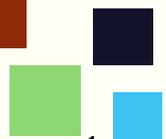
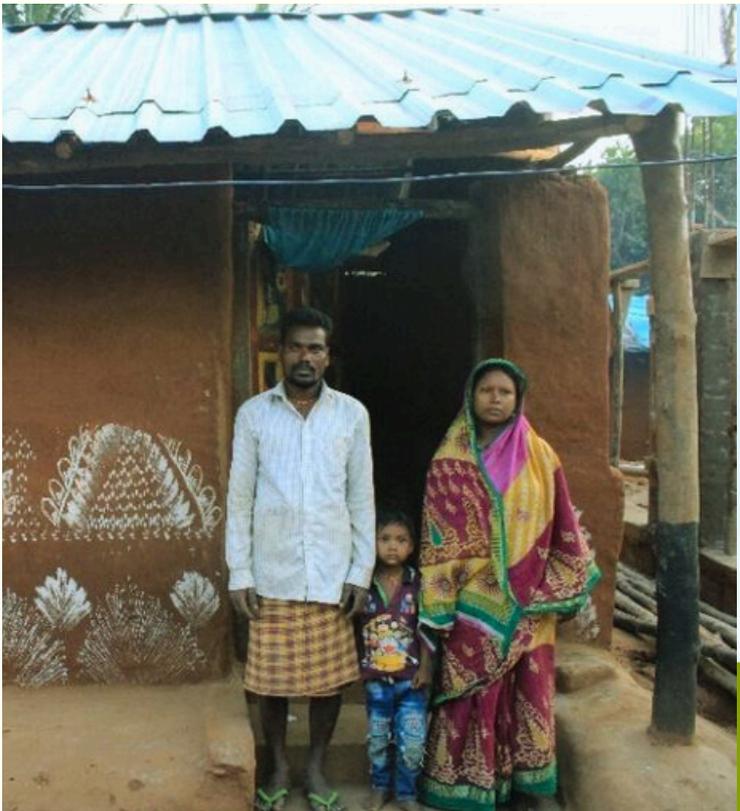




# AGENTS OF CHANGE

## ODISHA'S

### CIVIL SOCIETY TODAY



# Contribution of Civil Society Organisations in Odisha



**Author:** Voluntary Action Network India

**October 2025**

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# Executive Summary

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in India have played a crucial role in driving social, economic, and environmental development, often working tirelessly in the most challenging and underserved areas of the country. This compendium, *“Contribution of Civil Society Organisations in Odisha,”* highlights their dedication, resilience, and innovative efforts in addressing the diverse challenges faced by communities. This compilation aims to document and recognize the contributions of CSOs, showcasing their impactful initiatives and the difference they have made. From fostering education, health, and sustainable livelihoods to promoting women’s empowerment, climate justice, and participatory governance, these organizations have significantly enhanced the development narrative of Odisha.

The purpose of this initiative is twofold. First, it seeks to address the lack of documentation of the outstanding work undertaken by CSOs, ensuring their efforts are acknowledged. Second, it aims to provide a resource for policymakers, academicians, and practitioners to draw insights and learn from the innovative approaches and best practices featured within these pages.

Through a blend of organizational profiles, thematic interventions, and success stories this compendium showcases how CSOs have leveraged grassroots connections and community participation to drive change. It also reflects on the lessons learned and challenges faced, offering valuable perspectives for the sector’s future efforts.

This initiative is part of Voluntary Action Network India’s (VANI) broader effort to strengthen and promote the positive narrative of and the civil society sector in India. We express our sincere gratitude to the CSOs featured in this compendium for their invaluable contributions and to our state-level partners who have supported this documentation process. We hope this compendium serves as a source of inspiration and knowledge for stakeholders across the development ecosystem.

We thank our core partner and donor organization, IM Sweden, for supporting VANI in this initiative. This document underscores the transformative impact of collective action and highlights the essential role of CSOs in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Harshvrat Jaitli  
Chief Executive Officer, VANI



## Introduction & Methodology of Compiling the document

The methodology for this compendium was designed to systematically document the contributions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the state, with Centre for Youth and Social Development, CYSD serving as a critical partner to ensure a localized and comprehensive approach.

### Key Methodological Steps

#### 1. Partnership with Centre for Youth and Social Development, CYSD

CYSD, a trusted local organization in Odisha, with deep-rooted expertise, was engaged to facilitate connections with grassroots CSOs, ensuring authenticity and cultural relevance in the documentation process.

#### 2. Thematic Data Collection

Focus on key thematic areas such as education, health, environment, and women's empowerment. Information was gathered on the mission, activities, and impact of CSOs in these domains.

#### 3. Identification of Sector Leaders

VANI collaborated with Centre for Youth and Social Development, CYSD to identify and profile sector leaders and under-recognized activists whose contributions were significant yet overlooked. This included personal interviews and case studies.

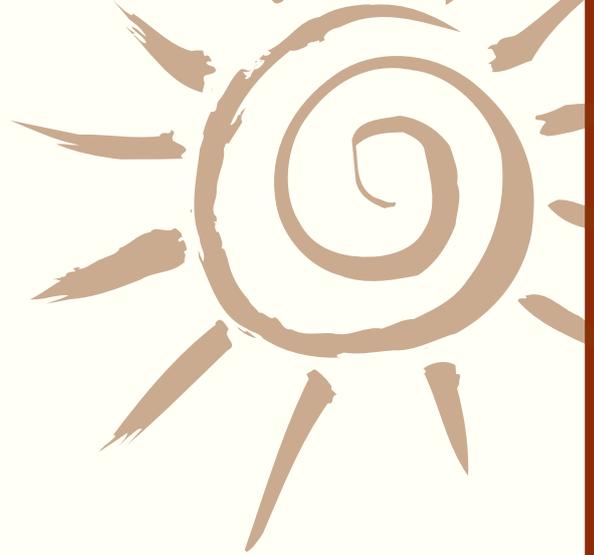
#### 4. Documentation Process

Detailed profiles of CSOs were compiled, including their history, target population, key milestones, and thematic achievements.

Both qualitative narratives (e.g., success stories) and quantitative data (e.g., metrics of impact) were collected.

#### 5. Multimedia Initiatives

Development of a podcast series "Conversations with visionaries" featuring interviews with CSO leaders to capture personal insights and experiences.



## Framework for Analysis and Presentation

- CSOs were selected based on criteria such as credibility, impact, and thematic focus.
- Structured templates were used to ensure consistency across organizational profiles and thematic articles.
- Data and findings were organized into comprehensive sections, including organizational history, thematic engagement, milestones, and learnings.

The methodology emphasized a participatory approach, with ongoing feedback loops between VANI, Centre for Youth and Social Development, CYSD and CSOs. This ensured the accuracy and robustness of the final documentation. The collaborative approach with CYSD enhanced the compendium's depth, making it a reliable resource for policymakers, researchers, and CSOs.

CYSD's dedication to fostering collaboration among Civil Society Organizations and amplifying grassroots voices has enriched the documentation process, making it both comprehensive and authentic. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Jagadananda, Co-Founder and Mentor of CYSD and Mr. Jagateswar Parida, Senior Manager, Communication from CYSD for supporting us in compiling this document.

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## Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD)

[www.cysd.org](http://www.cysd.org)

### Background of the Organisation

Established in 1982, CYSD is a not-for-profit development organization registered under the Societies Registration Act. It was born out of a pressing need to address the grim realities of rural Odisha in the early 1980s a time marked by extreme poverty, illiteracy, and a collapsing village economy. Voluntary organizations were few, often operating with limited vision and traditional approaches. The idea of CYSD was seeded during the Odisha Voluntary Agencies Meet in January 1981, where NGOs and action groups came together to deliberate on emerging development challenges. Inspired by these discussions, two former National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers, Shri P. K. Sahoo (the former Chairman) and Shri Jagadananda (the current Member-Secretary)—founded CYSD to professionalize the voluntary sector and provide space for committed individuals to contribute meaningfully to social development.

In its initial years, CYSD relied heavily on volunteers' support. By 1985, it began inducting full-time development professionals to scale its impact. The organization's mission focuses on improving the quality of life of tribal and rural poor communities by eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promoting access to education and entitlements, enhancing public service delivery, and building resilient, inclusive community-based institutions.

CYSD's early interventions emphasized youth leadership, social mobilization, reviving traditional institutions, and organizing women into Self Help Groups (SHGs). Over time, its work evolved to include non-formal education for out of school children, natural resource management, micro-credit and entrepreneurship support for women, and the promotion of decentralized governance. The organization played a pivotal role in strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions, ensuring equitable participation of women and marginalized communities in local governance.

Today, CYSD continues to stand as a catalyst for inclusive and participatory development across Odisha, rooted in voluntarism, innovation, and social justice.

CYSD envisions an equitable society where women and men can freely realise their full potential, fulfil their rights and responsibilities and lead their life with dignity and self-respect.

- **Target Population:** Presently, CYSD's work is guided by its Strategic Plan (2022–2027), which focuses on four key impact groups: tribal communities, disaster-vulnerable communities, distressed migrants, and the urban poor.

- **Outreach:** Through its various initiatives, CYSD has directly reached over 6 lakh individuals across 1,387 villages in 32 blocks of 12 districts in Odisha - Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Bhadrak, Kendrapada, Khurda and Puri. Indirectly, it extends its impact across all districts of the state through a robust network of partner organizations.

## SUPPORT ENTITIES

CYSD had/has established formal partnerships across government, civil society, academia, and the private sector to advance tribal livelihoods in Odisha.

- **Government Partners:** Government of India - Ministry of Tribal Affairs, MANAGE under Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Department, Government of Odisha – Planning & Convergence Department, Department of SC & ST Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment, Department of Higher Education, District Mineral Foundation, Integrated Tribal Development Agencies, Gopabandhu Academy of Administration, State Institute of Rural Development, OTELP, SCSTRTI, District Rural Development Agency, Odisha Millets Mission, ATMA and Odisha Khadi and Village Industries Board, NCDS, NABARD, etc.
- **International Donors:** Ford Foundation; European Union, Digital Green, In Net Ltd., HSBC, Christian Aid, CAF America, IRC, Civil Society Academy, Dr. Dash Foundation, BOARDA, OXFAM-NOVIB, MISEREOR, Concern Worldwide, Plan International, DFID, Kusuma Trust, Bernard van Leer Foundation (BVLFF), American Jewish World Service, etc.
- **UN Agencies:** UNICEF, UNDP, UNWOMEN, UNFPA
- **Foundations / Institutions / Corporate:** Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation, Ashraya Hastha Trust, Oxfam India, Child Fund India, SBI Foundation, LIC Housing Finance Ltd., WIPRO Cares, Azim Premji Foundation, HCL Foundation, Reliance Foundation, SELCO Foundation, Aditya Birla Utkal Alumina. Mission Samridhi, Give India, Ketto, United Way, PHFI, FWWB, VYK, Sadananda Trust, FRIEND, Azad Foundation, Americares, Humanitarian Aid International, HSBC Skills for Life, Mahindra Finance.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Mr. Jagadananda, Co-Founder and Member Secretary (Chief Executive) of CYSD**, holds a Master's Degree in English Literature and a Diploma in Commonwealth Youth & Development. With over 46 years in the development sector, he has championed people-centric governance, civil society strengthening, and decentralized planning. He has served as State Information Commissioner, Member of the State Planning Board, and Member of NITI Aayog's Standing Committee for CSOs. He has chaired VANI, Credibility Alliance, and Sa-Dhan. As a CIVICUS Fellow at Harvard, his key publication is *Civil Society Legitimacy and Accountability*. Besides, he has co-authored *Organizational Behaviour for NGOs*. He is the convener of the Odisha Development Initiative.

**Mr. Prafulla Kumar Sahoo, Co-founder and former Chairman of CYSD**, is a well-known Social Scientist with a Master's Degree in Social Work from TISS and international certifications in Monitoring & Evaluation, Total Quality Management, and NGO Management. With over 45 years in the development sector, he brings deep expertise in governance, civil society building, institutional development, policy analysis, and poverty reduction strategies. He has addressed global forums including the United Nations, contributed to national policy consultations, and guided numerous

research studies. He serves on several national and international boards, including CIVICUS and the Schumacher Centre, Delhi.

**Mr. Haris Chandra Singh, Chief Operating Officer at CYSD** holds dual Master's degrees in Sociology and Personnel Management, along with a Bachelor's degree in Law. With over 36 years of experience in the development sector, he has served in key leadership roles at CYSD, Lepira India, and Care India. His core expertise includes organizational development, strategic planning, project management, and training. He has led multi-thematic programs across rural, urban, and tribal contexts, contributed national forums, and served on various state-level committees in health and institutional development.

**Mr. Basant Kumar Nayak, Programme Director, CYSD** holds a Master's and M.Phil. degrees in Economics. With over 17 years of experience, he specializes in decentralized planning, public policy analysis, and budget research. He began his journey at CYSD as Lead Anchor of the Odisha Budget & Accountability Centre and later served as Associate Director. He has led several research publications and contributed papers on social sector budgets to reputed journals. In his current role, he oversees strategic planning and programme execution.

**Mr. Ananta Kishore Swain, Associate Director, Program at CYSD**, holds a Master's and M.Phil. in Education and brings over 24 years of experience in education, research, and development. He specializes in program management, monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment. As the lead of CYSD's Demographic Intelligence Unit, he steers research on demographic transition and its policy implications, contributing to key publications like the Odisha Demography Report 2024. Mr. Swain is also deeply engaged in pedagogical improvement, teacher training, and curriculum development, contributing towards strengthening education policies and practices across government and civil society.

**Mr. Purna Chandra Mohapatra, Associate Director – Programme Support Division, CYSD** holds a Master's degree in Public Administration and a Diploma in Commonwealth Youth Development Programme. He has over 36 years of experience in office administration and organizational governance. Currently, he leads the Programme Support Division at CYSD, overseeing finance, human resources, general administration, procurement, communication, and Information & Technology (IT).

**Mr. Srikant Rath, Finance Controller at CYSD**, holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration (Finance). With over 17 years of experience in finance and accounts management in the development sector, he has cultivated deep expertise in financial planning, budgeting, compliance, and donor reporting. Since October 2021, he has been leading the Finance team at CYSD, where he plays a pivotal role in overseeing financial operations and ensuring financial accountability within the organization.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

CYSD's key programmatic interventions are organized under three thematic areas - sustainable livelihoods, education (including school education, health, nutrition, skills & employability and entitlements), and disaster risk reduction and climate change action.

***Sustainable Livelihoods:*** The livelihoods strategic interventions of CYSD aim to ensure food and nutrition security and enhance income opportunities for the rural poor, particularly tribal communities. CYSD empowers tribal and rural communities, small and marginal farmers including SHGs, Producer

Groups, FPOs, and VDVVs, through capacity building, resource facilitation, and skill development, focusing on women. It also promotes champion farmers, sustainable management of natural resources, soil and water conservation, agro-ecology, integrated farming, bio-manures, local seed preservation, value-chain augmentation, and market linkage. Its holistic approach builds economic resilience and improves rural living standards while addressing climate change impacts.

***Inclusive Education:*** The interventions under Inclusive Education aim at facilitating active citizenship and educating the people on their rights and entitlements, and how to access them, along with promotion of skill and entrepreneurship for better employability of the youth. The efforts have been focused towards strengthening local governance institutions through formal partnership with the Gram Panchayats, facilitating citizen-led monitoring and processes for ensuring community rights over food, natural resources and information, by using the progressive acts like Right to Food, Right to Education, Right to Information, Forest Rights Act, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) etc. Under gendered approach to development, the key interventions include gender budgeting, development of women leadership, capacity building of women PRI representatives on their roles and responsibilities, promotion of education among the girls, prohibition of girl child marriage and addressing gender-based violence.

***Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Action:*** Ever since the occurrence of the Super Cyclone in 1999, CYSD has been persistently making efforts and investing to deal with the emergency situations. In order to address climate change concerns, as part of varied efforts. CYSD developed an identity as a strong regional player in disaster preparedness & response and has enhanced its efforts towards innovating climate change adaptation practices and research. In this process, the organisation has learned a great deal from the experiences in responding to natural disasters (cyclones & floods) starting from Super Cyclone -1999 till FANI, Covid-19 pandemic and Dana Cyclone-2024 in Odisha.

CYSD facilitates the development of Village Level Disaster Management Plans and community resilient micro plans in partnership with district administrations. It works to sensitize tribal communities on the importance of forests and their link to livelihoods through orientations, plantation drives, and collaboration with VSSs and the Forest Department. Recently, CYSD helped set up the Odisha Climate Action Practitioners' Collaborative to promote climate-resilient agriculture, water conservation, clean energy, carbon sequestration, and forest regeneration through local communities.

## MILESTONES

Since its inception, CYSD has achieved several significant milestones in its journey of advancing equitable and sustainable development.

### 1980 s

- A large number of youth volunteers mobilized as change makers, and an international youth camp was also organised in Odisha.
- Facilitated non-formal education program benefiting 43,000 children in the state.
- Sahara, a drug de-addiction and counselling centre, was established in Bhubaneswar.
- Pioneered the promotion of women self-help groups, the first of its kind in Odisha.
- Bagged K. P. Goenka Memorial Award for Environment (1989).

### 1990 s

- Initiated land and water management programs in rural and tribal regions.
- Launched tribal development initiatives in Koraput district.

- Promoted joint forest management and community forest governance.
- Established the Development Resource and Training Centre (DRTC) as a hub for learning, sharing, and capacity building for NGOs and CBOs.
- Established the Odisha Disaster Recovery and Mitigation Consortium.
- Introduced disaster preparedness measures and institutionalized disaster response mechanisms.

#### 2000s

- Undertook large-scale cyclone rehabilitation following the Super Cyclone, establishing 21 multipurpose Cyclone Centres along the Odisha coast.
- Initiated pro-poor governance efforts, including the Odisha Budget and Accountability Centre (2003)
- Contributed to the Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP)
- Set up Rural Livelihoods Training Centres in both South and North Odisha.
- Awarded the India NGO Award (2008, East Large Category).

#### 2010s

- Initiated the Agriculture Production Cluster model to enhance farm livelihoods. Implemented WADI, agro-horti models and promoted collective farming practices.
- Advanced social accountability initiatives through RTI, social audits, and report cards.
- Led the establishment of the Odisha Development Initiative and organized the first Odisha Vikash Conclave in 2016 to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- Promoted nutrition-sensitive agriculture through millet revival programs.
- Supported the formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).
- Facilitated the preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) through the People's Plan Drive.
- Received the Think Odisha Leadership Award (2010).
- Received the UNDP Equator Prize finalist certificate (2017).
- Gained UN ECOSOC consultative status (2018).
- Awarded the Prakruti Mitra Puraskar (2019).

#### 2020s

- Led cyclone Fani recovery efforts and COVID-19 relief initiatives, reaching over two lakh families.
- Promoted natural farming, ecological agriculture, and climate resilience initiatives.
- Facilitated access to social security entitlements for the excluded beneficiaries.
- Formulated village disaster management plans, inclusive development strategies, and micro-plans.
- Strengthened farmers' collectives, set up bio-input centres, and established 24 Van Dhan Vikash Kendras (VDCKs).
- Signed MoUs with 80 Gram Panchayats to promote SDG localization and enhance community resilience.
- Partnered with 11 universities to integrate research with community-driven development.
- Hosted organisation of the Odisha Vikash Conclave in 2020, 2023, and 2024.
- Established the Odisha Climate Action Practitioners' Collaborative (2024).
- Published the Odisha Development Report 2020 and the Odisha Demography Report 2024.
- Won the Jury's Choice Award at the Future Innovation Challenge (2020).
- Certified as a Great Place to Work (2022).
- Earned Guide Star India Platinum Certification (2024–25).

## SPECIALISATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Over the years, CYSD has developed distinct specializations and unique characteristics that define its approach to inclusive and sustainable development.

Specialisation	Unique Characteristics
<p>CYSD focuses on strengthening participatory governance, decentralised planning, and policy influence while promoting sustainable livelihoods through agriculture clusters, WADI, millets, and integrated farming. It advances natural farming, climate-resilient practices, and environmental sustainability through forest regeneration and NTFP initiatives. CYSD supports disaster preparedness, builds capacities of grassroots institutions, and promotes social accountability through tools like social audits and report cards. Its work is grounded in development research, evidence-based policy engagement, and multi-stakeholder dialogue, with strong community-led governance</p>	<p>CYSD follows an integrated approach combining environmental sustainability, community empowerment, and socio-economic development. It builds strong partnerships with government, civil society, academia, corporates, and media, and pioneers the localisation of SDGs through gram panchayat-level initiatives. The organisation maintains a long-standing focus on tribal development and inclusion of marginalised communities, while nurturing social entrepreneurs and grassroots leaders. CYSD integrates technology into community development, promotes collective resource management and value chain development, ensures environmental conservation benefits communities, and leads multi-district disaster recovery and resilient community building.</p>

## LEARNINGS

Over the years, CYSD has learned that sustainable development is possible only when communities, particularly women and youth, are at the centre of planning, implementation, and monitoring. Integrated approaches that combine livelihoods, governance, environment, and social development create deeper and lasting impact. Strengthening local institutions like self-help groups, producer groups, forest protection committees, and gram panchayats builds resilience and empowers communities to manage resources and respond to crises. Decentralised governance and participatory planning ensure that marginalised voices are heard and included in decision-making.

CYSD's experience shows that climate resilience is best achieved through community-led natural resource management, where forest regeneration and NTFP value chains thrive when linked to traditional knowledge. Locally anchored disaster preparedness through village and panchayat-level plans has made communities proactive in managing risks. Social accountability tools such as Right to Information, social audits, citizen report cards, community score card, and Odisha Right to Public Services Act (ORTPSA) help build transparency and trust. Technology, including ICT platforms and GIS mapping, has proven effective in bridging gaps for rural and tribal communities. Partnerships across sectors have multiplied impact and enabled policy influence. Finally, sustained capacity building and linking communities to markets and value chains have enhanced economic inclusion and the long-term sustainability of development outcomes.

## ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

The key impacts of CYSD's interventions over four decades are outlined below, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, reflecting its commitment to inclusive and sustainable development.

- 1.36 lakh small and marginal farmers have been supported through APCs, Millet Mission, WADI, and integrated farming
- Over 1 million individuals have received recovery and rehabilitation support since the 1999 Super Cyclone, including housing, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), and livelihood restoration.
- 1.7 million rural women were made digitally literate through 2286 digitally empowered Gram Sathinees.
- 19,800 women are organized into 1,953 SHGs, fostering economic inclusion.
- 257 producer groups and 11 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have been promoted to facilitate collective marketing.
- Year-round water availability has been ensured in over 200 villages through integrated watershed management.
- 27 bio-input centres and 26 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) have been strengthened, benefiting approximately 7,800 tribal women.
- Social security has been accessed by more than 64,000 beneficiaries.
- Twenty migrant support centres have been established at the Gram Panchayat level to track entitlements and support skill development.
- The average annual income of small and marginal tribal farmers increased from ₹47,256 in 2018 to ₹68,688 in 2022, through integrated farming, APC, and WADI.
- Social accountability has been strengthened in ICDS, PDS, SSA, and MGNREGS, leading to improved service delivery.
- Pilots on women SHGs, watershed development, agroforestry, collective farming, and enterprise promotion have become mainstream practices adopted by civil society and government.
- Climate resilience initiatives include forest regeneration and NTFP (Non-Timber Forest Products) conservation.
- Civil Society Budget Watch, initiated in 2007, has been institutionalized at the government level in Odisha.
- CYSD has been designated as a Resource Support Agency in the state for promotion of Odisha Right to Public Services Act (ORTPSA), enhancing citizen awareness and accountability.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Alladin Khila: Championing Millets and Empowering Farmers in Koraput

Alladin Khila, a 30-year-old entrepreneur and farmer from Kandha Podapadar village in Koraput district, has emerged as a leading figure in millet farming and sustainable agriculture. After marrying at 15 and settling in Boipariguda block, Alladin began cultivating millets like finger millet, foxtail millet, little millet, and pearl millet. Traditional methods brought low returns, making it hard to support her family.



In 2017, Alladin's journey took a turn when she received training at CYSD's Rural Livelihoods Training Centre. She adopted the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) promoted by the Odisha Millets Mission (OMM), along with organic inputs like jeevamrut and Haandi Khata. With support for farm tools and post-harvest machines, she boosted her yields and income. From 3 acres, she harvested 18 quintals of ragi in 2021, earning a profit of around ₹40,000. Driven by her entrepreneurial spirit, Alladin co-founded Sabujima Producers Company, processing and marketing millet flour, turmeric, and forest products. She also promotes seed conservation and sustainable practices, training over 60 farmers. Recognised by OMM for her work, Alladin continues to inspire women farmers and strengthen climate-resilient farming in her region.

## Gaon Mitras: Bringing Malkangiri's Lost Children Back to School After COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic, which shut schools across India in 2020, left a lasting impact on children in remote villages like Dhungiaput in Odisha's Malkangiri district. With no access to online learning and families in deep financial distress, many children dropped out. Some became farm labourers; others migrated to Andhra Pradesh with their parents for work.

CYSD's *Project Samadhan*, launched in June 2022, sought to address this crisis. The project established 15 community learning centres across 45 villages in Mathili block to bridge learning gaps and bring children back to school. Local youth were trained as *gaon mitras* (community educators) to identify out-of-school children, support them academically, and facilitate their return to formal education.

In Dhungiaput, gaon mitra Geeta Pradhani convinced 13-year-old dropout Gupta Majhi to attend the centre. Initially, she fetched him daily; soon, he came willingly. Gupta regained confidence, cleared his exams, and enrolled in Class 9. Similarly, Geeta helped seven-year-old Sukanti Gouda get her birth certificate and join Class 1.



These efforts aligned with National Education Policy 2020's vision of alternative learning platforms and civil society partnerships. In a district with literacy below 50%, gaon mitras helped turn the tide - restoring hope and belonging, and bringing children back to school one child, one village at a time.

## Digital Financial Literacy: Amplifies the Voices of VDVK Members

CYSD, in partnership with ITDA under the Pradhan Mantri Vana Dhan Vikas Yojana (PMVDVY), strengthens tribal livelihoods in Odisha by promoting Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), managed by tribal Women Self-Help Groups. These Kendras focus on value addition, processing, and marketing of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) to create sustainable, forest-based livelihoods. CYSD's digital tools, including the NTFP Mapper and Banashree App, further enhance market access, planning, and price realisation.

Karishma Kandhapan from Sana-Gadabalsa village in Bandhugaon block, Koraput, has emerged as a Digital Champion groomed by CYSD. She promotes digital financial literacy and supports women's collectives in enterprise promotion, helping them access Minimum Support Price (MSP) and other entitlements. In 2023, Karishma facilitated MSP linkage for 180 quintals of NTFP collected by 18 SHGs. She worked closely with the procurement agency and government officials, ensuring fair pricing and better returns for women producers.

Karishma also trains VDKV members in product collection, aggregation, storage, and value addition. In addition to her role as Digital Champion, she serves as a Bank Mitra at Utkal Grameen Bank, helping tribal women and other community members access essential digital and financial services, thus driving inclusive growth.



### Bridging Gaps in Maternal Health and Family Planning through ICT

In Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts, where reproductive and maternal health services were already limited, the COVID-19 lockdown deepened existing barriers. CYSD responded by introducing an ICT-based platform that combined digital tools with grassroots mobilisation to address sexual and reproductive health, maternal, new born, and child health, and family planning, with a focus on the critical First 1000 Days from pregnancy to a child's second birthday.

Through Project SAMVAD, CYSD used participatory video screenings, mobile messaging, and community radio to spread awareness on these vital issues. Over 340 adolescent girls and young women received counselling, while 276 Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND) sessions ensured the continued delivery of antenatal, postnatal, and child health services. Fifty frontline



workers were trained in digital counselling, reaching over 23,200 women across 174 villages.

One volunteer, Chandrama Sethi, transformed not only her life but also the lives of many mothers in her community. During her first pregnancy in 2019, she lacked essential maternal health information. But after engaging with SAMVAD's digital content, she registered at the Anganwadi centre, accessed antenatal care, and ensured a safe delivery at the government hospital. Today, Chandrama is a change agent, screening community videos in three villages and inspiring hundreds of mothers to adopt healthy practices.

## Mamata Diwas becomes Priority for Bhalujhola Village



With a vision of inclusive governance that localizes the SDGs, CYSD has worked consistently to strengthen people's voices through community-led social watch. This includes community-based monitoring of public services, revitalizing local governance through people-centric planning, and ensuring greater inclusion through citizen-led monitoring and action. A recent community-based monitoring exercise facilitated by CYSD in Bhalujhola village, Boipariguda block of Koraput district, revealed a major

gap in basic health services. Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND), or Mamata Diwas, had never been organized locally. Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children lacked access to check-ups, immunization, antenatal and postnatal care, and nutrition counselling. The Anganwadi Centre served 40 beneficiaries, but the ANM conducted VHND only in Chadhipani, 2-3 km away, limiting participation.

Recognizing the impact on maternal and child health, the Anganwadi Worker (AWW) took the lead in presenting the issue to the ANM. Mothers joined her, engaging in continuous follow-up and multiple discussions. Their persistent efforts bore fruit the ANM agreed to conduct monthly VHND in Bhalujhola from December 2019. Since then, Mamata Diwas are held regularly in the village, enabling beneficiaries to access vital health services at their doorstep.

## Technology Adoption in Agriculture Production Cluster Boosts Livelihoods of Smallholder Farmers

Introducing innovations in farming, cultivation, and marketing is no longer a wonder — smallholder women farmers are now doubling their annual income. The promotion of the Trellis method of cultivation under the cluster approach during the COVID-19 pandemic became a lifeline for many. With a large number of migrants returning home jobless, agriculture became their only source of livelihood. Recognizing this need and aiming to

maximize land use, the Horticulture Department, with facilitation from CYSD, introduced the Trellis method in APC areas, offering financial support under a special COVID-19 scheme. Initially, shifting from traditional practices was challenging. However, through intensive training, handholding, and regular extension support, farmers, particularly women, adopted this profitable technology. In the 2021 Rabi season,



50 members of the Akhapalan Producers' Group in Thakurmunda block cultivated creeper crops like cowpea, beans, and bitter gourd on trellis over 25 decimals of land. Each member earned an average of ₹38,000 within three months. The success drew appreciation from district departments and inspired replication across other clusters, supported by training, exposure visits, and government subsidies.

"We are now planning multilayer farming to make the best use of our land and secure higher returns," shared a group member.

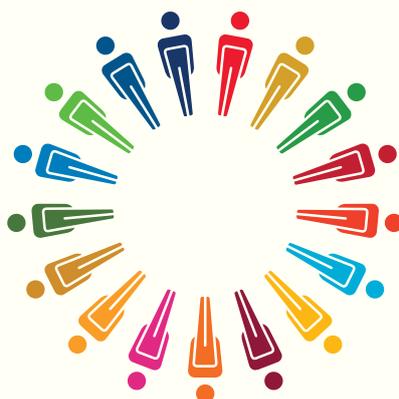
## Surviving the Double Blow of Fani and COVID-19: Cash Aid Reaches 94 Struggling Families

Though not a great amount, an interim cash assistance of Rs 5000/- per family was provided to 139 *daily labourers, fishermen, etc.* through bank transfer in Brahmagiri and Krushnaprasad blocks of Puri district. “The lockdown due to COVID-19 Pandemic had brought untold miseries in our lives. Even we were not allowed to go outside in search of daily wage earning.



Jyoshnabala Samal (32 years), Village – Khati Sahi, P.O. Nuapada, Block - Krushnaprasad, District - Puri, Odisha

Last year the FANI had flown away everything. Now, before the Corona infects my family, we would have died in starvation. But, CYSD’s cash support of Rs. 5000/- to us through bank transfer has given a ray of hope for survival at this critical situation. Now we can have food materials to eat. Our sincere thanks to CYSD for helping us to surpass this difficult time and survive till the situation improves”, says Jyoshnabala Samal from Khati Sahi village of Krushnaprasad Block in Puri district.



### Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD)

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# ADHIKAR

[www.adhikarindia.org](http://www.adhikarindia.org)

## BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANISATION

Sustainability, Social Equality and the Environment are the business problems, and that cannot be delivered by the Government only. Inspired by the spontaneous reaction to the situation witnessed during a journey in the rural Odisha a group of intellectuals under the leadership of Mr. Mohammad Nooruddin Amin set up Adhikar in 1991 to work for an exploitation free and inclusive society where social and economic justice are ensured and create a positive change in the lives of people living in the bottom of the pyramid. This collective effort led to the establishment of ADHIKAR on 19th August 1991. ADHIKAR officially registered under the Society Registration Act XXI of 1860 as a non-profit development organization. The organization holds all necessary legal certifications to carry out development initiatives. Adhikar believes that when women have access to better income and health then their families access to healthcare, nutritious food and education improves.

## Outreach and Target Population

ADHIKAR operates in 22 districts across Odisha covering the Southern, Eastern and Western Parts. Especially the tribal interior Pockets are main focused operational area. Near about 80000 women clients, rural youth, Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs) are the primary focused group. The Organisation is actively working towards women empowerment within the State of Odisha aiming the overall development of its targeted communities. In addition to that Adhikar has also worked in Gujarat, Assam, West Bengal & Chhatisgarh in Money remittance, Safe Migration & financial inclusion programmes. Near about 15000 women clients from 12 districts were the focused group under the programmes.

## SUPPORT ENTITIES

Adhikar received grant funds for various projects from the following Agencies:

- **Government Sector:** Govt. of India (MoHRD & NSDC); Govt. of Odisha (ORMAS, Dept. of Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water), Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA); and NABARD, Bhubaneswar; and SIDBI, Lucknow
- **International Agencies:** Niwano Peace Foundation, Japan; MISERIOR, Germany; MERCY CORP-USAID; WATER.ORG, USA; Harmosa Foundation, HSBC- SWADES FOUNDATION, Mumbai; CENDREIT, HIVOS, Netherland; IDS – USA; ASHA-USA; CARE & CGAP; and ANDHERI HILFE, Germany.
- **National level Agencies:** Action Aid, IGSSS, CAPART, New Delhi, International Finance Corporation (IFC), New Delhi, Habitat For Humanity India, New Delhi, Dia Vikas, Gurugaon; and Sir Jamsetji Tata Trust, Mumbai.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Mohammad Nooruddin Amin, Founder President** and an Ashoka Fellow (1995), has been leading the organization since its inception. He possesses extensive expertise in innovative approaches to financial and social intermediation, particularly through livelihood finance and self-help cooperatives. His work spans a wide range of areas, including participatory strategic planning, organizational development, policy advocacy, government schemes and entitlements, and livelihood promotion.

Mr. Amin has been recognized for his innovative money remittance programme designed for migrant workers in northern India. He has also served as a dignitary member of various national-level agencies and has established himself as a leading resource person in these domains.

**Mr. Gobinda Chandra Dalabehera, Secretary of Adhikar** has nearly 22 years of experience in development work within the NGO sector. His expertise spans livelihood promotion and food security, SHG and SHG federation development, promotion of self-help cooperatives, and safe migration. He also has substantial experience in accounting, internal auditing, and microfinance operations based on the Grameen model. Currently, he leads the statutory and compliance functions of the organization.

**Mr. Lingaraj Sahoo** has been associated with Adhikar since its inception and brings over 25 years of experience in the development sector. He has taken on responsibilities across various programmes and remains an integral part of the organization. With extensive experience in education, money remittance, livelihood promotion, SHGs, and sanitation, Mr. Sahoo contributes strong expertise and leadership. He is currently overseeing the Financial Inclusion Programme.

**Mr. Manoranjan Hota** has been a part of Adhikar for the past 20 years, bringing over the years of experience in the development sector. He possesses a deep expertise in women's empowerment, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship development for SHG women. Currently, He serves as the Programme Head in Micro Finance Programme.

**Mr. Basant Kumar Lenka** has been serving as the Accounts Head at Adhikar. Mr. Lenka brings extensive expertise of 18 years to the organization. In his current role, he oversees key financial functions including fund management, budgeting, financial analysis, and auditing. He ensures regular reporting to the Management and provides financial insights and updates to the project implementation team, ensuring the organization's financial health and compliance.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

**Promotion of SHG & SHC:** Strengthening SHGs, Promotion and capacity building of Self Help Cooperatives, Producer Groups for financial inclusion and women empowerment in Nayagarh, Khordha, Puri, Jajpur districts of Odisha.

**Livelihood Promotion & Food Security:** Supporting agriculture, natural resources, and animal husbandry to enhance food security and livelihoods through farm & nonfarm based activities, creation of water harvesting structures for better irrigation & livelihood, Paddy farming in SRI Method in 5 GPs of Ranpur Block Nayagarh District. Paddy Farming in SRI Method in support of ATMA, Nayagrah district Administration.



**Women Empowerment & Gender Equity:** Advancing women’s rights, financial inclusion, and leadership for gender equality.

**Livelihood Finance and Financial literacy:** Facilitation of funds for rural women for investing in small business to increase their family income and as well as make them financial literate for smooth management of their funds. The programme covers 22 districts of Southern, Northern, Western, Eastern Odisha.

**Non formal Education and Female Literacy:** In support of Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India and ASHA, USA Setup of 50 nos of Non formal education centres for Non starters and drop out students and Accelerated women literacy programme in tribal pockets of Nawarangpur District.

**Disaster Response:** Adhikar addressed the victims of Disaster like super cyclone in 1999, Phailin in 2013, Titli-2018, Fani in 2019. Rescue, Evacuation, Relief, rehabilitation for the disaster affected victims, emergency response for food security in post disaster through cash for work.

**Health & Nutrition:** Improving public health and nutrition through community-focused health initiatives.

**Safe Migration:** Integrating the Migrant workers into the mainstream Development Process through Creation of community based support service and solution network for the migrant workers both at source and destination so that their and their family’s vulnerability against exploitation reduces. The programme has been implemented in Tangi Block of Khordha and Surat of Gujrat.

**Water & Sanitation:** Promoting access to clean drinking water, Community Borewell, Establishment of water plant to provide RO water in fewer prices at the door step of the client, safe sanitation, hygiene education, and menstrual health management in 22 districts of Southern, Northern, Western, and Eastern Odisha.

