputs and setting up kitchen gardens, to name a few. Initiated early this year, till date around 900 farmers have been oriented by Welthungerhilfe’s 100 volunteers.



▲ MGSA’s orientation programme for select volunteers



▲ An awareness session on nutrition

Strengthening nutrition sensitive intervention

Twenty one-year-old volunteer Sonam Mishra, a resident of Pahadi Baban village in Chhatarpur district, focuses on community mobilisation, empowers adolescents and raises awareness among mothers on childcare and feeding practices. “I support the project staff in conducting inclusive child screening. In one of the screenings of 102 children through stadiometer, infantometer and digital weighing machines, eight severely acute malnourished and 18 moderately acute malnourished children were identified. I also regularly visit the families and help them identify malnutrition and adopt good practices,” shares Sonam. Sonam’s proactive actions have seen a visible impact on the mothers of Pahadi Baban village. They are now taking their children to the local Anganwadi Centre (childcare

centre) for regular weight and height measurements and have adopted correct feeding and hygiene practices. “My dream is to see all the children in my village happy and healthy. If we want to remove malnutrition, we have to ensure that the health of every child is regularly monitored. And I will ensure that this happens in my villages,” explains Sonam.

Waves of change

This network of 100 volunteers is playing a vital role in building a valuable relationship with the community, enabling them to learn, support each other and transform society effectively. Developing a cadre of ‘100 ambassadors of change’ is the first step towards improved food and nutrition security for many like Sonam and Ram Charan.

In all, 260 nutrition smart villages will be developed across some of

the most backward districts of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal under Welthungerhilfe’s multi-country project titled ‘Regional Programme on multi-sectoral approach to promote Nutrition Smart Villages’. In India, Welthungerhilfe plays a critical role in promoting food and nutrition security, agroecology, access to clean water, improvement in health and education, livelihood promotions, and empowers grassroots civil society organisations. It particularly strengthens nutrition security among the vulnerable populations and age groups particularly, women (15-49 years) and children (0- 5 years), and empowers them to access diversified nutritious diets through nutrition education and behaviour change. ■

(Contribution by Welthungerhilfe India (Liaison Office) for The Good Sight)

BUILDING COMMUNITIES, CHANGING LIVES

L&T's Integrated Community Development Programme is leading to stories of hope from a drought-stricken region

Barely a few minutes off the Ahmednagar-Pathardi highway and one sees the first signs of trouble. Little children, mostly girls, in groups of 2 or 3, carrying water on their heads. A few kilometres further inside Pathardi and another distressing visual – a group of women doing the day's laundry by the side of a small pond. Drive around the tehsil for an hour and scenes like these start to feel normal, part of the milieu. A casual city slicker may even find such imagery charming, in a slice-of-the-rural-life sort of way.

However, there's nothing remotely charming about women and children having to carry water on their heads. It's a sad and ugly sight. A reality that shouldn't be. For the residents of Pathardi in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district though, it is about as real as it can get. Scarcity of water is a bitter and punishing truth that affects life in Pathardi in every way imaginable. From farmers not being able to grow crops in their fields to girls not being able to pursue education to youths having to migrate to cities

▼ Low-cost water conservation technologies are adopted under ICDP

Despite it being widely known as a water-stressed area for decades, Pathardi received little to no institutional aid before L&T began its project in 2015

in search of employment, lack of water has a very visible impact here.

The tehsil, one of the driest in Maharashtra, has 134 villages with a combined population of 27,211. The general climate of Pathardi is hot and dry, except during the south-west monsoon season. With an average rainfall of 566 mm during the season, it's not as if Pathardi doesn't get any rains. It's the geology of the place which lets it down. Pathardi's basaltic soil, reddish brown in appearance, cannot hold water for long – it either percolates too quickly or gets washed away into the low lying areas nearby – leading to shortages post monsoon.

For the local population, dependent largely on agriculture, life is hard. Farmers rely mainly on kharif crops like paddy and nachani while a great many migrate to nearby cities to find temporary employment. The women and children left behind by the migrant farmers often have to shoulder the additional burden of the household such as caring for the livestock and looking after the fields. It adds to the drudgery of the womenfolk and affects children adversely, not just in terms of their education but general health as well.

It's a depressing cycle impacting lives and putting precious futures in jeopardy. And at the root of it lies one problem – scarcity of water. Address it and many of the attendant challenges cease to exist. This is an idea that is at the core of an ambitious project currently being implemented by L&T's CSR team across six villages in Pathardi.

L&T's is an Integrated Community Development Programme (ICDP) directed towards improving the lives of villagers living in Khandgaon, Joharwadi, Dharwadi, Dongarwadi, Gitewadi and Damalwadi through watershed development. With the aid of NGO partner Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR), the Company's CSR team is helping implement measures



that seek to conserve rainwater through low-cost techniques, treat degraded land and promote sustainable agricultural practices. Besides, the project also involves mainstreaming of women through skill training and rural entrepreneurship, and initiatives in the area of health and sanitation.

An effort contingent on people participation and ownership, for the project L&T is working hand-in-hand with the local community. The aim is as simple as it is profound – bringing prosperity to a largely neglected pocket and elevating the lives of those struggling on the fringes.

L&T's presence at Pathardi is no accident. Far from it, it's the outcome of an elaborate exercise of water-starved areas conducted at the conceptualisation stage. Despite it being widely known as a water-stressed area for decades, Pathardi received little to no institutional aid before L&T began its project in 2015. NGO partner WOTR mapped the tehsil and helped identify the six-village cluster for ICDP and it is WOTR's reach in the local community combined with the technical expertise of L&T that the project has attained its success.



▲ Kitchen gardens are encouraged under ICDP

After receiving L&T Board's approval for commencing its activities in Pathardi, the CSR team began implementing the programme first with a series of meetings and awareness campaigns for the villagers. Through these, they were familiarised with how watershed management could actually help address the challenge of water scarcity. Subject matter experts made farmers aware of various measures for soil and water conservation which could be undertaken to prevent soil degradation and ensure greater water availability. Workshops on treating degraded land, soil moisture conservation and micro-irrigation were conducted and farmers were presented with successful instances of how check dams, farm ponds, farm bunds and other such structures had altered the face of many dry and parched landscapes elsewhere. It was a long and arduous task convincing the locals but the project team's persistence paid off in the end.

After the initial phase of evangelising the concept, work on building various types of structures began around May of 2015. The year saw the construction of check dams, water absorption trenches, farm bunds, loose boulder structures, stone gully plugs, earthen gully plugs etc. that help trap the rainwater and recharge the groundwater tables in the area.

What made this exercise unique is that all the construction work was done by the villagers themselves. By hiring only locals for the job, the programme not only offered employment opportunities to the villagers but also made them a stakeholder in the initiative. In the first year, some 115 odd villagers found work through various activities.

Apart from the watershed development work, as part of ICDP's other key agenda that of women's empowerment, workshops and gatherings for women were organised at regular intervals. At these gatherings, they were made aware of how Self-Help Groups (SHGs) could help them grow more independently and improve their financial standing. They were encouraged to form collectives and explore entrepreneurial opportunities.

Difficult as it was, the project team incentivised this by putting up a small corpus from which the women could take petty loans and start their own business. A formal structure was put in place for issuing loans and repaying the money. Used as a revolving fund, the money loaned to



▲ Farmers learn sustainable agriculture practices at a workshop

the women does not cost an interest but simply has to be paid back in easy instalments so that it could be lent to other members of the group.

An apex committee comprising two representatives from each SHG was convened. This committee called Samyukta Mahila Samitee is not only responsible for ensuring that the corpus funds are used judiciously but also orienting all the members to different entrepreneurial schemes. Choosing from trades like stitching and tailoring, operating a grain mill, goat rearing, poultry business, running small shops etc. the women could borrow funds to support their businesses.

Besides their economic welfare, the programme also focuses on women's physical and emotional wellbeing and useful sessions on health and training on things like drudgery reduction in which participants are trained on the proper use of improved farm technologies have helped further popularise the ICDP among the locals.

Through soil and water conservation activities, the

groundwater level has gone up across all the six villages and the activities last year (2018-19) resulted in 21,926 number of person-days as hundreds of villagers who participated in the activity were able to find employment and supplement their incomes.

The farm bund built around Subhash Jagdale's field near his house in Khandgaon has transformed it completely. A well in the middle of his field, which would normally begin to dry up shortly after the rains, is still full even in mid-December. "The farm bund hasn't allowed the well to dry up like it would before. Also, there's plenty of moisture in the soil still," he says smilingly. Jagdale is growing custard apple on his farm this year. Even an average harvest can fetch him an impressive sum for it in the market. To water his plants, some of which are already bearing fruit, he's installed a drip irrigation system which draws water from the well.

Janardan Gore of Dharwadi shares a similar story. A farm pond dug up on his land through the ICDP's intervention means that his well remains recharged for most of the



▲ Women empowerment is integral to L&T's ICDP

year, allowing him to water his fields without having to worry about the rains. “Because of this work, water will be stored in the farm pond, slowly percolating my field. I no longer worry about the uncertain rains,” says Gore.

There are 140 farm ponds and 15 check dams built through ICDP intervention. In Dongarwadi which is situated at an elevation, WOTR has helped create different types of structures including water absorption trenches, continuous contour trenches and earthen gully plugs over a vast swath at the base of the hills. The structures help stanch the flow of rainwater and retain it for gradual percolation. The work has upped the groundwater tables at both Donagarwadi and Khandgoan.

WOTR has appointed Wasundhara Sevaks to liaise between programme coordinators and the village folks in each of the six villages. Paid for their time, they act as both messengers as well as facilitators for major initiatives. In all, there are 13 such Wasundhara Sevaks across the six villages. Kisan Gite, a resident of Dongarwadi, worked on the project as the Wasundhara Sevak and coordinated between WOTR and the villagers from Dongarwadi.

Constructing rainwater harvesting structures is merely one part of the story. Community mobilisation and capacity building efforts play an equally important role in L&T's agenda. This is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project so that the villagers can own and continue the work after L&T and WOTR move base. As part of the effort, training, linkage building workshops and cluster

gatherings are organised for villagers at regular intervals. These activities, besides expediting implementation matters, help increase people participation. Then there are workshops on sustainable agriculture development where farmers are taught new farming techniques and low-cost practices covering seed treatment, insect and pest management, organic ways of farming such as making vermicompost etc. Besides bringing subject matter experts to educate the farmers, WOTR also takes villagers to farming schools as part of the exercise.

As for the women empowerment component of ICDP, trainings are organised for Samyukta Mahila Samitee. Additionally, at a training programme for adolescent girls, they were taught important life skills. There have also been talks on health and sanitation familiarising women

and children with the virtues of good habits and basic hygiene.

Enabling women to generate income by turning them into entrepreneurs is one of the most effective ways of ensuring the sustainability of the effort and to that end the project is seeing plenty of success. Towards women's development in 2018-19, the Samyukta Mahila Samitee has raised a revolving fund of Rs. 4.9 lakh for Income Generation Activities (IGA) besides Rs 7.4 lakh for social development or drudgery reduction activity. The activity has so far helped 49 women to start their own businesses. The women have been encouraged to start their own kitchen gardens as part of the intervention. Thanks to the exercise, some 480 odd women currently part of various SHGs now have their own kitchen gardens.

It's been nearly four years since L&T first began implementing the ambitious programme in Pathardi. While it may have taken some time to find acceptance among the villagers, the watershed initiative was firmly rooted in the ground within the first year. Once water sufficiency was achieved, only then other phases were taken up. The programme has several other interventions built-in around health and sanitation such as making clean drinking water available for school children and building sanitation facilities, wastewater management system, and avenue plantation. Work on sanitation, including the construction of toilets as well as awareness generation, was started after work on water sufficiency.

In Gitewadi, for instance, the primary school now has clean drinking water for its students. Additionally, the supply of clean drinking water to the village's water tank has also been ensured through the initiative. At Joharwadi primary school, new washrooms were built so as to inculcate among the children sanitary habits. It has also been given a water tank for ensuring supply of clean drinking water to the children. Across the project area, 52 individual household toilets have been constructed while 28 more are in progress.

L&T's integrated community development programme features many such seemingly small yet important initiatives. Things that address problems at their most basic level. And it's a truly community-based intervention, the success of which relies wholly on the participation of the local populace. ■

(Contribution by L&T for The Good Sight)

The Young and the Restless

Youth have immense potential to catalyse social change. They have the power to address critical development issues. Restless Development has been engaging with youth to build strong communities. Its Country Director Nalini N. Paul tells Asit Srivastava about the organisation's youth-led approaches to counter some of the most daunting challenges faced by the society.

▼ Nalini N. Paul, Country Director, Restless Development



Q: Restless Development has been working in India since 1985. Please help us trace this journey.

A: We were set up in 1985 by Jim Cogan OBE, the then headmaster of Westminster School. Jim was a visionary and believed in the transformative power of youth. Jim noticed young people from affluent families attending Westminster School and then assuming leadership positions. He wanted that these people should be exposed to the 'real world'. Going ahead with this idea, he started sending them first to Zimbabwe and later to India and Tanzania, to work in schools and support teaching.

Over the years, particularly from 1992 to 2005, our functioning underwent a lot of changes. We started recruiting and placing national volunteers. We changed the focus of our work. From formal academic subjects, we started concentrating on the development issues (like HIV and AIDS, education, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation et al) affecting young people.

Through these years, we have earned a reputation for high quality programmes that reach out to remote rural areas that offer a lot of challenges. New countries started inviting us to initiate programmes for them. In Zambia, the Ministry of Education asked us to help them address issues related to HIV/AIDS in the school system. In Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Youth and Sports sought our intervention to address sexual health and youth exclusion in the post-conflict context.

Over the past five years we have evolved and grown tremendously. We developed our first ever Global

Strategy focusing on three goal areas – Sexual and Reproductive Health, Livelihoods and Civic Education - and went on to develop our present day mission "To place young people at the forefront of change and development." We have developed some real expertise in working with and for young people.

- Recognised by UNAIDS as Best Practice Case Study, meeting all 16 UNAIDS criteria for a holistic HIV/AIDS intervention
- Cited by the World Bank as Best Practice Model in the Sourcebook of HIV Prevention Programmes
- Bagged Best NGO award from the Government of Nepal, 2005
- Won one of three 2006 World Bank Development Marketplace Prizes for Southern Africa in Zimbabwe
- Nominated finalist for the 2006 and 2007 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prizes (the Nobel Prize for humanitarian work)
- Won the 2007 Stars Impact Award for HIV prevention and education work in Tanzania
- Won the AWOL National NGO of the Year Award in Sierra Leone, 2009

We re-branded ourselves in 2010—from Students Partnership Worldwide to Restless Development. It happened because we primarily wanted to capture our youth-led identity, mission and ambitions. We wanted the rebranding should also help us overcome some very strongly held negative stereotypes about young people.

Q: Do you notice any paradigm shift in the development sector when we compare the scenario of the 1980s with that of the present?

A: Yes, a lot has changed in the way development is done. The 60's and 70's were an era of optimism. Post-independence, the focus was also on improving the service delivery of essential services. Also, this period witnessed the entrance of big international development organisations entering into long-term MoUs with the Indian government and undertaking the chunk of development initiatives. Towards the 80's the sector strengthened, with a very strong rights based focus and took on the responsibility of largely playing the role of a watch dog, with a very left wing school of thought, serving as



▲ Plan-It Girls programme is delivered through group education activities

a critique of the government. Cut to the present time, the rules of the game have changed completely. You no longer see NGOs standing at street corners and raising slogans. Globalisation and technological developments have fundamentally altered the nation's political economy, the nature of work, and the economic prospects of millions of Indians. And with these changes, development has changed too. It has become more collaborative, underling the fact that we cannot afford to ignore the government if we want to make lasting change. Technology and working in partnership is the new norm.