**Skilling and Placement:** Skilling the rural youth across Odisha in different trades like retail sales, Food & Beverage steward, tailoring, electrical and facilitating better placement opportunities in different Industry Inside and Outside Odisha.

**Establishment of Migration Support Centre:** The programme supported by ORMAS, Govt. of Odisha. Registration, Counselling, facilitation for social security, harassment in workplace, health hazard issues, especially retention in work place and create better opportunity for new job in new work place for DDUGKY trainees from all over Odisha.

**Emergency Response in Covid-19 Pandemic-** During the period of Covid -19 Pandemic Adhikar played vital role in the slum areas of Bhubaneswar. Dry Ration kit along with Hygenic materials were distributed in the community like Visually Challenged people, Physically Handicapped, Transgenders and daily labourers. Adhikar addressed near about 2000 house hold in the programme.

**Facilitation of Entitlement for Bahanaga Train Accident Victims:** Adhikar played a vital role being one of the members of CSOs response for disaster. Spot visit, awareness & counselling to victims and also facilitation with the Govt. departments done by the Organisation. Adhikar led an effort to counsel

and facilitate the interaction which enabled to sanction the ex-gratia amount. Near about 1Crore claim amount mobilized through this process and directly paid to the victims Bank Account.

## **MILESTONES:**

**1991-1995:** Adhikar Registered on 19th August 1991 and established as a non-profit organization, focusing upon human rights, promotion of self-help groups, income generation programmes, village level meetings, establishment of legal counselling centres, Other statutory Registrations like FCRA in 1994, 12A Registration and PAN.

**1996-2000:** Adhikar started Integrated slum development programmes in Bhubaneswar, Networking & Training for viable Micro Finance programmes, Non formal education centres, played a vital role in Evacuation, Carcass disposal in Super cyclone in 1999, relief, rehabilitation for the cyclone affected victims of Erasama & Kujanga of Jagatsingpur district.

**2001-2010:** Fully engaged in integrated livelihood restoration, food security, mason training, agriculture development programmes for the cyclone affected victims of Erasama & Kujanga of Jagatsingpur district. The Organisation also engaged in Female literacy programme in tribal pockets of Nawarangpur district, Money Remittance programme for Migrant workers, Promotion and strengthening of Women Self Help Cooperative and its federation. Human Rights Campaign, Livelihood restoration through micro finance, livelihood promotion and food security programme.

*Adhikar constructed its own office building in January 2010 and established its identity globally.*

**2011-2020:** Adhikar created new milestones in financial inclusion programmes, expanded its reach in new geographic areas like southern, western part of Odisha through micro finance and water & sanitation programme supported by Water.Org, USA & Habitat for Humanity India, New Delhi. Established its own Dairy farm in support of IFC, New Delhi for clean milk production & marketing, fodder cultivation, equip the farmers to manage the farm professionally. Engaged in Improving Livelihoods in rural Odisha programme in Ranpur, Nayagarh district in support of Mercy Corps, Scotland, established its own Industrial Training Institute namely ADHIKAR ITI. Received grant funds from the renowned foreign Donor agencies like MERCY CORPS & USAID & HARMOSA FOUNDATION for emergency food security and shelter restoration programme for PHAILIN cyclone affected victims. Tied up with JAMSETJII TATA TRUST for safe migration programme, Establishment of RO water Plant in support of DIA VIKAS, Gurgaon, Skill Development programmes in support of TATA PROJECT, NSDC, OSDA, and HSBC through Swadesh Foundation. Adhikar has also created community assets through engaging the tribal community in Cloth for Work supported by GOONJ, New Delhi

**2020-2025:** Continued the skill programmes in support of HSBC & NSDC, Govt. of India, New Delhi. Adhikar signed the contract with ORMAS, Govt. of Odisha for establishment of Migration support centre for DDUGKY trainees across Odisha and successfully completed the tenure in 2023. Similarly, the Organisation is running it's own training centre since 2010. Near about 80000 participants through different agencies across Odisha availed the training and as well as the facilities.

## SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Adhikar strongly believes in the idea of “Social Entrepreneurship” as the driving force behind sustainable and large scale development. Social transformation will happen if a spirit of entrepreneurship is promoted among the targeted beneficiary sections making the developmental process self-sustainable and highly effective in the long run. The approach believes that the targeted beneficiary groups in any development intervention has to directly participate in the process and contribute to the costs involved to encourage their participation and “ownership”. They may be poor but dignified people and do not need alms and charity from others to change their lives. They have the capability to address the critical issues of their life and earn their livelihood in a dignified way provided they have easy access to relevant resources like finance, technology, information and other such resources. Adhikar has adopted this approach throughout its journey as the core in designing various intervention strategies. Adhikar stands out for its holistic and strategic approach to socio-economic and environmental development through a range of specialized interventions. At the core, Adhikar is deeply embedded in direct community engagement, working closely with marginalized populations to drive sustainable change.

## ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

- **Promotion and strengthening of Self Help Group (SHG) & Self Help Cooperatives (SHCs):** Adhikar Promoted and strengthened 55 no of Women Self Help Primary Cooperatives across Odisha. Among them one is Secondary Self Help Cooperative – Federation to nurture the Primary Cooperatives and two are Framers Cooperatives. Near about 15000 women are the members of the cooperatives, running at their own and engaged themselves in entrepreneurship activities.

- **Disaster Response:** More than 15000 disaster affected victims benefited through the programme. 220 number of community assets created, through involvement of the people in the cash for work, cloth for work and shelter repair programme.

- **Livelihood Restoration:** 3000 Households enrolled in the programme, 2 Farmers Cooperatives & 8 Producer groups created, 15 Water harvesting structures created for water preservation, 25 no of agriculture equipment provided in subsidy price by facilitation with the Govt. 350 farmers increased their yearly income by paddy farming in SRI method and vegetable farming. Revival of 5 nos of local Haat under this programme to create market linkages at the down trodden area .

- **WASH Intervention:** Adhikar created awareness and facilitated loan facility for construction of Toilets and Community Bore wells, piped water connection, hand pumps for safe drinking water and better health &hygienic life. 60000 Households across Odisha enrolled and benefited through this programme.

- **Affordable Housing Loan: 1500 Households** across southern part of Odisha benefited by renovation of their house through Affordable Housing Loan of upto Rs.75000/- each.

- **Skilling the rural youth: 3540** rural youth especially from the tribal and interior Pockets skilled through the programme and out of them 60% placed in different industries and 20 % self employed.

- **Establishment of Migration Support Centre:** Adhikar is the representing Organisation from Odisha as MSC out of 5 MSCs at National level. 7500 skilled trainees under DDUGKY Sceme enrolled and got benefitted in this programme.

- **Livelihood Finance:** More over 1 lakh rural women from all over Odisha enrolled in the programme and got eligible to increase their family income source through small business loan.

- **Money Remittance & Safe Migration:** Near about 30000 migrant workers from both the source and destination were addressed in this programme. The Organisation successfully run the programme to send their hardly earned money at their dependants door step within 24 hours of time. Similarly the migrant workers are also benefited through awareness, counselling, seminars, workshop for their health hazard issue, comfortable living condition, identity card, social security, harassment at work place etc..

- **Non Formal Education & Female Literacy:** 2700 Tribal students and 14000 adult women from tribal pockets of Nawarangpur district were enrolled in this programme.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### **Skill, Support and Success: Rashmita's Journey of Change!**

Rashmita Dehury hails from Khajuriapada in Kandhamal district and comes from a farmer's family with two siblings. Her family faced significant financial challenges due to low household income. After completing her graduation, Rashmita enrolled in a skill development program under the DDU-GKY scheme through NIYATEE Foundation, Bhubaneswar, and successfully completed training in the IT sector. She is now employed as a Data Entry Operator at Inspavo Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd., Bhubaneswar, earning a monthly salary of ₹8,500 along with other statutory benefits. The Migration Support Centre of Adhikar played a key role in helping her access performance-based incentives and social security benefits at her workplace. Rashmita is happy to have secured a job in the capital city and takes pride in supporting her family. With renewed hope, she now dreams of building a better future for herself.



### **Stitching a New Future: Rahima's Journey from Struggle to Success**

Rahima Bibi, a 45-year-old woman from Tatobehuria village in Karanjia block of Keonjhar district, once lived in a thatched house under difficult circumstances. Her husband was the sole breadwinner, supporting a family of five, and their income was barely enough to make ends meet. Driven by the desire to contribute to her family's well-being,

Rahima decided to pursue entrepreneurship. She received training in tailoring and later took a loan through the Adhikar Joint Liability Group (JLG) to set up a tailoring shop. With discipline and determination, she repaid the loan regularly and gradually expanded her business.

Today, Rahima successfully manages her own tailoring unit, employs two additional staff members, and earns around ₹25,000 per month.



Her growing income has enabled her to send her children for higher education in reputed colleges and institutes. Rahima's journey is a testament to how women's entrepreneurship, when supported with the right opportunities, can transform lives.

## A Step Toward Dignity: Sumitra’s Journey to Sanitation and Self-Reliance

Sumitra Halder, a resident of Kalimela in Malkangiri district, was living with her family of four in challenging conditions. Due to limited income, she was unable to construct a toilet an essential facility for ensuring the health, hygiene, and dignity of her family.

Understanding the importance of sanitation and determined to improve her living conditions, Sumitra got in touch with Adhikar. Through their support, she availed a loan of ₹20,000 and constructed a toilet at her home. With dedication and careful financial planning, she repaid the loan in regular instalments.

Today, Sumitra is proud to have created a cleaner and safer environment for her family. She is living a more dignified and healthy life, setting an example for others in her community to prioritize sanitation and make use of available financial support. Her story reflects how small but meaningful interventions can lead to a significant transformation in rural lives.



## A Glance of other Successes:



**Livelihood Promotion and Market linkages– Revival of Local hats in Ranpur, Nayagarh District.**



**Women Empowerment through Financial Inclusion Programme.**



**Adhikar’s Skill Development programmes for Youth**



**Community Asset creation through cash for work under Emergency Response and food security program.**



**Adhikar Training Centre**



**Adhikar Migration Support Centre – Registration & Counselling to the DDUGKY Skill Trainees**



**Relief distribution to Physically Challenged Persons during Covid -19 Pandemic by Adhikar.**



**Adhikar's facilitation to get the Govt. Entitlements for Bahanaga Train Accident victims**

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## MADHYAM FOUNDATION

[www.madhyamfoundation.org.in](http://www.madhyamfoundation.org.in)

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### BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

Madhyam Foundation came into being during June, 2003 when its founder (Mr. Subrat Kumar Singhdeo), former Executive Director of Rastriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi (RGVN), an Indian grant making agency, sponsored by IFCI, IDBI & NABARD, was hired by CARE-India to provide capacity building support to 38 NGOs in Gajapati, Balangir & Kandhmal district on strengthening management of SHGs and grain banks under its community based drought response programme (CBDRP). Mr. Singhdeo used this opportunity to setup Madhyam Foundation as a Development Support Organisation which was formally registered on 9th June, 2004. Between 2004 to 2008, Madhyam was hired by number of International donor agencies, NGO networks and NGOs to provide technical support. Such technical support pertained to a host of areas such as scoping studies, feasibility studies, evaluation studies. Micro plan, development of specialized training modules preparation of strategic plan etc.

The year 2008 marked a new beginning for Madhyam as it received 12A registration and FCRA registration and it started diversifying its focus to implementation of field based projects. There are widely held perceptions that small holder operations cannot be sustained and do not offer solutions to the needs of the poor. Madhyam's thrust has been to dispel such myths through appropriate programming in small holder operation-be its agriculture, livestock or any other livelihood activities. Madhyam has been able to effectively leverage financial resources from several stakeholders and dovetailed these resources efficiently into livelihood financing at the household level.

### Outreach

Starting its field based implementation in 20 villages in Ranpur block of Nayagarh district, Madhyam, over the years, has been able to reach out to 46,000 resource-poor households in 1332 villages of 12 districts in Odisha. Expanding livelihood options of small and marginal farmer households through crop intensification, crop diversification and promotion of natural & sustainable agricultural practices has continued to be the mainstay of all Madhyam's intervention over the years.

### Target Population:

Madhyam Foundation works with small and marginal farmers, women and forest dependent communities. The target groups may broadly be classified as primarily survival and to a limited extent subsistence-oriented and lack access to critical resources like land, labour and credit.

### SUPPORT ENTITIES:

Over the years, Madhyam Foundation has been able to mobilize funding from a diverse base of funding agencies as follows:

- **UN Agencies:** U.N Women
- **International Donor agencies:** Ford Foundation, ICCO-Netherland and kerk in Actie, Australian High Commission. AWO International, Germany.



- **Internationally reputed agency:** International Rice Research Institute, Philippines.
- **Corporate Philanthropic Institutions:** Tata Trusts, Mumbai and Azim Premji Foundation, Bengaluru
- **Govt of India:** Ministry of Rural Development
- **Govt of Odisha:** Department of Panchayatiraj & Drinking water, Department of Agriculture & Farmer's empowerment
- **CSR Funding:** Oil & Natural Gas Corporation and BoB capital.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Mr. Subrat Kumar Singhdeo, Founder and Executive Director** A post-graduate in Sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, he has also done Certificate courses on enterprise promotion and universalizing socio-economic security for the poor from Harvard University, USA, and the Institute of Social Studies Netherlands respectively. Worked as the Executive Director of RGVN (national-level funding agency sponsored by IFICI, IDBI, and (NABARD) Guwahati before setting up the Madhyam Foundation. He has been leading Madhyam Foundation as its Executive Director since 2004. His core competencies are in the areas of livelihoods promotion, project planning, monitoring and evaluation study, action research, result-based, monitoring mentoring, networking, and capacity building. He has forty years of experience in the development sector across different states of India. He has co-authored a book on Human Security: From concept to Practice, published by World Scientific, Singapore (2011).

**Mr. Kartikeya Panigrahi, Senior Project Manager** He holds a Master's in Social Work from Utkal University of Culture, Odisha, and has completed PGDCA and a certificate course on organic farming from IGNOU. With 26 years of hands-on experience in microfinance and livelihoods, he has received extensive training in livelihood promotion, sustainable agriculture, result-based project management (PME), impact-oriented planning and monitoring, logical framework techniques, process documentation, baseline reporting, and disaster management. He trained at reputed institutions like the Kurl Kuble Institute of Development, IRMA Gujarat, and through programs by AWO International. He has developed training modules and conducted sessions for target communities, grassroots workers, mid-level managers, and partner NGOs on organic farming, SHGs, producer groups, and cooperative management.

**Mr. Alok Jyoti Mohanty, Programme Manager** A post-graduate in economics, he has also done a Diploma in Enterprise Development from Bankers Institute of Rural Development, Lucknow, India. He has twenty five years of working experience with many reputed NGOs of the state. His areas of expertise include project designing, feasibility studies, disaster preparedness, base line studies, monitoring & evaluation of projects.

**Mr. Nageswar Patra, Project Co-ordinator,** He has over 20 years of working experience with NGOs and has a Master degree in social work. His areas of expertise are livelihoods promotion in farm and non-farm sector, organic farming practices, promotion and strengthening of community-based organizations and project monitoring.

**Mr. Bipin Bihari Sahoo, Co-ordinator (Accounts & Administration).** A commerce graduate, he has 26 years of experience in Accounts & Finance. Has worked with number of organisations such as Vikalpa, Samuha Vikas, Parivartan, I –Concept Initiative in different parts of Odisha.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS:

Madhyam Foundation's sole focus, since its inception, has been on enhancing production & productivity in small patches of land belonging to small & marginal farmer households. Need specific and well-thought out interventions are made at different stages such as pre-production, production, post-production and institution building.

## MILESTONES

Madhyam has achieved the following milestones over years:

**2008–2014:** With support from the Ford Foundation, capacity building of SHGs was undertaken across 6 districts in partnership with a consortium of 8 NGOs, along with the promotion of 8 women-led vegetable co-operatives and 5 dairy co-operatives.

**2010–2017** - With the support of Tata Trust:

- Prepared a comprehensive migration profile of Ranpur block, Nayagarh district by surveying all 32,450 households, which enabled targeted interventions including legal support, skill training, destination support, and registration under the Construction Workers Welfare Board.
- Established 26 diversion-based irrigation structures in 26 villages, providing assured irrigation to over 500 acres of land and improving agricultural productivity.

**2011–2015** - With the support of ICCO & Kerk in Actie, Netherlands:

- Demonstrated that change in cultivation practices led to enhanced production of pigeon pea among 3,000 farmers.
- Established that improved cultivation techniques resulted in increased yield of turmeric among 2,000 farmers.

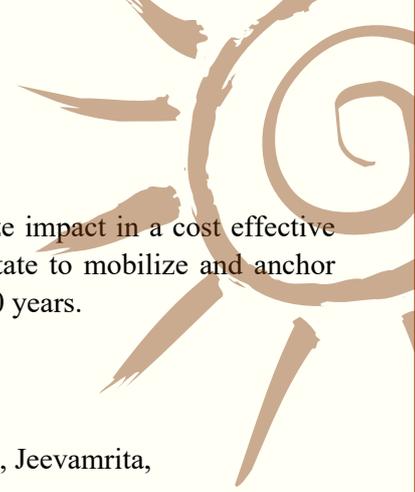
**2009–2021 & 2023–2025** - Supported by AWO International, Germany:

- Promoted vegetable cultivation among 11,204 farmers on 6,540 acres in three districts, increasing household income to ₹40,000–₹50,000 from just half an acre of land.
- Encouraged climate-smart agriculture among 5,000 households in Raikia block of Kandhamal district, enhancing their resilience to climate variability and ensuring sustainable farming practices.
- Madhyam with the joint support from the Ministry of Rural Development and Tata Trust has promoted cultivation of paddy, millets, pulses, and vegetables among 19,200 small and marginal farmers
- 5,000 farmers in G. Udayagiri and Raikia blocks adopted natural farming, leading to 100+ Primary Producer Groups launching agri-based enterprises with the support of Azim Premji Foundation.

## SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS:

Following unique characteristics clearly distinguish Madhyam Foundation from other organizations.

- **Unique targeting:** Madhyam works with only small & marginal farmers and in each household, intervention is made through only women members.
- **Sole focus on promotion of farm based livelihoods:** Right from its inception, Madhyam Foundation has been focusing on promotion of livelihoods in agriculture sector. As a chosen strategy, it has not digressed to any other thematic sector.



- **Working in a network mode:**

Working in a network mode is a co-operative strategy to maximize impact in a cost effective manner. Madhyam Foundation is perhaps the only NGO in the state to mobilize and anchor issue-based network projects, implemented by 15 NGOs for over 10 years.

## **ORGANIZATION IMPACT**

### **Qualitative Impact**

- Improved soil fertility and structure through the use of compost, Jeevamrita, Ghanjeevamrita, and solar-based soil treatment.
- Enhanced seed germination and plant vigor via seed treatments with cow urine, Beejamrita, milk, and water priming.
- Strengthened natural pest and disease control using Nimastra, Mahulastra, fish tonic, egg-lemon tonic, and pheromone/yellow traps.
- Increased crop diversity and resilience through intercropping, mixed cropping, trap crops, border crops, and proper crop spacing.
- Reduced input costs by replacing chemical fertilizers and pesticides with organic alternatives and locally available resources.
- Promoted water-use efficiency through drip systems using water bottles, pit covers with trampoline/polythene, and mulching.
- Encouraged preservation and self-reliance with indigenous seed storage using dry leaves, pits, and cotton/net covering.
- Boosted crop yields and quality by adopting techniques like raised beds, line sowing, nipping, and blanching.
- Empowered farmers through the revival of traditional knowledge and low-cost farming innovations.
- Improved household nutrition and income through higher productivity and better marketable surplus.

### **Quantitative Impact**

- Brought about changes in 46,000 resource poor households in 1332 villages of 12 districts in Odisha.
- Mobilized, trained, and supported small, marginal and landless families to diversify livelihoods through SRI/line transplanting in 3,254 ha of paddy, natural vegetable farming in 5,987 ha, potato in 132 ha, ginger in 96 ha, turmeric in 660 ha, and plantation in 240 ha. Nutri-gardens were promoted in 10,889 households, while 900 landless families took up goat rearing and 1,100 backyard poultry.
- 4585 no of SHGs, 1833 no. of Producer groups, 49 co-operatives & FPO, 38 water user groups promoted & strengthened.
- 38 Diversion based irrigation structures set up to provide round the year critical irrigation facilities to 532 hecters of land.
- 11 check dams constructed to benefit 301.5 hectares of land.
- 141 percolation tanks set up in individual farmers' land to irrigate 151.5 hectares of land.
- 30 graded guide bunds constructed to improve moisture retention in 801 hectares of low land
- Rs. 1947 lakhs mobilized for target groups from various Govt. depts. & financial institutions as convergence.
- Household level income increased to Rs. 40,000-Rs. 80,000 from half acre of land through various interventions.

## LEARNINGS

It is a painful experience to implement reimbursement based funding projects supported by the State Government.

## Success Stories

### Turmeric cultivation: Change in practices lead to increase in yield

Under a project, supported by Azimpemji Foundation, Bengaluru in G. Udayagiri and Raikia block of Knadhamal district Madhyam foundation attempted to enhance production through introduction of new practices in cultivation. Subsequent to trainings to the turmeric farmers, following new practices were introduced; Seed treatment with cow dung slurry with addition of Tricoderma virid and Sodomonus (Bio Sanjeevani) to prevent fungal diseases in seeds, line sowing place of broad casting, use of bio fertilizer, raised bed, space maintenance . Inter cropping of



pigeon-pea and application of bio-fertilizer such as use mustard and Neem cake etc.

All these practices were adopted by more than 1400 farmers who cultivated turmeric in average 38 decimal of land per farmer. Crop cutting exercise was undertaken by Govt Officials which showed that the yield increased by 30-40% (against the base line of 5 quintals per acre) such enhanced production has led to growth in household income of farmers.

### Diversion Based Irrigation (DBI): a boon for the community of downhill villages.

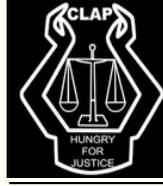
Studies on impact of irrigation on poverty indicate a clear and significantly positive relationship between access to irrigation and reduction in poverty. Diversion Based Irrigation (DBI) offers great opportunity for small and marginal farmers. DBI is one which diverts a portion of water from perennial stream in hill top, reserves it in an intake structure and then brings water to downhill villages through underground pipes without use of any form of energy as the technology is based on gravity flow.



Madhyam Foundation has setup 38 such structures in Nayagrah and Kandhamal district which provide critical irrigation facilities to 532 hectares of land. Round the clock access to water has also reduced drudgery of women folk who otherwise had to walk long distance to fetch water for household consumption. The villagers are now able to take 2-3 crops in a year which has contributed to their growth in household income. The community offer voluntary labour to dig trenches from the hill top to downhill for laying the pipes and Madhyam Foundation provides the pipes and technical support. Such an arrangement inculcates a sense of ownership, accountability and sustainability from the very beginning.

### Madhyam Foundation

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# CLAP – Legal Service Institute

[www.clapindia.org](http://www.clapindia.org)

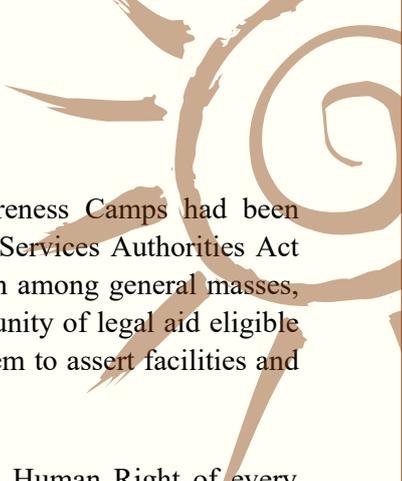
## BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

CLAP owes its origin from the initiative of a group of Freedom Fighters of Indian independence movement who worked as Sarvodaya Constructive Workers pursuing Gandhian Principles in the post- independence era. In the beginning of the Indian Republic, they endeavoured for promotion of constitutional governance of the country and focused on prevention of untouchability and liberation of people from the Bondage from moneylender (Bonded Labour System as prevailed in India) in the post independent India. The experience of this group over 25 years, concerning the state of freedom of individual while working with caste groups and bonded labour raised genuine concern over constitutional governance. It persuaded them to expand the horizon of their effort beyond bonded labour system and untouchability as they realized such practices was the result of injustice deep rooted in Indian social fabric, which is difficult to change in an adversarial justice system. They were convinced that the poor and marginalized in India essentially require improved legal status to change their situation and bringing about equality in the society. For this purpose, legal empowerment and legal activism appeared imperative. At this stage, being inspired by Universal Declaration of Human Right (UDHR), 1948 especially Article 10 of it which recognized free and fair public hearing as a Human Rights and also the subsequent International Bill of Rights this group of social activists and lawyers under the leadership of Shyam Sundar Das initiated a Movement for Legal Aid.

Initially the group constituted Ad-Hoc Committee on Legal Aid to undertake sustained debate and demand for incorporation of provision of legal aid in the Indian Constitution during 1975. In the meanwhile, the Govt. of Orissa introduced Legal Aid Scheme in the state in 1975. In 1976 the Indian Constitution was amended (42nd Amendment) which incorporated Article 39-A which says “The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on the basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities”. Overwhelmed with the constitutional mandate the Ad-hoc Committee on Legal Aid made an extensive effort between 1976-80 to accomplish the constitutional mandate for Free Legal Aid and Social Justice

During such process the Founders felt the need for an institutional set up to function in a more formal, professional and organized manner. Thus during 1980 the process began to give the Ad-hoc Committee a status of legal entity which finally culminated with Registration of Committee for Legal Aid to Poor (CLAP) on 18th November 1982 under Societies Registration Act, 1860. Shyam Sundar Das became the President of CLAP with other 7 persons on the Board.

Till 1987 the effort of CLAP mostly revolved round legal literacy and human right education. For this purpose, a series of demystified legal materials were published, seminars were held, Para Legal



Workers' Training Camps were conducted and Community Level Awareness Camps had been organized. A new dimension to the activities had been added when Legal Services Authorities Act came into force in 1987. Apart from promoting legal literacy and education among general masses, CLAP accepted Legal Aid Eligible as a community of persons. This community of legal aid eligible become its target groups with whom CLAP started working by enabling them to assert facilities and opportunities created by the State for underprivileged.

Towards 1994 CLAP realized that while the provision of Legal Aid is a Human Right of every individual it is not an end in itself rather it is a means to secure all other rights recognized by the Constitution, Laws of the State, and the International instruments.

In the post Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization era in the 90's and its consequential effect on nation states particularly on developing countries, India witnessed radical changes at all levels affecting the socio-economic and political life of people. It resulted in introduction of new structural adjustment and new public management system. It redefined the notion of Welfare State and its relationship with the citizens. The social fabric of India was greatly disturbed by these changes and the state of Human Right more particularly of Legal Aid Eligible who constitute approximately 90% of total population, entangled with new problems and issues.

These aspects of structural change pose a great challenge to CLAP and its vision. Accordingly, CLAP, through a continuous organizational renewal process, expanded its outreach and adopted new techniques of social change, which stretched from direct legal aid to advocacy at different level, legal empowerment of communities and capacity building through legal support.

The evolutionary growth of CLAP marked several changes in its mandate over the years, however, the fundamental approach of using law, legal system and legal processes as the instruments of social change as well as advancement of human rights with dignity remains unchanged; a legacy to be cherished ever for promotion of democratic development and strengthening governance.

#### **Target Population:**

CLAP has identified a strategic target group for which the services of CLAP are being delivered. The target group is Women, Children, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Victims of human trafficking or beggars, Mentally Ill, Disabled Person, Victims of Mass Disaster, Ethnic Violence, Caste Atrocity, Flood, Drought, Earthquake or industrial Disaster, Industrial Workman, in Custody, A Citizen whose Annual Income from sources does not exceed two lakhs rupees, Transgender, Persons living with HIV and AIDS, Senior Citizens.

#### **Outreach:**

CLAP operates at the State level, consisting the entire population as a whole. It helps poor and marginalized from across the state of Odisha to enable them to gain Access to Justice at the High Court Level. Any Poor and marginalized for any area of the state and eligible for Pro-Bono- Legal service at the High Court Level from the support of CLAP.

#### **SUPPORT ENTITIES:**

CLAP works closely with support from various NGOs, international entities and also government. It has implemented a series of training programme for Paralegal Volunteers in 8 north east states including Sikkim with the support of Department of Justice, Government of India.

In 2014-15 it also conducted similar training programme for Paralegal Volunteers of Odisha with support from United Nations Development Programme. It conducted a specially designed training programme for Young Lawyers for promotion of Human Right Lawyering with support of United Nations Development Programme and Department of Justice. At present CLAP is being supported by Azim Premji Foundation and MISEREOR eV / KZE.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Dr. Bikash Das** is the President at present. He has made significant contribution in designing the organizational plan and approaches. He is the architect of the organization who steerit's mission. Dr. Das has completed Master of Law (LLM) and has a Doctoral Degree in Law and Governance from India's premier University, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He has been associated with CLAP from very early stage of his life, when he was a law student. After his enrolment as a Lawyer in 1993, he has occupied the post of Executive Vice President. Some of his major contributions over last 35 years were organizing World's largest Public Hearing immediately after the Odisha Super Cyclone in 1999, Campaign for Abolition of Death Penalty, organized mega convention of NGOs to uphold Freedom of Association under took a massive campaign for Birth Registration of Children in accordance with law, Liberated Childhood Movement for Elimination of Child Labour and Strengthening Access to Justice and Food Right.

**Mr. Purusottam Sahoo** is the Secretary to the Board of Management of CLAP. A trained Law Graduate who has been associated with CLAP since 1991, he has a long experience in Statutory Compliance of Civil Society Organisation, Project Formulation and Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Documentation of Learning. He has wide exposure into civil society activism especially in the field of protection and promotion of Human Rights.

**Ms. Bijayshree Barik**, a law graduate has been associated with CLAP since 2007. She is engaged in different projects related to Women and Child Rights. Currently, she is working as the coordinator for the Access to Justice Project, overseeing the Mobile Legal Service Clinics, conducting numerous clinics, and visiting several jails to gather cases of under trial prisoners for their release from custody.

**Mr. Chandra Dev Purohit** has completed his Master Degree in Law and joined CLAP in the year 2018 as the Legal Advisor, Access to Justice Programme. His sole responsibilities are preparation of strategy regarding Cases received from different sources. Coordinate with the lawyers and entrustment/ monitoring of cases for filing in High court and other subordinate Court.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

CLAP works on a wide range of themes. However, the uniqueness of the work of CLAP is, it looks at different issues from the Lances of Law. At present the thematic priorities are Access to Justice, Legal Empowerment on issues like Food Security, Forest Rights, Gender Based Violence, Criminal Justice, Right to Restitution.

## MILESTONES

CLAP was originated in the year 1982 as a registered entity. In the early phase it was extensively involved in Paralegal Worker's Training and Promotion of Legal Literacy until late 80s. In 1988,

CLAP under took a project for Legal Entitlements of Fisheries Communities with support of NORAD and Legal Aspect of Social Forestry with support of SIDA. In 1994 the young leadership decided to form Legal Support Network which engaged almost 900 NGOs of Odisha who work for legal rights of poor. At that point of time it also worked on legal rights of women aligned with the Beijing Conference. In 1998 with the support of Bernard Van Leer Foundation, the CLAP has entered into the legal dimension of Child Right as envisaged under United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The devastating Super Cyclone positioned CLAP to demand for Relief as a Right. CLAP conducted a massive public hearing in the aftermath of super cyclone which was attended by 11,000 victims of disaster. Consequentially the Disaster Mitigation Act was enacted and CLAP continued to work on legal aspect of disaster. In the early stage of 21st century CLAP mostly focused on Civil Registration of Children and Child Labour Liberation. In 2007, CLAP initiated a Nation-wide campaign on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to make it a legal right as per Article 45 of the Constitution of India. As a derivative of its campaign on right to ECCE CLAP got involved in demanding mother tongue based early education for tribal children as a matter of right to language.

From 2010-15 the CLAP focused on building capacity of Young Lawyers and Paralegal Volunteers for Strengthening Access to Justice. During this time, CLAP initiated special drive for realization of food right and forest right of vulnerable communities. From 2015-20 the emphasis of work was on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Media Freedom. From 2021 CLAP strategically decided to enhance opportunity for Access to Justice for poor and marginalized with the support of Azim Premji Foundation and Food Right as per National Food Security Act (NFSA) with support of MISEREOR eV/KZE. In addition to it, issues like forest right, right to restitution for victim compensation and reform in criminal law have been prioritised which helps 1500 cases of poor and marginalized every year to exercise their rights and entitlements.





## SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

CLAP is a unique in the sense that it acts as a Public Interest Law Organization in India extensively and exclusively deals with Law and Justice. The major characteristics of it's work is the legal dimension of all important social issues and looking at these issues from the lenses of law. As a part of its approach, it relays on Legal Justice, Natural Justice and Social Justice.

## ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

### Qualitative Impact:

CLAP has carved out a strategy to render quality legal service for poor and marginalized through its flagship initiative titled Demonstrative Model Legal Service Clinic offers a comprehensive range of eight services through a single-window approach, including Litigation Support, Legal Defence, Representation, Claim of Entitlements, Referral Services, Applications to Human Rights Institutions, Drafting of Legal Documents, and Mediation. The CLAP annually reaches out to 1500 poor and marginalized people to enable them to gain Access to Justice at High Court level.

**Quantitative Impact:** The legal awareness work reaches out to approximately 60,000 populations annually. The field operation ensures the legal empowerment of approximately 150,000 populations directly in the field.

## LEARNINGS

The lesson that CLAP has learnt through its work over 42 years is that law has a potential tool that can prevent injustice and promote justice.

## Success Stories

**Field Related Success:** CLAP has empowered 30000 population of Badamba Block to realize entitlements conferred under National Food Security Act, Forest Right Act, MGNREGA and other social welfare measures. It has helped 107 families affected by leprosy to establish land right. It empowered 75,000 forest dwellers to obtain individual and community forest right.

### Story-1: From Injustice to Hope: Sashi Majhi's Legal Battle

Sashi Majhi's story is a powerful testament to the impact of legal advocacy and support for vulnerable individuals. Despite the deep personal and legal challenges, she faced, Sashi's life began to change thanks to the tireless efforts of the CLAP Legal Service Institute. After being falsely implicated in her husband's criminal actions, she was arrested and imprisoned in 2021. However, with the dedicated work of CLAP's advocates, including Dr. Sadanand Bag, Dr. Binoda Kumar Mishra, and Bijaya Kumar Mishra, a bail petition was filed before the High Court of Orissa. In January 2023, the court granted her bail, acknowledging the flaws in the case against her. Though the bail bond of Rs. 50,000 was a financial hurdle, the case underscored the need for reform in bail conditions, especially for people from

economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Though Sashi is still undergoing treatment for kidney ailments and awaiting release, this case stands as a success in securing justice for a victim who had been wrongfully treated, and it highlights the crucial role of legal aid in empowering individuals to overcome unjust circumstances.

### **Story-2: Restoring Dignity Through Justice: The Story of Sukuludei Santa**

Sukuludei Santa, a 67-year-old tribal woman from the Kundra area of Koraput district, faced extreme hardship after the brutal murder of her husband in April 2019, who was the sole breadwinner for the family. Left to care for her three sons aged 20, 16, and 14, she struggled in poverty and despair, unaware of her right to victim compensation. It was only through the intervention of a CLAP volunteer, Subrat Patra, that she learned about the Victim Compensation Scheme and applied through the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA),



Koraput. Despite multiple follow-ups, her plea was unjustly ignored for over three years, causing immense economic and emotional suffering. With no other option, she approached CLAP Legal Service Institute, which immediately took legal action by filing a writ petition (No. 12252/2022) in the Hon'ble High Court of Orissa through Advocates Bijaya Kumar Mishra, Binoda Kumar Mishra, Chandradev Purohit, and Sadanand Bag. Hearing the matter, Hon'ble Justice Arindam Sinha directed the State to release the compensation within three weeks. Following the Court's intervention, Sukuludei finally received the first instalment of Rs. 5 lakh, marking a significant victory for justice and showcasing how CLAP's timely legal aid helped restore dignity and rights to a marginalized and grieving tribal woman.

### **Story-3: Justice for the Voiceless: Sabitri and Runu's Fight for Freedom**

Sabitri Rana (55) and Runu Dora (40), two impoverished widows from Kansamari village in Ganjam district, Odisha, found their lives shattered when an act of innocent trust and desperation for extra income landed them behind bars. Illiterate and working as daily wage labourers earning barely Rs.150 a day, they were unknowingly tricked into carrying contraband ganja in two polyethene bags to Bhubaneswar Railway Station, leading to their arrest on 11th January 2022 under the NDPS Act. With no means to hire legal aid, their plight reached CLAP Legal Service Institute, whose lawyers swiftly filed bail petitions (BLAPL No. 4725/2022 & BLAPL No. 4711/2022) before the Hon'ble Orissa High Court. Justice Sashikanta Mishra granted them bail on 2nd June 2022, recognizing the limited culpability and prolonged detention. However, due to their inability to pay the imposed cash surety of Rs. 10,000 each, they remained in custody. CLA Ponce again intervened, and through CRLMA No. 139/2022, successfully sought waiver of the cash surety, with Justice V. Narasingh ruling on 9th September 2022 that such conditions should not render bail orders ineffective. Finally, after ten harrowing months in custody, the two women were released on 28th September 2022, their smiles returning thanks to CLAP's tireless pro bono legal support offering a lifeline where none else existed.

Advocacy Success: CLAP had successfully carried out a campaign demanding legal backup to ECCE as per Article 45 of the Constitution of India. The campaign ended with adoption of National Policy on ECCE.

**Other Successes:** There are several notable successes in the field of SRHR, Legal Service, Food Right, Freedom of Association, Legal Assistant Lawyers under Madhubabu Aain Sahayata Scheme, Food Right and Right to Restitution. In all these areas CLAP has impacted both formulation of policies and generating demand in the society.