Q: It's been more than three decades now for Restless Development in India. Any changes that it has embraced to maximise its reach and impact?

A: From a British volunteer sending organisation to an agency catalysing youth leadership initiatives, to ensure that change happens where it's needed the most, Restless Development has come a long way. We are now based in ten strategic hubs across the world (including six in Africa), and have a wider network of hundreds of partners

across the world. We are global experts in youth-led change, and have developed a unique approach to meaningful youth engagement. We have worked with leading development agencies, such as Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), to improve their work engaging young people; as well as building the capacity of hundreds of youth-led organisations across the world. We are able to offer tailored training and capacity building programmes, as well as a unique youth-led research methodology which can be applied to enhance partner's youth engagement strategies. Restless Development has adopted the youth-led research model that enables us to work with other organisations, to provide high quality youth-led research on youth employment, engagement and accountability.

Q: Tell us about your presence in India. We would also like to know about your programmes in the country.

A: Restless Development is an agency

for youth-led development, we work with young people so they can lead in solving the biggest challenges we are facing today. In India we work with young people from Delhi, Bihar, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. All our programmes are tailored and embedded into the ways of the specific community. They are driven and delivered by young people from the same community.

In Delhi and Jharkhand we work with the Government Senior Secondary Schools to deliver a tested curriculum which enables young girls to make an effective transition from education to employment. The curriculum is especially designed for girls in 10th and 12th standards.

Our 'Plan-It Girls' initiative, a school-based programme, aims to work with boys and girls aged 12-17 to promote gender equality norms through redefining masculinity and reflecting critically on inequitable gender norms and violence. Initially the project was designed only for young girls, but later it also started covering young boys studying in the Government Senior Secondary Schools.

The other programme we run in Bihar and Jharkhand is to amplify the reach of anti-child marriage initiatives. Restless Development as a member of the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right (SRHR) alliance in India works with a coalition of grassroots NGOs to build their capacity to address legal, cultural and normative factors that influence child marriages. The idea behind this project was to build an inclusive movement and strengthen the capacity of the grassroots NGOs to fight child marriage.

My favourite programme, which is based in all 4 states, is the Youth-Led Accountability for Gender Equality and Social Change. The project equips young people with knowledge, skills and platforms to effectively use real time data from their local communities and advocate change at local, national and international decision making forums. This project truly represents Restless Development's model for change, where young people from local communities are leading data collection and representing at high level forums to hold their governments accountable for the issues that are most important for young people and their communities.

Q: In terms of execution of programmes, we would like to know about your partners?

A: We implement all our programmes that are tailored and embedded into the communities. Our programmes are designed and delivered by young people from the communities we work with. We believe in the potential of young people.

We know that young people want to



▲ Restless Development's programmes are designed and delivered by youth

take the lead in development, and that one young person has the ability to influence many. We have been a witness to it on countless occasions.

Q: Changes that Restless Development intend to bring about in the near future.

A: A new generation is emerging, one that is more active, more connected and more able to lead the change needed than ever before. Young people are getting to the heart of our communities and demanding deep change to achieve their goals. They are also showing us how to connect; how to bridge the divide between international development and people's lives – leading to lasting

change across the world. Restless Development is championing a growing movement led by this new generation. Our vision is that everywhere young people are able to demand and deliver a just and sustainable world. The strategy is not about harnessing the power of youth to do what others think is best. It's about unleashing youth leadership as an agency of change in its own right. With our Restless Model putting youth at the heart of development, we believe to have the key to unlock this potential on a global scale. When young people all over the world would say, "Thanks, we'll take it from here," that day we would have a sense of achievement in the truest form. ■



▲ Youth volunteers gather data to achieve gender equality and family planning targets

▲ Youth-led Accountability Programme has its presence in four states in India

INVESTING IN RURAL INDIA...

ACF has built up a special expertise for community mobilisation and engagement, and has also created models which work for rural India

The global spotlight is upon India as an emerging economy, and our demographic and gender dividend has us poised for remarkable things in the future. Despite this great potential, inherent gifts and talents of our people, poverty continues to prevail. And as the urban rural divide deepens, it becomes our responsibility to ensure that as the country rises, so do all of its people - equitably.

Whilst India has seen some traction in development over the last few years, there is much yet to be done. Rural

communities, even today, lack basic infrastructure and connectivity. Whilst we may have some of the best policies in place to address these issues, how do we enable their reach at a grassroots level? There is a need to reach that last mile, which in India, is no small feat.

Ambuja Cement Foundation (ACF) has accepted this challenge – to create necessary awareness at that last mile, to demonstrate practices to solve problems, to organise people into social networks, build their capacity, help them take charge of their futures, and advocate bringing about a better quality of life in their own households.

Over the last 26 years of its mission, ACF has been able to achieve this last mile reach, honing a grassroots

▲ Clean drinking water availability is also a focus of ACF



approach. ACF has created sound models for its work - keeping livelihoods at the core. Yet there is much more work to be done, and the need of the hour is additional, collaborative investment in rural India.

Background

ACF began in 1993 when parent company, Ambuja Cements Limited (ACL) kick started community engagement in communities around its manufacturing plants. Its Chairman believed that as the company grew, rural communities and the people in them should grow too. So the focus remained on strengthening rural livelihoods, and fostering prosperity in villages.

But as the company deepened its work over time, expanding across 11 states and 2,073 villages, it realised that the problems in rural India were so vast, and that there was so much more to be done.

Livelihoods at the Core

Indeed, now more than ever, there is a need for a united approach to help facilitate rural transformation. Quality of life can only be achieved by enhancing livelihoods. What would that quality of life look like? It would be one where every human has the necessary capital he or she needs to earn a livelihood - because with a decent livelihood, a person can carve their own destiny.

ACF aims to generate such income levels that can meet 8 basic household needs: food, energy, housing, drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, education and social security. And this remains the focus of ACF's all programme verticals.

ACF has focused its efforts on the pressing issues of Water, Agriculture, Skills, Health, Women and Education. All these areas are integral to ACF's rural villages and positive changes in each of these areas has ripple effects across the entire community as a result.

A key differentiator and strength is ACF's ability to leverage the opportunities the government creates, by linking communities to various schemes and subsidies established to ensure that the people can avail of the benefits. ACF's role as a connector and enabler here is the key.

A key differentiator and strength is ACF's ability to leverage the opportunities the government creates, by linking communities to various schemes and subsidies

Ensuring People Participate in their Development

At ACF it is believed that every community must contribute to its own development. Unfortunately, the majority of India has got used to receiving things for free - 'donations' and 'subsidies' - therefore very often there is resistance to 'contributing and participating' to various projects. This can be a real set back because ACF believes, that in order for anything to be sustainable, the people themselves must 'buy in' and contribute to the project, financially or in-kind.

This approach has worked as far as ACL is concerned. Across all locations of ACL, community members contributed a total of almost Rs 19 crore last year - from building toilets to helping create water harvesting structures. Everyone pitched in and the community members now feel proud, responsible and empowered as a result. In order to overcome the initial resistance from communities, ACF team members do a lot of community



▲ ACF runs skilling institutes for rural youth



▲ Ambuja Manovikas Kendra improves the quality of life of differently-abled children

dialogue to involve people and help them see that this is the best way for sustainability in the future.

Challenges Along the Way ...

A big challenge also faced is around basic infrastructure. The places in which ACF works are often very remote and have electricity supply issues. This hampers ACF's plans for integrating e-learning and technology in village schools. Dearth of good quality buildings for initiating a skill institute add to the challenges. Poor road conditions also make it difficult for ACF team to reach out to isolated communities.

ACF also finds it difficult to get the right kind of technical people in the remote areas. This creates a roadblock because getting the right expertise on-ground is critical smooth functioning. ACF has addressed this by creating a team with sincere and interested local people and building

them up through training, to deliver quality services.