#### **Story-4: Justice for Non-profits: A Landmark Relief for Madhyam Foundation**

Madhyam Foundation, a respected NGO registered under the Societies Registration Act and permitted to receive foreign contributions under the FCRA, faced a major setback when a technical error by their bank led to the imposition of a hefty penalty of Rs. 4,69,707 for delayed submission of FC returns for 2019–2020. Despite timely submission of required documents for opening their FCRA account at SBI's New Delhi Main Branch, as mandated by the amended FCRA Rules, the bank mistakenly recorded the wrong address, delaying the process significantly. Though Madhyam promptly informed the bank and the issue was acknowledged and rectified, the delay resulted in the FCRA portal reflecting a penalty, which was not the NGO's fault. With mounting pressure and limited resources, the Foundation approached CLAP Legal Service Institute, which swiftly filed a writ petition (W.P. (C) No. 22068 of 2021) in the Hon'ble Orissa High Court under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution. After thorough hearings, the Court, on 12.04.2022, delivered a favourable judgment allowing the NGO to submit their returns and documents physically to the Ministry of Home Affairs without paying the penalty, providing immense relief and showcasing how timely legal intervention can safeguard organizations from unjust financial burdens.

### **CLAP – Legal Service Institute**

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Email: [info@clapindia.org](mailto:info@clapindia.org)



## PEOPLE'S CULTURAL CENTRE

[www.pecuc.org](http://www.pecuc.org)

### BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

People's Cultural Centre (PECUC), a leading socio-cultural organization, has been dedicated to creating positive change across Odisha for the past 35 years. Founded in 1990 by a group of passionate individuals from diverse walks of life including social workers, educationists, artists, development professionals, and NSS volunteers. PECUC emerged with a shared vision of building a just, equitable, and inclusive society. It all began with a grand children's festival on 14th November 1990, where over 5,000 children came together to celebrate the spirit of change and hope.

**Outreach:** PECUC has touched countless lives across 30 districts of Odisha, 4 districts in Delhi, and other parts of India, implementing numerous projects and programs in collaboration with communities, civil society, government agencies, corporates, and international organizations.

**Target Population:** PECUC envisions a just, peaceful, and equitable world where cultural and natural diversity is respected, and empowers children, youth, women, the elderly, and marginalized communities to participate meaningfully in shaping their dignity, security, and inclusive development through strong people's institutions.

### SUPPORT ENTITIES

PECUC is working with different Individuals, Agencies of local, National and International level including Government of India & Government of Odisha, UN agencies, INGOS, Networks and Alliances, Corporates and Commercial establishments, Banks, etc.

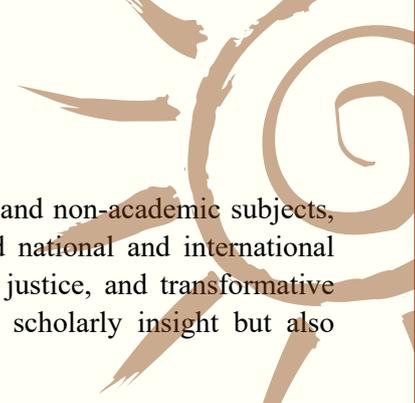
### Vision 2030

PECUC would continue to focus primarily on child rights during 2021-2030. While working at the community level PECUC has learnt that the realisation of child rights and the well-being of children cannot be thought of in isolation and that their parents, grandparents, families and communities need to be protected and strengthened. Hence, PECUC has prioritized to focus on Child Rights, women empowerment, health, hygiene & Sanitation, Emergency Management & Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation, Livelihood, Governance & Democracy, youth empowerment, Person with Disability & Rights of the Older Persons these years.

### PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Dr. Minakshi Panda** is the Chairperson of PECUC, and a respected name in the fields of academia, research, and social development. Holding a postgraduate degree in Political Science and a Ph.D., she retired as a Reader in Political Science after a distinguished academic career. Over the decades, she has established herself as a noted Gender Expert, Researcher, and Trainer. Dr. Panda's intellectual





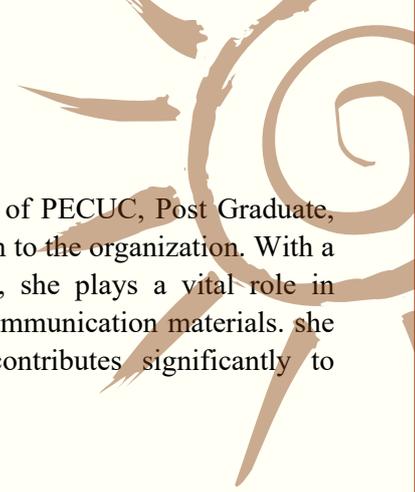
contributions include the authorship of 12 books that span both academic and non-academic subjects, along with the publication of more than 40 research papers in esteemed national and international journals. Her work reflects a deep commitment to gender equity, social justice, and transformative education. With over 40 years of rich experience, she brings not only scholarly insight but also compassionate leadership to PECUC.

**Mr. Ranjan Kumar Mohanty** is the Founder Secretary of PECUC. A postgraduate in Commerce and an LL.B., he is also a practicing lawyer with over four decades of experience in law, training, and the development sector. He is widely respected for his expertise in Planning and Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Policy Research and Engagement. With deep grassroots experience, Mr. Mohanty has worked extensively with vulnerable communities across Odisha and India. His strong connect with ground realities has shaped his strategic approach to development and policy advocacy. Nationally acclaimed as a pioneer in the eradication of child labour, he has also demonstrated exemplary leadership in building networks and alliances with like-minded organizations at state, national, and international levels to advance child rights.

He served as the National Convener of the Campaign Against Child Labour (2003–2007) and as the State Representative of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), monitoring the implementation of the Right to Education Act. He has also been a Member of the State Child Labour Advisory Board under the Department of Labour and ESI, Government of Odisha. Trained and experienced in Child Rights, Child Labour, Child Protection, Education, Child Participation, Governance, and child-related legislations, Mr. Mohanty has shared his insights at numerous national, international, and UN-level consultations and workshops. He also served as Chairperson and is currently a National Executive Body Member of the National Action and Coordination Group for Ending Violence Against Children (NACG EVAC), India — the civil society platform of SAIEVAC, the apex intergovernmental body of SAARC. In recognition of his relentless efforts, he has received several prestigious awards, most recently the Time Icon Award 2024.

**Ms. Anuradha Mohanty, Executive Director of PECUC**, holds an M.A. and an LL.B., and has over 35 years of experience in the development sector. She was recognized as the Best NSS Volunteer in her formative years, which shaped her commitment to social service. An acclaimed trainer and resource person, she has worked with NGOs across Odisha and other states, and served for 10 years as a Member of the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), Khordha, with additional charge of Nayagarh JJB for 5 years. She has also been part of several government committees and advisory bodies across diverse sectors. With a strong grassroots foundation, Ms. Mohanty has worked extensively with marginalized communities and is widely respected for her expertise in Planning and Monitoring, Research and Engagement, Capacity Building, and Community Mobilization. She is trained in Child Rights, Child Protection, Child Participation, Gender, Environment, and related laws concerning children, women, and the elderly. She has represented India at international conferences and workshops, presenting papers at the United Nations, including the UN House in Geneva. Honored by many institutions, she has authored Lockdown Diaries, a children’s book, and written extensively on social development issues.

**Mr. Prashant Kumar Panigrahi** serves as the Finance Manager at PECUC, bringing with him over three decades of expertise in the field of finance. His extensive experience has played a pivotal role in strengthening the organization’s financial systems. He oversees all financial operations, including fund management, budget planning, financial analysis, auditing, and compliance. Under his leadership, the finance department ensures regular financial updates and maintains timely compliance with donor requirements.



**Dr Sumitra Mohanty Coordinator RDC:** She has been an integral part of PECUC, Post Graduate, PhD, bringing her expertise in research, documentation, and communication to the organization. With a strong ability to support organization through her documentation skills, she plays a vital role in overseeing studies, research initiatives, and the development of various communication materials. she is responsible for preparing the organization’s annual reports and contributes significantly to fundraising efforts, ensuring the continued growth and impact of PECUC.

## THEME ENGAGEMENT

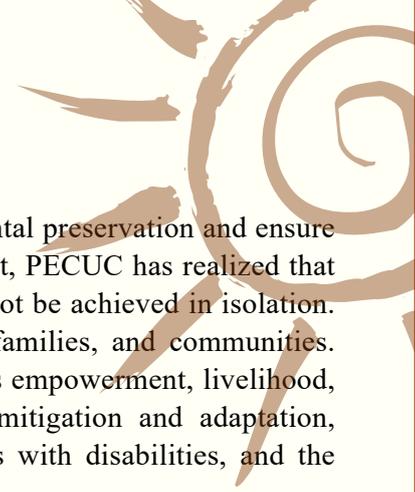
- Child Rights
- Livelihood
- Women Empowerment
- Health, Hygiene and Sanitation
- Emergency management & climate change mitigation & adaptation
- Governance and Democracy
- Persons with Disability
- Youth Empowerment
- Rights of the Older Persons

## MILESTONES

- 1990–1999: Focused on welfare of children, women, and the elderly; launched mass plantation drives and youth-led cultural campaigns. Post the 1999 super cyclone, PECUC responded by prioritizing disaster preparedness and response.
- 2000–2010: Shifted to a rights-based development model. Key areas included child rights, right to education, elimination of child labour, agro-horticulture, empowerment of marginalized groups, food security, and democratic participation. The organization gained national and international recognition and strengthened its capacity as a development leader.
- 2011–2020: Implemented Vision 2020, with a continued focus on child rights, women’s empowerment, health, sanitation, climate change adaptation, rights of senior citizens, and emergency response.
- 2021–2030: PECUC would continue to focus primarily on child rights during 2021-2030. while working at the community level PECUC has learnt that the realisation of child rights and the well- being of children cannot be thought of in isolation and that their parents, grandparents, families and communities need to be protected and strengthened. Hence, PECUC has prioritized to focus on Child Rights, women empowerment, health, hygiene & Sanitation, Emergency Management & Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation, Livelihood, Governance & Democracy, youth empowerment, Person with Disability & Rights of the Older Persons these years.

## SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

People’s Cultural Centre (PECUC) is a prominent socio-cultural organization that has been actively working in Odisha for the past 35 years. PECUC has specialized in micro level intervention targeting macro level change & policy strengthening, key stakeholder engagement & rapport with community. Established in 1990 through the collaborative efforts of like-minded individuals from diverse backgrounds, PECUC is dedicated to fostering positive social, cultural, and economic development for the betterment of targeted communities. PECUC's human-centric approach is deeply rooted in sustainable development strategies, with a specific focus on the well-being of children, women, youth, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups. Its overarching goal is to contribute to the creation of a violence-free and exploitation-free society. As the global landscape



continues to evolve, PECUC strives to forge new avenues for environmental preservation and ensure long-term sustainability. Through extensive community-level engagement, PECUC has realized that the fulfillment of child rights and the overall well-being of children cannot be achieved in isolation. It requires the protection and strengthening of parents, grandparents, families, and communities. PECUC has prioritized addressing issues related to child rights, women's empowerment, livelihood, health, hygiene, sanitation, emergency management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, governance and democracy, youth empowerment, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of older persons.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT**

**Child Rights:** PECUC has rescued and mainstreamed 36,334 child labourers, making 22 villages in Patna Block (Keonjhar) and 3 GPs in Baliana Block child labour-free. It facilitated school enrolment for 72,236 children, ensuring they learn and thrive in a child-friendly environment. PECUC promoted 512 *Sisusabhas* with 23,221 members, trained 600 child reporters, and empowered 23,761 children through trainings on life skills, first aid, leadership, 21st-century skills, online safety, and body safety awareness and organised SISUMELA since 1990 and encourage creativity since last 35 years more than 5lakhs children.

**Livelihood:** PECUC established an Agricultural Development Training-cum-Research Centre at Bhimpur (1999–2004) to build farmers' capacity in modern agricultural practices. In collaboration with the Water Technology Centre for Eastern Region, it implemented a rainfed agriculture research project in Dumuria village, Keonjhar, promoting sustainable practices. PECUC strengthened 171 farmer groups with 3,420 members, trained 995 farmers in organic farming, facilitated irrigation across 1,000 hectares through 20 structures, and introduced the SRI method on 49,090 acres. It revived millet cultivation after two decades in Keonjhar and promoted 202 grain banks and 176 seed banks. PECUC also encouraged green entrepreneurship among youth through eco-friendly ventures.

**Women Empowerment:** PECUC promoted 467 SHGs across Khordha, Keonjhar, and Cuttack districts, with around 5571 women members and economically empowered them through IGP activities. PECUC supported 599 women farmer for millet farming in the year 2019,2020 and 2024,2025 which was a huge success.2299 women farmers have emerged as change-makers through organic backyard kitchen garden with local seeds. 1283 women received training and support in local poultry, goatery and duck rearing to enhance their income. Promoted 11 Nari Shakti Mahila Groups with 257 members to raise awareness on Gender Based Violence, 51 young women's groups comprising 728 members were formed to protect reproductive rights, PECUC has actively engaged with 692 women functionaries of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across its operational area to build their capacity.

**Health, Hygiene and Sanitation:** In 1995, PECUC established the ASHRA drug counselling center in Balasore. A total of 2,756 cases were identified, of which 1,881 cases were treated and 184 serious cases were referred to hospitals. PECUC organised 127 health check-up camps reaching 10,114 patients, 856 health awareness camps were conducted, involving 41,889 participants, Training was provided to 44 Mahila Arogya Samitis in 44 slums of BMC, covering a total of 623 members. 463 Youth Ambassadors were created to work for tobacco control, Disha Recovery Centre was created for the rehabilitation of drug addicts etc.

**Emergency management & climate change mitigation & adaptation:** 40,520 families received food basket, 11,416 families received supplementary nutrition, 4,850 person were provided with food through community kitchen, 3 child Friendly Flood centre was created at Kendrapada and Bhograi

block, 14,704 families received (kits (mosquito net, mat, lantern, solar light, torch, bed sheets, utensils, etc.) 482 families were provided with warm cloths, blankets during disasters. During COVID 19 800 migrant labourers received food item for one month, 10313 families received dry ration, 31786 masks, 13750 gloves, 1546 sanitizer and PPE kit- 1290, 186 health care kit to district & Block administration, 541 sanitary napkins received by adolescent girls. 200 children received education kit, Medical equipment support to 7 PHC /CHC, 71394 persons received counselling services through telephonic interaction. PECUC facilitated the development of school safety plans in 42 schools across Kendrapada and Bhograi blocks in Balasore. Kalapada High School's Safety Plan, facilitated by PECUC, won the Best School Safety Plan award from National Disaster Management Authority NDMA in [2012]. More than 8 lakhs tree planted in avenue, community land, school campus etc.

**Governance and Democracy:** Capacity building training to 2792 elected PRI functionaries, 124 Voter awareness campaign in educational Institution covering 13333 students, National CSO Award 2014, for the Campaign on Voter's Education & awareness for carrying out "Mera Vote Mera Des" campaign to promote ethical & informed voting conferred by Election Commission of India, New Delhi. The "Ham Badlenge Apna Bharat" campaign was launched in 2018 with the aim of empowering first-time young voters and future voters to become responsible and proactive citizens.

**Persons with Disability:** Therapeutic & Rehabilitative Services for Children with Intellectual Disabilities started at Patna, Keonjhar with the support of the Department of SSEPD, Government of Odisha in the year 2018–19, and from the year 2024–25, another centre started at Bhograi Block of Balasore district to provide therapeutic and rehabilitative care for intellectually disabled children. AADI Therapy Centre came into existence as a part of the institutionalization process for the betterment of these children. Mostly children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) and Mental Retardation (MR) are included in the centre. A total of 80 children are enrolled. In the endeavour of skill development, training was provided to 594 persons with disabilities. They completed their training in the following trades: Domestic Data Entry Operator, Tailoring, Mobile Repairing, and Fancy Bag Making and are now successfully employed.

**Youth Empowerment:** PECUC Promoted 181 Ecosavers Youth Networks with 2,719 members actively engaged in environmental protection. More than 1 lakh trees were planted by the ecosavers, 7228 bird nest created, 360 received skill training, 1649 tube well and pond cleaned by ecosavers, 1997 youth received training on environment, career counselling, vocational skills, and life skills, 3,000 youth engaged in discussions on OTT platforms, and tobacco health harm, 190 youth participated in a Youth Parliament on tobacco control, 3,170 youth took part in awareness campaigns, creating 101 wall paintings on social and environmental themes, 566 youth actively participated in Pallasabhas and Gramsabhas, strengthening grassroots governance.

**Rights of the Older Persons:** PECUC participated in the Second World Assembly on Ageing at Madrid Spain and submitted key recommendations to the Government of Odisha for the State Action Plan on Ageing. PECUC actively involves older persons in productive roles within communities, recognizing them as contributors, not dependent. PECUC helped 150 needy elders to receive essential support—including food, clothing, medical care, eye operation camps, personal bedding, and pocket money through "adopt a Granny" programme. Restored the eyesight of over 765 older persons, through its emergency response initiatives and health camp programs, PECUC has reached 4,957 and 2,735 older individuals, respectively. PECUC Supported 856 older persons with blankets, umbrellas, mosquito nets, and clothing on various occasions and linked 4,637 older persons to various government schemes and entitlements, including old age and widow pensions.

**Community Radio Station-Radio Sampark 89.6** (At: Murudabad in Nischintakoili of Cuttack District): Radio Sampark 89.6 is a community radio initiative by People's Cultural Centre (PECUC), launched on 26th December 2021 with the aim to educate and create awareness among the community on issues that impact their day-to-day lives. It caters to diverse segments of society, with a reach extending to over 3 lakh people.

## KEY LEARNINGS:

- **Community-Centric Approach and Strong Grassroot presence** : Sustainable change is possible only when communities are actively involved in planning, implementation, and ownership of initiatives.
- **Holistic Child Rights Perspective, Child Participation and Leadership:** Realizing child rights requires empowering and protecting families and communities, while promoting children's voices through Sisusabhas, child reporters, Sisumelas, and skill development platforms.
- **Integrated Development:** Issues like education, gender ,disability , skill development , health, sanitation, livelihood, climate change, and governance are interconnected and must be addressed collectively.
- **Disaster Preparedness as a Development Priority:** Post the 1999 Super Cyclone, PECUC prioritized disaster preparedness by focusing on emergency management, child-centered risk reduction, and building long-term community resilience.
- **Inclusive Programming and Sustainable Livelihoods:** Programs must be inclusive, with a focus on vulnerable groups such as children, women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, while promoting sustainable livelihoods through support for organic farming, irrigation, millet revival, grain/seed banks, and green entrepreneurship.
- **Creativity as a Tool for Change:** Cultural expressions, children's festivals, and creative forum have been effective in mobilizing communities and fostering social awareness.
- **Evidence-Based Engagement:** PECUC's grassroots experience has informed policy reforms and improved enforcement of child protection and other laws at both state and national levels.
- **Education as a Gateway to Empowerment:** Quality education and life skills are foundational to breaking the cycle of poverty and exploitation of children.
- **Climate and Sustainability Awareness:** Grassroots experience highlighted the need for climate change adaptation and mitigation as core to community development.
- **Multi-Sectoral Interventions and Inclusion:** PECUC brings expertise across sectors child rights, women's empowerment, education, health, sanitation, livelihood, emergency response, and climate action while ensuring the inclusion of the women, elderly, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities in all development processes.
- **Institutional capacity Building:** PECUC has focused on people's institution building by forming and strengthening SISHUSABHA (children's groups), women's collectives, youth groups, farmers' groups, and local governance bodies, alongside consistent institutional capacity building through training, systems development, and leadership nurturing to promote adaptation and innovation.
- **Partnerships and Collaborative Engagement:** PECUC has forged strong alliances with like-minded organizations, networks, and forums at local, state, national, and international levels to amplify impact.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Continuous Learning:** Regular participation in knowledge platforms, joint campaigns, and research initiatives enhances PECUC's ability to influence policy and program design effectively.





## Success Stories



### Sradhabhavan Education:

Education centres “Sradha Bhavan” were created, providing preparatory education, bridge courses, and support for school retention of children. The purpose of this initiative is to bring out of school children, drop out, long absentee, child labour to school by providing them bridge course. Additionally, Village Level Child Protection Committee were created and strengthened, mother group was created and capacitated, motivation camp and awareness campaign at field, IEC materials, capacity building of stakeholders were undertaken to mainstream them to school. The effort bore fruit when 22 villages of Patna block of Keonjhar district declared child labour free at Gramsabha.

### Bird Nest Preparation by Ecosavers:

Ecosavers youth Network organized by PECUC for the protection of environment. The group has been taking various initiative at ground level for the protection of Biodiversity. One such initiative was preparation of bird nest to invite local birds to their villages. This initiative has been successful as it is seen birds are returning to their villages. During the COVID 19 Pandemic in the year 2020 this initiative of the Ecosavers of the Kendujhar caught the attention of the Hon’ble Chief Minister Mr. Nabin Pattnaik and he tweeted by praising their effort. The story goes viral through various media houses who visited Keonjhar to capture the live story.



### Child Centric Disaster Risk Reduction (CCDRR):



For keeping children safe during disaster Child friendly Flood and cyclone shelters were created. In Kendrapda and in Bhograi block of Baleswar 3 child-safe flood and cyclone resistant shelters were created with separate wash basins of low height for children. It had a separate room for children with child-friendly design, blackboard and playing materials. It also had a separate toilet for children. Wall paintings with different colors made the shelters attractive.

The cyclone and flood resistant shelters were unique examples of convergence between community, Local NGO, INGO, corporate body, Panchayat and the Government.

**Women grievance cell:** In 2008, the Block Development Officer of Baliana issued a notification to hold a separate Grievance Day at the Block Office for women PRI functionaries and working women—marking the first such initiative in Odisha. It was possible due to successful intervention of PECUC and organising & strengthening women Group in Baliana.

### **Policy Engagement:**

**Safe school campaign:** Under this campaign School Safety Plan were prepared to promote disaster safety in schools through education, awareness planning and demonstration/mock drills with active participation of school children. The school safety plans were developed to assist schools in preparing for future disasters. The plan was implemented in 42 schools of Kendrapada district. Emergency education is a building stone for the future. It is life saving and is an essential right of every child for survival and life opportunities. PECUC and Kalapada High School received award for Best School Safety Plan by NDMA.

**Suggestion box:** In 2007, PECUC installed Suggestion Boxes in 40 schools of Patna Block, giving children a voice to report protection concerns. This initiative had a tremendous impact and was later expanded to all government schools as 'Idea Boxes', helping safeguard children's rights.

**Sisusabha Interaction with Gram Sabha:** During 2008, at Bhograi, Balasore, PECUC formed Sishu Sabha, where children voiced various issues inschools, such as the lack of teachers, boundary walls, water facilities, and classrooms. While interacting with the children and building their capacity on the Panchayati Rajsystem,they became curious about why children could not participate and raise issues in theGram Sabha.PECUC team members took this concern. Before August 15, 2008, they discussed with three Panchayat Sarpanches about Sishu Sabha leaders interacted in the Gram Sabha and formally presenting their issues to the Panchayats.



The Sarpanches agreed and provided space for children at the beginning of the Gram Sabha. The children submitted their concerns in writing and it was recorded in Panchayat minutes and accordingly action taken. Recently, the Government of Odisha has also adopted a similar process, introducing Bal Sabha at the Panchayat level to listen to children's voices. The Panchayati Raj Department and the Drinking Water Department of Odisha have issued a crucial notification mandating the establishment and regular organization of Bal Sabhas in all Gram Panchayats across the state. This initiative aligns with the objectives outlined in the State Panchayati Raj Act, providing statutory recognition and support to Bal Sabhas.

**Village Level Child Protection Committee:** VLCPCs were formed by PECUC in the year 2005 in the villages of Patna block of Keonjhar district by involving PRI members, Anganwadi workers, PTA/MTA/teachers, ASHA, senior citizens, ANM, CBOs, Women SHGs, and concerned citizens. The members focus on protecting every child in the community from abuse and exploitation. They work on raising awareness about child rights, addressing protection issues among the community and parents, gathering information on children, vulnerability mapping, and linking government schemes and programs to families of vulnerable children. They also establish connections with child protection structures such as police stations, the Child Rights Commission, CWC, and JJB. In the Aug 2023 Govt. issued a guideline making formation of Village Level Child Welfare and Protection Committee Mandatory.

### Sampark Help Desk:

A Lifeline for Children - As COVID-19 disrupted lives, children faced uncertainty, isolation, and loss of support systems. To protect their rights and well-being, PECUC, in collaboration with the Women and Child Development Department, launched the Sampark Help Desk—a beacon of hope for children in distress. From the very first call, it became a vital resource, offering guidance, counseling, and access to government schemes. The team worked relentlessly, ensuring that help reached those in need. 3,866 children and families accessed welfare schemes and essential support, 41 vulnerable children secured assistance under the Ashirbad Scheme, 297 additional linkages ensured food, education, and medical aid, 220 children received psychosocial support to cope with anxiety and distress. Recognizing its impact, the Government of Odisha entrusted the Women and Crime Cell with the initiative, ensuring its continuity in safeguarding children's rights. In one of the most challenging times, Sampark Help Desk was more than just a helpline it was a promise of protection, resilience, and hope.



### Other Stories:

**Water Regeneration by Ecosavers:** The Ecosavers youth network members of PECUC also practicing water regeneration by creating loose bolder bonding in the stream in their area. This low cost structure helps prevent soil erosion, improves groundwater recharge, and can maintain soil moisture.



### Promotion of Millet and traditional local food:

Promotion of Millet and traditional local food:

Through the intervention of project Food sovereignty for adivasi communities of Odisha at Ghatagaon block of Keonjhar block PECUC revived nutrient rich millet cultivation after 2 decades. Through various initiatives like formation and strengthening of farmer group, exposure visit, training on organic



exposure visit, training on organic cultivation and millet, nutritional training to mother, revival of traditional recipes, seed bank, seed mela, local food mela PECUC integrated millet to their food culture which was missing for last 2 decades. At the end of project period 295 farmers were producing millet using organic method. The story was published on the Indian Express on 22nd Sept 2020.

## PEOPLE'S CULTURAL CENTRE (PECUC)

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**WOSCA**  
**WOMEN'S ORGANISATION FOR**  
**SOCIO-CULTURAL AWARENESS**

## **BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANISATION**

In the early nineties, a group of young women under the leadership of Dharitri Rout came out from the four walls of the domestic chores and wanted to do something for other needy and neglected women of the society. No doubt it was very difficult at that time under the grim illiteracy and the resultant social superstitions and religious dogmas. The resistance came from the male dominated society, but the women were desperate. Neither any obstacle nor any odd could dissuade the spirit of a group of sincere and dedicated women who got united and took a solemn vow to enlighten and empower other poor women and marginalized segment of the society. Their firm resolution was translated into action with the establishment of Women's Organisation for Socio-Cultural Awareness (WOSCA) that was working silently for 2 years without any official status. On the sacred day of 20th December 1993, it was stamped with official recognition by the virtue of registration in the court of ADM-cum-Addl. Registrar of Societies in Keonjhar district of Odisha.

WOSCA is a non-profit, community-based organization (IGR Reg. No.21816/250, 2003-04) dedicated to the holistic empowerment of women, children, and marginalized communities. WOSCA visualizes a society full of peace, joy and happiness where there will be no poverty, ignorance, diseases, suffering, hunger, exploitation, injustice and which will be saturated with solidarity, integrity, fraternity, nationality, non-discrimination, brotherhood and prosperity.

WOSCA strives to transform vision into reality through participatory actions, community mobilization, participatory learning and working together for human resources management. Our focus includes governance, livelihood, health, education, women and child empowerment and environmental conservation. WOSCA directly reaches 1.4 lakh families, aiming to create a society marked by peace, prosperity, and non-discrimination. WOSCA is committed to fostering a society free from poverty, ignorance and injustice, filled with solidarity and joy through our dedicated work. WOSCA firmly believes that a conducive and productive environment cannot be achieved unless all parameters of the development equation are adequately addressed.

### **Core Values:**

- Committed to the cause and the organization
- Gender equity & equality
- Democratic decision-making process
- Working within the true spirit of the democratic principles
- People's participation in all community works

### **SUPPORT ENTITIES**

WOSCA is supported by the Govt. of Odisha, Plan International, UNICEF, UNDP, LTI, Eaton, Amdocs, Symantec, NABARD, Oxfam India, The Hunger Project, SGP –The Small Grants Program, District Mineral Foundation, Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives and FISERV.



### **WOSCA's Membership:**

OMBADC, PLC (Integrated Tribal Development Agency), District Health Advisory Board, District Sexual Harassment committee, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, District Advisory Committee on PC & PNDT Act, Non-Official Visitors for District Jail, Grievance Redressal Committee on NREGA, Indian Red Cross Society, Kendujhar Branch, District Blood Bank Committee & District Council for Child Welfare, Mahila Vikas Sambaya Nigam, State Dowry Prohibition Advisory Board, Orissa Voluntary Health association, Committee for Legal Aid to Poor & OriEAN

### **PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS**

**Ms. Dharitri Rout**, Founder Member and Secretary of WOSCA, has over 31 years of dedicated service in grassroots development. At 62, she remains a driving force in promoting sustainable livelihoods, women's empowerment, forest and environment conservation, Panchayati Raj, education, maternal and child health, micro-credit, and watershed development. Her leadership in NGO management has shaped WOSCA into a trusted institution for people-centered development. Widely admired for blending vision with grassroots action, she is committed to building inclusive, self-reliant communities led by empowered women.

**Mr. Mansingh Durga Prasad Nayak (Programme Director)**, is an important member of WOSCA's second-line leadership, bringing 25 years of experience in diverse fields of community development. His expertise spans business and trade craft, livelihood promotion, forest and environment conservation, handicraft promotion, Panchayati Raj, education, maternal and child health, NGO management, watershed development, climate change, nutrition, and rural sanitation. With his multifaceted knowledge and commitment, Mr. Nayak has played a vital role in strengthening WOSCA's grassroots initiatives and advancing sustainable, people-centered development.

**Mr. Dasaratha Rout as the Capacity Building Officer** has been a part of WOSCA for the past 17 years, bringing over 26 years of experience in the development sector. He has expertise on maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) care, Early Childhood Care & Development (ECCD) and women empowerment.

**Mr. Sirish Ch. Singhsamant serves as the NRM Expert of WOSCA** since last 18 years. He possesses a deep expertise in natural resource management, rain water management structure, women's empowerment, and entrepreneurship development for SHG women.

**Mr. Milan Kumar Mishra being the Programme Manager** is a passionate advocate for literacy and child education, with a rich background in literary works, creative writing, and educational program development. With 24 years of experience, he has contributed to initiatives aimed at nurturing a love for reading and learning among children.

**Ms. Pratima Swain** having 30 years of experience in infrastructure development, community development and project management serves as an expert of Agri/Horti activities with the commitment to excellence and to drive forward the organization's vision for impactful development.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT

- **Outreach and Community Development:** Reaching over families across four districts in Odisha, making a significant impact through integrated development initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods, education, land rights, and climate resilience.
- **Wasteland Reclamation:** Facilitating the conversion of previously unproductive wastelands into productive agricultural land across 134 villages through effective implementation of rainwater management and strategies under MGNREGA scheme, contributing to enhanced agricultural output and rural employment.
- **Women's Livelihood Advancement:** Enabling women to improve and diversify their livelihoods by supporting access to government schemes, training, and capacity building through convergence of multiple livelihood activities contributing to greater economic independence and social standing for women in rural communities.
- **Science Education for Children:** Positively influenced the education of school children by enhancing access to quality science education and learning support. This initiative promoted curiosity, creativity, and improved learning outcomes among students in under-resourced areas.
- **Climate-Resilient Enterprise Development:** Supporting members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in developing climate-resilient microenterprise plans, fostering sustainable income generation while building adaptive capacities against climate change impacts.
- **Land Rights Secured through FRA:** Facilitating the legal recognition and securing of land rights for families through effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) empowering the tribal and forest-dwelling communities by ensuring tenure security and access to traditional lands.
- **Child Protection and Rehabilitation:** Ensuring rescue operation for the children from child labor conditions and successfully rehabilitating them by integrating them back into the formal education system, thus restoring their right to childhood, education, and a better future.

## MILESTONES

**1993-1998:** The Women's Organization for Socio-Cultural Awareness (WOSCA) was established on December 20, 1993 and dedicated to uplift underprivileged communities, particularly women, children, and the elderly. Initially, WOSCA started formation of SHGs and vocational trainings like tailoring for women and promoted skill development programme.

**1999-2007:** With the FCRA registration, WOSCA gained support from CONCERN Worldwide, CARE, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Centre for People's Forestry (CPF) for livelihood development, forest conservation, promotion of maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) care and strengthening Local Governance and decentralised planning. During these years, WOSCA bagged Indira Priyadarshini Vriksha Mitra (IPVM) Award by Ministry of Environment & Forest, National Youth Club Award by Nehru Yuva Kendra (Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports), National E-Governance Award by Deptt. of Administrative reforms & Grievances.

**2008-2017:** During this period, WOSCA expanded its focus to child rights promotion, education, bio-diversity conservation, social inclusion, implementation of Forest Rights Act, Orchard plantation, CFT Projects, Community centred child development, Skill upgradation and Design Development Programmes, Focused Area Development Programme, combating child domestic labour and Natural

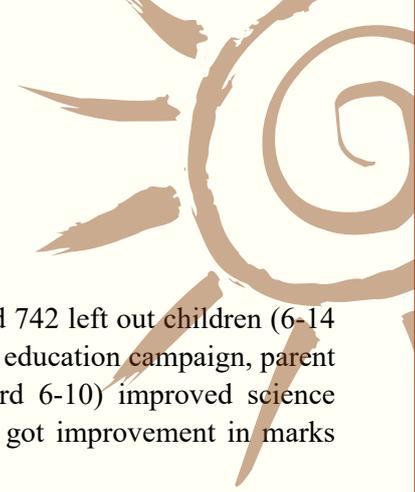
Resource Management programmes with the support of National Health Mission (NHM), District Mineral Foundation, Keonjhar and Sundergarh, Dept. of Women & Child Development. Gradually these initiatives had strengthened community institutions, enabling women to assume leadership positions in local governance and advocacy. During this period, WOSCA received Rastriya Swayam Sidhha Samman (RSSS) conferred by JSPL Foundation, India Development, Marketplace Award-2011 by World Bank.

**2018-2024:** WOSCA expanded its geographical reach to other states namely, Karnatak, Maharastra, New Delhi, Telengana, Madhya Pradesh, Chennai including another seven districts of Odisha focusing on Youth empowerment, women centric child development programmes, community nutrition programme, nutrition rehabilitation programme, strengthening Farmers Producers Organisation, Humanitarian response to COVID-19, Multi-Lingual Education and Joyful Learning programme with an increase in the staff strength from 364 to 812.

## ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

Every programme that WOSCA patronizes is attempted to address the issues pertaining to livelihood, social security, health and environment.

- **WADI (Orchard) based Livelihood Development Programmes:** 4432 tribal including 1280 PVTG (Juanga) families in five blocks of Keonjhar district enhanced their livelihoods through WADI development and converging the public benefits from government schemes. Formed and strengthened 122 Udyan Vikas Samitis and trained 4000 farmers on intercropping, improved agricultural practices and income generation activities.
- **STEM Life Lab initiative:** WOSCA introduced the Jigyasa program, part of the STEM Life Lab initiative aiming to provide children with hands-on experience in science and mathematics through demo models aligned with grade-specific curriculum. This innovative approach enhanced students' understanding, engagement, problem-solving skills, and creativity. WOSCA has successfully set up 381 STEM labs across the nation, providing children with the opportunity to explore real-world applications of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- **Mukhya Mantri Janajati Jeevika Mission:** For enhancing immediate livelihood prospects a total of 10,883 tribal beneficiaries were provided essential seasonal input support and the initiative had enabled the cultivation of 4,780 acres of land across both Kharif and Rabi seasons. Financial support of ₹1 lakh provided to 150 entrepreneurs, empowering them to launch diverse businesses.
- **Community Nutrition Programme:** Registration of 5211 pregnant women and 4313 children from 0-5 years enrolled under the AWC was carried out in Harichandanpur block using the program MIS (AVNI). A total of 640 SAM, 396 MAM and 28 Normal Children (URTI, Skin Infections) have been referred to CHC through QRT Vehicle. Quick Response Team (QRT) engaged to track Severe Acute Malnourished (SAM) children and severely anaemic high risk pregnant women.
- **MGNREGA for livelihood enhancement and infrastructure development:** WOSCA sensitised the rural people to access their entitlements. 7658 families made aware on Infrastructure Climate Resilient Works under MGNREGA. 64 plans were linked with MGNREGA, OLM and ITDA developmental schemes. 80% Livelihood convergence ensured in 32 GPs building the lead from the assets created under MGNREGS.



- **Access to Education and Child Development:** 3450 drop out and 742 left out children (6-14 years) developed access to formal education through facilitation of education campaign, parent counseling and residential bridge course. 5200 children (standard 6-10) improved science learning through Life lab kits and 1280 children (10th standard) got improvement in marks through scholarship for books and special tuition.
- **Agriculture Production Cluster (APC):** 98 Producers Groups formed and strengthened covering 2567 women farmers of 134 villages under OLM. APCs promoted diversification by encouraging activities such as livestock rearing, which involved 1,203 families, along with mushroom cultivation, nursery raising, and floriculture. 32 women Agri Entrepreneurs (AE) identified by the respective groups.
- **Rain Water Management:** Rain Water Management facilitated by WOSCA under MGNREGA in 116 villages of 6 blocks and 6360 families improved the crop production of the farmers from 60% to 130% through land development and water conservation measures. Around Rs. 30,000/- to 35,000/- additional income accrued to each household in Rabi & Khariff season using rain water.