Lastly due to various other conflicts in the system, many potential partnerships are held back leading to the people losing out being the ones on the ground. From the get-go, we have wanted to be 'clean operators' and conduct our work with integrity - placing a lot of emphasis on core values. As a result, ACF has stuck to its values and that has put ACF in good stead with many stakeholders, who over time, have come forward to collaborate to do good, meaningful development work at the grassroots.

Why Rural India?

Primarily ACF is committed to rural India. By and large there is still so much work to be done in rural India so why shift the focus? And ACF has a firm belief that if India is going to flourish as an emerging economy, we need to uplift rural India.

In saying that, ACF has a strong Skill and Entrepreneurship Development programme. It runs institutes to skill rural youth. At the same time, if some skill training opportunities arise in semi urban or urban areas, ACF caters to it as well.

Over time ACF has built up a special expertise for community mobilisation and engagement, and has created models which work for rural India, such as the ability for 'last mile reach.'

ACF's efforts have shown tangible results across all programmatic areas. The customised monitoring system of ACF helps it generate enough data to ascertain impacts. ■

(Contribution by Ambuja Cement Foundation for The Good Sight)



▲ Women empowerment is a key functional area of ACF

Macro Impact Data

- Spent Rs. 160 crore to create water storage capacity of **55.60 mcm**; since 2000 till March 2019
- Increased from **1 crop to 3 crops** per year; since 2000 till March 2019
- Working with over **1,75,000** farmers across locations; since 2009 till March 2019
- 146 villages with 100% toilet coverage; **30,395** toilets constructed, since 2006 till March 2019
- **45,000** youth received skill training with 75% placement rate until since 2006 till March 2019
- **2,424** Self-Help Groups with a corpus of Rs 14.44 crore; since 1997 till March 2019
- Supported **150** schools and anganwadis and rehabilitated nearly 100 special children; since 1998 till March 2019
- **2,769** large village level institutions in places to ensure sustainability; since 1997 till March 2019



Over 69,000 Indians lost their lives from AIDS-related illnesses in 2017.

*(Source: USAID, Data 2018)

Help Delayed is Help Denied

SUPPORT TO END AIDS : RISE. ACT. CHANGE.

Give us a missed call @ 02249558055

f /EndAIDSIndia

@EndAIDSIndia

#EndAIDSIndia



FIGHT FOR SIGHT

Orbis and Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital come together to set up Bihar's first Children's Eye Centre



▲ Orbis and AJEH team members at the inaugural



▲ Orbis CEO Bob Ranck inaugurating the CEC

Suman was unable to regularly continue schooling as a result of her eye problem. She was diagnosed with cataract (clouding of the lens of the eyes) at Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital, Mastichak. The 12-year-old from Buxar travelled all the way to Mastichak along with her grandfather, who was immensely concerned about her condition.

Like all other specialisations, ophthalmology also requires a pediatric ophthalmology team to test children's eyes, examine, diagnose and treat their condition. With the Orbis support, Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital (AJEH) recently launched its Children's

Eye Center (CEC). It is the state's first ever CEC. The facility is up and running and has a promising team of expert pediatric ophthalmologists, optometrists, and other ophthalmic personnel.

But more than that, how does the CEC, inaugurated four months ago, help a child visiting the hospital? It has a child-friendly and colorful waiting area with toys and cartoons to engage children. In addition, the design of the waiting area ensures that they do not feel uncomfortable in an alien environment such as a hospital. The child patient room interiors are also colorful and the environment is

made child-friendly to ensure they do not have any danger of being hurt while being in the room during post-operative care.

Suman's diagnosis and the solution for her condition was a simple cataract removal surgery. But her predicament continued for 12 long years. Although enrolled in school, Suman was not able to study properly because of vision impairment. It translated to the loss of the basic right to education of a child. She was losing out on something as crucial as education but also on playing outdoors, making friends, finding a social circle, identifying her passion!

The Akhand Jyoti-Orbis Comprehensive Childhood Blindness Project helps address five of the sustainable development goals.

So, when she got her ability to see, she did not just find happiness but also the ability to reach her full potential within the classroom and even beyond.

The initiative in Bihar, in association with AJEH, is an Orbis attempt to address the vision problem of children like Suman who struggle with avoidable blindness. Since, 75% of all visual impairment can be prevented or treated, it means millions of children and adults would be able to see today if they had received timely, good quality eye care - the kind of care many of us take for granted. The CEC in Bihar will enable the Orbis partner

hospital reduce avoidable blindness and visual impairment among children in the state by developing affordable, sustainable, high quality child eye care services over the next six years.

Suman was elated to see clearly once her cataract was removed. She was very excited about being able to go out and play with her friends!

Mr. Mritunjay Tiwary, Founder and Head of AJEH, said during the CEC launch, "We firmly believe that irrespective of a person's capacity to pay, she/he should have access to world-class treatment. This initiative will contribute towards ensuring this.

In the coming years, we hope to see every child in Bihar being able to access quality eye care services in their own community, regardless of their social or economic background.”

As part of Orbis’ India Childhood Blindness Initiative (ICBI), 32 CECs have been established with Orbis support across 16 states of the country. It is the largest network of dedicated Children’s Eye Centers in the world.

The Akhand Jyoti-Orbis Comprehensive Childhood Blindness Project helps address five of the sustainable development goals. A child helped through this project will be able to see better which will help her/him to perform better academically giving him a fair opportunity to have a better career; the child’s family will earn more, and as a ripple effect a community has the potential to flourish in the long run as a result.

Orbis is a global non-governmental organisation that has been engaged in prevention and treatment of blindness for over 30 years. Orbis provides the skills, resources and knowledge needed to deliver accessible quality eye care. Working in collaboration with local partners, Orbis offers hands-on training, strengthens eye care infrastructure and advocates the prioritisation of eye health on public health agendas.

Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital is a non-profit eye hospital working towards eradicating curable blindness from the state of Bihar and empowering the women in the community to achieve this. It started as a 20 bedded facility in December 2005 in Mastichak and has developed into a 350 bedded

tertiary level hospital with satellite secondary care centers and primary care units in neighboring districts. ■

(Contribution by Orbis for The Good Sight)

▼ An elated Suman post surgery



Can solar power more than just lanterns?

India’s vulnerable and poor communities are now using solar energy to improve their lives in more ways than one

Tailor in Karnataka using a Solar Powered Sewing Machine



By purchasing technologies and solar energy systems through bank financed loans, individuals are improving their incomes, setting up businesses and providing employment to others

Solar energy, energy efficient health appliances and appropriate delivery models are helping health personnel provide vaccination, diagnosis and treatment at very last mile



Solar Powered Boat clinics in the Brahmaputra in Assam’s Riverine Islands



Solar Powered Digital Education in Government High Schools in Karnataka



Schools, day care centres, teachers and village leaders are making use of televisions, offline, appropriate content, interactive technologies to engage children better, improve their quality of education and make teaching easier

Innovations in technology, financing, ownership and delivery models can only exist and be implemented with a co-existing and symbiotic ecosystem of stakeholders, from varied industries and points of view

Do engage with us to know more, exchange ideas and collaborate. You can reach us by email at info@selcofoundation.org and by telephone on 080 2649 3145



SELCO Foundation
www.selcofoundation.org



▲ A colourful classroom developed by ThinkSharp Foundation

INFRASTRUCTURE – AN IMPERATIVE FOR STUDENTS’ HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

▲ An inclusive infrastructure can improve learning outcomes

Investing in an inclusive and well-thought-out infrastructure complementing the dynamic pedagogy in the long-run will add significant value to the students’ learning outcome

Schools are stepping stones to knowledge and success. It is a place where children not only learn the fundamentals of academics but also learn to adapt, co-exist and share while inculcating virtuous, moral application of life principles. An all-inclusive growth of a child begins

with the first steps into the school. It is imperative that the framework of the institution is robust and equipped with the right amenities to ensure a well-rounded and inclusive development of its students.

Holistic growth of a child depends on

various factors, school being one of the most significant among them. For a school system to deliver improved educational outcomes, the school environment must be conducive for learning. The quality, availability and the accessibility of infrastructure at schools impact various factors in a

child’s development, such as health, motivation to attend school and learning outcomes.

Children spend half of their day, every day, at the school. Access to basic amenities such as hygienic surroundings, clean toilets and hand-wash facilities, and safe drinking water at the school is a prerogative of every child.

World Bank’s education investment projects comprise school infrastructure as one of the

focal points. “Learning to Realize Education’s promise” – The Bank’s World Development Report 2018, focusses on the premise that school works for all learners and should have access to systems and facilities. It also focusses on the need to ascertain high quality of education. Efficient use of public resources in delivering the maximum benefits of education to all children must be recognised.

A study done by Barrett, Peter, Alberto Treves, Tigran Shmis, Diego Ambasz, and Maria Ustinova. 2019 - The

Impact of School Infrastructure on Learning: A Synthesis of the Evidence; suggests that not just access to schools but also access to safe and healthy spaces have an impact on a students’ learning outcomes. An appropriate ‘mix’ of the physical aspects of the schools which involve land and building structure, with the academic aspirations of a futuristic mode needs to be developed to maintain sustainability. A dynamic pedagogical practice can be supported by the physical layout of the schools. This can be accomplished either by

In its endeavour to go beyond the meals, the Akshaya Patra Foundation has embarked on an initiative for rejuvenation of Government schools

creating new schools or rejuvenate existing schools to ensure more structural adaptability to promote long term support for dynamic academic practices.

It is important to consider children's requirements in terms of infrastructure on a typical school day. Something as simple as a compound wall that defines the boundaries of the school space when the child enters the school premises, or a safe and hygienic environment to attend the assembly early in the morning can motivate children to attend the rest of the day at school and add a fillip to their day. Similarly, toilets, safe drinking water, sufficient and hygienic classrooms, safe space to have their meals, digital classrooms, open space to play, enough sports equipment and a well-equipped library form some of the essentials that impact a child's learning outcome besides the academic curriculum.

Investing in an inclusive and well-thought-out infrastructure complementing the dynamic pedagogy in the long-run will add significant value to the students' learning outcome. Today, many NGOs are striving to embed a balance between the two and are approaching schools to carry out interventions such as health and hygiene awareness, infrastructure development, provision

of drinking water, among others. Akshaya Patra, an implementing agency for Government's Midday Meal (MDM) programme, is now venturing into schools. In its endeavour to go beyond the meals, the Foundation has embarked on an initiative for rejuvenation of Government schools. While assessing the impact of the MDM at the beneficiary schools, it became evident that the overall development of the school environment needs to be focussed on. Akshaya Patra launched the 'Government school rejuvenation programme' and inaugurated its first rejuvenated school – GLPS Ravindranagar, in December 2018.

Interventions were carried out on various levels including but not limited to infrastructure (development of compound wall – repair and paint), education, health, hygiene and

sanitation awareness. Building toilet blocks, hand-washing station, kitchen garden, digital classroom, provision of safe drinking water and even yoga classes were some of the interventions carried out at the school. Complete rebuilding of Anganwadi existing on the same campus. In the coming academic year, the Foundation plans to rejuvenate more beneficiary schools in various interventions

School rejuvenation programmes are the need of the hour. The look and feel of the premises will always make schools appealing not just to the children, but also for their parents. An inclusive, well-planned school infrastructure can ensure increased enrolment, reduce dropouts and improve learning outcomes. ■

(Contribution by Akshaya Patra Foundation for The Good Sight)

▼ A well-thought-out infrastructure complements dynamic pedagogy



Indo-Global Social Service Society

"I am able to support my husband and feel equally proud to contribute to the family"

-Vandana, Kastura Village, Amravati.

Her PRIDE is many of thousands who are striding towards a LIFE with FREEDOM and DIGNITY.

20 States

102 Districts

441554 individuals

SINCE 1961, INDO GLOBAL SOCIAL SERVICE SOCIETY (IGSSS) IS ENABLING THE POOREST URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES IN UNREACHED INDIA TO BREAK FREE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION, TO ACHIEVE A POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION IN THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.

Urban Poverty Reduction

Climate Change Adaptation

Youth Development

Disaster Risk Reduction

Gender Equity

Sustainable livelihood

Contact: doc@igsss.net; 011-45705000

Rural artisans weave magic, receive European Product Design Award

Through the Artisan Originals initiative rural men and women who have either had no education or just primary education, have stunned the world with original designs competing with professional designers and mega design houses on the global stage

▼ The hand woven rug having lehariya pattern



Weaver couple, Parvati and Bagchand from Kekri village in Rajasthan defeated global design houses to win the prestigious European Product Design Award, 2019 for their rug Sawan ka Lehariya – woven and conceptualised by them together. The rug is a part of the Artisan Originals collection under which weavers become the designers of their own rug. This collection experiments with the originality of rural craftsmen and nurtures their creative potential, which is unexplored at the global stage.

This rug is a beautiful story of the chemistry between the couple who started off by weaving two very different designs on the rug. While Parvati designed lehariya patterns on the rug, Bagchand was making diamond like motifs in a very systematic manner.

Initially, Bhagchand insisted Parvati to imitate his design, but Parvati refused to follow him and kept designing her own thing. As the rug progressed, the couple's neighbors saw the design and preferred Parvati's design more. Following that Bhagchand took cues from Parvati's design and both of them started weaving the lehariya pattern. "All the credit for this rug goes to my wife. If it wasn't for her, this rug wouldn't have looked so beautiful", says Bhagchand with a smile.

The European Product Design Award™ was created to recognise the efforts of talented international product designers who aim to improve our daily lives with their practical, well-thought-out creations. It rewards the strategic thinking and imagination

"All the credit for this rug goes to my wife. If it wasn't for her, this rug wouldn't have looked so beautiful."

- Bhagchand

which goes into making a great product. Farmani Group assembled European Product Design Award to bring attention to international product design and promote the winning designers to the prominent audience in Europe.

Jaipur Rugs is a social business that connects rural craftsmanship with global markets through its luxurious handmade carpets. It offers an exclusive range of hand knotted and hand-woven rugs made using a traditional art form. The carpets are contemporary, transitional and eclectic in design and are currently exported to over 60 countries and 135 cities. The company has a retail presence in India, US, China and Russia.

The social enterprise has a strong grassroots connect and works with close to 40,000 artisans in 600 villages in India, providing families with sustainable livelihood at their door steps. Each rug passes through 180 hands, perfecting the timeless art of carpet weaving. Every rug brings to the cities the stories of its weaver and binds together the lives of rural artisans with urban consumers. The goal of Jaipur Rugs is to keep alive the art of carpet weaving and use business as an agent of change and progression.

Through its bottom-up business model the organisation has impacted 1,29,200 lives and created 40,000 jobs directly and indirectly in some of the most impoverished regions of India.

This initiative has been introduced by Jaipur Rugs which taps into the untamed fashion from the villages of India. It experiments with the originality of rural craftsmen to nurture their creative potential, which is unexplored at a global stage. For the first time ever, weavers get to be the designers of their own rugs. Each rug in the collection is a masterpiece for the design inspiration it weaves. It is imbued with the individuality of its artisan evident in unique artistry. This collection has won numerous awards including the German Design Award, Elle Décor Award, Carpet Design Award (runners up) and the European Product Design Award.

Through the Artisan Originals initiative rural men and women who have either had no education or just primary education, have stunned the world with original designs competing with professional designers and mega design houses on the global stage. This one of its kind social innovation has resulted in important transformations in the life of the weavers.