## KEY LEARNINGS:

WOSCA has completed 31 years in the field of socio-economic development of the poor and marginalized people. WOSCA has tried its best to address the pertinent issues in the district, especially the marginalized women folk in the rural hinterland. The effort to bring about any change would substantially be challenging, when it disrupts the status quo and precedence, and so was the case of WOSCA in its endeavours as well. Despite umpteen schemes for the socio-economic betterment, the target group remained impoverished. And the saddest thing was that they were tolerant enough to resent the intervention of WOSCA initially. The mere availability of welfare schemes and programmes need not create any desirable and perceptible impact on beneficiary groups.

- An agency with impeccable credibility, must be engaged to smoothen the intervention programmes spearheading transformation.
- Ecological Benefits Take Time because restoration is gradual but leads to long-term ecosystem recovery.
- Monitoring and Adaptive Management is the key as the conditions change; continuous learning is needed.
- Community Involvement is essential as the long-term success hinges on local ownership.
- Women are the keys in all the developmental initiatives.
- Strong Institution building helps project success.
- Empowering people to claim entitlements from government rather than providing material support is the best way of empowerment.



## Success Stories



**Improved Access to nutrition to children:** Under the Pusti Kendra (PPK) and PPK Plus initiatives a total of 87 PPKs has been functional in the Harichandanpur block where a total of 979 children of 3 to 6 years and 7 months to 3 years are receiving hot cooked meals benefiting their cognitive and emotional development along with improved physical growth.

**Agriculture Production Cluster for income enhancement:** Through the APC Programmes WOSCA provided opportunities to 12,000 women farmers to participate in collective farming. The production of 10,969 quintals of vegetables was sold collectively amounting Rs. 293.69 lakhs, showcasing the benefits of collective marketing efforts. This has led 428 women to receive income through collective marketing of vegetable and livestock. This has not only increased their confidence but provided financial independence and improved social status within their communities.



**Aama Kalika-Creche Programme for children:** WOSCA established 187 Crèche centres in Harichandanpur and Sadar block of Keonjhar. Through this initiative, total 4384 children enrolled in the Aama Kalika Kendra. Provision of nutritious foods like Sattu mix, Ragi, Dates, Egg, Soyabin, Dalma and Rice has reduced the risks of stunting, anemia, and other health issues of the children.



**Maternal Waiting Home:** A total of 713 institutional deliveries were conducted through the MWHs, demonstrating their effectiveness in providing a safe and monitored environment for childbirth. Notably, 657 scheduled tribe women and 30 scheduled caste women benefited from these services, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions for marginalized communities.

**Improved nutritional Care:** WOSCA established four Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) in four blocks of Keonjhar district. By this initiative, 2640 women and 8241 children (0-24 months) improved their nutrition status through proper facilitation of Infant, young child and mother nutrition. Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND) strengthened through effective facilitation and trainings to duty bearers.



## **Women's Organisation for Socio-Cultural Awareness (WOSCA)**

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[www.gramvikas.org](http://www.gramvikas.org)

## **BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION**

The journey of Gram Vikas began in 1971 Odisha when a group of 400 volunteers from the Young Students Movement for Development (YSMD) in Chennai, under the leadership of Joe Madiath arrived in Odisha to support relief and rehabilitation in the cyclone affected areas of the then Cuttack district. After the initial relief phase, the group started working with the farming community in the area by developing lift irrigation systems to help improve agricultural productivity. However, the work did not benefit the landless and the poorest in the villages.

This prompted the group to search for deeper, more inclusive engagement leading them to Ganjam district, to work with the adivasi communities in the Kerandimal hills outside Berhampur. The group from YSMD shifted base to Mohuda village in Ganjam district in 1976.

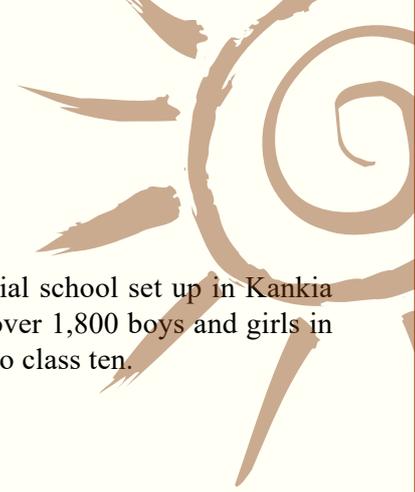
The original plan was to set up a dairy cooperative but, the team quickly realised that such efforts would not address the real needs of the tribal population. There was need for work in basic needs such as education and health, and that is what the group began working with. The initial work was in 60 villages in the area. Gram Vikas was registered in January 1979 to formally take up the work began by the YSMD volunteers.

## **Gram Vikas in the First Four Decades**

### ***Mobilisation of communities for rights and development***

The Kandha tribe in the Kerandimal hills under the aegis of the Kerandimal Gana Sangathan had united against exploitation by money lenders and liquor merchants. They were successful in releasing many families from indebtedness and bondage. The success in Kerandimal motivated Gram Vikas to support a similar movement in Thuamul Rampur in Kalahandi district, to protect land rights of the adivasi and dalit communities. These grassroots struggles laid the foundation for Gram Vikas' commitment to community led development. Over the next two decades Gram Vikas expanded its work in remote areas of Ganjam, Gajapati, and Kalahandi districts, supporting adivasi communities through interventions in health, education, savings, afforestation, and forest protection. The organisation's work in the villages is taken up through democratic village level institutions.





### ***Education***

The organisation's focus on education began early, with the first residential school set up in Kankia village in Ganjam district in 1982. The work grew steadily to now serve over 1,800 boys and girls in remote regions through four residential schools that provide education up to class ten.

### ***Renewable energy***

One of Gram Vikas' earliest technology interventions was in the area of biogas. Between 1981 and 1992, it helped install more than 54,000 biogas units in villages across Odisha, to ease fuel wood dependence and women's drudgery. The Biogas programme of Gram Vikas is also among the earliest cases of voluntary organisations working with the government to achieve scalability and wider reach of development interventions. The work on renewable energy has continued in the sectors of solar power, micro-hydro systems, and other sustainable energy sources.

### ***Drinking water and sanitation***

Perhaps Gram Vikas' most transformative contribution has been its work in community-owned and managed drinking water and sanitation. Starting in 1994, the Rural Health and Environment Programme was designed through deep community engagement. By combining piped water supply with twin-leach pit toilets and bathing rooms, the programme ensured 24/7 access to safe water while addressing the root causes of waterborne disease — making health, dignity, and convenience a reality for rural families.

## **Gram Vikas in the Fifth Decade**

On completion of forty years of work in 2019, Gram Vikas undertook an internal exercise to review its work and contributions. Based on the assessment, the Gram Vikas Decade V strategic approach was arrived at. The work in the fifth decade is built to respond to the key challenges our rural community partners in Odisha and Jharkhand face. Enabling rural communities to create a dignified quality of life requires multidimensional actions designed and executed in a robust, participatory manner. Gram Vikas recognises its role as a catalyst and facilitator to demonstrate that technology and knowledge can be used to demonstrate solutions to these problems across multiple socioeconomic and biophysical contexts.

Two key programmes form the core of Gram Vikas' work with our community partners - The Water Secure Gram Panchayat (WSGP) Programme and the Safe and Dignified Migration (SDM) Programme.

The Water Secure Gram Panchayat Programme is a community-led initiative that aims to enable water resource management and resilient, sustainable, and gender-equitable institutions. This approach empowers rural households to improve their health and economic outcomes. The Gram Panchayat, as a federation of its constituent habitations, is the unit of implementation. The programme envisages bringing together all households in the habitations within a Gram Panchayat to effectively manage their water resources and build the capacities of the local governance system to facilitate this.

The Safe and Dignified Migration Programme focuses on geographies where opportunistic migration is a key livelihood option. It enables communities to gain from informed and dignified migration. The Programme contributes to the overall social and economic development of remote areas and enables stronger coping with the impacts of climate change.

## Reach and Coverage of Gram Vikas' work

Gram Vikas' work has benefitted more than 1.34 million households in 1135 Gram Panchayats of 15 districts in Odisha and one district in Jharkhand. More than 70% of the communities covered belong to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The work has focused on remote locations in different districts of Odisha.

## SUPPORT ENTITIES

Gram Vikas has had the privilege of being supported by a wide range of partner organisations and individuals. These organisations and individuals have shared financial resources, technical and managerial knowledge and materials, and support in developing human resources at the organisation and community level.

- **National Donor Partners:** ACC Trust, Arghyam, Axis Bank Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation, Bajaj Finserv, Deloitte, HDFC Bank Parivartan, ICRISAT, IndiGo Reach, InterGlobe Foundation, Reliance Foundation, Rainmatter Foundation, SBI Foundation, Wipro Cares,
- **International Donor Partners:** B1G1, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, charity: water, Standard Chartered Bank, Skoll Foundation.
- **Knowledge & Technology partners:** ACWADAM, C-GEM, CMID, Emulus Consulting, Genpact, Goonj, India Climate Collaborative, ICFOSS, Rang De, SBI Youth for India, Social Shapes Foundation.
- **Academic and Research partners:** Azim Premji University, Development Innovation Lab, DMI Patna, Emory University, IIHS, ISDM, IRMA, KIIT School of Rural Management, Shiv Nadar University, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Xavier University.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Mr. Joe Madiath**, the Founder Executive Director and currently Chairman of Gram Vikas, is a renowned social entrepreneur who has dedicated his life to empowering rural communities in Odisha. Recognized globally for his work, Joe has received numerous awards, including the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship and the World Economic Forum Social Entrepreneur award. He has also contributed to national policymaking as a member of several key committees, especially in the water and sanitation sector.

**Mr. Liby T Johnson is the Executive Director** of Gram Vikas. He has led large-scale, impactful poverty alleviation efforts with nonprofits, multilateral organisations, and government in 30+ years of social development work. Liby regularly contributes to policymaking in the rural drinking water, sanitation, and livelihoods sectors at the national and state levels. He served as a member of the National Task Force for the Jal Jeevan Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.

**Mr. Sukant Bhattacharya, Strategic Lead-Performance**, is a development professional with more than 25 years of grassroots experience. He has been with Gram Vikas since 2014. He is responsible for organisation capacity building, performance management system, developing organisation policies and guidelines.

**Mr. Chandramohan Patnaik, Strategic Lead-Finance**, has been with Gram Vikas since 1998. He provides leadership to ensure smooth collaboration between the programme and regulatory/ control functions and strengthening Gram Vikas' stature as a transparent and accountable organisation.

## IMPACT OF GRAM VIKAS' WORK

- Established four residential high schools, enabling 1,736 students from remote villages to access quality education; 890 boys and 642 girls, all first-generation learners, successfully passed Class 10.

- Improved land productivity on 10,370 hectares, regenerated over 10,000 hectares of forests, supported 276 primary collectives benefiting 2,844 farmers, and enhanced employment skills for 6,716 individuals, including 742 women.
- Completed 1,472 open-defecation free villages with 108,645 households having toilets and bathing rooms with running water and empowered 1,431 villages to manage their own integrated drinking water and sanitation systems.
- Enabled 58,000 households to access renewable energy for domestic needs and supported 16,568 households in 175 villages with disaster-resilient housing.
- Established self-managed development systems in 1,700 habitations, with ₹10.80 crore mobilized as village corpus funds and 162 habitations developing Village Poverty Reduction Plans integrated into Gram Panchayat Development Plans.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Kantabanji village models grassroots climate action in reviving springs and conserving land

In Kantabanji village in Thuamul Rampur block of Kalahandi district, community-driven efforts revitalise landscapes and restore water security. Forty-five households tackled chronic water shortages through sustainable watershed practices.

Trained youth volunteers used tools like the A-Frame and mWater app to guide the construction of over 4,500 staggered contour trenches and 60 field bunds. These eco-friendly interventions have reduced soil erosion, enhanced spring discharge, and prepared land for agriculture and horticulture. Greener hills and improved water tables reflect the success of these efforts, showcasing how local action and knowledge can build lasting environmental resilience and improve rural livelihoods.



### Women negotiate their way to assume the role of decision-makers

For years, male migration from Kaluku village in Ganjam district left women responsible for their families and livelihoods. Rather than being passive recipients of remittances, women like Runu and Bobby took initiative, managing household needs, raising children, and uniting the community to address shared challenges. When clean water and sanitation emerged as urgent needs, they led efforts to bring lasting change. These women mobilised villagers formed a gender-balanced Village Development Committee (VDC), and helped build toilets, bathrooms, and an overhead water tank for piped water through three taps at home. Their leadership restored dignity, improved hygiene, and strengthened community bonds. Today, Kaluku's women are transforming their village, redefining roles and creating a future built on resilience, equity, and hope.



### Climate resilient farming initiative boosts local farmer incomes

Sixty-three-year-old Artarana Bhoi from Chhatrang village in Bolangir district successfully cultivated pointed gourd for the first time, earning ₹6,500 in just a few months. Inspired by exposure visits and trained in modern, organic farming methods, Artarana adopted sustainable practices like mulching, trellising, and using natural pesticides. His success, has made him the first successful pointed gourd farmer in his area, earning steady weekly income and inspiring others. His journey shows how training, peer learning, and small innovations can transform lives and strengthen rural livelihoods across Bolangir.



### Remote village communities of Lanjigarh reduce groundwater contamination

In Lakhbahali GP of Lanjigarh block, Kalahandi district, Gram Vikas has partnered with the village communities to address water contamination and improve sanitation. Talbora, Rughaguda, Thuangapadar, Rangiguda, and Lermuhi, home to 399 households, rely on tube wells for drinking water, but contamination from poor sanitation leads to frequent health issues like cholera and jaundice. In response, Gram Vikas trained local youth as Water Quality Management (WQM) volunteers to test water sources for harmful bacteria and nitrates. With this data, the community launched cleaning drives, built raised platforms around tube wells, and improved water safety measures. By November 2022, water contamination reduced significantly. The villages also constructed community bathing rooms and repurposed wastewater for vegetable cultivation, contributing to better hygiene and a sustainable environment. The initiative empowers these communities with safe water and better health practices.



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# National Alliance of Women

[www.nawoindia.com](http://www.nawoindia.com)

## Genesis of NAWO

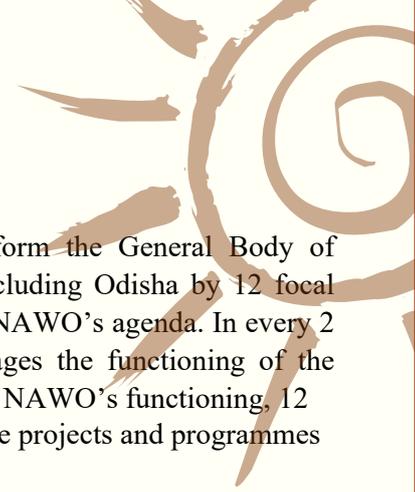
The Beijing Conference of 1995 and subsequent interest evinced by activists and NGOs triggered the emergence of National Alliance of Women (NAWO) which has since mooted the centrality of women's rights as human rights. Thus, NAWO can be considered as an offshoot of Beijing conference and a network of women whose affiliation / membership is open to all progressive minded women's groups and institutions, women workers, individual women.

Having emerged from Beijing conference of 1995, NAWO engage with government both at state and national level for realisation of the UN commitments through appropriate government policies and programmes for women. NAWO enjoys a unique position in that it is the single largest National Alliance that has centre-staged critical issues of marginalised women through a collective process and in particular, those of the Dalits, Adivasis and Religious minorities. NAWO's contribution is best seen in its reporting on and to CEDAW and its participation in the UPR reporting process– underpinning the denials and deprivations of women from marginalised communities.



## The structure of NAWO:

NAWO is registered on 30 July 1997 under the Society Registration Act 1860 keeping twelve women leaders/ activists as members. They become the governing body members as well as each one becomes the focal point for their respective states to which they belong.



However, NAWO is a membership-based organization, the members form the General Body of NAWO. The base of NAWO is its members. It operates in 18 states including Odisha by 12 focal points who have journeyed together, giving their voluntary time to further NAWO's agenda. In every 2 years the Governing body elect 7 Executive body members, who manages the functioning of the organisations. While the NAWO Governing Body is overall responsible for NAWO's functioning, 12 state level focal point persons spreading across 18 states of India manage the projects and programmes of NAWO at state level.

### **NAWO's Founding Members:**

**Dr. Ruth Manorama**, Founding President of the National Alliance of Women (NAWO), is a renowned social and political activist and a leading Dalit feminist. She is the founder and advisor of the Karnataka Gruha Karmikara Sangha, the first registered trade union for domestic workers in India, and serves as Vice President of the National Centre for Labour (NCL). A lifelong advocate for human rights, she has championed the struggles of marginalized communities against discrimination and deprivation. Her effective lobbying and negotiation skills led to her membership in several national commissions and committees, including the National Commission on Population, RTE Advisory Council, and the Standing Committee for Women Scientists. An international resource person since 1979, she has received the Right Livelihood Award (2006) and the SKOCH Challenger Award (2012).

**Ms Pramila Swain**, is a women rights and tribal rights activist working among the Dongria Kondhs in the remote south western parts of Odisha.

**Dr Pam Rajput** is a noted academician and feminist. She headed High Level Committee on the Status on Women, 2015 set up by Government of India.

**Ms. Sheba George** is a prominent Women Activist from Gujrat who worked for minority women's rights and peace building.

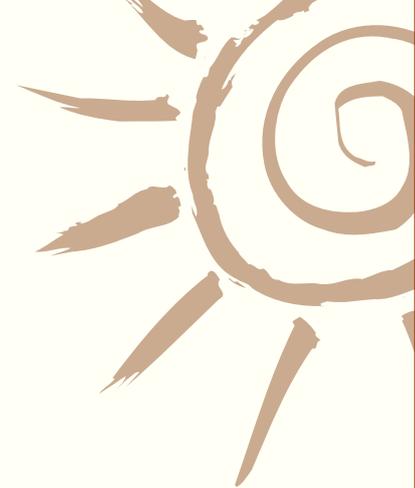
**Ms. Jarjum Ette**, a noted women activist and former State Commissioner for Women, Arunachal Pradesh.

**Ms. Roshmi Goswami** is a feminist human rights activist and independent researcher, widely recognized for her pioneering work on women in conflict situations in India. She serves on the Governing Board of the US-based Urgent Action Fund, is a bureau member of South Asians for Human Rights, and a Working Group member of the Asia Pacific Women's Alliance on Peace and Security (APWAPS). Previously, she worked as Program Officer with the Ford Foundation, New Delhi, and continues to contribute as an advisory committee member for the Foundation's global work on Violence Against Women.

**Dr Neelam Gorhe**, a renowned academician, women's rights advocate, and seasoned politician from Maharashtra.

**Ms Vasanth Kannabiran**, is a noted Academician and Feminist from undivided Andhra Pradesh.

**Ms. Neelam Chaturvedi**, a committed women's rights and human rights activist from Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.



## Current Executive Body Members of NAWO

1. Dr Pam Rajput, President
2. Ms Pramila Swain, Secretary
3. Ms Bimala Chandrasekhar, Vice- President
4. Ms Sheba George, Joint Secretary
5. Ms Lalita Missal, Treasurer
6. Ms Neelam Chaturvedi, Member
7. Ms Tapoti Bhowmik, Member
8. Ms Koely Roy, Member

## Vision and Goal of NAWO

NAWO envisions a gender-just society, democratic and humane society where women and men can in partnership fulfil their responsibility of building a peaceful future. The goal of NAWO is to advance women's leadership in building an inclusive, equitable, just, sustainable, safe, and secure society for women and girls.

## Values of NAWO

- Respect for Human Dignity
- Freedom of thought and expression
- Belief in diversity, Pluralism and democracy
- Transparency and Accountability
- Secularism
- Peace, Social Justice and Human Rights
- Empathy and Solidarity with the marginalised
- Camaraderie and Collegiality
- Diversity in Leadership, especially leadership among youth

## NAWO's Belief:

- We understand that women are not a homogenous group, and intersectional factors such as class, caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, and age shape their vulnerabilities. To reach the most marginalized, our focus must remain on inclusion.
- Increasing women's participation in different spheres of life is not enough; leadership and active involvement in decision-making are crucial for true empowerment. All our interventions aim to nurture women's leadership at every level.
- Challenging patriarchal norms and beliefs cannot be done in isolation. We strive to collaborate and build alliances to create lasting change.
- Achieving gender equality requires recognizing the evolving nature of gender-based violence. Continuous learning and perspective-building are vital to sharpen our strategies for creating a gender-just society.

## NAWO's Reach and Strength

NAWO has around 5,000 members, including civil society organizations, movement-based networks, and individual women activists. Its strength lies in this diversity and mutual partnership. Small NGOs from remote areas benefit through exposure and learning from larger networks, while their grassroots experience enriches and grounds NAWO's work. Many women activists have also drawn strength from

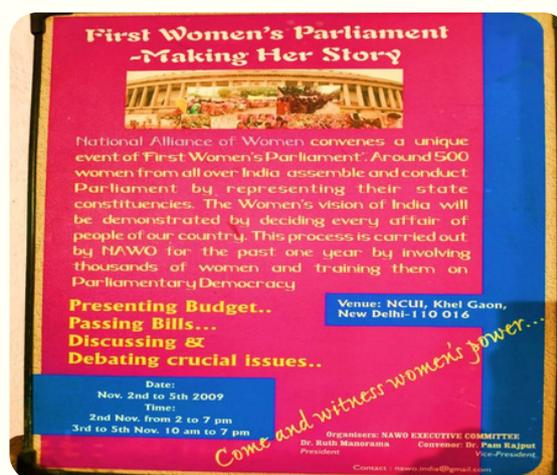
their association with NAWO in their fight against injustice. This close-knit exchange is what makes NAWO unique and calls for constant nurturing.

## SUPPORT ENTITIES

NAWO is receiving support from Action Aid, Water Aid, Trocaire, SEWA, SAWF IN (South Asia Women Foundation India), Oxfam India, IDWF (International Domestic Workers' Federation), DCA, IM Sweden, Bread for the World and ASW.

## Making a difference looking back

NAWO's evolution, growth, and maturity have been shaped by four core processes: The Beijing Process, the CEDAW Alternative Report process, the *Women's Parliament* initiative, and the effort to engender the 11th Five-Year Plan. Each of these involved extensive consultations, dialogue, reporting, networking, and publications. Together, they enabled NAWO to foster critical reflections on women's issues, with a special focus on the concerns of marginalized women.



## Role of NAWO in CEDAW Alternative Reports

First and foremost, NAWO's script is best seen in its role and contribution on and to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). For NAWO, the reporting process under CEDAW has emerged as a strategic lever to identify, educate, disseminate and to make public the gaps, lapses, violations of state bodies in meeting its commitment to CEDAW as well as engage and negotiate for remedial measures. For CEDAW reporting, NAWO adopts multi-level consultations (with NGOs, activists, and grassroots groups; use of reports of fact-finding missions and outcomes of judicial instruments such as PIL, RTI etc.) that embed dialogue, critical analysis and documentation. CEDAW reporting has taken on the colour of a systemic response. Currently, NAWO is involved in the 6th and 7th NGO Alternative Report preparation process. More and more women/ organizations want to be associated with the process of NGO Alternate Reports.

## Political Participation and Governance

Since its inception, along with many other Women's Rights groups, NAWO has persisted with its campaign for equal representation of women in Parliament and State Legislative Assembly. For highlighting the importance of women leadership, and highlight the women's issues the historic 'Women Parliament', held at the India's national capital in 2009. The e 'Women Parliament' was a well thought out process which went through stages of training of trainers who in turn the 545 women representing all the 545 parliamentary constituencies.

In the process ordinary women, particularly from marginalised section got oriented and trained on how to conduct themselves in a parliament, how to raise questions, how to place a bill and pass the bill. During the Women's Parliament these women tabled several significant Bills such as Women's Reservation Bill 2009 which allows for 50% reservation for women in Parliament, Domestic Workers (Regulation of employment, condition of work, Social Security and Welfare) Bill 2009 and right to recall Bill 2009. All these bills were subsequently discussed and debated in the Parliament.

A continuing initiative of NAWO is releasing **Women's political manifestos** before all elections, interfacing with legislators and parliamentarians for dialogue—a process that has been educative. The Women's Manifesto are developed in consultation with grassroots women and CBOs highlighting what women want as policies and programmes before every General Elections and State Elections since 2009.

### **Engagement with the India's Five-Year planning process**

At the instance of Planning Commission of Government of India, NAWO in collaboration with the Voluntary Health Association of India undertook a mid-term appraisal of the Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-2012 to review aspects of health, women and child development, minorities, handicrafts and handlooms. This process went through a series of regional level consultations and interfaces with various stakeholders. For NAWO, this was a learning process that resulted in a strong interface with bureaucrats and policy making bodies.

Tangible outcomes are seen in NAWO's engagement in the planning process. NAWO created an opportunity to capacitate 2000 women & men on government schemes and disseminate guidelines to evaluate and monitor the programme at ground level. Several of NAWO's recommendations got integrated in the Plan Document. In 2010 a state core committee was formed in Andhra Pradesh, comprising of 13 women, to disseminate information on government schemes and programmes that benefit women. Another fall out of this is that a few of NAWO members are in the working groups (Empowerment of Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Voluntary Sector, Women and Child development) of the 12th Five Year Plan. NAWO also took the initiative to organise consultations among Civil society organisations in the country during the 12 Five-year Plan making significant contributions to the plan document.

### **NAWO's involvement High level Committee of the Government of India**

The Government of India set up the High-Level Committee on the Status of Women in India in 2013. Its mandate was to examine the social, economic, health and political status of women in the country since 1989 and evolve policies based on women's needs. The Committee submitted its report (in four volumes) in 2015.

The chairperson of the High-Level Committee Dr. Pam Rajput is one of the Founding members and the current president of NAWO. NAWO members took initiative in organising regional level consultations and took active part in contributing to the Report.

The report assesses the status of women in India in "all aspects of their lives", including age, class, caste, religion, ethnicity, region and ability. It recommends measures for women's 'holistic empowerment', evaluates the impact of existing policies and legislative changes, and identifies gaps in their implementation. The Committee says that while there has been progress in women's education and their participation in local governance, the status of most women is not equal to that of men, especially women from marginalised sections of society.

### **Campaign to Repeal Two Child Norm as Panchayat Election conditionality.**

Some 7 to 8 states of India adopted a policy where by any person who are has more than two children would be barred from contesting Panchayat Election. Though the policy is applicable for both men and women, yet NAWO found that this policy is affecting women more adversely. So, it led a campaign against it along with some other organisations, in state of Odisha where this policy is adopted.

### **Study on Status of Migrant women during the COVID -19 pandemic.**

During pandemic when due to lockdown lakhs and lakhs of migrant workers returned back to their native places, there was quite a lot of debate and discussion on migrant workers' plight, but there is hardly any data on migrant women and their situation during that time. In fact, till date there is no gender segregated data on reverse migration to highlight the issues and concerns of Migrant women workers from unorganised sector NAWO undertook a study of Migrant women workers from unorganised sector. The objective was not only to highlight the issues and concerns, but also to use the study findings for influencing various stakeholders for pro women livelihood options and create scope and opportunities for women migrant workers' economic rehabilitation through demonstrating pilots with select SHG platforms.

### **Thematic Areas and Strategies for The Next Five Years (2023-28).**

Considering the post pandemic socio-political and economic context NAWO has decided to work on following thematic areas:

1. Women's livelihood, especially in the context of climate change
2. Gender based violence mitigation and Enhancing women's' Human Rights.
3. Women leadership building and active participation in decision making process in personal and public life., especially youth leadership
4. Action Research and knowledge building

## **THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS OF NAWO**

### **1. Violence and Discrimination against Women**

NAWO influences the law enforcement agencies for proper implementation of laws to address violence against women (PW DVA, PC and PNNDT, Bill against sexual harassment of women in workplace) and influence promote and strengthen the redress system at district and state level.

Additionally, NAWO was the first organization to be allowed to work in psychosocial counselling, visit relief camps, and join district peace committees. NAWO is still fighting for the rights of women who have been victims of abuse, particularly widows who need more time to get well.

### **2. Women and Governance**

NAWO Odisha has been active in federations and solidarity organizations, capacity building for female PRI members, and the battle to remove the two-child rule as an electoral conditionality that has been a barrier. The government's 50% reservation campaign for women has proven to be effective. the endeavour to support candidate nominations in the legislature and state assembly.

### **3. Women and Livelihood**

NAWO playing a part in promoting women's rights with the forest right act by increasing awareness of ownership rights to land and forest, pushing for women to receive land under FRA, and pushing for joint patta through meetings, interfaces, and capacity building on land problems.

The women's land rights movement has raised knowledge of women's rights on a broad scale, resulting in women submitting applications and widowed and single women being granted land patta.

#### 4. Women and Health

Health is an important aspect of women's life. NAWO also works on health issues through its SURAKHYA team. It has conducted a study on Family Planning Insurance (FPI) scheme. The issue of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and practices among adolescent females is a pressing matter. So NAWO works on Reproductive health and menstrual hygiene of Adolescent girls.

Besides, NAWO also considers **Education, Natural Resource Management, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, and Inclusion and Diversity** as key thematic areas of its work.

### Key Activities Undertaken by NAWO

#### Women in Climate Resilient Agriculture:

This activity focused on empowering women farmers to adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices through hands-on training, community engagement, and seed preservation efforts.



seed efforts. Programs like the "BIHAN MELA" and "Mo Upakari Bagicha" promoted indigenous seed conservation and organic farming, supporting food security and sustainable livelihoods. Training sessions in Odisha enabled women to learn eco-friendly farming techniques, including organic fertilizer preparation and collective cultivation. The awareness program in Rayagada district further strengthened the movement, recognizing women's crucial role in agriculture and their resilience in the face of climate challenges.

#### Organizing women in the unorganized sector:

NAWO actively works to empower and organize women in informal employment by providing support and training. Through this training and support, it helps women get better jobs, earn more, and gain legal rights in overlooked sectors.



NAWO helps women in informal jobs, like domestic and agricultural work, form unions to claim their rights. In Odisha, these unions are linked to SEWA. NAWO also helps women to get official worker recognition and registered as women farmers.

Women's groups also held village meetings, rallies, and discussions on farming, gender equality, and workplace rights. Migrant and domestic workers learned how to become financially independent. These efforts are helping women become stronger, more informed, and perfect leaders. . Our work with unorganised sector women workers also made us realise how despite laws women workers in unorganised sector women workers are experiencing sexual harassment at workplace. This, compelled us to conduct a study on *Implementation of Sexual Harrassment of women at Work place (Prevention, Protection and Redressal) Act 2013 for unorganised sector workers.*

This study showed us many operational issues like formation of Local committee, Training of Local committee members, budgetary allocations for implementing the Act which need to be addressed. The study was shared with government, with Trade Unions. As a result, in many districts of Odisha and Jharkhand the district administration organised Local Committee members training on POSH Act.

### **Strengthening Rights and Recognition for Single Women:**

NAWO is working to support single women—widows, divorced, separated, and unmarried—by raising awareness about their rights and pushing for policy recognition. NAWO conducted various meetings in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar to understand their challenges and organized conventions in different districts to bring women together. These events helped single women discuss issues like job access, childcare, financial struggles, and social stigma. In Kandhamal and Deogarh, large gatherings created safe spaces for women to share experiences, learn about government schemes, and build leadership. The initiative strengthened unity and advocacy, helping single women gain recognition and support for a better future.

After the single women survey, we organized a training session in Bhubaneswar, where women leaders were selected to learn about their rights and how to support others. To strengthen the movement, a state-level convention was held, bringing together trained leaders and women from different regions. They shared stories, discussed common issues, and built a strong support network. The event helped single women feel heard and connected across the state.

## **National Alliance of Women**

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An Initiative for  
Sustainable Development

## Working Towards Transformation of Food Systems

[www.nirmanodisha.org](http://www.nirmanodisha.org)

### BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANISATION

NIRMAN is established as a leading development organization in Odisha, working at the grassroots level to empower smallholder farmers, Scheduled Tribes (STs), and other marginalized communities. NIRMAN has played a critical role in shaping the discussion around food systems, promoting agrobiodiversity, restoring degraded natural ecosystems, and strengthening community-based institutions to face the twin challenges of a changing climate and depleting knowledge and resource base. Operating across 13 tribal and coastal districts of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, the organization has improved the food security and livelihoods of 1,00,917 small and marginal farmers, and forest communities, through a holistic look at food issues, adopting a diverse range of climate smart agriculture and natural resource-based interventions, organization building for product enhancement, and tapping market opportunities.

The journey has humble beginnings. Prasant Mohanty, the founder of the organization who hails from a family of farmers, had observed and experienced first-hand the various issues and challenges being faced by the rural households in general and the smallholders in particular. His experience of more than a decade in the development sector by that time convinced him that through multi-level actions and networks, the difficulties of the rural households can be overcome.

This conviction and commitment led to informal interventions in localized manner and subsequently the passion formalized in the form of an organization through the Society Registration Act, 1960 in 2007 and NIRMAN was created to further such approaches of inclusive growth at grassroots level. The organization received its first external supported project from Regional Centre for Organic Farming (RCOF) in 2004 for the Nayagarh Block in Nayagarh district, Odisha, India.

### Countering Challenges, Seeking Solutions:

Communities, largely dependent on agriculture and forest-based livelihoods, face persistent challenges such as poverty, food insecurity and hunger, climate vulnerability, and lack of access to sustainable development resources. NIRMAN's interventions are tailored to address the socio-economic and ecological needs of these underserved populations, with a strong focus on tribal rights, natural resource management, and inclusive livelihood promotion.

Beyond field-level engagement, NIRMAN actively contributes to policy and research initiatives at the national and international levels. As a member of several knowledge networks, the organization plays a vital role in shaping discourse around indigenous rights, climate change, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem conservation. Its collaborative research efforts with institutions like the University of Waterloo (Canada) and IIT Kharagpur, particularly on the socio-ecological dynamics of the Chilika lagoon - demonstrate its commitment to evidence-based development and global knowledge exchange.

**Target Population:** NIRMAN primarily works with small and marginal farmers and marginalised communities, forest-dependents and Scheduled Tribes.



**Outreach:** NIRMAN currently operates across 530 Gram Panchayats in 50 blocks, spanning 13 tribal and coastal districts of Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

## SUPPORT ENTITIES

The organization's work has been supported by a range of national and international partners, including Tata Trust, SWISS AID, Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF), Karl Kübel Stiftung (KKS) and BMZ Germany, National Foundation for India (NFI), The Hans Foundation (THF), Ajim Premji Foundation, HDFC Bank Parivartan, Living Landscapes, AJWS, FES, and ICARDA.

NIRMAN's contributions extend beyond field-level interventions. The organization has actively collaborated with renowned research institutions such as IIT Kharagpur, the University of Waterloo (Canada), and ICRISAT. These partnerships have enabled NIRMAN to infuse its grassroots efforts with global research insights, thereby enriching its development programs and expanding its impact.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

NIRMAN has a multidisciplinary team of committed professionals with deep expertise in diverse sectors, including millet-based and ecological farming systems, rural development, land tenure, rainwater harvesting and management, natural resource governance, climate change adaptation, community empowerment, public health, and food and nutrition security. This robust in-house capacity is further enhanced through collaborations with subject matter specialists and consultants, who are engaged as needed for specific thematic areas and projects. NIRMAN's core team includes:

**Mr. Prasant Mohanty** – Secretary-cum-Executive Director: A founding member of NIRMAN, Mr. Mohanty, with 30 years of experience in the development sector, and a Master in Development Planning & Administration, has been instrumental in shaping the vision and strategic direction of the organization. His leadership continues to guide NIRMAN's mission in community empowerment and sustainable development.

**Mr. Soumen Sarangi** – Senior Advisor: A Master & MPhil in Anthropology, with extensive experience of more than 30 years in the development sector, Mr. Sarangi provides strategic inputs and technical guidance across NIRMAN's key thematic areas.

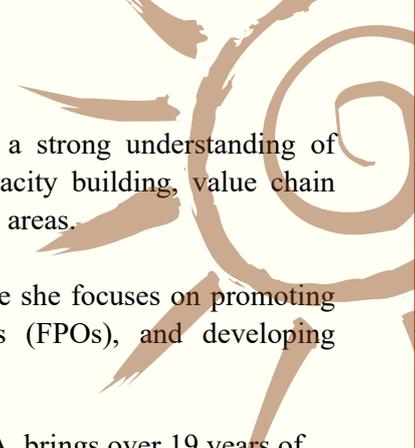
**Mr. Niranjan Dalai** – Finance Manager: A commerce graduates with Honours, Mr. Dalai brings over 29 years of experience in financial management. He oversees budgeting, compliance, and fiscal governance for all programs and projects.

**Mr. Siddharth Kumar Rout** – State Program Coordinator: A Gold Medallist in M.Sc. Horticulture from Siksha 'O' Anusandhan, Bhubaneswar, Mr. Rout coordinates state-level programs focusing on livelihoods and natural resource management.

**Mr. Jagannath Chatterjee** – Senior Program Officer: A MBA (Business Administration) and B.Com (Hons) graduate with 19 years of experience in the development sector Mr Chatterjee brings in strong expertise in program planning and execution. He ensures quality implementation and scaling of NIRMAN's interventions.

**Ms. Sigma Dang** – Program Officer: Ms. Dang, a BSc graduate, is currently serving in documentation and knowledge management roles. Her experience bridges implementation and evidence-based reporting. She has prior experience in program coordination in revival of millets program.

**Mr. Kailash Chandra Sahoo** – Project Facilitator: A MSW Mr. Sahoo works at the community level, facilitating livelihood initiatives and ensuring alignment with regional needs and priorities.



**Ms. Shradhanjali Mohapatra – Project Coordinator:** A MSW with a strong understanding of community-based agricultural development, she plays a key role in capacity building, value chain development, and promoting sustainable cultivation practices across project areas.

**Ms. Monalisha Patra – District Coordinator:** An M.Sc (Ag), in her role she focuses on promoting agroecological practices, strengthening Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and developing resilient seed systems.