It has renewed their passion for weaving, given them self-confidence and recognition from their own communities. They have discovered themselves in a way they had never imagined. The project has facilitated the economic transformation of weavers who used to work as mere wage earners. ■

(All inputs by JRF)

Housing with trust

Taking multi-faceted approach towards ensuring decent housing for poor, Mahila Housing Trust's interventions enable the participation of poor communities in government housing programmes

In 2002, women from Abuji Na Chapra slum in Ahmedabad approached Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) to implement infrastructure upgrades in their slum under the Parivartan Slum Networking programme, an initiative that involved a public-private partnership (PPP) towards slum redevelopment, instead of the resident displacement programmes that had been unsuccessfully tried in the past.

These women dreamed of formal connection and basic comforts, but their slum had no infrastructure. Most women had to trek daily to the public tap on the road for water and wait in lines for using the shared community toilets. Their homes were built with materials like cement sheets, plastic covers, and corrugated tin sheets and had almost no natural light and ventilation, this created stuffy and hot living conditions. However, under the Parivartan

Slum Networking programme, there was a chance for upgrades.

MHT responded by first engaging with the community: conducting several area meetings, folk media and video shows, informing them about the details and the intent of slum networking project, and building consensus around the initiative. As MHT organisers facilitated the formation of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), it looked for natural leaders within communities to take charge of the development process.

MHT then trained these leaders to actively interface with government, take charge of the slum improvement processes and bargain collectively for improvements. By end of 2005, these women leaders were able to raise the desired community contribution and secure individual water and sanitation services for the whole community. They were also able to work with the government to get paved roads and street lighting which improved the living conditions in their slum.

In 2010, a developer approached the slum residents with a plan to rehouse them in formal flats on the same land under AMC's public-private-partnership programme. However, some residents were skeptical to participate and feared losing their homes. "The slum dwellers perceived SRS (Slum Rehabilitation Scheme) either as a novel eviction strategy of the government, or an opportunity



▲ Electricity in slum housing is ensured by MHT

for the developer to usurp the land on which they were presently located," said one report on the redevelopment. A total of 12 legal cases were filed by slum dwellers to block the changes.

With MHT's support, the CBO leaders in the slum convinced the community to participate. It took two long years of paperwork and several neighbourhood meetings to finally start the implementation. Even so, as the bulldozers readied to raze the holdout homes, a small group of women protested saying they'd commit suicide if necessary. Hundreds of riot police stood guard.

CBO leader Geetaben Thakore reflected on the time she spent convincing residents to sign on to the development project. "I felt like I was doing a good job – doing something good for the community," says Thakore. "But they just weren't agreeing."

In November 2014, the four-storied Shanta Deep Cooperative Housing Society was inaugurated and the residents were welcomed back to homes outfitted with running water, natural light, enough space that no family members need to sleep outside and roofs that do not leak. All the apartments have titles.

Recently, Geetaben Thakore got a call from a neighboring slum community asking her for help in upgrading their development as well. Empowered by her success in her home community, Geetaben Thakore, who was once

▼ MHT builds capacities of grassroots women



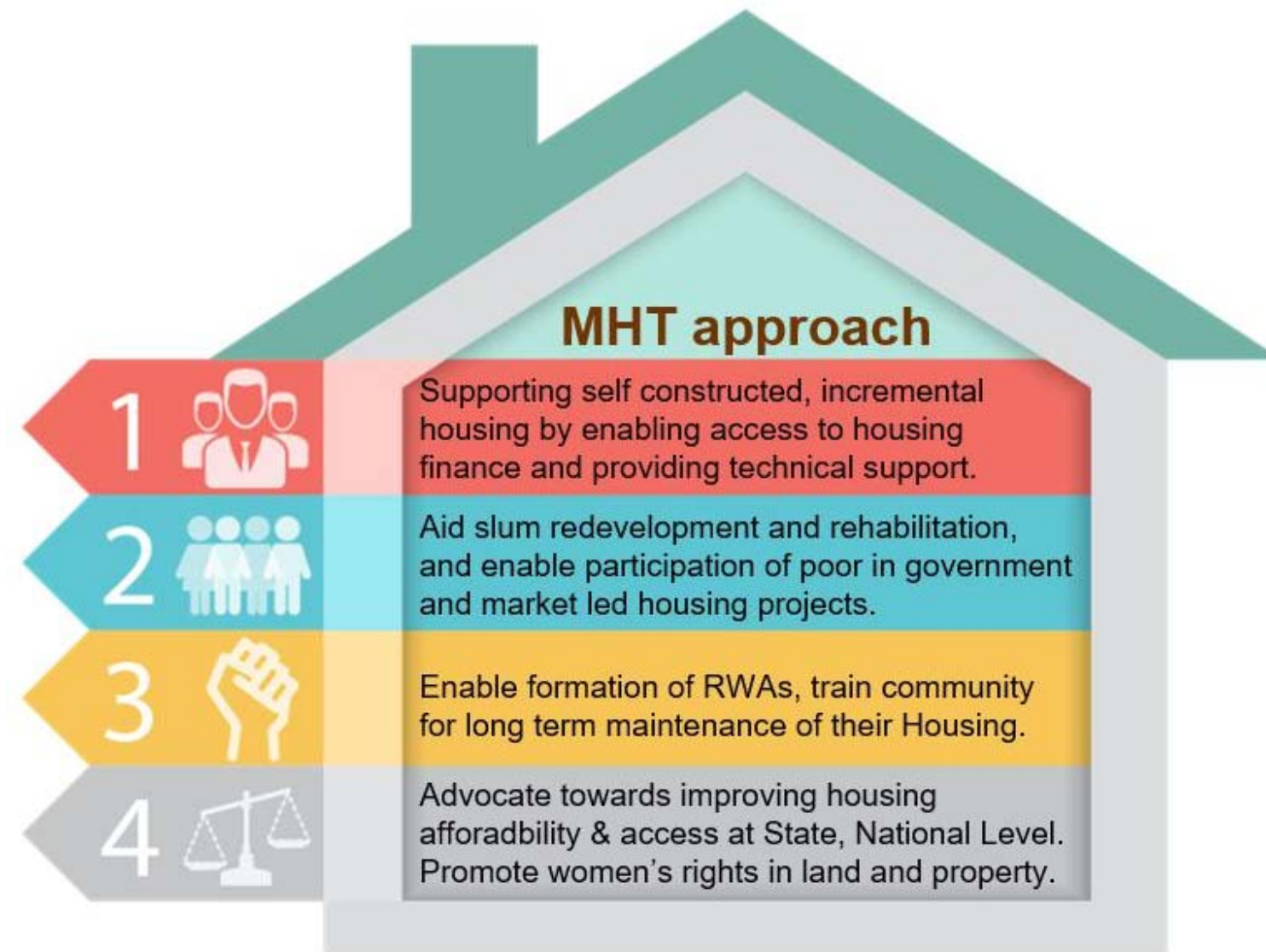
MHT supports poor families in buying units in government-led subsidised housing schemes as well as private affordable housing projects by communicating information about new schemes, helping them in the application process and mobilising the required earnest money

afraid to speak in public said: “I didn’t know I was so strong. After I joined MHT, I learned I can do it. And I will do it.”

Mahila Housing Trust

Following the global trajectory of population movement towards cities, India too is seeing a rapid growth in urbanisation. As per the census in 2011, one-third of the country is dwelling in urban areas. By 2050, India could see an additional 416 million urban dwellers – a number larger than the present day population of the United States of America. Most of this rapidly migrating population currently lives in slums and informal settlements and works in the informal sector, without housing allowances, social security provisions and the nature of employment is almost always temporary. In the face of the added vulnerabilities caused by climate change, public housing is more than just a need for this population.

Recognising the challenges of expensive formal housing, growing slum population and highly deteriorating housing conditions in India, the Government of India always recognises the problem through its large-scale housing schemes, whether under Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP), Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Rajiv Awas Yojna (RAY) or the most recent Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). As per the most recent plans, the focus is on infrastructure provision. Various models are being experimented with and implemented, such as (Public



▼ Promotion of energy efficient light bulbs by MHT



Private Partnership) model, beneficiary-led construction, credit subsidy for incremental housing, in-situ slum upgradation and regularising the existing slums or informal settlements.