**Mr. Rabindra Chakraborty – MEAL Officer:** Mr. Chakraborty, PGDCA, brings over 19 years of experience in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL). He ensures program effectiveness through robust evaluation frameworks and continuous learning processes.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT

NIRMAN has been working at ground level for more than two decades around the various thematic areas like natural resources governance & management, sustainable agriculture & livelihood development, climate change & community resilience, nutrition, and community health & WASH. Based on the learning from the field, organization’s core strength, experiences of the staff & changing priorities of the donors, research organizations, UN bodies, and other global issues & priorities, it was consensually agreed and prioritized to focus on the following thematic areas during upcoming five-years (2025- 29) through a strategic planning process:

a) **Food System Transformation through Agroecology:** NIRMAN champions food system transformation by fostering natural farming, reviving indigenous seeds and livestock, and promoting millet as “Shree Anna” to ensure biodiversity, seed sovereignty, and resilient livelihoods. Backed by farmer collectives and seed banks, these efforts today engage over 30,000 farmers across nearly 25,000 acres.

b) **Landscape Restoration and Responses:** NIRMAN advances landscape restoration and climate resilience by strengthening community forest governance, documenting biodiversity, and fostering climate action at the grassroots. Through water conservation structures and land restoration, it enhances soil and water security while empowering tribal communities to protect forests and adopt adaptive practices for sustainable livelihoods.

c) **Knowledge Co-creation:** NIRMAN fosters knowledge co-creation and local enterprise by building community resource centers and grassroots institutions that transform farmers into changemakers. With 782 groups, including SHGs and FPOs, driving rural entrepreneurship, these platforms blend traditional wisdom with innovation, enabling smallholders to enhance livelihoods and increase family incomes by up to 30%.

## KEY MILESTONES

- Over 16,000 farmers are now practicing agro-ecology farming, bolstered by 3 Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) serving 6,000 farmers and 3 community seed banks supporting 4,000 farmers.
- Over 12,000 farmers have transitioned to natural farming practices, promoting ecological balance and sustainability.
- Millet cultivation has seen a 40% increase in area, with production levels rising by up to 60%, thanks to dedicated promotion and capacity-building efforts.
- Food and nutritional security improved significantly, with availability extended from 4 to 8 months across participating households.

- Farmers have reported a 40% reduction in input costs, alongside enhanced crop diversity, contributing to climate resilience and soil health.
- NIRMAN supported 782 community-based groups (Self-Help Groups and Producer Groups), strengthening grassroots institutions for sustained impact.
- Interventions led to a 30% increase in income for smallholder farmers through diversified livelihoods and value-added practices.
- In 201 tribal villages, local communities have successfully undertaken conservation and governance of 17,690 acres of Community Forest Resource (CFR) land.

## Learning from NIRMAN'S Journey

- Sustainable change is possible when communities are at the centre. NIRMAN's success in livelihood, agriculture, and forest governance stems from empowering local institutions and respecting indigenous knowledge.
- Promotion of indigenous crops like millets, restoration of traditional agricultural and forest conservation methods, revival of traditional food culture, and customary community-managed forests has shown that adopting evidence based traditional practices can ensure ecological balance and food security.
- Continuous dialogue with the government, backed by field evidence, was crucial in influencing millet policy and gaining recognition for forest rights.
- Climate variability observed in NIRMAN program areas posed serious challenges, prompting NIRMAN to prepare and adopt climate action plans, climate-resilient agricultural practices and water conservation models, and research on natural resources affected by the changes with a view to build mitigation strategies.
- Collaborations with academic and research institutions helped in evidence-based programming, enriching both field interventions and policy influence.
- The ability to adapt strategies—whether shifting focus from pilot to scale or integrating new technologies—helped NIRMAN navigate evolving challenges.
- Partnering with diverse donors and networks was essential for scaling impact while maintaining community ownership and program sustainability.

## IMPACT OF INTERVENTIONS

Over the years NIRMAN has significantly advanced inclusive, sustainable, and community-led development across Odisha and beyond. With a presence in **2 states, 13 districts, 50 blocks, 530 Gram Panchayat's, and 2,535 villages**, the organization has directly impacted **1,00,917 mostly tribal, farming households**, primarily small and marginal farmers.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### Pond-based Integrated Farming System (IFS): A Holistic Farming Revolution

In the semi-hilly terrain of Daspalla, where rainfall is unpredictable and soil health is fragile, pond-based IFS models introduced by NIRMAN have turned challenges into opportunities. These models integrate crop cultivation, aquaculture, poultry and duckery, agroforestry, and organic waste recycling into a single, synergistic system.

One such smallholder family expanded their farming area from 0.2 to 0.43 acres, diversifying crops across kharif and rabi seasons. Paddy, ragi, pulses, and vegetables flourished, increasing yields sixfold—from 102 kg to 598 kg in kharif and from 109 kg to 363 kg of produce in rabi. The family's annual income rose from Rs 4,640 to 25,810.

Livestock and aquaculture added further resilience. Poultry and duckery, supported by integrated feeding using animal droppings, along with fish farming, generated both income and nutrition. The introduction of agroforestry - papaya, banana, moringa—enhanced environmental services while adding Rs. 4,000 annually to household earnings.

Organic composting of plant residues and animal waste reduced dependency on synthetic fertilizers and improved soil fertility, fostering a closed-loop circular farming system.



### Women's Empowerment through Backyard Poultry: The Story of Sukanti Kanhar

In Gopalpur village, Sukanti Kanhar emerged as a symbol of rural women's economic empowerment through sustainable poultry farming. Once burdened by debt and failure, Sukanti found renewed hope when she joined NIRMAN's poultry program supported by SHIVIA, UK.

With an initial toolkit of 10 chicks, net, feed, and basic medicines, she scaled to 22 toolkits, earning a net profit of Rs. 46,300. Her husband, who previously migrated for work, now manages a poultry shop on NH-57, earning Rs. 100–200 daily. Together, they have restored their household income, re-enrolled their daughter in school, who now teaches as a lecturer, and revived their dignity.



Sukanti's success also rests on azolla cultivation, a sustainable high-protein aquatic fern used as poultry feed. This cost-effective, eco-friendly innovation cut down commercial feed expenses, improved bird health, and enhanced egg and meat yield.

Today, Sukanti mentors other women in her village, inspiring a ripple effect of self-reliance and community upliftment.

### Community Seed Bank: Guardians of Indigenous Agrobiodiversity

In Raisar village, a quiet revolution is underway. A community seed bank, run by 27 champion farmers from nine villages, is preserving over **160 indigenous crop varieties**, including 64 traditional paddy types, 42 vegetables, and several millets, pulses, and tuber varieties. Farmers like those in Raisar now grow climate-resilient crops like Sana Mandia and Kantei Brinjal, ensuring better adaptation to changing weather patterns. Using traditional seed storage methods - earthen pots, neem leaves, and cow dung, farmers conserve seeds sustainably and exchange them through a community lending-return model. The seed bank not only enhances food security and self-sufficiency, but it also strengthens social capital. Women, elders, and SHGs lead in seed multiplication, training, and agroecological knowledge dissemination. Through seed fairs, exposure visits, storytelling, and local exhibitions, the initiative builds pride in traditional knowledge systems while connecting with wider advocacy networks for seed sovereignty and sustainable agriculture. The convergence of pond-based IFS, women-led poultry enterprises, and community seed conservation in Daspalla has become a robust model of climate-smart rural development. NIRMAN's interventions have not only enhanced incomes and nutrition but also revived traditional food systems and knowledge, empowered women, and strengthened ecological stewardship.



## Community-Led Forest Protection and Wildlife Care in Odisha

In one of the forest-dependent tribal villages of Odisha, the formation of a Community Forest Resource Management Committee (CFRMC) marked a turning point in local forest stewardship. Supported by NIRMAN, the community took proactive steps to safeguard their forest commons through collective decision-making and traditional ecological knowledge.

During the dry summer months, when forest streams run dry and fire risks soar, the CFRMC mobilized to protect both the ecosystem and its wildlife. The members undertook fire prevention activities, creating fire lines, monitoring vulnerable areas, and maintaining daily vigilance.



In a remarkable gesture of compassion and ecological sensitivity, the committee also addressed the plight of forest birds and small animals facing acute water scarcity. Earthen pots filled with water were placed strategically across forest patches, ensuring access to drinking water for birds and other wildlife. This simple yet impactful initiative not only preserved biodiversity but also deepened the community's connection with nature.



This case exemplifies how empowered local institutions, with support from organizations like NIRMAN, can lead sustainable and eco-sensitive conservation efforts, blending tradition with community-driven governance.

### NIRMAN

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## Self Employed Workers Association Kendra

[www.sewakodisha.org](http://www.sewakodisha.org)

### BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

Self Employed Workers Association Kendra (SEWAK) is a registered, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to promoting sustainable development and social empowerment. Formed in 1995 by a group of passionate volunteers under the guidance of Nehru Yuva Kendra, Sundargarh, SEWAK was established from a vision of empowering rural and tribal communities through inclusive development and participatory governance.

Guided by the core values of Non-Violence, Equity, Accountability, and Transparency (NEAT), SEWAK has steadily evolved from a small volunteer-led initiative into a professional development organization with a robust presence across Odisha. Today, SEWAK operates in eight districts and serves as the nodal agency for the KSHAMTA KENDRA project, a state-wide initiative reaching all 30 districts of Odisha through a network of 53 local NGO partners.

Over nearly three decades, SEWAK has championed a rights-based approach to development, focusing on livelihoods, health, environment, women's empowerment, and strengthening community-based institutions. It continues to work hand-in-hand with government bodies, civil society organizations, and grassroots communities to ensure equitable access to opportunities and resources for marginalized populations.

**Outreach:** SEWAK's outreach has been significant across multiple regions of Odisha. It has successfully expanded its presence to 8 districts, reaching 30 blocks and covering 312 Gram Panchayats. Through its various interventions, SEWAK has directly benefited 78,642 households, positively impacting an estimated population of over 3,00,000 people.

### Target Population:

The primary target groups of SEWAK include tribal communities, forest dwellers, and families' dependent on forest resources. The initiative also focuses on small and marginal farmers, landless households, and members of institutions like Vana Suraksha Samitis (VSS), Forest Rights Committees (FRC), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and Common Interest Groups (CIGs). Special attention is given to the poorest of the poor households, women-headed families, and destitute or marginalized women, ensuring that the most vulnerable sections of society are prioritized in development interventions.

**SUPPORT ENTITIES:** SEWAK was/is supported by the following Donors/Supporters/Funders:

- **Government:** National Health Mission, Sundargarh; National Health Mission, Sambalpur; National Health Mission, Keonjhar; Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department, Govt. of Odisha; District Mineral Foundation, Sundargarh; District Mineral Foundation, Keonjhar; District Mineral

Foundation, Angul; Additional Director of Horticulture, Jharsuguda; Odisha State AIDS Control Society.

- **Banker:** NABARD, Bhubaneswar
- **Development Organisations:** SAATHII, New Delhi and Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)
- 

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Mr. Amiya Kanta Naik – Chairman**, is the Co-founder of SEWAK. He holds an M.P.Ed. (Master of Physical Education). He is the guiding force behind the organization's growth across 8 districts of Odisha. Renowned for his visionary leadership, he has steered SEWAK through various challenges and opportunities. A recipient of the prestigious State-Level Best Youth Award, he also represents SEWAK in key district, state, and national-level networks. His unwavering commitment to community empowerment continues to inspire transformative change.

**Mr. Pradeep Kumar Brahma – Secretary**, holds an MSW (Master's in Social Work) brings over 30 years of experience in the development sector, with expertise in organizational development, livelihoods, health, natural resource management, and child protection. He has played a key role in shaping SEWAK's strategic direction, strengthening program implementation, and ensuring sustainability. His proficiency in monitoring systems, networking, and fundraising has substantially enhanced SEWAK's institutional strength and impact.

**Mr. Nilambar Upadhyay – Director (HR & Finance) (MBA-Finance)**: With an MBA in Finance and over 28 years of professional experience, Mr. Upadhyay has played a pivotal role in building SEWAK's financial and human resource capacities. Under his leadership, the organization has institutionalized internal audits, donor reporting systems, and comprehensive staff welfare mechanisms including insurance coverage. He has also led the digital transformation of administrative and financial systems, ensuring SEWAK's adherence to statutory compliance, financial transparency, and operational excellence.

**Mr. Deepak Kumar Tripathy – Director (Strategy & Planning)**, holds a Postgraduate Degree in Political Science and a Master of Social Work (MSW). He is a seasoned strategic leader with over 30 years of experience collaborating with national and international agencies such as DFID, USAID, UNICEF, JICA, and Plan International. His areas of expertise include strategic planning, disaster preparedness, poverty analysis, and partnership development. Having worked extensively in countries like Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Nepal, he brings a global perspective to SEWAK's programs. His leadership continues to drive innovation, operational excellence, and community-driven solutions across the organization.

**Mr. Digambar Upadhyay – Director Programme**, a Master of Social Work (MSW), brings nearly three decades of experience in the fields of development, environmental conservation, and grassroots mobilization. As the Director (Programme) at SEWAK, he leads the organization's monitoring, evaluation, and reporting functions with strategic insight and dedication.

He spearheaded initiatives like the Green Memory Campaign and Brukhya Rakshya Bandhan, enhancing environmental awareness and community engagement. He also introduced the Circular Bio-Economy model and set up a community-driven Medicinal Garden through Shramadan. His work has earned several honors, including Prakruti Bandhu Puraskar (1996–97, 2024), National Excellency Award, International Social Honourable Award, Mission Green Ambassador, Rising Social Activist

*Leader, Climate Warrior Award (Sambad), and Best Environmentalist Award 2023 (PRAMEYA & News-7).* Mr. Upadhyay's commitment to sustainability, strategic communication, and evidence-based programming continues to drive SEWAK's mission and community resilience across Odisha.

**Mr. Chakradhar Pruseth – Senior Program Manager (Livelihoods)**, a Master of Social Work, has over 35 years of grassroots experience in livelihoods, agriculture, and natural resource management. A veteran in community mobilization, he has expanded SEWAK's outreach to over 20,000 farmers, 10 FPOs, and 650 SHGs. His practical knowledge and mentoring have made a lasting impact on sustainable rural livelihoods, making him an indispensable pillar of SEWAK's livelihood initiatives.

**Mrs. Sanju Patel – Senior Program Manager (Health & Nutrition)**, an MSW (Master's in Social Work), leads SEWAK's health and nutrition portfolio with a focus on maternal and child health, adolescent health, HIV/AIDS, TB, and crèche management. Her rich field experience has led to the design and implementation of impactful community health programs. Through her leadership, SEWAK has strengthened its healthcare delivery, improved community health outcomes, and built strong health awareness at the grassroots level.

**Mrs. Snehalata Naik – Senior Program Manager (Communication)**, a Postgraduate Degree in Education, has been leading SEWAK's communication, branding, and knowledge management initiatives since 2014. With a strong focus on quality reporting, strategic donor engagement, and consistent messaging, she has significantly contributed to aligning SEWAK's external communications with its core vision and values. Her efforts have played a crucial role in enhancing the organization's visibility, improving documentation systems, and elevating the impact of SEWAK's storytelling across print, digital, and community-based platforms.

**Mr. Ghateswar Chhura – IT Expert**, a Master of Commerce (M.Com.) degree, is responsible for managing SEWAK's digital transformation and IT infrastructure. His expertise spans across cybersecurity, system automation, and data management, enabling the organization to modernize its operations and enhance overall efficiency. Under his guidance, SEWAK has adopted more secure, scalable, and integrated digital systems. As an emerging leader in digital innovation, Mr. Chhura plays a vital role in addressing the organization's evolving technological needs and ensuring a robust digital ecosystem.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

The key thematic areas of work of SEWAK centre around Livelihood and Governance, Natural Resource Management and Climate Change, and Health and Nutrition.

### Livelihood and Governance:

SEWAK promotes sustainable livelihoods for marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Tribe (ST) farmers, through agriculture-based interventions like the Mukhya Mantri Janajati Jeevika Mission, Odisha Millet Mission, and Crop Diversification Project across Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, and Sambalpur. It supports 10 FPOs and 650 SHGs, strengthens CFPC and provides CBBO support under NABARD. SEWAK promotes orchard-based farming through the WADI Model and large-scale agricultural interventions via Agriculture Production Clusters (APCs), while also empowering Village Development Committees under OTELP+ for grassroots governance.

### **Natural Resource Management and Climate Change:**

SEWAK integrates sustainability through projects like OFSDP-II, promoting afforestation and soil conservation. It enhances watershed resilience under NABARD and REWARD Projects and secures community forestry rights via the Mo Jungle Jami Yojana. Environmental drives near RSP and awareness programs further reinforce its commitment to nature conservation.

**Health and Nutrition:** SEWAK enhances health outcomes by operating Maternity Waiting Homes (Maa Gruhas) and running HIV/AIDS prevention programs, including Kshamta Kendras across Odisha. It strengthens Sub-Centre HWCs, Urban HWCs, and supports vulnerable groups through Kalika Kendras focusing on child care and supplementary nutrition.

### **MILESTONES**

**1995:** SEWAK (Social Education for Women's Awareness and Knowledge) was established in Sundargarh, Odisha, with a focus on promoting livelihoods, health, and holistic social development. The organization was formally registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.

**1999–2000:** Won the National Youth Club Award (1999) and Outstanding Youth Organization Award (2000) for excellence in youth and community development.

**2002:** SEWAK secured registration under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), paving the way for international collaborations and expanded development support for community-based initiatives.

**2005:** Initiated integrated watershed development programs, contributing to improved soil fertility, water conservation, and increased agricultural productivity in tribal areas

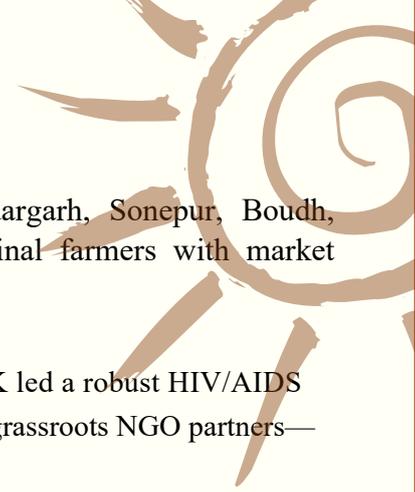
**2009:** Launched a self-funded Computer Training Program, equipping rural youth with essential digital skills and enhancing employment opportunities in underserved regions.

**2011:** Started Women Empowerment and SHG Promotion campaigns, resulting in the formation of over 1,000 SHGs across operational areas.

**2013–2016:** Deepened focus on maternal and child health by establishing *Maa Gruhas* (Maternity Waiting Homes). Simultaneously, SEWAK expanded sustainable livelihood programs, introducing *WADI* models and supporting the growth of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

**2017–2020:** Strengthened natural resource management through partnerships under OFSDP-II, implementation of *Mo Jungle Jami Yojana*, and large-scale plantation drives. Introduced community-based forest governance models, empowering tribal communities in resource management.

**2020–2022:** Promoted sustainable agriculture by diversifying crop patterns through the Odisha Millet Mission, implementing organic farming initiatives, and facilitating crop diversification projects supported by ATMA, NABARD, and District Mineral Foundations.



**2021–2023:** Scaled up FPO initiatives across five districts—Sundargarh, Sonepur, Boudh, Jharsuguda, & Keonjhar—empowering over 15,000 small and marginal farmers with market linkages, input support, and collective processing units.

**2022:** Designated as the *Nodal Agency for KSHAMTA KENDRA*, SEWAK led a robust HIV/AIDS response network across all 30 districts of Odisha in collaboration with 53 grassroots NGO partners—focusing on stigma reduction, health rights, and inclusive healthcare.

**2023:** Launched climate-resilient interventions under the *REWARD Project* and expanded watershed development programs into challenging terrains and backward districts, promoting environmental sustainability and community adaptation.

**2024:** Operationalized community-led enterprises in brown rice, turmeric, broom, and millet processing under the Micro Enterprise Development Program, benefiting over 3000 rural women.

**2025:** Received prestigious accolades—the *Environment Sustainability Excellence Award* and *Odisha Gourav Samman*—for SEWAK’s outstanding contributions to environmental protection, climate action, and institutional development.

### **SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS:**

SEWAK specializes in integrated rural development with a focus on sustainable livelihoods, natural resource management, climate resilience, health, and nutrition. It excels in promoting agriculture-based livelihoods through FPOs, WADI models, and cluster-based initiatives like the Odisha Millet Mission and Agriculture Production Clusters. SEWAK empowers communities through participatory forest management, watershed development, and climate-adaptive agriculture. In health, it delivers holistic interventions from Maternity Waiting Homes (Maa Gruha) to state wide HIV/AIDS support via Kshamta Kendras. Innovative campaigns like the Green Memory Campaign, Brukhya Rakshya Bandhan, Circular Bio Economy models, and Seed Ball initiatives showcase its community-driven approach. Strong HR systems, financial management, knowledge frameworks, and partnerships with 53 NGOs under Kshamta Kendras further strengthen its operations. Recognized with awards like the Sustainability Excellence Award and Odisha Gourav Samman, SEWAK stands out for integrating livelihood security, health promotion, and environmental sustainability across grassroots initiatives in Odisha.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT**

#### **Qualitative Impact**

- o Transitioned farmers from subsistence to diversified, climate-resilient agriculture through initiatives like the Odisha Millet Mission and Crop Diversification Projects.
- o Improved maternal and child health outcomes by establishing Maternity Waiting Homes (Maa Gruha) in rural and tribal areas.
- o Strengthened community governance and secured Community Forest Rights under the Mo Jungle Jami Yojana, promoting ecological stewardship.
- o Fostered environmental consciousness through innovative campaigns like the Green Memory Campaign and Brukhya Rakshya Bandhan.
- o Empowered local communities and grassroots organizations through participatory planning, leadership development, and decentralized governance models.

- o Promoted sustainable practices linking tradition with conservation through initiatives like Seed Ball Campaigns and Circular Bio Economy models.

### Quantitative Impact

- Operational in 8 districts directly and 30 districts through the Kshamta Kendra project.
- Engaged over 20,000 farmers through various livelihood initiatives.
- Strengthened 10 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and mobilized 650 Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- Covered 2632.54 hectares under millet cultivation and established 968.87 acres of orchard plantations under the WADI model.
- Implemented Crop Diversification Projects covering thousands of hectares across multiple blocks.
- Operated over 10 Maternity Waiting Homes for high-risk pregnant women.
- Supported thousands of individuals living with HIV/AIDS through 53 local NGO partners.
- Executed plantation and environmental resilience initiatives across multiple project areas.

### LEARNINGS

- **Community-Centric Development is Essential:** SEWAK learned that sustainable impact can only be achieved by deeply involving communities in planning, implementation, and ownership. Participatory models like Community Forest Rights under the Mo Jungle Jami Yojana and the promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) strengthened local ownership and long-term sustainability.
- **Diversification Strengthens Livelihood Security:** Through initiatives like the OFSDP-II, WADI, Agriculture Production Cluster, Odisha Millet Mission and Crop Diversification Projects, SEWAK realized that promoting diversified cropping patterns and integrated farming approaches builds resilience against market fluctuations and climate risks.
- **Health and Livelihood Interventions Must Go Hand-in-Hand:** Implementing health programs like Maa Gruha (Maternity Waiting Homes) alongside livelihood interventions highlighted the importance of addressing social determinants of health, such as nutrition, income security, and access to services.
- **Innovation in Campaigns Increases Community Engagement:** Creative initiatives like the Green Memory Campaign, Bruskhya Rakshya Bandhan, and Seed Ball Campaign showed that linking environmental action with emotional and cultural values can significantly boost grassroots participation.
- **Strong Internal Systems are a Backbone for Growth:** SEWAK learned that building robust HR, finance, and monitoring systems—including SOPs, audits, digitalization, and knowledge management practices—was key to managing increasing project complexity and donor expectations.
- **Continuous Learning and Staff Development is Non-Negotiable:** Regular faculty sessions, exposure visits, internal knowledge-sharing, and case study documentation emphasized that investing in human capital leads to better innovation, adaptability, and overall organizational resilience.
- **Climate Change is a Growing Threat:** Experiences from Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project and watershed management and resilience programs taught SEWAK that integrating adaptation measures at all levels—from farm practices to community mobilization—is now essential rather than optional.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### From Trash to Treasure: Unveiling the Gold within Waste

In Sundargarh district, 112 women from 38 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across 16 Van Surakhya Samities (VSS) transformed their lives through a Vermi Compost Revolution, turning Skepticism into pride. Supported by a Revolving Fund, capacity-building programs, a crucial MoU with the Sundargarh Forest Division, technical assistance from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, and guidance from SEWAK, they mastered the production and sale of "*Jia Khata*" (Vermi Compost). Starting modestly in 2022-23, 15 SHGs sold 582.4 quintals earning ₹11.64 lakh, and by 2023-24, 112 women sold over 1600 quintals generating ₹32 lakh, with each member earning an average of ₹28,571. They also used 600 quintals on their own farms, promoting sustainable agriculture. With ambitions to sell over 2000 quintals in 2024-25, these women have not only achieved economic empowerment but have also become champions of organic farming and environmental stewardship, showcasing the power of collective action and resilience.



*Preparation of Vermi Compost at Karlaghati (Subdega Block)*

### From Grains to Gains: Empowering Women Through Brown Rice in Karlaghati

In the village of Karlaghati, 20 women from Shivani SHG and Maa Maria SHG under Karlaghati VSS have transformed their lives through a Brown Rice enterprise initiated in 2019 with support from the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP-II). Guided by SEWAK's team and backed by a Revolving Fund and capacity-building initiatives, they cultivated the endangered "Lusuri paddy" organically across 5 acres and processed it traditionally using "Dhenki." Their dedication resulted in selling 64 quintals of brown rice worth ₹3.20 lakh in 2022, ₹2.88 lakhs in 2023 and ₹3.45 lakhs in 2024. Beyond income generation, the women revived cultural traditions, promoted sustainable agriculture, and envisioned expanding their brand across Odisha and beyond. Their journey stands as a shining example of women's empowerment, environmental stewardship, and the revitalization of rural heritage, with continued encouragement from the Sundargarh Forest Division and SEWAK.



## Kurladunduri: The transformation from A Bald Hill into a Lush Green Forest

The Sagarpali Van Surakhya Samiti (VSS) in Sundargarh, Odisha, stands as a powerful example of community-driven forest conservation, having successfully transformed the once-barren Kurladungri hill into a thriving green forest within 25 years. The journey began in 1956 with the villagers' efforts to curb illegal tree felling, leading to the formation of a Forest Protection Committee (FPC) and later, in 1993-94, the formal registration of the VSS under the Sundargarh Forest Division. At that time, Kurladungri spanned 121.41 hectares but was devoid of vegetation. Through innovative practices like "Thengapali" (stick-rotation patrol) and "Muthidhana" (paddy contribution), along with collective "Shramdaan" (voluntary labour), the villagers strengthened forest protection, planted 56 banyan and 74 pipal trees, and dug 4 km of cattle-proof trenches to control grazing and fires.

With the support of the Forest Department and NGO SEWAK, awareness programs on forest fire prevention and wildlife conservation were conducted, empowering both men and women to protect and restore their natural environment. Under the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project, Phase-II (OFSDP-II), the VSS



planted over 46,000 seedlings with a 98% survival rate, established a Forest Fire Control Team for 24-hour vigilance, and promoted the adoption of LPG connections among 95 households to reduce dependence on forest resources. Additionally, women-led Self-Help Groups diversified into dairy farming, mushroom cultivation, vermi composting, millet farming, turmeric cultivation, and backyard poultry, significantly boosting household incomes, with 66 families now earning over one lakh rupees annually. Proudly, the villagers state they have created a safe home for wildlife and restored their barren hill into a lush, vibrant forest, earning recognition and praise from forest officials for their dedication to sustainable forest management and community empowerment



### SEWAK

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# Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC)

[www.rcdcindia.org](http://www.rcdcindia.org)

## BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION:

Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC) is a not-for-profit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 and Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act of 1976 of India. RCDC started its journey in 1993 with the mandate to carve a definite niche in the development sector with the agenda of empowering people for sustainable management of natural resources. RCDC works towards enabling the communities to manage their own natural resources efficiently and effectively for poverty alleviation and improving the quality of life.

RCDC has worked with the belief that proper management of natural resources can take care of most of the current development problems and the local communities are the best managers of these resources as they have the highest stake and time-tested knowledge.

Since its formation, RCDC has grown steadily and is now recognized as one of the premier non-Governmental organizations in Odisha in the field of Natural Resource Management and Climate Change. Its core strength lies in its substantial peoples led work on the ground, its studies and research based on the ground experience, the passion and competence of its board and staff, its place in and contribution to important policy discourses, and its ability to remain transparent and accountable as an organization.

RCDC envisions a future where vulnerable and marginalized children, youth, women, and men are empowered to secure their rights over natural resources, achieving lasting improvements in their quality of life through sustainable management that ensures livelihoods and prosperity for generations to come.

RCDC has been accredited under the highest standards of “Desirable Norms” after a thorough audit of all its aspects by the Credibility Alliance.

RCDC’s strategies align with its vision and core values, adapted to suit diverse local contexts. Its interventions focus on the poorest districts of Odisha, especially among geographically and socio-economically excluded communities. While deepening work in southern and western Odisha, RCDC is also addressing climate change impacts in the coastal belt. Its community-centric approach empowers people to identify local resources and access government support. By strengthening people’s institutions, RCDC promotes collective action and government coordination. Committed to research-based advocacy, it addresses location-specific resource management issues through evidence and education. Over time, RCDC has developed rich literature on entitlements and resource rights.

## Outreach

The geographical coverage of RCDC is primarily concentrated in the state of Odisha, located in eastern India. While most interventions are within Odisha, RCDC also engages in research, documentation, advocacy, and networking activities in the Central Indian states. Currently, RCDC implements its projects across 10 districts of Odisha. Its reach extends to 9 districts – Bolangiri, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Kendrapara, Khurda and Puri, covering 29 blocks and 1,004 villages. Through these interventions, RCDC reaches out to 56,068 households, impacting a population of 2,80,348.

**Target Population** RCDC primarily targets vulnerable and marginalized communities, especially children, youth, women, and men from geographically and socio-economically excluded groups, for the sustainable management of natural resources and improved quality of life.

### SUPPORT ENTITIES:

RCDC works in partnership with CSOs, networks, PRIs, government institutions, academic and research institutions, and, when necessary, with market-based institutions for its market access interventions. RCDC was/is working with the following support entities:

- Action Aid
- Broederlijk Delen (BD)
- Concern Worldwide
- Dan Church Aid (DCA)
- European Commission (EC)
- Ford Foundation
- Keystone Foundation
- KZE (Misereor)
- Oxfam India
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF)
- SIMAVI
- Jamsetji Tata Trust (JTT)
- LetzDream Foundation
- Government of Odisha

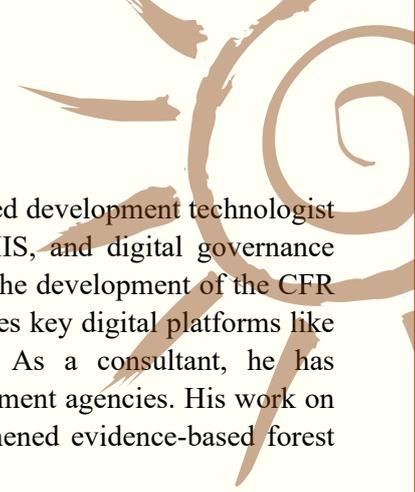
### PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS:

RCDC is governed by an active Executive Body that drives its vision and mission, oversees compliance, addresses risks, and ensures policy implementation. They review programs, approve proposals, and sign MOUs with donors, remaining accountable to statutory authorities.

A core Senior Management Team, comprising the Executive Director, M&E Director, Finance Manager, HR Officer, Regional Managers, and Senior Project Managers, ensures effective project implementation and reporting as per donor and government agreements.

**Mr. Rajan Mohanty – Executive Director, RCDC**, bringing over 30 years of distinguished experience in humanitarian assistance, integrated development programming, and institutional leadership. His professional journey spans multiple geographies across India and Nigeria, where he has held senior roles with reputed international NGOs such as ActionAid, Plan International, CARE, CRS, Save the Children, and Terre des Hommes.

Mr. Mohanty brings expertise in child protection, education, health, nutrition, livelihoods, and disaster risk reduction. He excels in policy advocacy, M&E, donor reporting, and strategic partnerships. Under his leadership, RCDC advances social equity, sustainability, and community empowerment.



**Mr. Ramakrishna Maharana – ICT and MIS Lead, RCDC**, is a seasoned development technologist with over 23 years of experience in ICT for Development (ICT4D), MIS, and digital governance innovations. He pioneered Odisha's Forest Enumeration Database and led the development of the CFR MIS system, generating over 250,000 mobile-based data points. He manages key digital platforms like [rcdcindia.org](http://rcdcindia.org) and [banajata.org](http://banajata.org), supporting environmental governance. As a consultant, he has supported organizations such as WaterAid, WorldFish, IGSSS, and government agencies. His work on forest inventory systems, real-time dashboards, and analytics has strengthened evidence-based forest resource planning.

**Mr. Sambhu Sahu – Senior Program Coordinator (Livelihoods & Advocacy) of RCDC** - with over two decades of field-based experience, has been playing pivotal roles in implementing and coordinating district-level livelihood and social justice programs. His career began with development organizations, like Agrabamee and Concern Worldwide, where he developed expertise in food security, rights-based advocacy, and community mobilization. Notably, Mr. Sahu worked as a researcher with the State Advisor Office for the Supreme Court's Right to Food case, focusing on policy research and field validation. He has managed key initiatives like the Odisha Girls Incentive Program (OGIP) and the Community-based Nutrition (CAN) Project, and contributed to climate-smart agriculture and forest management. His efforts aim to bridge the gap between entitlements and grassroots delivery.

**Mr. Anand Ch. Sethi, Program Manager – NRM**, is a development professional with 30+ years of experience in sustainable forest management, rural livelihoods, and community conservation. He has led multi-stakeholder programs focused on forest rights under FRA, participatory planning, and local governance. Known for his expertise in project lifecycle management, Mr. Sethi has strengthened RCDC's NRM initiatives through strategic leadership. He collaborates with government, donors, and civil society to promote policy reforms and enhance community-level institutional capacity.

**Ms. Gayatribala Harichandan – Manager, Administration & HR** - plays a vital role in ensuring operational efficiency and human resource development within the organization. She brings extensive experience in staff welfare, performance appraisal systems, and capacity-building initiatives that promote professional growth and a positive organizational culture. Besides, Ms. Harichandan actively contributes to women empowerment, tribal entrepreneurship, and girl child education. She is dedicated to fostering gender equity within both the workplace and community, helping ensure RCDC remains inclusive and gender-sensitive.

**Mr. Pradeep Kumar Patra – Program Specialist, Agriculture & NRM**, is a domain expert in sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods with 18 years of experience. He holds a Master's degree in Rural Development and has contributed extensively to program implementation, proposal writing, training facilitation, and bilingual content development in English and Odia. Mr. Patra specializes in dryland farming, organic soil amendments, water and soil conservation, agroecology, nursery development, permaculture, and integrated farming. He has led farmer trainings and supports community-driven ecological farming and food security. He plays a key role in designing agro ecology-based field intervention.

**Mr. Keshab Ch. Dash – Senior Program Coordinator**, is a Rural Development professional with over 15 years of experience in participatory development planning, communication for social change, and community engagement. He excels in micro-planning processes, facilitation of community institutions, and inclusive programming strategies. His competencies include participatory training, team leadership, and building partnerships. He has led village development planning, capacity-building, and grassroots IEC material development, promoting community ownership and decentralized governance.



**Mr. Dushmanta Kumar Ojha – Program Lead, Livelihoods & Community Health** – brings over 26 years of experience in sustainable livelihoods, microfinance, health systems, and institutional capacity building. He leads key initiatives in the organisation, including partnerships with UNICEF, and focuses on integrated development for marginalized communities. His expertise spans project execution, participatory monitoring, micro-enterprise promotion, and strengthening NGO networks. His strategic vision has been instrumental in scaling community-based models for resilience and wellbeing.

**Mr. Umakanta Mohanty – Program Lead, Governance & Rights** – is an expert with a strong foundation in program management, micro-planning, conflict resolution, and stakeholder engagement. His notable achievements include the formation and strengthening of SHG federations, revitalization of women’s cooperatives, and leadership in land rights campaigns. He has done research on the PESA Act and land alienation, helped design state-level Disaster Risk Reduction tools, conducted NTFP market studies, and supported Community-Based Disaster Preparedness plans in 87 PRIs, focusing on participatory governance and inclusive planning

**Mr. Bijan Kumar Dalal – Head, Finance & Operations** - brings over 30 years of expertise in financial and operational management within the development sector. His portfolio includes managing multi-crore budgets, financial planning, statutory compliance, procurement, audit coordination, and donor reporting. Mr. Dalal is experienced in internal controls, ERP-based financial management, and risk mitigation. He coordinates with auditors, vendors, and donors to ensure transparency and compliance, while also managing HR and procurement to maintain RCDC’s accountability.

**Mr. Rabinarayan Tripathy – Thematic Lead, Climate Resilience & WASH**, is a senior development professional with more than 21 years of experience in climate justice, WASH, women empowerment, financial literacy, and development communication. He has worked with various national and international development agencies, bringing a multidisciplinary approach to project design and implementation. His skills include M&E, capacity building, documentation, and stakeholder engagement. He plans livelihood programs, supports FPOs, and advocates inclusive policies. His communication strategies enhance outreach and drive behavioural change.

**Mr. Pabitra Mohan Mishra – Senior Manager**, is a development practitioner with over 25 years of experience in micro-enterprise promotion, CSR execution, cluster development, and emergency response. Holding dual Master’s degrees in Rural Management and Business Administration, he has collaborated with organizations such as XIMB, IPE Global, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Mercy Corps, and UNIDO. His expertise includes MSME promotion, artisan cluster development, FPOs, and skill development under NSDC, NABARD, PMKVY, and DDU-GKY. He has led relief efforts and trained numerous youth, artisans, and farmers. His approach blends innovation, systems thinking, and practical capacity building.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

RCDC’s key thematic areas of engagements revolve around the followings:

### 1. **Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM):**

RCDC promotes sustainable livelihoods by ensuring equitable access to and control over natural resources by local communities. This approach integrates ecological conservation with livelihood

enhancement, empowering communities to sustainably manage forests, land, and water. Through decentralized bio-resource governance, forest rights advocacy, NTFP-based enterprises, sustainable agriculture, climate-resilient practices, and gender-responsive policies, RCDC advances inclusive, rights-based development rooted in resilience and environmental sustainability.

### **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) and Nutrition:**

RCDC integrates WASH and nutrition through community-led education, advocacy, and governance. While avoiding direct health or nutrition service provision, it focuses on improving water, sanitation, hygiene practices, and awareness of nutrition schemes. Key strategies include model development, water safety advocacy, menstrual hygiene education, school-based hygiene promotion, and integrating nutrition-sensitive farming in its livelihood interventions to ensure holistic community well-being.

**Climate - Resilient Development and DRR** RCDC promotes climate-resilient development and disaster risk reduction by strengthening community preparedness, integrating climate adaptation across programs, and developing sustainable agroforestry models. It focuses on reducing livelihood vulnerabilities, educating children, and enhancing resilience to climate-induced disasters. RCDC collaborates with the State Climate Change Cell and explores funding opportunities while also engaging in disaster response and post-recovery initiatives when required.

### **Investing in the Future for Sustainability**

RCDC emphasizes placing children and youth—nearly half of Odisha’s population—at the core of development planning. It promotes child rights, quality education, adolescent health awareness, and community governance for improved service delivery. The organization supports youth skill development with a focus on natural resource management, fosters informed migration, and encourages youth leadership and civic engagement, ensuring a healthier, empowered generation that drives sustainable development in the long run.

## **MILESTONES**

- 1993: Established in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, RCDC began grassroots interventions focusing on forest protection, community mobilization, and sustainable livelihoods.
- Early 2000s: Initiated pioneering models in Community-Based Forest Management (CFM), mobilizing local communities for sustainable forest governance. Established itself as a clearing-house of information through newsletters and journals influencing NRM policies.
- 2003: Launched the Agriculture and MFP Producers’ Society (AMVSS) Ltd. in Nabarangpur district to promote sustainable agriculture and forest-based livelihoods. The cooperative grew to 3,760 women members with an annual turnover of ₹3 crores.
- 2000s: Expanded operations into 650 villages, implementing sustainable agriculture practices, promoting vermicomposting, and establishing seed banks to combat food insecurity and farmer distress.
- 2000s–2010s: Facilitated the creation of 30 NTFP-based cooperatives and a federation, enabling tribal communities to manage and market forest produce independently and sustainably.
- 2010s:
  - Revived climate-smart and ecological farming practices, promoting traditional water and land management, mixed cropping, millet cultivation, and drought-resistant seeds to enhance food security and ecological resilience.
  - Developed and scaled WASH innovations and fluoride mitigation models, emphasizing hygiene education and advocacy against fluoride contamination, ensuring safe drinking water and improved sanitation in vulnerable communities.

- Aligned programs with key national and state policies such as the Forest Rights Act (2006), MGNREGS (2005), climate action plans, and Panchayati Raj reforms, advocating pro-poor and gender-responsive implementation.
- Collaborated with civil society groups including Odisha Water Forum, SOPPECOM, End Water Poverty, Fresh Water Action Network, Odisha Jala Mancha, and the NTFP network to strengthen policy influence and promote sustainable water governance.
- 2011–2014: Coordinated the "Save Eastern Ghats-Odisha Ecosystem" (SEGOE) program under the Ecosystem Alliance, focusing on biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management in the Eastern Ghats region.
- 2013–2014: Implemented the Mahila Kishan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) with the South Odisha Development Initiative (SODI), benefiting 2,200 women farmers in Rayagada district through sustainable agriculture and community institutions.
- 2020–2021: Facilitated access to social protection schemes for vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching over 19,000 households across 150 villages in Odisha in collaboration with UNDP
- Recent Years: Focused on youth and future sustainability by prioritizing child rights, adolescent health, education quality, and skill development to empower the next generation for sustainable growth.

## ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

- Towards Sustainable Livelihood Promotion Using Local Resources - RCDC facilitated 656 CFR and 11,185 individual FRA claims across five districts, with 11 CFR management plans and forest management in 50 villages. Through Bharasa and cooperatives, it ensured fair NTFP pricing and led Odisha's first *Kendu* leaf deregulation, increasing Gram Sabha earnings by 150%.
- RCDC promoted WASH in 662 villages across four districts, forming leadership groups and training frontline workers and PRI members. It implemented school WASH in 300 schools for 16,000 students, addressed fluoride issues in Nuapada, and developed 105 village water security plans.
- For Education, Youth Engagement, and Skill Building, RCDC launched WASH and literacy initiatives for children (6–14), improving water and hygiene access. It trained over 500 youths in trades like tailoring, masonry, and mobile repair, supporting self-employment through market and bank linkages.
- RCDC raised awareness on fluoride contamination in 172 schools and 100 villages across Nuapada and Kalahandi, sensitizing 20,000 children and 558 teachers. It also demonstrated safe drinking water solutions and installed defluoridation units in the most affected areas.
- Towards Integration of Entitlement and Livelihood Enhancement, RCDC promoted low-cost organic farming, reaching 5,000 farmers. Over 1,000 families grew millets, 7,000 practiced mixed farming, and 2,500 benefited from land and pond development. It hosted seed and food fairs and restored irrigation on 25,000 hectares in Puri.
- Strengthening Local Governance Systems, RCDC facilitated decentralized planning in 56 villages and formed 12 resource centers. It built leadership capacity, improved transparency, and linked 8,000 families with social security schemes and government entitlements.
- Enhancing resilience in coastal and drought-prone areas of Puri, Kendrapara, and Jagatsinghpur, RCDC piloted climate-resilient farming, mangrove plantations, nutrition gardens, and water solutions. It mapped vulnerabilities, supported Panchayat planning, and provided early warning kits. In Balangir, it promoted resource governance and conservation along the Gandhamardan range.

## SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

- RCDC has grown through a collective vision shaped by its Governing Body members, rather than being led by a single Founder-Member.
- The organization emphasizes its role as a Resource and Knowledge Centre, undertaking numerous action-research initiatives to inform practice and policy.
- All research and field learnings are systematically documented and published to serve as learning and reference materials.
- These publications are intended for use by communities, development practitioners, and policy makers alike.
- RCDC works to influence policies to be more responsive to local issues and inclusive of grassroots aspirations, especially those affecting marginalized communities.
- It has built a strong body of work in both English and vernacular languages to ensure wider accessibility and impact.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### 1. Reviving Roots, Reaping Growth: The Transformation of Women Millet Growers in Alguni Village, Nabarangpur

Once central to Odisha's tribal rain fed regions, minor millets like little millet, foxtail, and kodo gradually declined with the rise of high-yield commercial crops like maize, causing cultural, nutritional, and ecological losses. In the remote village of Alguni, tribal women have been reclaiming their millet heritage since 2017 with support from RCDC under the Eco-Village Development initiative and the

Odisha Millet Mission. Women farmers like Salata Santa lead this revival, combining traditional knowledge with new skills. RCDC's training on agronomic practices, organic input production, and market linkages through the Shri Anna Abhiyan helped increase millet cultivation area from 1 to 1.5 acres, double productivity from 3.4 to 7.3 quintals per acre, and boost income from ₹7,150 to ₹32,300 per farmer. Women also diversified livelihoods by establishing backyard goatery and poultry farms. Millets have returned to local diets, rituals, and festivals, restoring cultural pride and food security while reducing dependence on chemical inputs and commercial crops. Today, 43 acres are under millet cultivation with 25 tribal farmers involved, mostly women. This revival goes beyond agriculture—it revitalizes identity, sovereignty, and resilience, positioning these women as custodians of indigenous knowledge and key agents of economic and cultural transformation in their communities.

### 2. From Unemployment to Entrepreneurship -The Transformative Journey of Narendra Kumar Gond

Narendra Kumar Gond, from the tribal village of Karanpadar in Nabarangpur, Odisha, faced rural unemployment despite holding a graduate degree. Supporting his family on a low income from working at a motorcycle garage in Raighar Bazaar, he considered migrating but wanted to stay close to home. His life changed when Karanpadar was selected under the Mukhyamantri Janajati Jeebika Mission (MMJJM), aimed at empowering tribal youth through entrepreneurship. Recommended by the Janajati Jeevika Parishad, Narendra was chosen to start his own motorcycle repair garage.





## Social Welfare Agency & Training Institute (SWATI)

[www.swatiodisha.org](http://www.swatiodisha.org)

### **BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Social Welfare Agency & Training Institute (SWATI) was founded in the year 1999 by a committed group of progressive social activists led by Er. Hari Sankar Rout, with a shared vision of fostering alternative development in the underdeveloped regions of Odisha. Drawing on their extensive experience in social work, these change-makers recognized the deep-rooted challenges facing neglected communities, as well as the limitations of existing governmental and organizational approaches. In response, SWATI was established to empower communities to build a sustainable development model- one that harnesses local potential and resources while accessing critical government support.

At its core, SWATI envisions a healthy, self-reliant society where dignity, equality, justice, rights, and liberty are guaranteed. The organization is deeply committed to fostering active community participation, enabling informed decision-making, and equipping people to address their challenges independently.

### **Target population**

SWATI is committed to empowering marginalized communities; especially women and indigenous groups—by strengthening health services and promoting sustainable livelihoods for the most vulnerable including landless families, smallholders, SC, ST, migrants, persons with disabilities, transgender, children and PVTGs, enabling them to lead healthier and self-reliant lives.

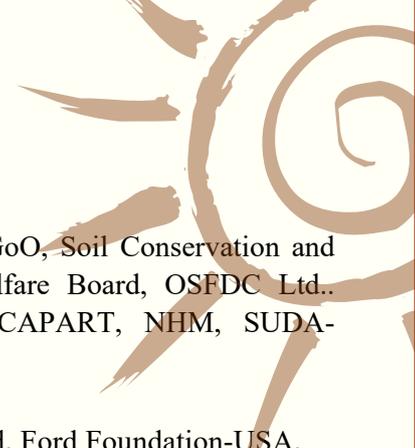
### **Outreach**

Beginning its journey in the remote tribal belts of Kandhamal district, SWATI has expanded its reach to covering 1,000 villages covering more than 1.5 Lakh population across five districts namely Kandhamal, Ganjam, Boudh, Subarnpur/Soneour and Khurdain Odisha state. To strengthen grassroots participation and institutions, SWATI has promoted 300 Village Development Committees, 5 Farmer Producer Companies, 10 Water User Groups, 135 Farmer Groups, 1168 Women SHGs (rural and urban), 40 SHG Federations, 44 Udyana Vikash Samitis, 100 Vana Sanrakshana Samitis, 339 Adolescent, and 57 Youth Groups.

### **SUPPORT ENTITIES**

SWATI carries out various community welfare projects/ programmes in partnering close partnership with different Govt., Non-Govt, Semi-Govt, CSR agencies as under:





**Past Funders:** State & Central Govt. : NABARD, Panchayatraj Dept, GoO, Soil Conservation and Watershed Development- GoO, Ministry of Culture, State Social Welfare Board, OSFDC Ltd., DWSM, Centre for Environmental Studies, Spices Board- Kochi, CAPART, NHM, SUDA-Bhubaneswar, W&CD Dept. -GoO,

**Foreign Funders:** UNICEF, CARE, CPF- Hyderabad, IDE(India)/Cordaid, Ford Foundation-USA, SAATHII- Kolkata, IDEAL- CSJ-Ahmedabad, CRY- Kolkata, CRY-America, U.S Consulate, Action Aid, EFICOR, New Delhi, Save the Children, FVTRS-Bangalore, CWS/TROCAIR, TMST-DFID, UNDP, Basic Needs India, US Consulate etc.

**Partner/ Consortium Funders:** PREM, Plan International, NEG, New Delhi, Concern, TSWT-Mumbai, JTT/SDTT- Mumbai, HLPPT, Bhubaneswar, NAWO, Bhubaneswar, Knowledge Link- New Delhi, AVANTA Foundation, OVHA-Bhubaneswar, SBI Life.

**Present Funders:** ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Department, National Health Mission, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Dept, Govt. of Odisha, Dept. of Agriculture, OSACS, NIOS, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department, BNI.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

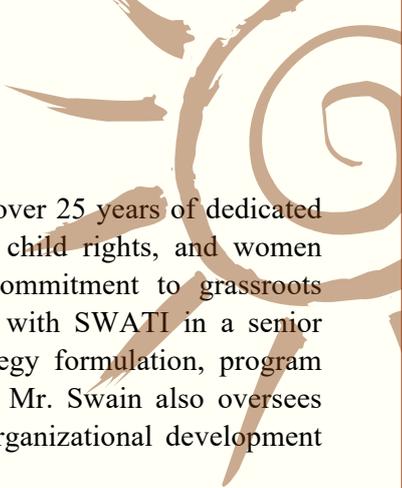
SWATI's strength lies in its dedicated team of development activists, experienced field workers, professionals and intellectuals. The organization has over 100 full-time workers and more than 200 indirectly associated members. Its General Body and Governing Body consist of professionals and activists from diverse social backgrounds and partner communities.

**Mr. Prasant Kumar Satapathy, Chairman of SWATI**, has over 30 years of experience in rural development. He holds training certifications from reputed national and international institutes, enhancing his expertise. He also has specialized skills in Auditing & cost control, supporting effective financial oversight of development initiatives.

**Mrs. Sujata Mohapatra, Vice-Chairperson of SWATI**, is a prominent gender rights advocate in Odisha. With over two decades of experience, she has played a key role in advancing women's empowerment, combating gender-based violence, and promoting gender equality across the state. As an alumna of the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), she brings global insights to her grassroots work.

**Er. Hari Sankar Rout, Founder Secretary of SWATI**, has over three decades of experience in NRM Based Livelihood, Watershed Development and organizational management. With a background in Civil Engineering, he has dedicated his career to improving the livelihoods of marginalized communities in Odisha, particularly in Kandhamal district. In recognition of his impactful work, he received the *4th Shambhavi Puraskar* in 2017 from the Bansidhar & Ila Panda Foundation (BIPF).

**Mr. Santanu Kumar Mishra, Treasurer** of the organization, brings with him more than 30 years of extensive experience in accounting and financial management. For the past 15 years, he has been entrusted with overseeing the institution's financial operations, ensuring meticulous management of financial resources and compliance with relevant regulations.



**Mr. Pradip Kumar Swain** is a seasoned development professional with over 25 years of dedicated experience in the social sector, with a focus on livelihood promotion, child rights, and women empowerment. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to grassroots development and inclusive growth. Since 2016, he has been associated with SWATI in a senior program management role, where he has played a pivotal part in strategy formulation, program implementation, and monitoring. In addition to his core responsibilities, Mr. Swain also oversees human resources and institutional liaison, contributing significantly to organizational development and stakeholder engagement.

**Mr. Girish Chandra Samal** is presently working as the Mental Health Coordinator in SWATI, where he has been serving for the past 16 years. He brings with him over 35 years of experience in various CSOs, successfully executing development projects and programmes entrusted to him. His expertise lies in Natural Resource Management and rural livelihoods, with a special focus on organic and climate-resilient farming. He also has significant experience in institution building.

**Mr. Biswaranjan Kar** has been an integral part of the SWATI organization for the past 23 years. He has expertise in the fields of Health & Nutrition. He is recognised as a State Level Trainer in the National Health Mission and State Institute of Rural Development.

**Mrs. Susmita Jena** has served with this institution for the last 15 Years focusing towards Gender Mainstreaming in all projects/ programmes. She builds women's leadership within and outside the organisation.

**Mr. Chandrakant Kanhar** with 12 years of experience in the development sector, currently serves as the Team Leader in Mukhya Mantri Janajati Jibika Mission being run through this organisation with financial & technical assistance of ITDA, Balliguda. He has expertise in promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities for Tribals.

**Ms. Arnapurna Pradhan**, a lead female activist is an icon for the organisation serving from 2012-2013 in different projects/ programmes. Her continuous effort towards women in agriculture is one of the key areas that the institution envisions.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

The key thematic engagements of SWATI centres around the following:

**Health Services:** SWATI sees health as a basic right and a key concern for marginalized communities. Its Health Program has grown from initial awareness efforts to a wide range of impactful initiatives. These include malaria control in tribal regions, HIV/AIDS prevention for high-risk groups, maternal & child health promotion through village-level outreach, Mental Health, and Adolescent Health Programs that have improved early childhood care, addressed child marriage and empowered adolescents. SWATI also works to reduce maternal and infant mortality, manages Maternity Waiting Homes and provides bike ambulances and delivery vans to ensure safe delivery of PWs in inaccessible pockets. Its efforts in sanitation and primary healthcare have significantly improved health access in remote and underserved areas.

**Natural Resource Management/Livelihood:** Since its inception, SWATI has prioritized Natural Resource Management (NRM) as a key to strengthening livelihoods. Starting with watershed

development under government schemes, its initiatives have evolved to include Integrated Watershed Management, WADI, MGNREGS, OTELP and FADP, focusing on resource restoration, productivity, skill-building and entrepreneurship. The NRM initiative continues to enhance livelihoods and provide crucial income support.

**Skill development:** Since its inception, the organisation focused on skill development initiatives particularly for youth communities by offering training, vocational programs, and support services to enhance employability and entrepreneurship. These initiatives aim to bridge the gap between education and practical application, fostering real-world skills and self-sufficiency. It carried out vocational training programmes in food processing, tailoring, pickle processing, poultry farming, goatery, Mushroom cultivation etc. under FADP, WSDP, SPPIF, OTELP, NABARD Vocational Skill, FVTRS and so on.

**Women Empowerment:** from the very beginning of SWATI's establishment it focuses on awareness building and advocating for stronger legal frameworks to protect women's rights along with resolving stereotype issues. It also undertakes various initiatives relating to women's education, economic empowerment, skill development, legal support and healthcare access, particularly in underserved areas.

**Social Justice:** SWATI has been promoting youth clubs, and community-level organizations and orienting them on communal harmony, peace and justice to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

## KEY MILESTONES

### 2001-2005:

- SWATI launched its NRM strategy using the watershed approach, and developed 200 Hect. and provided irrigation facility for 50 Hect. It also established 50 Hect. of plantations.
- 200 families in Tikabali block were supported with skill-based livelihoods like cycle repair, beekeeping, tailoring, vending and bamboo crafts under the JEEVIKA program.
- Over 100 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were promoted to enable savings and credit access for poor families, empowering women financially and socially (Covered 2000 direct and 5000 indirect beneficiaries during the period).

### 2006 -2010

- SWATI initiated Orissa Forestry Program with the support of Centre for People's Forestry in six VSS villages of Tikabali Block to affirm forest rights and promote sustainable joint forest management.
- Convergence with MGNREGA for Dug well, Farm Pond and other WHSs of 500 families.
- 25 peace committees were formed to restore peace & harmony being disturbed by communal riots during 2008.
- Restoring and rehabilitating 200 youths under various skill development programmes who were affected by the riot. Ensuring good governance across the operational areas by sensitising and capacity building of stakeholders and existing CBOs to bring social justice.

## 2011–2015:

- Under MGNREGS, SWATI facilitated job creation in 125 villages across Tikabali, Phiringia and K. Nuagaon blocks. It generated 54,936 man-days and ₹133.2 lakh in wages under MGNREGS. Key achievements included 849 farm ponds, 128 dug wells, 100 model plots and land development over 771 hectares by integrating natural resources.
- With the technical and financial support of NABARD & SDTT 33 Diversion Based Irrigation (DBI) structures established in K. Nuagaon and Tumudibandha Blocks with community contribution. It supports 1500 households for irrigation and domestic use of water around the year.
- Established 300 Nos. of temporary sheds and supported 100 families for constructing permanent houses being vulnerable to Philine disaster.
- Under Pathways Programs supported by CARE-Odisha mobilized 119 women's groups in 114 villages across Tikabali and Phiringia to improve the resilience of SC/ST women farmers through livelihood support.
- SWATI also began implementing the V4 Sub-Centre programme in Indragada and Ranaba to address unmet health needs. Health initiatives for mothers & children established a Maternity Waiting Home and newborn care in Phiringia block covering 5000 mothers.
- Began work with Female Sex Workers and MSM to prevent HIV/ AIDS in 5 blocks of Kandhamal district covering 300 FSW and 160 MSM populations.
- SWATI rolled out the Odisha Tribal Empowerment & Livelihood Program in 48 villages of Tumudibandha block and 31 Villages of Tikabali Block, benefiting 3,000+ families through land development, agriculture, skill training, and livestock support.
- SWATI became the facilitating NGO for the Focused Area Development Program (FADP) in Phulbani and Balliguda ITDA zones, implementing farm and non-farm livelihood initiatives for ST families. In the year Water Sanitation & Swachh Bharat Mission program was launched in K. Nuagaon to promote ODF villages. SWATI also implemented the DAY-NULM in BMC (Bhubaneswar), BeMC (Brahmapur), Boudh NAC and Phulbani Municipality Corporation to support urban poor women with self-employment and skill training.

## 2016–2020:

- Under NABARD assisted WADI project 800 acres of orchards were developed for 800 tribal families in Belaghar, Bilamal and Gumma panchayat of Tumudibandha Block to enhance food security and income.
- The Marriage No Child's Play (MNCP) project began in K. Nuagaon to empower adolescent girls with life and health skills, contributing to a 75% reduction in child marriages in the region. Jhulima Malik, an adolescent group member promoted by SWATI, received the UN's V-Award and was felicitated by the Government of Odisha for her role in preventing child marriage and promoting girls' education.
- ECCE program launched in Phiringia and K. Nuagaon, improving nutrition and pre-school education for children aged 3–8 Yrs. ensuring holistic development.
- Health & Nutrition program initiated to protect child rights at Phiringia block with support of CRY covering 1800 Children.
- Through the Vector Control program malaria-prone zones became malaria-free due to SWATI's efforts in awareness, prevention and treatment.
- This year SWATI received the 4th Shambhavi Award from the Bansidhar & Ila Panda Foundation for outstanding development work in Odisha.
- SWATI launched one delivery van in Phiringia Block and subsequently another 3 Nos. in the year 2022, transporting over 2000 pregnant women annually from remote areas. Since inception, over 10000 individuals have benefited, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- With the support of IRRI , demonstrated 15 types of resilient paddy and 8 types trial with farmers for continuously 3 years for sustaining drought.
- Post covid, sustaining income of farmers, newly introduced Kharif potato with support of CIP in 1000 acres, but it was sustained.
- During the year 2017-18 & 2018-19, SWATI facilitated the construction of 3,000+ Individual Household Latrines, supporting ODF villages under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- SWATI has operated another 2 maternity waiting homes i.e. one at Katringia in Phulbani Block and another at Chhatijhar in Tikabali Block serving over 1,200 pregnant women annually and benefiting over 10,000 women to date.

#### 2021 to till date :

- For over 12 years, SWATI has implemented the HIV/AIDS Targeted Intervention program for 440 Female Sex workers in Kandhamal, reducing STI/HIV risks among high-risk and general populations.
- The Community Mental Health Development program is implemented in 4 blocks covering 1300 PWMI.s.
- Millet & Integrated farming in 2 blocks covering 5000 farmers to enhance farm practice and organically grown crops with climate resilient.
- Nearly 50000 tribal farmers are covered in 12 blocks by establishing 174 Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry clusters.

#### SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Experienced and Committed Team:** A strong team of seasoned and dedicated professionals working towards impactful rural development. Mostly 90% of human resources are working from local areas, among them 40% are women.
- **Grassroots Presence:** Deep-rooted engagement in remote villages, building lasting trust and relationships with the local community.
- **Effective Implementation of Government Schemes:** Acts as a key facilitator for executing vital government schemes and projects in underserved regions.
- **Community Empowerment:** Goes beyond facilitation by enabling communities to access and utilize government resources effectively.
- **Multi-Sectoral Engagement:** Works across diverse areas such as health, education, gender equality, sanitation, and livelihood.
- **Youth & Women Leadership Promotion:** Identifies and nurtures local champions, promoting adolescent and women-led social change.
- **Proactive Social Initiatives:** Regularly organizes blood donation camps, disaster relief, youth motivation sessions and socio-cultural events.

#### ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

##### Community Health:

- Out of 1300 PWMI.s identified in 50 GPs of Phulbani, Phiringia, Tikabali & K.Nuagaon Blocks 650 Nos, have recovered and reintegrated into the society. Among them, 150 received livelihood support and 300+ accessed Govt. Assistance.
- Around 10000 P.W.s avail safe institutional delivery through established 3 MWHs and 4 Delivery Vans. The people in the operational areas self-motivated and are presently joining these facilities in their self-interest.

- Use of Household Latrines and ODF ensured in almost all operational villages of SWATI.
- Girl Child Marriage has been stopped in almost all villages of SWATI's operational area.
- Because of our regular intervention through CBST camps and Campaigns; alertness on HIV/AIDS prevention is incepted among the people.

#### **Livelihood Promotion:**

- 25000 families become self-reliant because of our initiatives through the implementation of different livelihood-supportive programmes like WSDP, OTELP, SAA, SPPIF, FADP, MMJMM, DAY-NULM in operational villages of SWATI.
- Thousands of farming groups especially tribal farmers get incremental income in value chain management through 26 Udyan Vikash Samities, 5 FPOs, 120 Farmer's Clubs promoted by this institution.

#### **Women's Participation in development activities:**

- SWATI has a dedicated team of experienced professionals committed to impactful development work.
- With a deep village-level presence, it has built strong community relationships.
- The organization plays a vital role in implementing government schemes and projects in remote/ underserved areas.
- SWATI facilitates access to government entitlements and empowers communities to utilize available resources.
- SWATI organizes blood donation camps; conducts relief operations during crises; hosts discussions on pressing local and regional issues; engages and motivates youth and promotes socio-cultural activities

#### **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Developed and converted over 1000 hectares of land into productive use through various impactful projects by constructing WHS nearly 1000 in numbers in different blocks.
- Established more than 2000 acres of fruit orchards through initiatives like WADI, Watershed Management, MGNREGA and others.
- Provided irrigation to over 700 acres of land through DBI, Minor Irrigation, and Dug Wells.
- Provide drinking and domestic use of water from DBI in some PVTG areas covering 1500 households.
- Enabled over 5000 families to secure sustainable livelihoods through diversified livelihood programs.
- Facilitated entrepreneurship opportunities for more than 1000 individuals, contributing to local economic growth.
- Formed 100 Vana Sanrakshyana Samitis (VSS) in Ganjam district.
- Supported the formation of village committees in 60 villages of Kandhamal to promote community-led forest protection efforts.
- Presently working with 75000 farmers across the districts mostly tribals for farm and non-farm initiatives. Building 174 farm clusters, 5 FPOs for the next step towards aggregation marketing and value addition.
- Building 3 lemon grass processing units producing 5000-7000 ltr of lemon grass oil annually.
- An outlet with the brand Kandhamal Fresh is run by our promoted FPOs to facilitate marketing.

## LEARNINGS

- Building trust through consistent presence, empathy, and culturally sensitive communication is the first step.
- Working with local leaders, traditional healers and community influencers helped bridge the gap.
- Health interventions must be accompanied by ongoing health education, using local language, visuals, and community meetings to ensure understanding.
- Integration with Government Health Systems is essential.
- Geographical challenges require innovative solutions
- Women and children need targeted approaches
- Community ownership strengthens sustainability
- Sustainable Natural resource management is key to Sustainable livelihood
- Integrating traditional knowledge with modern practices strengthens communities and enhances their ability to manage resources sustainably.
- Wise Management of Natural resources make the community resistant to climate change, diversifies income sources and reduces dependency on external aid
- Participatory planning and implementation of programs increase community ownership, responsibility, and active involvement in development initiatives.
- Successful implementation of government schemes and projects empowers communities to become self-sustained and resilient.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Lighting the Shadows- Transforming Mental Health in Phulbani and Phiringia Block

In Kandhamal District, thousands of mentally ill people stayed without medical intervention. Some were chained, some abandoned and many caught in the vicious cycle of superstition and poverty. Families endured in despair, locked in fear of social stigma, helplessness and the crushing absence of accessible psychiatric care. In the year



2021-2022 with BNI's support, SWATI conducted a survey in 10 G.P.s of Phulbani and 20 G.P.s in Phiringia Block and found out 1570 individuals silently battling Mental disorder. After this, with a joint effort of SWATI, BNI and the District Mental Health Department 797 PWMI's underwent Treatment among whose more than 50% are reintegrated to maintain a normal life and the remaining are under regular health practices. Now *"Where there was once only silence and suffering, today there is healing, dignity, and hope."*

### Gargadi – From Isolation to Inspiration:

#### *The First Open Defecation Free (ODF) Village of Kandhamal District*

Gargadi in K.Nuagaon Block of Kandhamal District was once just another overlooked tribal hamlet—cut off from roads, without clean drinking water, a school or even a basic Anganwadi centre.

In the year 2015 when SWATI started its ODF Movement; **Manisha Rani**, a spirited young activist mobilised the villagers with her tireless dedication and was able to declare the 1st ODF Village in Kandhamal District.

Impressed by the self-initiative and discipline of the villagers, the Dist. Collector of that time made several key announcements like the Sanction of a solar-powered drinking water project, construction of a connecting road, ₹12,000 support per IHHL etc. Manisha Rani is declared the Brand Ambassador of the District Sanitation Mission, a well-deserved recognition of her relentless efforts. A proud member of the Gargadi Sanitation Committee says, “We didn’t wait for change, we became the change.”



Awareness Campaign on World Toilet Day

### Turning Fallow Land into a Lifeline: The Padangi Orchard Story

In Padangi village of Tikabali block, sixteen tribal families owned fifteen acres of highland that lay fallow, used only for cattle grazing. Poverty kept them from cultivating it—until SWATI stepped in. Through a convergence of programs like MNREGS, Watershed and Jeevika; SWATI organized the families into a user group who had planted 150 Amrapalli mango saplings individually with support for fencing, fertilizers, and pesticides. The villagers earned wages while developing their own land



Grassroots Organizers in Action

and began nurturing their orchards with pride. SWATI also introduced intercropping supported by a renovated water source and pedal pump irrigation. Now each family earns over ₹10,000 per acre just from vegetables, alongside the promise of future mango yields. What was once barren land is now a thriving source of sustainable livelihood and nutrition for the community.

### Securing Forest Rights, Securing Livelihoods: Swati’s Impact in Phiringia Block, Kandhamal

In the quiet forested tracts of Kandhamal district, Odisha, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006—popularly known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA)—was implemented by the district administration in 2008 with a vision to address historical injustices and secure the rights of forest-dwelling communities. However, the implementation of this transformative legislation faced several bottlenecks, especially in remote areas like Phiringia and Tikabali blocks. With a determined mission to bridge this gap, SWATI launched an intensive awareness campaign across Phiringia and Tikabali blocks, using posters, wall paintings and village-level meetings to inform communities about the FRA and its benefits.



Forest protection and regeneration by Barepanga Villagers

The impact of this intervention was soon visible. Villagers who had never thought of land ownership as a possibility now came forward in large numbers to file their claims. Today, several families in Phiringia and Tikabali are cultivating their own land—growing vegetables, and fruits, and even starting small-scale agro-forestry initiatives.

### A Triumph of Change: Kandhamal's Victory over Child Marriage

In the year 2016, SWATI, in collaboration with Save the Children, launched the ANANYA Project in 11 Gram Panchayats of the K. Nuagaon Block aimed to eradicate child marriage by empowering adolescent girls with the knowledge, skills and support they need to lead the charge. This grassroots movement impacted the mind-set of communities to recognize child marriage not just as a harmful tradition but as a social and legal crime. With this initiative; child rights, physical and mental development of young girls and educational opportunities seems to be degraded has been restored. Jhulima Malik, a shining star from the adolescent girls' group, received the prestigious V-AWARD at the UN House, New Delhi in 2019. Now the result is a staggering 75% reduction in child marriages across the district.



### Social Welfare Agency & Training Institute (SWATI)

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## UTKAL SEVAK SAMAJ(USS)

[www.utkalsevaksamaj.org](http://www.utkalsevaksamaj.org)

### BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANISATION

A group of young volunteers had extended humanitarian support to the migrated daily workers of ethnic tribal origin while they were suffering owing to growing deforestation due to massive industrialization in the state. They initiated a process of social action to provide these ethnic tribes immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation which brought success to them. Boosted with that success and conviction for improving the quality of life of rural poor, those youths metamorphosed their individualistic social movement to a voluntary development movement and formed a social welfare organization named Utkal Sevak Samaj (USS) in 1989.

Initially process started in a low key, then after started taking up small projects on Health Environment, & Women empowerment. After 1999 super cyclone, USS changed its gear and focused on Disaster management and HIV/AIDS Care and Support and expanded its activities to other districts. After successfully completing three decades in multiple thematic areas, now USS has its Head Office in Cuttack city. Coping with the changing time and demand; USS has always transformed its strategies, came out with perspective plans, developed the capacity of its team and adopted new technical innovations. USS adopts a people-centric integrated and holistic approach to find appropriate solutions to key issues affecting the life and livelihood of the people.

**Outreach:** Utkal Sevak Samaj is actively working across nine districts of Odisha, encompassing both rural-tribal and coastal areas. The organization operates in 15,274 villages, spread across 2,317 Gram Panchayats in 94 blocks. The districts include Kendrapara, Angul, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Bolangir, Keonjhar, Khurda, and Cuttack.

### Target Population:

The primary focused groups of Utkal Sevak Samaj include CNCs, Tribals, Dalits & Minorities, Migrants, Disaster victims, FSW, MSM, TG, Truckers & Allied Communities, Vulnerable Women & Children, Small & Marginal Farmers, Slum dwellers, mentally ill people, People living with TB, People infected and affected with HIV& AIDS, General Mother & Children. Presently, USS is vigorously working towards achieving its vision including several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within its demography aiming to provide a better solution to its target communities.

### SUPPORT ENTITIES:

The support entities of USS include Government Agencies, Corporate and overseas organisations:

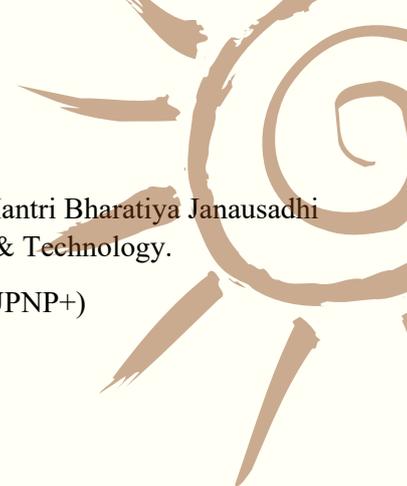
**Government Agencies:** Odisha State AIDS Control Society, National Urban Health Mission, Odisha Water Supply & Sewerage Board (OWSSB), District Rural Development Agency, Cuttack, Department



of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Govt. of Odisha, Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janausadhi Pariyojana and Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science & Technology.

**Corporate:** Apollo Tyres Foundation, Uttar Pradesh Network for PLHIV (UPNP+)

**International:** Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation US



## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Adv. Kamalakanta Mohanty, the President of USS** has been associated with the organisation since last three decades. He holds a B.A LLB degree and practised over 38 years in the Orissa High Court, Session & District Court. He has an extensive expertise in handling over 700 cases. By providing his expertise he provided legal consultancy in time to time and closely associated with the organisation for 3 decades.

**Mr. Amiya Bhusan Biswal, Secretary of USS**, has over four decades of experience in the voluntary sector, with a strong focus on governance, health, education, livelihoods, and civil society empowerment. He has led major initiatives in HIV & AIDS prevention, care, and support, and has worked on disaster management, child rights, and advocacy for marginalized communities. He actively combats stigma around Leprosy, TB, and HIV/AIDS, leads the DLNCC network in Cuttack, and founded the Odisha State Patient's Rights Forum to uphold patient dignity through advocacy. He is a key promoter of the Community Radio Movement in Odisha and also served as a member of the State Child Welfare Committee. His selfless devotion to social development work has been widely recognized.

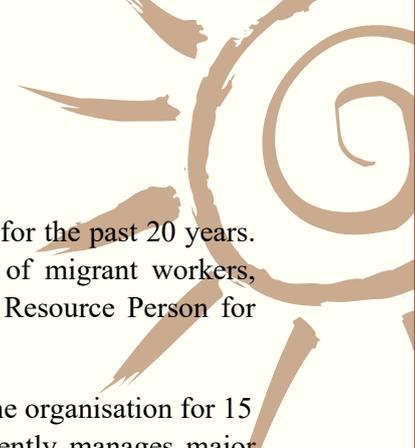
**Er. Anwoya Avinab, Director of USS**, has been associated with the organisation for 10 years and brings extensive experience in the development sector. He holds multiple skills in strategic leadership, program management, fundraising, and technological development. He excels in building partnerships, crafting effective communication strategies, and ensuring governance and regulatory compliance. His expertise drives positive change, fosters collaboration, and creates meaningful community impact. He also promotes Community Radio as a platform for public voice, local talent, traditions, and crafts.

**Mr. Pramod Kumar Ojha, EC Member**, brings over 30 years of extensive experience in Health, Education, Livelihood, Disaster Management and Community Development projects. He has demonstrated expertise in monitoring, and evaluation, effectively managing teams of professional staff to achieve project goals and objectives. He is good in Community Mobilisation and Conflict Resolution

**Mr. Malaya Kumar Sarangi, Administrative Officer**, has been with the organization for over 30 years. With expertise in office management, human resources, and logistics, he ensures smooth organizational operations. He is skilled in record-keeping, database management, and policy compliance. His strong grasp of government processes helps him navigate and collaborate effectively within these systems.

**Mr. Bibhuti Bhusan Beura** brings over 20 years of experience in Health and Development projects specialising on people living with HIV/AIDS. He has an expertise in programme implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, effectively managing team to achieve project goals and objectives.

Furthermore, he has an excellent understanding of government departments' functioning mechanisms, which allows him to navigate and collaborate efficiently within these systems.