Established in 1994, Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) is an autonomous organisation with the overall objective of improving habitat conditions of poor women in the informal sector. Housing and land rights is one of the eight focus areas of MHT. Taking the multi-faceted approach towards ensuring decent housing for poor, MHT’s interventions enable the participation of poor communities in government housing programmes.

- **Micro-lending for self-constructed housing**
Of the 10 houses constructed in India, seven are constructed by the people themselves, two by the government and one by the private sector. MHT supports self-constructed, incremental housing by providing financial and technical support to ensure that the houses are structurally safe with efficient layouts and access to adequate light, ventilation and basic infrastructure.
- **Building stake for slum residents in redevelopment projects**
Several city governments in India are exploring a public-private partnership (PPP) approach to slum redevelopment that involves participation of private developers in the provision of housing. The focus of MHT’s interventions in the PPP redevelopment projects is to create an environment of better accountability and build a legal stake for the slum dwellers, especially women in the entire process to ensure that a) their interests are not marginalised and they have equal property rights, b) they are involved in decision making regarding design and governance and c) women are actively involved in community management as members of Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs).
- **Surveying residents for government housing programmes**
Over the years, MHT has built capacities of grassroots women in collecting and maintaining data on socio-economic characteristics and physical conditions of slum households. It works with local governments to create and update slum databases, and in the process



▲ MHT advocates pro-poor housing policies

also train slum communities to collect, analyse and use this data to provide local inputs in city-level planning efforts.

• Ensuring land rights for the poor

MHT supports poor households to get their lands registered in their own name. However, regularising tenure on such properties is a long and expensive legal process. MHT believes that too much insistence on this absolutist approach emphasising formal titles in the short term can also prove detrimental to the development of poor depriving them of their entitlements to basic services. MHT hence adopts a gradualist approach of progressive tenure security that encourages the poor to establish land rights and create assets in their name in the interim.

• Linking poor families to affordable housing options

MHT supports poor families in buying units in government-led subsidised housing schemes as well as private affordable housing projects by communicating information about new schemes, helping them in the application process and mobilising the required

earnest money. MHT also assists families that are selected for allotment process in accessing housing finance and securing possessions.

• Advocating for housing reforms

MHT advocates with government at all levels to institute pro-poor housing policies and programmes. The main focus is on streamlining procedures and ensuring better transparency and accountability in government schemes. MHT has been invited to serve on various state and national-level committees and represent the voices and concerns of the poor on these policy dialogues. MHT was a member of the slum notification committee of the Government of Gujarat, the prime PMO task force for Affordable Housing and the Steering Committee on Affordable Housing and Poverty Alleviation for the 12th Five-Year Plan. After allotment of housing units, MHT also works closely with the residents to form Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and trains them to manage and monitor community infrastructure. MHT also recognises that direct provision of housing by the government alone will not be able to solve the affordable housing crisis in India. To bring in large-scale change, market housing will also have to be made more affordable and accessible for the poor. Towards this, MHT works with government at all levels influencing policies, negotiating urban town planning and tenural systems, and advocating for removing regulatory constraints.

• Conservation

Ahmedabad, where MHT's main office is located, has become the first Indian city to be declared as a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Pols, or densely packed traditional houses are an important part of the urban fabric of the city and MHT has begun restoration projects in Pols across Ahmedabad. Working with Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, MHT works with community members within the Pols to restore traditional wells, upgrade rooftop rainwater harvesting infrastructure, support HTDR application for residents, improve public area of heritage precinct and increase awareness of these areas through heritage walks and community education sessions.

• Sustainability

As slum housing is upgraded and infrastructure



▲ A housing project completed through MHT

improvements are made, climate resilience and energy are key components to ensuring that homes are prepared to protect residents from heat stress and natural disaster. MHT works with women living in urban slum settlements not only to ensure that slum housing has electricity, but that homes themselves are energy efficient. This involves using energy efficient equipment, changing the physical structure of their households, and reducing heat stress. The goal is to not only improve the housing of slum dwellers, but to reducing expenditures, build resilience against climate change, and increase savings through using efficient technologies. In addition, MHT has trained women from slums as energy auditors, promoted the use of sustainable housing materials, conducted research on the indoor design needs of low income professionals, and installing 'modroofs,' a technology to combat heat stress. ■

Impact by Numbers

Land Rights

- 545 households are regularised through impact fee
- 1,380 households claimed ownership of their land through intermediate mechanisms
- 5,528 households benefiting from MHT developed housing
- 361 households obtained patta

Housing

- 6,560 households reached through the programme
- 98 slums covered under the programme
- 1,032 households benefiting from public housing (government led)
- 5,528 households benefiting from MHT developed housing

(Contribution by MHT for The Good Sight)

SMALL FARMERS TO SMART FARMERS

The Farmers Field School (FFS) approach has emerged as an effective tool to empower small farmers and ensuring food security

Shikha Srivastava and Sukanya Chatterjee



▼ Red gram cultivation under FFS initiative

Small and marginal farmers with less than two hectares of land account for 86.2% of all farmers in India, but they own just 47.3% of the crop area (as per the agriculture census, 2015-16). Their assets and livelihood are completely dependent on climate sensitive production. Climate change and unsustainable practices have affected the farming ecosystem. Unable to cope with the weather vagaries, small farmers are facing crop failures and reduced production. Increased losses in agriculture production are causing distressed migration, making them more vulnerable. On the other hand, demand for food is increasing and poor and vulnerable people are facing food shortage. The availability of land cannot be increased; therefore the significant mass of these small farmers hold the key to increased food production. Against this context there is an urgent need to work with small farmers to intensify food production. In the wake climate change, small farmers need new agri-techniques and knowledge to adopt climate resilient practices. They need an empowering ecosystem for sustainably managing and improving production.

Government and voluntary organisations have initiated many programmes to support these farmers with climate-smart agricultural techniques. However, the huge population of 126 million famers (as per the agriculture census 2015-2016), pose a gigantic challenge in reaching out to each and every small farmer and build there resilience towards climate change. Despite well thought out of intervention plans, series of training on improved practices are not enough to enable the vulnerable community to comprehend and adopt it. It is common to see that learnings are often picked up by a handful, mainly those with the initiative and motivation from among the vulnerable community. Often, activities are also implemented in isolation of complementary activities. The Farmers Field School (FFS) approach has emerged as an effective tool to empower small farmers and ensuring food security.

Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS), working for over five decades on building capacities of the most marginalised, has adopted the FFS approach in many of its projects across India. In one of the projects namely “Promoting Agri Enterprise among Vulnerable Families (PAVE)”, IGSSS is promoting FFS to exclusively empower small plot holders in drought affected areas. The project

is being implemented in the 15 villages of Gola block, Ramgarh district, Jharkhand.

Understanding Farmer Field School Approach

FFS is a proven and effective participatory approach to build capacities of marginal farmers through practical demonstrations for promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices. The FFS approach stress on active problem solving and learning by doing. It values building local knowledge and leaderships for its replication and sustainability. The pedagogy of FFS emphasis on following:

Forming

Potential farmers are identified and FFS groups are formed, with their participation, a plan of action is developed.

Nurturing

This is the intensive training phase when farmers undergo weekly/fortnightly/monthly sessions in a nearby community field, which is a controlled demonstration plot, where practical knowledge & skills are transferred.

Practicing and Promoting

After acquiring the skills & becoming confident they replicate it in their fields for dissemination to the wider community, through informal communication and on-field farming.