**Mr. Mahendra Mahananda** has been an important part of the organization for the past 20 years. He has over 20 years of experience in the fields of Health (HIV/AIDS) of migrant workers, trafficking and bonded labour issues. Currently he is serving as a District Resource Person for Bolangir District LWS Project of Utkal Sevak Samaj.

**Mr. Anirudha Das** has been a Senior Finance and Compliance Manager of the organisation for 15 years. He brings extensive knowledge in finance and compliance. He currently manages major financial operations such as fund management, budgeting, financial analysis, book keeping, and auditing. He ensures that the board members receive regular reports and financial insights from the project implementation team, assuring the organization's financial health and compliance.

**Mr. Ajitabh Sahoo** is an MBA has been working as a Finance officer since 2019. He currently manages major financial operations such as fund management, budgeting, financial analysis, bookkeeping, and auditing.

**Mr. Chitta Ranjan Mohanty** has been with the organization for 5 years and brings over 25 years of experience in the development sector. He specializes in Child Rights, Gender Justice, and Human Rights, with proven skills in project management, leadership, documentation, advocacy, and networking. A state-accredited trainer on local self-governance and child-related laws, he trains on POCSO, child marriage, and related issues. He also served as a member expert in the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

**Basic Health:** Focusing on Health education, diagnosis, treatment, Care, Counselling & support to the poorest vulnerable out of reach People like Truckers, people with HIV & AIDS and people with Mental Illnesses.

**Protection of Child Rights:** Implementing Access to Justice for Children Programme and working on prevention of Child Marriage, Child Labour & Child Trafficking and Child Sexual Abuse.

**Disaster Management:** Promptly responding to all disasters through preparedness, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

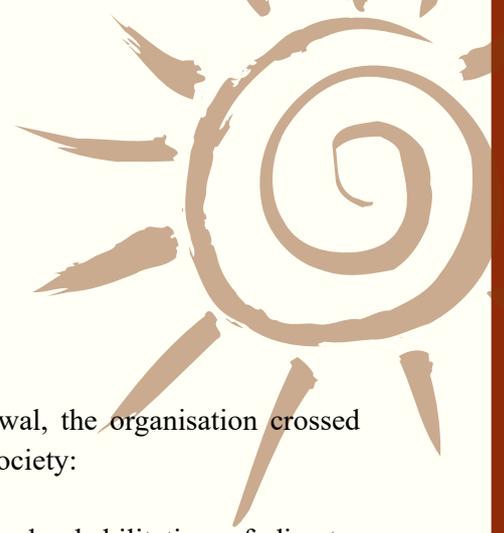
**Livelihood:** Providing small IGP& free ration packet during Covid pandemic to the people with mental illness & HIV, empowering Women by forming SHG, addressing Food Security issues, supporting Disaster affected Women & Older people and women farmers with skill building Training and rehabilitation support.

**Water & Sanitation:** Community awareness in Schools and urban communities of CMC on Management of Solid and liquid wastes clean drinking water, promote hand-wash, ensure personal hygiene, sanitation, etc.

**Environment:** Sensitising the community on waste management, proper use of newly created sewerage system, single use Plastic waste management etc,

**Animal Welfare:** Strengthening animal welfare schemes and services in all 14 blocks of Cuttack district.

**Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions:** Organising training for elected PRI Members on their Role and Responsibility, Documentation, Needs Assessment, Panchayat Planning, Resource Mobilisation etc.



## MILESTONES

Under the leadership of the Secretary of USS Mr. Amiya Bhusan Biswal, the organisation crossed successful milestones through the following unique contributions to the society:

- **1999-2003:** Contributed immensely towards provision of relief and rehabilitation of disaster victims including super cyclone 1999, high flood in 2001 and 2003, Tsunami in Tamilnadu and Fani Cyclone in Odisha.
- **2000-2005:** Introduced insurance as a disaster risk reduction strategy in the state and advocated for Panchayat as unit to access the crop loss.
- **2000-2015:** Played a game changing role in prevention of HIV/AIDS, strengthening Eco-system towards sustainable impact of various positive intervention and care and support to people living with HIV/AIDS including passing of HIV AIDS bill in the country.
- **2004-2005:** Produced two full time movies on migration leading to spread of HIV to create awareness on HIV/AIDS including stigma related to it and also published one book and more than 20 leaflets on various development issues.
- **2005-2010:** Promoted organic farming among tribal population to divert them from a forest dependent economy to a land-based economy.
- **2005-2015:** Participated in more than 50 TV debates, wrote more than 125 articles in newspapers on various developmental issues.
- **2010:** Advocated for and able to success in establishing NATPCR machines in all leading blood banks of Odisha to address transmission of HIV through blood transfusion.
- **2012-2013:** Stopped use of filthy, obscenity songs and quotes used by Dahuka during the Rath (Chariot) Movement of Lord Jagannath during Car Festival in Cuttack City.
- **2015-2020:** The organization filed two Public Interest Litigations in the Odisha High Court with favorable outcomes. One secured immediate appointment of qualified doctors and better facilities at Anti-Retroviral Therapy centers for people living with HIV & AIDS. The other resulted in removal of a high-frequency telephone tower from a densely populated area.
- Through ongoing advocacy, the patient's rights charter recommended by NHRC and adopted by the Government of India is now followed by many states. Our fight against stigma and discrimination helped bring the HIV & AIDS (Prevention & Control) Act, 2017, protecting their rights.
- **2022-2025:** Introduced Child Friendly Eco-system in the district by sensitising all key stakeholders and organising mass pledges in the schools and communities.
- Apart from the above milestones, we are also operating one Community Radio Station named Radio Utkal to voice the voiceless, bring out local talent and popularise rich cultural heritage and educate people on their rights and entitlements.
- Also, we are managing one Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janasudhi Kendra to popularize low-cost quality medicine among people in an affordable price through PMBJK scheme.

## SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

- USS believes in sustainability and empowerment as a permanent solution to any problem. It always focuses on people's participation and addresses problems at all levels.
- We do not believe to provide fish everyday rather provide skill how to catch fish for all time to come.
- USS is dedicated to protecting human rights and dignity, guaranteeing non-discrimination, promoting inclusivity, and keeping people's safety and well-being first. Our goal is to establish a fair and just society where everyone's rights are respected and upheld.
- From the very inception we have been adopting rights-based approach to empower the most poor, deprived and vulnerable people to unitedly fight for their own rights and achieve it.
- USS follows the holistic approach to address the root causes of the societal issues and provides appropriate and innovative solution to it

## ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

- **Community Health & Development:** 1.2+ million beneficiaries reached through health interventions and awareness programs, 6491 health camps organised. OPD footfall in our Mobile and Static Health Care set ups was more than 2 lakhs, 438 patients got expert consultation through E-Sanjeevani, 131607 people got pathological investigations, 3545 people got minor OT services, 34374 patients got treated of non-communicable diseases, 16157 people suffered from Syphilis and 6696 suffered from STI got treatment.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** 500,000+ individuals engaged in environmental protection and conservation efforts, promoted 5000 samplings planted on the Maha nadi River back after FANI cyclone, supported Mass plantation drive, 1700 hector of natural forest and 250 hector of social forestry created in the tribal surroundings, 150 hectors of waste land belonging to SC and ST families developed in to cultivable land.
- **Protection of Child Rights & Child Welfare:** More than 3 lakhs people became aware through pledge and other awareness and sensitization activities about the right age of marriage, consequences and punishment provisions for child marriage, More than 1000 girl child were prevented and 40 children rescued from forceful child marriage, 2500 nonstarters and school dropout children mainstreamed to formal educations, 200 child labour got school education up to 5th standard, 7 Crèches operated and 137 children got nutrition and preliminary education, 300 and more Child Labour and Trafficking children rescued. 1320 adolescent girls are trained on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health including life skills and roles of different public service institutions. 136 women and farmers SHGs formed and strengthened.
- **PMBJK:** \$10+ million saved by beneficiaries through low-cost affordable medicine program.
- **Community Radio Station:** 2+ million listeners reached through health and social messaging.
- **Women Empowerment, Skills, Livelihood and Care for Senior Citizens:** 277 disaster-affected women and 50 senior citizens received livelihood and income support. Women SHGs saved ₹5 lakhs. 60 HIV/AIDS-infected individuals got IGP support. 5000 tribal women were trained on rights and duties. 50 grain banks were formed, ensuring food security for 300 tribal families. 40 Sarpanches were trained on Social Security Schemes. 35 stabilized individuals with mental illness received income support. 300 SC, ST, and OBC women farmers were trained in organic farming and agro service center management. Community infrastructure (7 roads, 6 ponds) was developed through *Sramadan* in tribal villages.
- **Agriculture:** 200 acres of waste land has been developed up to cultivable standard, 13 grains cum seed bank formed to promote indigenous seed preservation and food security issues, 7 old ponds renovated and utilised for fishing, duckery, bathing and kitchen garden promotion purposes, 300 farm families provided support for intensive organic crop and vegetable cultivation, value addition, marketing and preservation of indigenous knowledge and coping system.

## LEARNINGS

With the changing time to survive and grow, USS adopted technology & use of social media platforms including artificial intelligence to showcase the major achievements. Besides, media has been sensitized & utilized in favour of people's rights. Similarly, judiciary has been informed & feeded with authentic data & evidences on key issues for a favourable policy change.

The mainstream governance has been equally sensitized by keeping frequent dialogues on the changing needs and aspiration of the people and thereby providing a favourable platform for mutual cooperation, coordination and convergence.

The very core value of our organisation is quick decision making in favour of the poor not following lengthy and long-time consuming process but contrary to that strength now a day with changing situation both Govt, corporate and foreign agencies are expecting prompt response like military-administration, proper documentation & record keeping like Govt system, evidence-based reporting like media world and increased visible & evidence-based achievements. So, this 4 in 1 expectation from voluntary sector including our organisation with no support base, no skill enhancement and no resource security assurance is the greater challenge for survival and growth.

There is a trend of over expectation from the voluntary sector without adequate and proper support system and favourable environment. Our core value of participation to ensure sustainability is badly affected by the freebee culture introduced by the other key actors of the society for the short-term gain making compromises with sustainable national growth.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### Field-Related Success

#### 1. Journey from Kitchen Child Labour to Classroom

Rama, a 12-year-old boy from Mahana village in Gajapati district, was forced into child labour due to his family's financial crisis caused by his father's battle with cancer. To support the family, he left school and started working in a hotel in Cuttack, enduring 14-hour shifts for just ₹3000 a month. His daily duties included washing utensils, serving food, and assisting the cook. On 7th December 2023, during a school awareness session under our ongoing project *Access to Justice (A2J) for Children*, an 8th- grade student informed USS's Child Social Worker (CSW) about Rama's situation. The CSW collected the hotel address and informed the USS office. A formal complaint was lodged with the



District Labour Officer (DLO), requesting a raid. On 8th December, a joint raid was conducted across 15 hotels in the Mangalabag–Ranihat area of Cuttack, where 12 working children were found, six of whom were confirmed to be underage after medical tests. All were produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and sent to Basundhara Child Care Institution. Unlike the others, Rama expressed a strong desire to return to school, stating he only worked to support his ailing father. Moved by his situation, the DLO took immediate action—arranging treatment for Rama’s father at a government hospital and linking the family to welfare schemes.

Today, Rama is back with his family and has re-enrolled in school. His story is a powerful example of how timely intervention and collaborative effort can restore a child's right to education and dignity.

## 2.From Despair to Hope:A Story of Resilience and Support

Sabita (pseudonym), a 23-year-old woman from Dumerchuan village in Turekela block of Balangir district, married Saura, a daily labourer, on 24th March 2022. Coming from poor backgrounds, they found happiness in their new life and were blessed with a baby boy on 14th February 2023. Life seemed peaceful until Sabita began experiencing unexplained health issues. Despite multiple consultations, no diagnosis could be made until she was tested for HIV at ICTC Kantabanji on 25th January 2024 and found positive. She was immediately linked to

ART Centre, Balangir. Shocked and fearful, Saura abandoned Sabita at her parental home, worried about the possibility of infection for himself and their child. The village ASHA, upon hearing Sabita’s ordeal, informed Mr. Rajendra Narayan Sahu, CLW of USS’s LWS Project at Balangir. He, along with ICTC Counselor Mr. Prashant Nidhi Kumar, took swift action.



Rajendra motivated Saura to accompany Sabita to the ICTC. After counselling, Saura agreed to get tested and was also found HIV positive. Initially in disbelief, he finally accepted the reality after being shown proper documentation. Both were then counselled on the importance of treatment and positive living.

Today, with regular ART adherence, both Sabita and Saura are in good health. The couple now expresses gratitude to the ICTC counsellor and LWS team for their timely support and guidance.

This story reflects how timely intervention, counselling, empathy, and medical care can restore dignity, hope, and health for people living with HIV.

## 3.Perils of Risky Choices: The Hidden Cost of Migrant Labour

Poverty often compels many young, educated men to migrate for work, seeking better livelihoods for their families. However, in unfamiliar settings, some fall the influence of alcohol or peer pressure, which include unsafe sexual practices. These

choices put them at high risk of HIV, endangering not only themselves but also their families. Tuntun Kumar Roy, son of Ramayan Roy from Gamahariya, Meyari, Rohtas (Bihar), is one such case. A matriculate and daily wage worker, Tuntun lives in SMS Colony, JSPL, with his wife Asha Devi and their three children. A few months ago, he began experiencing prolonged fever, coughing, and itching. Initially self-medicating, he eventually consulted Dr. Arun Pattanaik at a health camp organized by USS’s TI Project on the JSPL campus.



During the consultation, Tuntun revealed that he had engaged in unprotected sex with a woman while working in Gujarat. Dr. Arun suspected possible HIV infection and recommended immediate testing. Manoj Kumar Sahu, the project's counsellor, referred him to the ICTC near JSPL. On February 23, 2024, Tuntun tested HIV positive. Counsellor Rohit Nath provided extensive guidance on ART adherence, safe sex practices, nutrition, and lifestyle changes. Tuntun was registered at the ART Centre on February 28, 2024. Since then, with regular medication and support, his health has significantly improved. He now continues to work and support his family, living a healthier, more informed life—an example of how timely intervention can change lives.

#### AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS of USS:

- Best Environment building Organization of the District Award-1998
- State level "Prakrutimitra Award" for the year 1998 – 99
- Certificate for Outstanding Service to Humanity- 2001
- Best Organization Award for the year 2002 - 2003
- Best NGO Award- 2010
- Best NGO in the field of HIV & AIDS in Cuttack District
- Pranam Matrubhumi Award- 2015
- Vijay Ratan Gold Medal Award - 2017
- Change Agents of Odisha making big difference – 2017
- TRF-UNESCO-CEMCA SDG Fellowship Award-2024
- District Administration Award-2024



### Utkal Sevak Samaj

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## Voluntary Integration for Education and Welfare of Society

[www.viewsindia.org.in](http://www.viewsindia.org.in)

### BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

VIEWS is a growing grassroots non-profit development organization based in Odisha, founded in 2002 by a group of youth who initially engaged in relief and rehabilitation efforts following the 1999 Super Cyclone in the state, in collaboration with Lutheran World Service (India) and the FMM Social Service Society, Gopalpur-On-Sea. This early experience made them realise the need for a committed local organisation to address the critical social issues affecting underprivileged communities on a sustained basis.

Since 2008, VIEWS has been consistently working to empower marginalised communities, especially women and girls, through a range of high-impact projects. Its customised interventions span across Livelihoods, Education, Health, Climate Change, and Disaster Management, enabling communities to improve their quality of life and become change-makers.

VIEWS collaborates with national and international agencies to integrate traditional knowledge and local expertise with modern development practices for the capacity building of targeted groups and to achieve measurable outcomes.

The organisation envisions a self-reliant Odisha where communities thrive in peace and dignity. Its core values are integrity, collaboration, and creativity. Since 2019, VIEWS has held Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

**Target Group:** VIEWS works with vulnerable child, adolescents, widow, single women, destitute women, dalit, small and marginal farmer .

**SUPPORT ENTITIES:** VIEWS is/was getting support from various donors /supporters:

**International Agencies:** Asia Initiatives, Global Glow, DKBW, SLCW, DASRA, Andheri Hilfe, KODDI, Concern India, Aid et Action

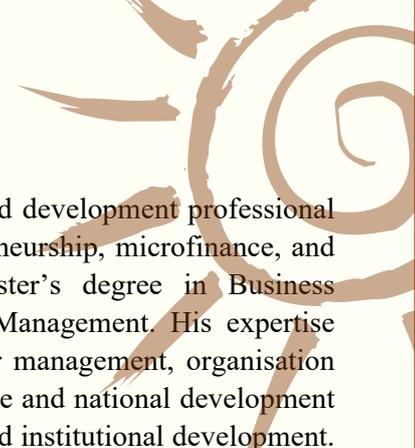
**Government Agencies/Departments:** Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Govt. of Odisha.

**Institutions/Foundations:** Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation,

### PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS:

**Mr. S. Bheema Rao, Secretary and Co-founder** of VIEWS, holds a Master's degree in Commerce along with multiple postgraduate qualifications, including a Postgraduate Diploma in Management, a Postgraduate Diploma in NGO Management, a Postgraduate Diploma in Rural Development, and a Diploma in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management. With over 30 years of experience in the development sector, he has gained deep insights into the transformation of NGOs into NBFCs in Odisha, as well as the issues and challenges faced by the sector in the state.





**Mr. Sunil Kumar Ghadei**, Programme Director at VIEWS, is a seasoned development professional with over 12 years of experience in livelihood promotion, social entrepreneurship, microfinance, and capacity building of community-based institutions. He holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and postgraduate certifications in Geo-informatics and Management. His expertise covers key areas such as livelihoods, education, climate change, disaster management, organisation development, and fund mobilization. He has collaborated with various state and national development agencies, with a strong focus on skill building, women's empowerment, and institutional development. Extensive travel across India has given him deep insights into poverty and effective intervention strategies.

**Mrs. Srilkeha Chouhan, Programme Lead-Education & Partnership**, holds Master's Degree in Home Science and MBA in HR. She has more than 15 years of working experience in International and State level NGOs, such as World Vision India, SOCH, HDF-CDAR etc. Her expertise spans child Health and Nutrition, Child Protection, Adolescent Empowerment and Social development.

**Mr. Bidyhar Behuria, Lead Monitoring and Evaluation**, holds Post Graduation in Public Health. He comes with a rich experience of monitoring and evaluation over 20 years in different National level and State level NGO's. He is an expert in resource planning, survey development, and MIS reporting, enabling effective project implementation. Known for my problem-solving abilities and team motivation.

**Mr. Saroj Kumar Satpathy, Programme Manager – Livelihood**, holds a Master's degree in Social Work. He has 13 years of experience in the social development sector, with expertise in the livelihood domain. He possesses strong skills in management, analysis, and implementation.

**Mr. Pramod Kumar Behera is the Programme Lead – Climate Change**. He holds a Master's Degree in Social Work and a PG Diploma in Social Work & Human Resource Development, and brings nearly 30 years of experience in the development sector. Over the years, he has held diverse roles ranging from grassroots mobilization to leading large-scale, multi-sectoral projects supported by national, international, government, and CSR agencies. His expertise spans education, watershed development, WADI, climate-smart farming, community-based disaster management, DRR, livelihood advocacy, conflict resolution, social research, and pro-poor policy implementation. Known for his technical acumen, strong field experience, and commitment to inclusive and participatory development, Mr. Behera continues to be a key driver of climate action and sustainable livelihoods.

**Mr. Sitakanta Pani** serves as the Senior Finance Officer at VIEWS. He holds a Master's Degree in Finance Control and brings with him over 15 years of rich experience in finance and accounting management.

**Mr. Asish Kumar Mohapatra - HR & Finance Lead**, holds a Master's Degree in Finance Management and has 4 years of experience in accounts and legal documentation in the development sector.

**Mrs. Sasmita Ku. Nayak - Lead Communication & Fundraising**, holds Master's Degree in Business Administration in HR and PG Diploma in Rural Development. She is having 6 plus years of experience in development sector. Her expertise spans in social media, communication, documentation and fundraising.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT

IEWS is working on three core thematic areas, such as Livelihood, Education and Climate Change

**Livelihood:** VIEWS believes that sustainable livelihoods are key to poverty reduction and social empowerment. It promotes skill development, entrepreneurship, and market access to boost incomes and reduce vulnerability. Its interventions include vocational training in tailoring, hospitality, and digital skills for rural youth; support for women's SHGs, micro-enterprises, and financial literacy; and promotion of organic farming, improved agriculture, and livestock rearing. VIEWS also helps producer groups and cooperatives access markets and fair prices. As a result, hundreds of youth have secured jobs across Odisha, women-led SHGs have increased household incomes, and climate-resilient farming has improved food security.

**Education:** Considering that education being a fundamental right and a powerful tool to break the cycle of poverty, VIEWS focuses on inclusive and gender-sensitive education for marginalized children and youth in Odisha, aiming to ensure that every child has access to quality education and grows into an empowered, self-reliant, and dignified individual. The organization has established learning centers for out-of-school children from tribal and migrant families, supported girls' education through awareness campaigns, scholarships, and menstrual hygiene initiatives, introduced digital learning tools to bridge the digital divide, and actively engaged parents and school committees to strengthen community involvement. These integrated efforts have led to improved learning outcomes, higher school retention rates, and enhanced digital skills among rural children.

**Climate Change and Resilience:** VIEWS recognizes climate change as both an environmental and developmental challenge, impacting livelihoods, food security, and health—especially in coastal and tribal areas. Its key interventions include community-based disaster preparedness in cyclone-prone zones; promotion of climate-resilient crops and eco-friendly farming; awareness campaigns in schools and communities; and initiatives in water conservation, reforestation, and local resource management. These efforts have improved disaster readiness, reduced carbon footprints through sustainable farming, and increased community ownership of climate adaptation.

## MILESTONES

2008: VIEWS was registered under the Society Registration Act. 1860, started work as an NGO

2012: The organisation registered under Income Tax -12 A, 80G and FCRA and started receiving foreign grants to run the developmental projects at the community.

2012: Collaborated with University of Texas to work for the university students and youth. They taught student communication, life skill education to the rural youths.

2014: Views started the livelihood programme - working on sustainable agriculture at Ganjam

2016: The organisation started adolescent resource centre at the urban slums of Bhubaneswar specially for the adolescent girls.

2018: Launched Audio Book project at Bhubaneswar – formed audio books in digitally along with established Audio book library at the special schools at 30 districts of Odisha.

2019: Odisha Millets Mission Project started, earlier to this farmer were using chemical cultivation but after the association with Odisha Govt. And work on Odisha millet Mission giving priority to millet through sustainable agriculture.

2019: VIEWS in collaboration with National Collation of Natural Farming started working on Natural farming and increased yield.

2019: Involved as a peace building partner, started operation in Andhara and Gajapati District.

2023: Operation started in Telegana state, VIEWS expands its area of operation to Telegana state, started working on climate change initiatives.

2024 (Dec.) VIEWS organized the Odisha Disability Conclave in Bhubaneswar which was represented CSO leaders by Government officials.

2025 (Feb): VIEWS organized the Ganjam Livelihood Conclave 2025 in Berhampur. The event witnessed the active participation of key representatives from various Government Line Departments, CSO, community members.

### **SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS:**

- VIEWS focuses on sustainable livelihoods through community mobilization and local solutions. It supports inputs, skills, and linkages to build community capacity for food security and income, creating a participatory and resilient model.
- It supports small and marginal farmers by introducing innovative models. Working with government bodies, KVKs, universities, and NABARD, it enhances community capacity through agriculture, livestock, skills, employment, and market access.
- Agricultural efforts have enabled women and small farmers to adopt better planning and organic practices, improving production, income, and access to markets and financial services. Women farmers are a key focus.
- VIEWS promotes non-farm livelihoods, introducing women to mushroom farming, tomato processing, micro-enterprises, and social businesses like bio-fertilizers, sanitary napkins, bags, and masks.
- In coastal Odisha, the organization supports women SHGs and cooperatives with training in fish processing and fishery-based livelihoods.
- VIEWS conducts studies on climate change, small-scale fisheries, coastal livelihood security, and marine fish value chains. It has also introduced solar innovations in these sectors.

### **ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT**

- Over 11,000 farmers have adopted organic practices, reflecting a growing commitment to sustainable agriculture. By shifting to chemical-free methods, they are improving soil health, protecting the environment, and producing healthier food for their communities.
- Around 8,600 farmers are practicing the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) in paddy cultivation. This method enhances water efficiency, reduces input costs, and increases productivity, promoting sustainable rice production.



- Approximately 3,500 farmers are cultivating climate-resilient crops, strengthening community preparedness against climate change and ensuring stable yields even under unpredictable weather conditions.
- Nearly 4,900 families benefit from vegetable cultivation and nutrition gardens, improving household nutrition, reducing food expenses, and generating additional income through surplus sales.
- 2,200 families have been supported in pulse farming, which enhances dietary diversity and protein intake while also enriching soil fertility through nitrogen fixation.
- 1,650 young people have received market-oriented skill training, equipping them with employable skills to secure jobs or establish their own enterprises.
- 160 ultra-poor women have been supported in starting small businesses, leading to improved incomes, economic independence, and greater community participation.
- 520 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have been strengthened to play a critical role in grassroots development, collective decision-making, and ensuring access to government schemes.
- 213 families have diversified their livelihoods through animal husbandry, gaining improved nutrition and steady income from dairy and livestock products.
- 300 audiobooks—from school texts to competitive exam materials—have been developed and made available across all 30 districts of Odisha. An Audio Book Library has been established, supported by a toll-free helpline for visually impaired communities.
- 180 training programs, including phenyl making, tailoring, candle making, and soap and detergent production, have improved the livelihoods of 1,000 people, enhancing their income opportunities.
- Children’s learning centres run by VIEWS are positively impacting the lives of 600 vulnerable children, ensuring access to education and personal growth.
- Life skills training has been imparted to 300 adolescents and children, leading to positive behavioural changes and stronger resilience.
- More than 3,150 girls have been supported to continue their education, pursue higher studies, or take up vocational training.
- Pioneering initiatives for inclusive education have benefited 6,000 visually impaired students, helping them overcome barriers to learning.
- A network of 30 Girls’ Clubs has been established, championing education and gender equity within communities.
- More than 3,000 students have been equipped with digital literacy and employability skills, preparing them for future opportunities.
- Communities have been enabled to effectively access government welfare programs, including the Right to Education (RTE) Act.
- Vernacular journalists from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have been trained on climate change reporting, building regional media capacity. Their impactful work has been nationally recognized through awards.
- VIEWS has also strengthened its Climate Journalism Network to foster reporting on climate-resilient small-scale fisheries and to promote safe, informed migration practices.



## LEARNINGS

### The key learnings for the organisation are:

- Learned the importance of building strong partnerships and diversifying funding sources to effectively bridge financial gaps.
- Realized that continuous training and motivation are essential for improving staff retention, especially in remote and challenging locations.
- Understood the need for ongoing learning to adapt to changing legal and compliance requirements.
- Gained experience in responding swiftly and efficiently to emergencies, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 relief efforts.
- Overcame early infrastructure and resource limitations through phased and strategic planning, reinforcing the value of perseverance.
- Recognized that establishing a robust Management Information System (MIS) significantly enhances project monitoring, transparency, and accountability.
- Embraced adaptability, community engagement, and systems thinking as critical components for achieving sustainable development outcomes.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Field-Related

#### Advanced agricultural practices yield plenty, doubling Damayanti's income and hope.

Damayanti Gauda, a 52-year-old farmer from Gurundi village in Patrapurblock, has transformed her livelihood through improved agricultural practices, with the agricultural training provided by VIEWS with support from the Azim Premji Foundation. Earlier, she relied solely on rain-fed farming, cultivating only paddy and pulses on her two-acre land. With the intervention of VIEWS, Damayanti adopted organic and climate-resilient farming techniques—such as proper crop spacing, the use of Jeevamrut, and organic pest repellents. Encouraged by the training, she ventured into commercial cultivation of brinjal, which yielded up to ₹45,000 in a single season, significantly reducing input costs. Today, Damayanti lives a debt-free life, empowered by knowledge, renewed confidence, and a sense of pride in her farming journey.



### Adyasha's Ascent: From Struggle to Strength through Education.

Adyasha Sahani, a determined girl from Birsamunda Sahislum, faced numerous hardships due to her family's limited income. Despite the odds, she continued her education in a government school, though she lacked academic support. Her life took a positive turn when she joined the *Girls for Change* program initiated by VIEWS, which provided free education, life skills, and mentorship. With this support, Adyasha improved academically, discovered her talent in dance and art, and grew in confidence. She successfully passed her 10th Board Exams and is now pursuing her studies at Kamala Nehru College. Today, Adyasha serves as a mentor to younger girls in her community, proving that with the right support, dreams can indeed come true.



### Rojalin's Journey to Financial Stability through Desi Poultry Rearing

Under the IVDP project by EMIL and VIEWS, 50 vulnerable families in Angul, Odisha, received desi poultry units. Rojalin Sahu, whose husband earns ₹100 daily as a cycle mechanic, was among them. Selected through community engagement, she received a Sonali Poultry Unit. These hens are ideal for rural farming, offering both meat and eggs. Within weeks, Rojalin collected 25 eggs - 17 for family nutrition and the rest to start her livelihood. With guidance and support, she now plans to expand and sell locally. Her story shows how small, targeted interventions can transform lives and promote self-reliance.



### Voluntary Integration for Education and Welfare of Society (VIEWS)

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## Youth Council for Development Alternatives

[www.ycdaindia.org](http://www.ycdaindia.org)

### **BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANISATION**

Founded in 1993, the Youth Council for Development Alternatives (YCDA) began its journey as a child-centric, community-based organisation dedicated to creating safe, supportive environments for children and vulnerable populations. Over the past three decades, YCDA has transformed into a dynamic, multifaceted development agency with a robust footprint across the state of Odisha. While expanding its thematic focus and geographical reach, YCDA has remained steadfast in upholding its core values of inclusion, empowerment, and sustainability. YCDA's legal and financial credibility is firmly established through its registration under the Societies Registration Act, and certifications under FCRA, Section 80G, and Section 12A of the Income Tax, enabling the organisation to operate transparently and receive both domestic and foreign contributions. These certifications ensure accountability, compliance, and long-term sustainability of its programs.

Nationally recognised as a Great Place to Work, YCDA has cultivated a work culture that values transparency, collaboration, and professional growth. The organisation prides itself on fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace, with a strong emphasis on gender balance and opportunities for leadership across all levels. This culture has not only enhanced employee satisfaction but also directly contributed to the organisation's capacity for innovation and community impact. With a diverse portfolio spanning child protection, education, health, sustainable livelihoods, and community development, YCDA continues to play a pivotal role in driving grassroots transformation. Its approach integrates evidence-based practices, community ownership, and strategic partnerships, ensuring that interventions are context-specific and scalable.

### **Target Population and Outreach**

YCDA primarily works with the marginalised and vulnerable populations, including children, youth, women, and underserved families. Our interventions span across 7 districts and 16 blocks in Odisha, directly reaching over 200,000 individuals. The focus areas of YCDA includes Education & Child Protection, Community Health & Mental Wellbeing, Climate-Resilient Agriculture, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Disaster Response and Management.

### **SUPPORT ENTITIES**

YCDA has received / is receiving funds for various projects from the following donors:

**Government sector** – Government of Odisha, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, NABARD etc.

**Global** – Kinderpostzegels, WildeGanzen, Linsi Foundation, , Love without Boundaries, Edukans Foundation etc.

**Indian Foundations:** Tata Trust, Reliance Foundation, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Desai Foundation, Basic Needs India, etc.





## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Dr. Mitali Mohanty (President)**, is an active social worker having Master's degree in Psychology and Women's Studies with PhD in Psychology. She has held various senior managerial positions in several national and international organizations, with 25 years of experience in the development sector. She is closely working in the domains of child rights and protection, health, education, SRHR, Gender issues, Water, sanitation, and hygiene, among others. She contributes as an expert in strengthening SRHR among adolescents & children in YCDA programs.

**Mrs. Sartita Choudhury (Vice President)**: Soon after completing her Master's Degree, she joined the development sector. She was always passionate about working for the deprived communities. She has worked in many settings with livelihood, SHG and entrepreneurship development of rural women. Organising women in rural areas and working for their empowerment is her area of core interest. She contributes to Gender integration in YCDA programs.

**Mr. Rajendra Meher (Secretary), is the CEO of YCDA.** He is a qualified (Master's Degree in Rural Management), & experienced professional with over 30 years of experience in providing quality care and support to the deprived across the state of Odisha. His in-depth understanding of relevant legislation, procedures and techniques has immensely contributed to YCDA's growth and credibility. He is a well-known personality in the development sector for his work on child rights, Adolescent health and livelihood promotion. His work on the promotion of various family-based care, de-institutionalisation and Family strengthening is recognised across the country and abroad.

**Ms. Rupam Mohapatra (Senior Program Manager)**, holds a Master's Degree in Psychology and has over 17 years of experience as a development professional. She leads aftercare programs in Odisha, supporting youth transitioning from institutional care to independence. Her work focuses on life skills, education, housing, and mentorship, ensuring sustainable reintegration through collaboration with government, NGOs, and communities.

**Ms. Subrata Jena (Sr. Program Manager, Foster Care)**: With 17 years of program management experience, she specializes in child and foster care. Her expertise spans child protection policies and alternative care models. She has collaborated with multiple District Child Protection Units across regions, significantly contributing to child protection initiatives and the development of alternative care practices.

**Mr. Debiprasad Tripathy (Chief Finance Officer)**, holds a professional degree of MBA (Finance). He looks after overall financial management such as budgeting, funds forecast, budget analysis, and allocation of various projects. In his role, he ensures that the organization upholds good governance and maintains proper accounting for each project.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

### o Education & Child Protection

YCDA is committed to promoting inclusive and quality education while ensuring the protection and well-being of children. The organisation works closely with schools, families, and communities to create safe, child-friendly environments and advocates for children's rights. Special attention is given to vulnerable and marginalised children to prevent exploitation, abuse, and neglect while enhancing their access to learning and development opportunities.

- o **Community Health & Mental Wellbeing** YCDA emphasises a holistic approach to health, addressing both physical and mental well-being within underserved communities. Through awareness campaigns, access to primary healthcare, and community-based mental health support, the organisation empowers individuals and families to make informed health choices. Special initiatives target women, adolescents, and persons with disabilities, ensuring inclusive and equitable health services.
- o **Climate-Resilient Agriculture**  
To combat the effects of climate change and enhance rural livelihoods, YCDA promotes climate-resilient agricultural practices. The organisation works with small holder farmers to introduce sustainable farming methods, improve water management, diversify crops, and strengthen value chains. These efforts help build adaptive capacity, ensure food security, and improve resilience in the face of environmental challenges.
- o **Skill Development & Entrepreneurship** Recognising the importance of economic empowerment, YCDA invests in skill-building and entrepreneurship for youth and women. Through vocational training, life skills education, and support for micro-enterprises, the organisation helps individuals enhance their employability and generate sustainable incomes. Partnerships with government and private sector actors further support pathways to economic independence and innovation.
- o **Disaster Response and Management**  
YCDA actively engages in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. It works with communities to raise awareness, enhance early warning systems, and create disaster management plans. During emergencies, YCDA offers immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation to help vulnerable populations recover with dignity.

## MILESTONES

In 1993, YCDA was officially registered as a grassroots non-profit organisation, with a mission to empower children, youth, and communities in Odisha. This laid the foundation for its rights-based, participatory approach to development.

In the early 1997s, YCDA collaborated with Child Relief and You (now Child Rights and You) to address child labour in western Odisha. This initiative laid the foundation for YCDA's long-term engagement in child rights, working closely with communities and local stakeholders to strengthen child protection systems.

In 2010, YCDA launched a signature programme on Family-Based Alternative Care, focusing on demonstrating various care models and promoting the deinstitutionalisation of children. The initiative introduced key concepts such as the Right to Family Campaign and the formation of Caregivers' Associations, which were later recognised and appreciated by the government. This ground-breaking work was carried out in collaboration with Kinderpostzegels and UNICEF, laying the foundation for systemic change in child care and protection in Odisha.

The organisation, in the year 2013, established its internal systems for financial management and monitoring & evaluation, enhancing accountability, transparency, and data-driven decision-making across all projects.

In the year 2015, YCDA’s work on promoting and supporting various Alternative Care Models for vulnerable children was acknowledged by the Government, Donors and other supporting partners, positioning the organisation as a thought leader in alternative care.

In the year 2018, YCDA partnered with Kinderpostzegels to develop and implement a district-level Child Labour Action Plan. This partnership enabled systemic engagement with government departments and communities to identify, rehabilitate, and mainstream child labourers through education and family support services.

In 2018, YCDA entered into a strategic partnership with the Government of Odisha and the Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF) to double/enhance farmers' income and promote millet cultivation as part of climate-resilient agricultural interventions. This collaboration aimed to strengthen sustainable farming practices, improve food security, and build resilience among smallholder farmers in the face of climate change.

In 2023, in collaboration with the Linsi Foundation, YCDA launched the Family Focused Village Development Program (FFVDP) in five villages, integrating leadership, health, education, livelihood initiatives and values and ethics. This holistic model is a shift toward long-term, community-led development.

In 2024, YCDA launched a new five-year strategic plan to strengthen youth skills, foster innovation, and promote climate-resilient livelihoods, aligning its work with the Sustainable Development Goals and future readiness.

## SPECIALISATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

YCDA adopts an integrated, family-centred development approach that ensures the diverse needs of every family member are holistically addressed. This approach not only focuses on individual and family well-being but also actively supplements government interventions and aligns with existing welfare schemes. By fostering strong partnerships with government agencies and other development partners, YCDA creates a collaborative ecosystem that enhances service delivery, avoids duplication of efforts, and maximises impact at the grassroots level. This synergy strengthens local systems and contributes to sustainable, community-driven development.