Farmers Field School: Experiences from the Field

Pre-project assessment in the 15 villages revealed a shift from traditional drought resistant crops like millets, kodo, kotki, etc, to growing staple foods (rice, wheat), vegetables and small animal rearing based livelihood. Assessment highlighted the agricultural practices like broadcast seeding, use of high yielding and hybrid seed, excessive consumption of chemical fertilizers. Erratic rainfall, dry spells, drought like conditions and water intensive cultivation led to enormous water stress in the villages. When IGSSS started its work, it was important to reach out to maximum farmers to alter the prevalent agricultural practices. It was a challenging task to



▲ A Farmers reaps the benefits of FFS

convince farmers for modifying the present practices and adopt new ecologically sustainable techniques. FFS proved to be an effective tool in demonstrating improved and climate-smart practices and encourage its replication with multiplier effect. IGSSS planned out demonstration of key agri-practices through FFS with carefully selected cadre of participants in consultation with the Village Development Committees (VDC), the apex village bodies. Without disturbing the cropping pattern, climate-smart techniques such as Systematic Rice Intensification (SRI), Systematic Wheat Intensification (SWI) and Systematic Mustard Intensification (SMI) were introduced. Drought resistant varieties of paddy, cultivation of pulses and oil seeds like red gram, green gram and groundnut, vegetables which require less water, are also being promoted through FFS.

Implementation Process

At the outset, 15 villages were divided into three clusters. In discussion with the VDCs, based on interest and local conditions, climate-smart practices for demonstration at each FFS was identified. The VDCs also helped to identify approximately 50 farmers from each cluster. Priority was given to the needy and interested farmers who would replicate the learnings in their own villages after training. These identified farmers who agreed to participate in FFS became the lead farmers. For three years, 24 improved practices were identified in total.

For the first year, two climate-smart practices per cluster were identified, one for Kharif season and another for Rabi season. To explain the process, we will take the example of how FFS was implemented during Kharif season in 2018.

The first cluster of 44 farmers decided to adopt the SRI technique. Detailed inputs such as line sowing, appropriate spacing, seed treatment, nursery raising, field preparation, seed sowing, weed management etc were provided to them. Sharing by these lead farmers motivated an additional 110 farmers to adopt the SRI method for paddy in their fields. In total SRI was demonstrated in 46 acres of land.

Farmers harvested 6 quintals per acre from SRI plot while production from non-SRI plots was 3.25 quintals per acre, which was a significant increase in the yield and at lower cost as SRI required much lesser amounts of seeds. The beneficiaries of the project areas are now convinced with these techniques. They have also committed to do SRI next year on a much larger scale.

The FFS training motivated farmers to initiate pulse cultivation on a small scale in the second cluster. Inter cropping of red gram and ground nut was introduced to 48 farmers. 123 farmers replicated inter cropping in

Farmer Field School sessions motivates Aonradih Village couple take up Vegetable Cultivation

Suman Devi from Aorandih village is very thrilled with her homestead garden where she has grown cauliflower, cabbage, beans and ridge gourd for the first time. Her husband migrates for work every year, leaving her behind with two little children. This year, both Suman and her husband were present at FFS training where he was requested to stay back at least one season. He learnt about mixed vegetable farming and stayed back to help his wife. Suman is motivated as she earned Rs. 31,230/- this season from sale of vegetables. *“All my neighbours would cultivate some vegetables or the other, but I couldn’t do anything. Now I am very happy, as I am able to cultivate vegetables for myself and my family.”*



discussion with the lead farmers. Pulses being a drought resilient crop have brought in 20 acres of fallow land under cultivation. Pulse cultivation led to the augmenting soil fertility by fixing nitrogen in soil.

In the Gola region there is vast scope of vegetable cultivation but a general trend is to cultivate one type of vegetable in a single plot. As a result in case of pest attacks or other natural calamities, the whole crop used to get affected. Through FFS, the third cluster of 58 farmers learnt about mixed cropping of vegetable and decided to cultivate vegetables like bottle gourd, brinjal, tomato, chilli, maize, bitter gourd, pumpkin. This was replicated by 170 additional farmers and a total of 30 acres of land was brought under mixed cropping. Farmers harvested varieties of vegetables in a single season and used it for their personal consumption and sale.

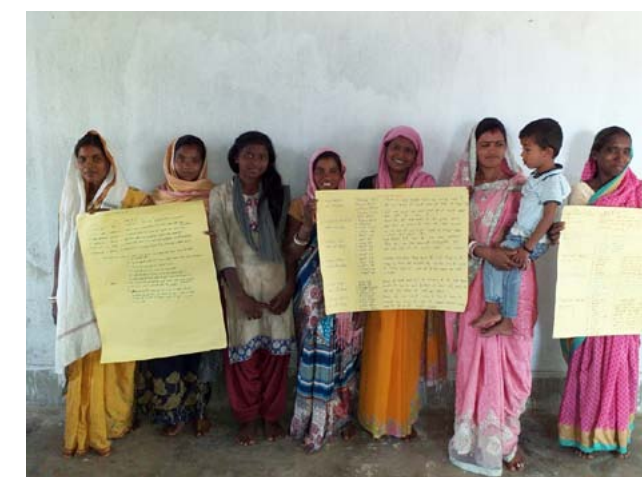
A similar process was adopted for the Rabi season. The three farmer field schools demonstrated mulching techniques for tomato and chilly, poly nursery for vegetable plantation and Semialata plantation for lac cultivation.

Replication Strategy

A brief summary of the outcomes of the Kharif season revealed that there has been an organic replication of

the learnings where other farmers have initiated these practices following the examples of the lead farmers. However, for a sustained change, the following strategies are being employed to accelerate effective replication of climate-smart practices with a wider group:

1. Lead farmers are being developed as master trainers over the time. The mix of theory and practical experience equip them to support other farmers.
2. Formal platforms for sharing of experiences among the clusters are being created to learn and support from each other.



▲ Marginalised farmers are capacitated under FFS initiative



▲ Under the FFS initiative, farmers undergo training

How Replication happens?

Step 1: Sharing of experiences about a climate-smart practice by lead farmers with other farmers, facilitated by VDC.



Step 2: As per the interest, other farmers join the lead farmers for replicating. Along with lead farmer, a plan for replication is developed.



Step 3: A memorandum of understanding is signed between the lead farmers and interested farmers.



- Lead farmers are the pillar of this whole approach. Clear roles and responsibilities of lead farmers have been defined. A memorandum has been signed by the lead farmers, which says that they will be taking responsibility of five farmers each, to replicate the technical knowledge of agriculture and for this they will not receive any form of remuneration from IGSSS.
- VDCs have accepted the responsibility to monitor the commitments of both the lead farmers as well as those who will learn from the lead farmers. Jointly, farmers and VDC will track the replication and adoption in each village basis sowing details, input details, production and area.

Conclusion

The FFS sessions during 2018 has yielded good results for the farmers. In a very short span of time, various agri-practices have been effectively demonstrated which has aided the adoption. 150 farmers participated in FFS and they motivated 403 more farmers to adopt climate-smart practices. The impact and outreach amplified with the use of this approach. The replication also happened because the practices were very local context specific and the farmers were able to see the benefits by comparing demonstration sites with other sites. Community reported increased food availability; cash in hand and reduction in distressed migration

The most significant facet of the whole approach is that it engages farmers as co-creator, partner and not mere recipient of the knowledge. It empowers farmers by actively partnering with them in analysing, experimenting and finding solutions to manage the complexities arising out of changing climate.

The approach aided in creating understanding on the ecologically sustainable practices. The farmers promoted climate-smart practices that conserve and nurture natural resources like water and soil.

FFS has proved to be an effective empowering tool for farmers in continuously discovering, creating and adopting climate-smart agricultural practices for sustainable livelihood. It is playing a very crucial role in ensuring food diversity and food security for rural poor. It makes perfect business case too as with fewer resources a wider and sustainable impact can be reached. ■



WHEN A GIRL FINDS HER VOICE, THE WORLD AROUND HER BEGINS TO CHANGE!

TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OUR PROGRAMMES, VISIT
WWW.VOICE4GIRLS.ORG
WWW.SOCHFORCHANGE.ORG

Disclaimer: The content in The Good Sight is for information purpose only. The Good Sight assumes no liability or responsibility for any inaccurate, delayed or incomplete information, nor for any actions taken in reliance thereon. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors/organisations and do not necessarily reflect the position of The Good Sight.

For contribution, feedback or queries, reach us at
tgoodsight@gmail.com