Core Specialisations	Unique Characteristics
<p><b>Integrated Care Models:</b> YCDA creates comprehensive care models addressing health, education, protection, and livelihood to ensure sustainable well-being for children and families.</p> <p><b>Participatory Assessments and M&amp;E Systems:</b> We develop participatory assessments and monitoring frameworks that promote community ownership, continuous learning, and accountability.</p> <p><b>Grassroots Institution Strengthening:</b> YCDA empowers local institutions, working with Panchayats, caregivers, teachers, and youth leaders to enhance their roles in child development and protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Child-Centered Innovation:</b> Our programs are designed <i>with</i> children, not just <i>for</i> them, giving them a voice and space in shaping interventions that affect their lives.</li> <li>● <b>Community Ownership:</b> By rooting change in local governance and leadership, we foster sustainable community-driven development.</li> <li>● <b>Evidence-Based Practice:</b> All our interventions are informed by continuous research, field learning, and impact assessments, ensuring relevance and effectiveness.</li> <li>● <b>Collaborative Approach:</b> We work in close partnership with government bodies, NGOs, and community stakeholders to scale impact while ensuring local relevance.</li> </ul>



Together, these elements make YCDA a pioneer in community development interventions that are inclusive, participatory, and transformative.

## ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

### Qualitative Impact

- **Empowering Children as Change Agents:** YCDA's child-to-community approach helps children develop leadership and advocacy skills to influence decisions in their families and communities.
- **Community Transformation:** YCDA strengthens local governance and fosters shared responsibility for child well-being, making Panchayats, caregivers, teachers, and youth leaders more proactive in child protection.
- **Improved Child Welfare Ecosystem:** Our care models improve access to essential services like education, health care, and psychosocial support for vulnerable children.
- **Improved Livelihood and Quality of Life:** YCDA boosts livelihoods through skill development, entrepreneurship, and access to government schemes, improving families' quality of life.
- **Community Mental Health and Wellness:** YCDA integrates psychosocial support into programs, builds frontline worker capacities, and creates safe spaces for emotional expression, reducing stigma and building resilience.

### Quantitative Impact

- **Education & Life Skills:** Reached 25,000+ children through comprehensive education and life skills programs, fostering knowledge, critical thinking, and self-confidence.
- **Alternative Care:** Facilitated placements of 5,000+ children under various alternative care arrangements, ensuring safe, nurturing family environments for vulnerable and orphaned children.
- **Livelihood Training:** 8,000+ women and unemployed youth trained in income-generating trades, leading to self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.
- **Agricultural Support:** Supported 25,000 farmers in adopting climate-resilient farming practices and linked to government schemes to enhance livelihood security and resilience.
- **Adult Literacy Programme:** 100,000+ adults are made literate through a digital-based curriculum integrating financial and digital literacy, entitlements, and disaster preparedness.
- **Community Mental Health:** 5,000+ individuals are provided access to mental health care, psychosocial support, and inclusive community-based services to promote well-being and reduce stigma.

## LEARNINGS

- **Deep Community Engagement Ensures Sustainability**

Meaningful involvement of communities in program design and implementation builds trust, ownership, and long-term sustainability of interventions.

- **Empowered Local Structures Amplify Impact**

Strengthening and mobilising grassroots institutions—such as Panchayats, self-help groups, and youth clubs enables wider reach and greater effectiveness of programs.

- **Culturally Adapted Approaches Enhance Participation**

Tailoring interventions to local customs, languages, and contexts leads to higher acceptance, active participation, and more impactful outcomes.

- **Grassroots Advocacy Drives Systemic Change**

Community-led advocacy plays a pivotal role in influencing policies and practices, bridging the gap between local realities and institutional responses.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### a) A Village Unites for Education

Jamukhol village, located deep within Boudh district, faces significant challenges, including limited access to mainstream services such as transportation, basic health facilities, and education. Despite these barriers, children in the village were eager to learn, gathering under a tree to study due to the lack of proper infrastructure. Recognizing the importance of education, the Village Development Committee (VDC) members took proactive steps. They identified an unused room in the village, which was in poor condition. The VDC brought the matter to a meeting and collectively decided to restore the room. YCDA supported the initiative by assisting with painting the walls and repairing the floor, transforming the space into a child-friendly learning environment.

The transformation of the room was significant. It is now a bright, welcoming space where children are excited to learn. The study center has become a lively hub for education, and its use has expanded to include VDC meetings, fostering stronger community cohesion. This success story highlights the power of determination, collaboration, and shared vision, demonstrating how unity can drive sustainable progress in the community.



### A Farmer's Path to Prosperity

In Ambagan village, farmer Lakhapati Rana once struggled to earn from paddy farming. But things changed with the Crop Diversification Programme. After training, he switched to maize cultivation on one acre of land. In the first season, he harvested eight quintals and earned ₹16,000. With ₹2,600 in project support and using maize residue as manure, Lakhapati's farm became more profitable—and his future, more hopeful. Encouraged by his success, Lakhapati shifted to cultivating sweet corn in the second year, aiming for higher returns. His innovative approach not only improved his family's financial stability but also inspired other farmers in his community.



### c) Education Prevails: Overcoming Migration Challenges

In Tara village, Sumitra, a young girl living with his migrant worker relatives, faced constant disruptions in her education. Frequent relocations made school attendance irregular, putting her future at risk.

Seeing her struggle, the Village Level Child Welfare and Protection Committee (VLCWPC) intervened. With support from the local headmaster, they arranged for Sumitra to stay in a seasonal hostel, giving her a stable environment to study.



The support paid off—Sumitra improved academically, scoring 62% in her last annual exam. Now in Class VII, she aspires to become a teacher. Her journey shows how community support can help children overcome hardships and build a brighter future.

## Youth Council for Development Alternatives (YCDA)

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## NIYATEE FOUNDATION

[www.niyateefoundation.org](http://www.niyateefoundation.org)

### BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

Niyatee Foundation, established in 2012 and registered under the Indian Trusts Act of 1882, is a Bhubaneswar-based non-profit organization committed to the holistic development of underserved communities in Odisha. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Foundation works through grassroots interventions to uplift the social and economic conditions of marginalized groups. The Foundation began with job readiness training for tribal youth, helping them secure employment in Government, PSU, Defense, and Corporate sectors. Over time, it has expanded its focus to include skill development programs under NSDC and state initiatives, pre-recruitment training in collaboration with district administrations, and livelihood generation for women through SHG formation and enterprise support. The Foundation is also active in improving health, nutrition, sanitation, and access to clean water. It runs crèche programs to support Early Childhood Care and Nutrition, promotes hygiene under Swachh Bharat, and ensures clean drinking water under the Jal Jeevan Mission. The organization plays a key role in disaster management by developing Village Disaster Management Plans and raising community awareness.

Through surveys, impact assessments, and IEC/BCC campaigns, the Foundation supports evidence-based planning and sustainable development. Guided by values of compassion, equity, inclusivity, and accountability, Niyatee Foundation continues to work towards a just, healthy, and empowered society for all in the districts of Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Puri and Khurda in Odisha.

**Target Group:** The Foundation primarily targets the unemployed youth, SC/STs, marginalized communities, women, and children from tribal, rural, urban, and Naxal-affected regions of Odisha.

**Outreach:** Through its interventions, NIYATEE Foundation has an active presence in the districts of Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Puri, and Khurda in Odisha.

**Support Entities:** Jal Jeevan Mission, SUDA (State Urban Development Authority), ORMAS, NSDC, Ministry of Rural Development, NITI Aayog, OTDS, DMF, OMBADC, FIEO, CII, NASCOM, TPWODL, Jaga Mission, etc.

### PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

- **Mr. Nirmal Panda**, the **Founder and Managing Trustee** of Niyatee Foundation, is a dedicated social development professional with an MBA background. A passionate social worker with over 15 years of experience in the development sector, he has led impactful initiatives across education, livelihoods, disability inclusion, and community development.

With a strong commitment to empowering marginalized communities, he has guided Niyatee Foundation in becoming a credible organization known for grassroots interventions and inclusive development. His work reflects a deep belief in equity, sustainability, and social justice.

- **Ms. Itishree Panda** serves as the **Chief Executive** of Niyatee Foundation. She brings over 13 years of rich experience in the social development sector along with 4 years in the corporate sector. Her professional background is strengthened by an MBA and a Post-Graduation in Odia Literature.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

The key thematic engagements of Niyatee Foundation are highlighted

- **Skill Development in Different Trades:** Equipping youth and women with employable skills across various sectors through NSDC and state-supported training programs.
- **Pre-Recruitment Training & Coaching:** Preparing candidates—especially from marginalized communities—for government, defence, and corporate sector jobs through structured coaching and mentoring.
- **Pre-Recruitment for Differently-Abled Students:** Supporting inclusive development by offering specialized pre-recruitment training and career guidance to students with disabilities.
- **Health & Nutrition:** Promoting maternal, child, and adolescent health through awareness, health camps, and nutrition-focused interventions like crèches and support during the first 1000 days of a child's life.
- **WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene):** Ensuring access to clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and promoting hygienic practices in line with Swachh Bharat and Jal Jeevan Mission goals.
- **Sustainable Environment & Clean Energy:** Promoting environmental sustainability through community awareness, green practices, and advocacy for clean and renewable energy solutions.
- **Village Disaster Management Planning:** Strengthening community resilience through grassroots-level disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and development of Village Disaster Management Plans.
- **Women Empowerment & Gender Equity:** Advancing women's rights, financial inclusion, leadership development, and promoting a gender-just society through SHGs and enterprise support.
- **Early Childhood Care & Development:** Supporting the physical and cognitive development of young children through crèches, nutrition, and education initiatives.
- **Community Surveys & Research:** Conducting gap analysis, baseline studies, impact assessments, and training need assessments to guide data-driven interventions.

## KEY MILESTONES

### 2021

- o Initiated the first crèche program in Kuanrmunda, Sundargarh, supported by DMF Sundargarh, covering 300 children.
- o Significant improvement in children's nutritional status was observed.
- o Zero child mortality reported during the year.
- o ECCD and ECE activities such as storytelling, play-based learning, and basic hygiene routines were introduced.
- o Parents became more aware of childcare practices, nutrition, and hygiene through regular engagement.



## 2022

- o Expanded to Keonjhar district with 60 crèches supported by DMF Keonjhar, benefitting over 1,200 children.
- o Children showed improved health, regular feeding habits, and better developmental outcomes.
- o Emphasis was placed on ECE through structured daily routines, rhymes, language development, and motor skills.
- o Parents were sensitized on nutrition, child rights, and early learning, increasing community ownership.

## 2024

- o Launched 115 crèches (Phase 1) in Sundargarh under DMF support, reaching 2,300 children.
- o Followed by 125 additional crèches (Phase 2) covering 2,500 children.
- o Consistent monitoring ensured better meal intake, reduced undernutrition, and safe learning spaces.
- o Parents actively participated in awareness sessions, promoting a supportive home environment for children.
- o Regular ECCD sessions emphasized social-emotional learning, language, and cognitive development.

## 2025

- o Started 262 crèches in Mayurbhanj, supported by OMBADC, benefitting 5,240 children.
- o Children received nutritious meals, early stimulation, and regular health check-ups.
- o Intensive community mobilization helped educate parents on the importance of early childhood care, health, and protection.
- o Focus remained on holistic ECCD practices integrating health, nutrition, learning, and protection.

## SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Focused on nurturing children during the most critical stage of growth, Niyatee Foundation's crèche programme offers comprehensive early childhood care with a strong emphasis on combating malnutrition and promoting healthy development during the first 1000 days of life. Implemented across Keonjhar, Sundargarh, and Baripada, the programme currently operates 500+ crèches, primarily in tribal and underserved communities. These centres provide nutritious meals, routine health monitoring, and early learning activities in a safe, structured environment. What makes the programme unique is its community-led approach—crèches are managed by trained local women and integrated with government health and nutrition services, ensuring cultural relevance and accessibility. The programme also empowers mothers through regular parental counselling on hygiene, nutrition, and responsive caregiving, while enabling them to pursue livelihoods. This sustainable, grassroots-driven model stands as a replicable solution to early childhood challenges in rural Odisha.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### Reversing Severe Malnutrition among children

Through Niyatee Foundation's crèche in Kutugaon, Odisha, a severely malnourished child, Chandan, made a full recovery—gaining over 3 kg in 10 months and progressing from being unable to stand to walking independently. Supported under the DMF initiative, the crèche provided targeted nutrition, early learning, and health monitoring, backed by ICDS, ASHA, and Anganwadi workers. The model



now reaching 6,000+ children through 500+ crèches leverages local SHGs for nutritious food procurement creating a powerful dual impact on child health and women's livelihoods across tribal regions of Odisha.

### Community-Led Infrastructure:

In a powerful demonstration of community ownership and local initiative, mothers at Nayadhanurjapur and Gandabarei crèches in Odisha came forward to fund and help construct dedicated kitchen rooms for their centres. This act of grassroots generosity—sparked by the mothers' understanding of the crèche's value transformed the centres into nurturing spaces for children's nutrition and care. With encouragement from Niyatee Foundation and support from the District Administration, this effort highlights how community engagement can lead to sustainable impact. The initiative has since inspired many other crèche communities to contribute, proving that when people feel ownership, they become the true custodians of change.



### From Red to Green: Swati’s Inspiring Recovery from Severe Malnutrition:

At 22 months, Swati Majhi from Teliansala was severely malnourished, weighing just 7.73 kg. Enrolled in the Ama Kalika Crèche in February 2023, she received consistent care, nutrition, and growth monitoring.

Over five months, Swati progressed steadily—reaching a healthy 9.87 kg and 81 cm in height by July, entering the Green (normal) category. Her recovery highlights the impact of early intervention, community support, and the dedicated efforts of Niyatee Foundation’s crèche team.



### Sai Om’s Journey to a Healthier Tomorrow

In May 2023, 8-month-old Sai Om Maharana from Laxmiposi, Jhumpura Block (Keonjhar) was enrolled in the Ama Kalika Crèche, weighing just 6.3 kg with signs of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). With consistent care, a nutritious diet



and parental involvement, Sai Om’s health began to improve. By March 2024, at 18 months, he reached 7.8 kg and 73 cm, placing him in the normal nutrition category. His transformation reflects the power of early intervention, structured nutrition, and a nurturing crèche environment. Sai Om’s story is a beacon of hope for other families battling childhood malnutrition.

## NIYATEE FOUNDATION

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**AAINA**

[www.aaina.org.in](http://www.aaina.org.in)

## **BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Aaina, meaning ‘mirror’ in Hindi – a development organisation, was established in 1998, under the Society Registration Act, 1860, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, with a deep commitment to reflect the unheard voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups—especially women, children, and persons with disabilities. It was born from a belief that inclusive development is not just a goal, but a process that requires sustained engagement, empathy, and systemic change.

Over the last two decades, Aaina has evolved into a recognized grassroots organization in Odisha, actively working across multiple districts. It began with small-scale awareness campaigns but has grown into a multifaceted organization involved in program implementation, policy advocacy, capacity building, and research. Aaina’s philosophy is grounded in participatory approaches, where the communities it serves are active contributors in identifying their issues and designing solutions. Aaina envisages an inclusive society where each person has an identity, independence and exercises his/her rights with dignity and equality especially persons with disability, women, children, elderly, ultra-poor and other socially excluded groups.

The organisation’s mission is to promote the rights of children through non-discrimination and participation; advance gender equality, justice, and the empowerment of women; respond to disaster situations while upholding human rights; ensure the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in society; and undertake people-centric advocacy through research, development, and networking."

With operations spread across six districts of Odisha, including Urban slum, rural and tribal regions, Aaina’s outreach covers thousands of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Its community-based programs span education, disability inclusion, gender justice, child rights, and disaster resilience, reaching over 18,000 people directly. Aaina works closely with self-help groups, schools, local panchayats, and district-level institutions, ensuring participation at the grassroots level. Its demographic reach includes children with disabilities, women facing violence or social exclusion, displaced families, and adolescents from underserved communities. Through this widespread geographic and demographic engagement, Aaina continues to promote equity, dignity, and inclusion across some of Odisha’s most underserved populations.

**Outreach:** Aaina is presently active in 424 villages of six districts of Odisha and collaborating with 100+ network partners in the remaining 24 districts.

## Target Population

Aaina's programs primarily serve the Children and youth with disabilities; Women and adolescent girls at risk; Rural and tribal communities; survivors of domestic violence; Displaced families affected by natural disasters.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

**Ms. Lalita Missal, the President of Aaina**, is a seasoned social worker with a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW). Ms. Missal provides strategic oversight and governance, ensuring that Aaina's programs align with its mission.

**Ms. Sneha Mishra, Secretary of Aaina**, holds a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) with LLB, and DNHE. Ms. Mishra is the founding member and the driving force behind Aaina. Her leadership has been pivotal in establishing programs for disability rights, women's empowerment, and child protection.

**Mr. Dillip Kumar Biswal, the Director of Programs, Aaina**, plays a pivotal role in shaping and implementing the organization's community-led initiatives. His work particularly emphasizes women with disabilities: establishing SEWA unions in Ganjam and ensuring equitable access to information, equipment, and services often neglected due to gender and disability biases. This blend of grassroots advocacy and program expansion exemplifies Dillip's strategic influence in advancing Aaina's mission across both geography and demographic lines.

**Ms. Fhulari Chakma, Manager - HR and Admin at Aaina**, holds an M.Phil. degree from the prestigious School of Social Work, TISS Mumbai. She has four years of field experience, with her work primarily focusing on social justice, community welfare, and marginalized populations. She has been actively involved in grassroots initiatives and has contributed significantly to projects aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable communities, advocating for social equity, and driving systemic change.

**Mr. Basant Kumar Patnaik**, is a seasoned development professional with over 15 years of dedicated service at Aaina, where he leads the organization's Disability and Inclusion portfolio. As Project Director, he brings deep technical expertise, strategic insight, and a strong commitment to equity, accessibility, and community-driven change. Basant continues to be a driving force behind Aaina's mission to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all, especially the most marginalized.

**Ms. Alice Kindo, Project Director at Aaina**, is a postgraduate in Social Work with extensive experience in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). As Project Director and a member of Aaina's compliance team, she has taken the lead on protection policies and has been conducting training on Child Safeguarding, PSEA, and POSH both within the organization and across government and private sectors.

**Ms Geetika Chandra, the Project Manager at Aaina**, holds a Master's and M.Phil. degree in Social Work. has extensive research background. Geetika has more than 15 years working experience and is a noted trainer on gender-based violence with specific focus on women with disability. She has experience of orienting Oxfam partners on GBV and women with disabilities. She also possesses extensive experience working with adolescents under a safe city project and hence having

comprehensive knowledge on violence against children and women which helps her portraying her as a trainer in the relevant issues. Sexual harassment being a public space violence Geetika has taken this up specifically and has been imparting POSH training in different Institutions and also within organisation as a trainer.

**Mr. Somanath Sahoo, Senior Accountant** at Aaina, brings extensive expertise in financial management, compliance, and non-profit accounting systems. With over a decade of experience in managing the financial operations of development programs, he ensures transparency, accountability, and timely reporting across all project portfolios.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

The key thematic engagements of Aaina include the following:

1. **Education:** Inclusive Education and Second Chance of education
2. **Health & nutrition:** RMNCHA and Mental health
3. **Livelihood:** Income Generation Program, Skill training and IGP support
4. **Climate Change Action:** Disaster Risk and Response, Organic farming
5. **Gender equality:** Empanelled POSH trainings
6. **Adolescent:** Adolescent Clubs, Public Space Ambassadors
7. **Disability:** Disabled Peoples' Organization, Federation of DPOs and SHGs

## MILESTONES

- 1998–2005** Aaina was founded in Bhubaneswar and initiated programs on disability awareness, women's rights, and inclusive education in rural Odisha.
- 2006–2010** Piloted inclusive education and gender-based violence prevention initiatives. Developed accessible materials and trained government functionaries.
- 2009** Obtained FCRA registration, enabling Aaina to receive foreign contributions and expand its reach through global partnerships
- 2011– 2015** Established Odisha's first Disability Resource Centre. Introduced 'We Can' campaign for gender justice. Expanded work with PRIs on inclusive governance.
- 2016– 2019** Trained over 5,000 persons with disabilities. Partnered with the State Election Commission for accessible polling. Launched digital literacy for women with disabilities.
- 2020–2022** Delivered COVID-19 relief to over 25,000 families. Developed accessible digital content. Ensured education continuity for CWDs through mobile learning kits.
- 2023–2024** Promoted leadership of women with disabilities in Panchayats. Expanded WASH and menstrual hygiene models. Collaborated with GAATW on safe migration.
- 2025**
- Launched Odisha's first disability-inclusive Gram Panchayat plan. Formed a state-level DPO coalition. Showcased inclusive innovation at the Aaina Samarthya Mela. Celebrated 25 years of transformative work in inclusive development (1998–2023).

- Moreover, Aaina has achieved the PAN, 12A, 80G, and FCRA registrations; and listed on Give India and GAATW platforms for funding transparency and accountability.
- Trained 3,000+ women farmers in sustainable agriculture. Promoted 352 women as MGNREGA mates. Formed Farmer Producer Groups to enhance women's role in local agri-economies.

## ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

### Disability Inclusion:

- Over 10,000 persons with disabilities supported through education, rehabilitation, skill-building, and access to entitlements.
- Inclusive education models implemented in government schools across multiple districts.

### Women's Empowerment:

- 5,000+ women farmers trained in sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, and financial literacy.
- Hundreds of women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs) have strengthened community governance and livelihoods.

### Child Rights and Protection:

- Worked with 100+ schools and thousands of children to promote child rights, prevent abuse, and improve access to quality education.
- Community-based child protection systems established in vulnerable regions.

### Awareness and Advocacy:

- Influenced local and state-level policy on disability rights, inclusive education, and gender-based violence.
- Partnered with government departments and networks to scale inclusive development.

### Community-Led Change:

- Built strong community cadres—volunteers, women leaders, and local facilitators—who now lead awareness and development initiatives independently.

## SPECIALISATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERS

**Inclusive Focus:** Pioneering work in disability inclusion, especially in rural and marginalized areas, long before it became mainstream.

**Community-Led Models:** Aaina empowers local women, PwDs, and youth to become change agents in their own communities.

**Collaborative Governance:** Strong track record of working with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), government bodies, and civil society groups.

**Innovative Programs:** Uses art, theatre, and storytelling to raise awareness and shift social norms—especially around gender and disability.

**Holistic Support:** Combines service delivery (education, rehabilitation, livelihoods) with advocacy for systemic change.

**Sustained Impact:** Over 25 years of consistent presence and evolving strategies based on community feedback and real-world learning.

## LEARNING

Over the past 26 years, Aaina has embarked on a profound journey of growth, learning, and transformation. From its humble beginnings rooted in the vision of inclusive development and social justice, Aaina has evolved into a resilient and adaptive force for change, particularly in the lives of women, children, and persons with disabilities. Throughout the years, Aaina has deepened its understanding of grassroots realities, strengthened community partnerships, and continuously refined its approaches through reflection and dialogue. Key learning have emerged around the importance of intersectionality, participatory development, and sustainable impact, guiding Aaina to innovate and advocate more effectively. Challenges have served as stepping stones, enabling the organisation to build greater empathy, strategic clarity, and collaborative networks. Today, Aaina stands as a testament to 26 years of committed service, enriched by lived experiences and driven by an ever-evolving learning mind-set.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### *Field-Related Successes*

**Steps Toward Hope: From Isolation to Integration** Kavyani, a 9-year-old girl from a marginalized community, faced challenges due to a speech impairment and a disability affecting her right leg. Limited by financial hardship, she lacked access to treatment and her learning level was far below grade level. Through Aaina's Inclusive Education Bridge Program, she received personalized support including health assessments, physiotherapy, special education, and regular home visits. Enrolled in her village school and supported through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Kavyani gradually improved her motor skills, communication, and academic abilities. She also gained access to essential social schemes like UDID, pension, and scholarships. Today, she can walk up to 50 feet, manage daily tasks independently, and read and write in both Odia and English. Her parents are now actively engaged in her development, and Kavyani is thriving in an inclusive school environment.



### From Wasteland to Lifeline: Tilima’s Triumph in Family Farming

In Valatunu village, Ganjam district, Mrs. Tilima Nayak, a passionate farmer, faced hardships despite owning land due to lack of irrigation and poor crop yields. Much of her land had turned barren, and grazing had made sections unusable. Her situation changed after a village meeting where she connected with Aaina, a local volunteer organization. Motivated by their support, Tilima reclaimed 2 acres of fallow land,



built an earthen dam to store canal water, and used a motor to irrigate her fields. With guidance from Aaina and local agriculture officials, she began growing cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, cabbage, and beans. Today, her once-wasted land is productive, providing both food and income, and reflecting her determination and the power of timely support.

### A Widow’s Struggle and Hope After Cyclone Dana

Life has not been easy for 39-year-old Gourilata Das from Badahebilisahi village in Bhadrak. After losing her husband two years ago, she became the sole support for her 3-year-old daughter and an ailing mother-in-law. Her meagre earnings as a daily wage laborer barely stretched to cover food and medicines. When Cyclone Dana struck, her fragile mud house collapsed, shattering the little stability she had managed to hold on to.

At her darkest hour, Aaina’s Dana Cyclone Relief Kit brought more than essential supplies—it brought comfort, dignity, and hope. “The kit gave me strength to stand again. It felt like someone cared for us when we had nothing,” says Gourilata, her eyes welling with gratitude.



### “Reaching the Unreached: AAINA’s Pandemic Relief with Dignity”

When the pandemic struck, AAINA swiftly launched an inclusive relief drive with support from WIPRO Foundation India, ensuring that the most marginalized were not overlooked. Reaching 2,150 vulnerable families—including persons with disabilities, widows, ultra-poor without ration cards, daily wage earners, people living with HIV, pregnant and lactating mothers, the elderly, and orphaned children, the initiative provided both Survival Kits (rice, wheat flour, oil, pulses, soyabean, sugar, and essentials) and Hygiene Kits (masks, soaps, sanitary



pads, matchsticks). Each distribution was preceded by awareness sessions on handwashing, mask use, safe disposal, distancing, and stigma reduction. Even the most neglected slum pockets were touched with care and dignity.



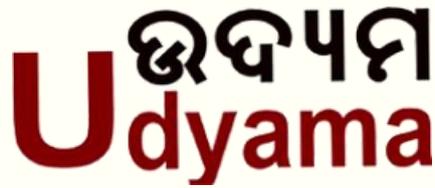
### Swagatika's Journey: From Silence to Self-Belief

Swagatika Sundaray, an 8-year-old girl from Chhatram, Nandapur, was born prematurely and later diagnosed with Intellectual Disability and Cerebral Palsy (ID with CP). She had difficulties in moving, speaking, and doing daily activities. In the beginning, her parents felt disheartened and could not give her the care she needed. Through AAINA's survey, Swagatika was identified and started receiving special education and physiotherapy. Slowly, she began to improve—she can now sit for longer, recognize colours and objects, and read and write Odia and English alphabets. She has finished **Class 1 syllabus** and is moving ahead with Class 2. Her parents are now supportive and hopeful for her brighter future.



#### AAINA

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## BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZATION

Founded in 1997 as a society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, UDYAMA is dedicated to strengthening the capacities of local communities to rejuvenate and enhance human, ecological, social, and economic capital. The organization focuses on improving the well-being of last-mile communities by cultivating resilience solutions that integrate traditional knowledge with innovative technologies and transformative practices. UDYAMA addresses the challenges of the *Triple Planetary Crisis*—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—through inclusive development communication and technological innovations.

UDYAMA adopts a holistic approach to poverty, looking beyond income, food, and water to emphasize nutrition, immunity, and nature-based solutions. By leveraging local resources and promoting livelihood strategies, it fosters risk-informed, sustainable development aligned with the vision of the future we want. The organization works towards circular development, systemic change, and resilience-building across food systems, WASH, health, and education, particularly in the face of cascading climate and health crises.

Its four strategic approaches include:

- (1) promoting program diversity with value-based assurance and insurance.
- (2) creating enabling environments for learning with strong micro-macro linkages.
- (3) strengthening institutions and processes.
- (4) advancing locally tailored initiatives through systematic localization.

## Outreach

UDYAMA facilitates community resilience initiatives across tribal, rural, urban, and coastal areas, with a special focus on women, youth, migrants, and vulnerable groups. Its interventions span multiple districts in Odisha, including Balangir, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Bargarh, Boudh, Nayagarh, Jagatsinghpur, Balasore, Puri, Ganjam, Deogarh, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Gajapati, and Mayurbhanj. By fostering private-public partnerships and socially guided development processes, UDYAMA works to rejuvenate natural resources, strengthen community institutions, and promote ecologically sustainable solutions for resilient futures.

## SUPPORT ENTITIES

UDYAMA has / had received support from the following entities:

**Government Agencies / Public Sector:** Agriculture Department, Government of Odisha; NABARD; PSUs, National Fertilizer Company; IFFCO.

**International / Bilateral / Multilateral Agencies:** UNDP, ICCO Cooperation (Netherlands); IUCN; World Bank; IRG-SA; Youth4Water Plus of UNICEF.

**Foundations / Trusts / Philanthropic Organizations:** American India Foundation; Ford Foundation; TATA Trust; Jamsetji TATA Trust; Dorabji TATA Trust.

**Civil Society / NGOs / Consortiums:** SPS (Samaj Pragati Sahayog); CWS (Centre for World Solidarity); AFPRO (Action for Food Production); Water Aid; CEE (Centre for Environment Education); SSP (Swayam Shikshan Prayog); CDDMASS; India Water Partnership; Community-Action-Collab; GNDR (Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction).

**Research / Training / Technical Support Institutions:** International Youth Centre, New Delhi; FVRTS; CIRC-DEF, New Delhi

**Corporate / Private Sector:** Vodafone; TATA AIG; Green Energy & End Poverty; and Donatekart.

With our steady and sustained effort in the resilient development process, UDYAMA has bagged UN ECOSOC status and has been accredited to UN Global Compact, UN CoNGO, UNDRR, 10YFP–UNEP, CTCN, UN STP, UNFCCC, GEF, UNCCD, CIVICUS, ESP, WOCAT, UN Urban Gateway, CITYNET, GWP, UN FAO, IFAD, GCF, Stakeholder Forum, NIOS, GoI–NPO, End Water Poverty, TISS–CSR Hub, IICA, Earth Day Network, FICCI, CII, WCC, WeAdapt, CANSA, GNDR, ACCCRN, WSSCC, SWA, CAF, CDRN, AADRRN, GACC and Sphere India.

UDYAMA is affiliated with national and global networks on water, climate, resilience, SDGs, and humanitarian standards, earning global accolades including UNESCO’s Best NGO for Water Harvesting and the International e-NGO Award.

## PROFILE CORE MEMBERS

UDYAMA has a professional team with a strong community action orientation, comprising experts in Agro-Ecology, Engineering, Gender, Business, Social Development, ICT, Accounts, and Circular Economy. There is one Project Advisory Group from various technical backgrounds to provide value addition, mid-course correction, and influence policy advocacy.

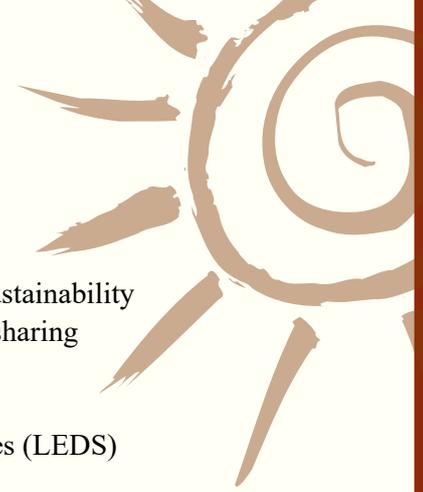
- **Mr. Pradeep Mohapatra, Team Lead and Co-Founder**, UDYAMA, has 36 years of experience in the development sector, with expertise in programme management, team building, conflict resolution, and climate adaptation.
- **Mr. Sarat Tripathy** holds a B.Sc. degree in Agriculture and has expertise in agro-horticulture and agricultural extension.
- **Mr. Prabodha Sahu** serves as the Technical Lead, holds a B.Tech. and MBA degree with expertise in civil engineering.
- **Mr. Ranjit Raul** has expertise in financial management and project support systems.
- **Ms. Sudeshna Satapathy** has expertise in rural management, community resilience, collective formation, governance and institution building, gender, and HIV/AIDS.
- **Ms. Sharada Singhdeo** has good expertise in grassroots governance, migration monitoring and skill building
- **Mr. Raj Kumar Dash**, an MSW Degree holder, has expertise in programme management and documentation.
- **Mr. Ratikant Behera**, a postgraduate, he has expertise in programme management and support services.

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

UDYAMA encompasses a diverse and integrated set of development priorities aimed at building resilient communities and ecosystems, such as:

- Building resilient communities and ecosystems
- Landscape advancement and ecosystem services

- Stream water rejuvenation and water security
- Regenerative food systems with sustainable diets
- Risk-informed Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) model building
- Livelihood resilience and climate adaptation
- Life skill development linked to social entrepreneurship and sustainability
- Promotion of diversity, inclusion, innovation, and knowledge sharing
- Strengthening WASH systems for urban resilience
- Environmental education and awareness
- Technology transfer and Low Emission Development Strategies (LEDS)
- Addressing urban poverty and migration
- Soil carbon sequestration for carbon, water, and green credits
- Strengthening Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and women collectives
- Curbing distress migration
- Promoting circular economies (reuse, reshape, rejuvenate, restore, repurpose)



## MILESTONES

UDYAMA's milestones achievement during 28 years is multifarious like:

- Built strong networks and partnerships, enabling local action, SDG localisation, and influencing risk-informed, resilient development policies.
- Played a catalytic role in building human, social, and natural capital, promoting home-grown immunity, agro-ecology, and nature-based solutions linking food, water, culture, livelihoods, and habitats. Focused on impact maximization and loss minimization from cascading disasters by integrating ecosystem services, wise water use, science-led livelihoods, and soil health initiatives.
- Advocated system change and policy influence, contributing to SDGs while addressing climate-induced hazards, poverty, gender inequality, and food-nutrition insecurity.
- Strengthened readiness, preparedness, and restoration of livelihood infrastructure in both rural and urban settings, promoting broad-based livelihoods and time-honoured technologies.
- Enhanced local governance of water, energy, and biodiversity, while advancing climate justice through campaigns like END WATER POVERTY and Youth4Water (with UNICEF).
- Drew critical lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, integrating resilience against disease, disaster, and digitization in development strategies.
- Championed partnership-driven innovations and nature-based solutions, addressing next-generation development challenges and supporting climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The organization is professionally associated with various local, international, and intergovernmental institutions, and has received the following awards, accolades, and recognitions:

2006- Recognised as Best NGO for Rural Reconstruction & Environment

2008- Award for the year of International Year of sanitation

2009- Recognised as Best Social organization

2010-Accredited to End water Poverty Campaign

2011- Accredited to UN ECOSOC Special Consultative Status

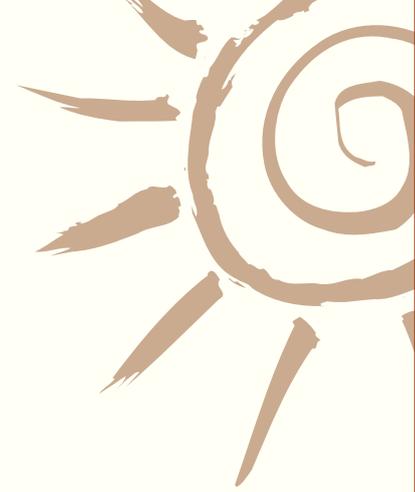
2011-Observer to UNFCCC

2012- Accredited to UNCONGO

2012-Partner To Global Water Partnership

2013- Observer to UNCCD





- 2014- International Award for Environment
- 2015 Accredited to Sustainable Water and Sanitation for All,
- 2016 Accredited to Global Environment Facility
- 2016- UNESCO- Award for Best NGO on Water Harvesting
- 2017- Accredited to UNEP & UNEA,
- 2017- National focal point of GNDR from South Asia,
- 2018- Accredited to Global Soil Partnership,
- 2019- Best NGO Award for Environment by BWW
- 2020- Accredited Observers to Green Climate Fund,
- 2022- Accredited to Major UN SYSTEM
- 2023- Received SABERA Award for Innovation Work
- 2023- Associated with WWQA: a Local Water Forum of the World Water Quality Alliance
- 2024- Receiver of Jal Prahari Samman, Jala Shakti Department, GoI
- 2025- Member for Blue Economy

### **Tangible Achievements:**

- Enabled 2,000 distressed migrants, including many women, to become skilled and self-engaged.
- Mobilized 20 women’s collectives for nutrition farming and greening initiatives.
- Brought 2,000 hectares under science-led resilient farming for soil-carbon absorption.
- Established 10 ICT kiosks delivering digital climate-risk and weather information to farmers.
- Engaged 25 CBOs and 5 FPOs to strengthen market linkages, minimize distress sales, and scale resilient livelihoods.
- Protected 10,000 hectares of biodiversity for carbon sequestration and regulated forest foods/products.
- Set up 3,500 micro-models for water harvesting, restoration, and rejuvenation.
- Distributed 3,500 solar lights and 3,500 fuel-efficient cook stoves to improve household energy access and health.
- Registered 8,000 distress migrants with ID cards and provided COVID vaccination support to 109,750 people.
- Reached 45 schools with sanitation, nutrition, hygiene, and environmental education programs.

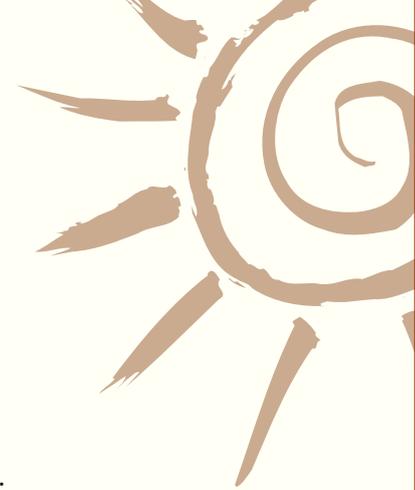
### **SPECIALIZATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS**

UDYAMA’s core specialisations focus on advancing integrated, community-driven approaches to sustainability and resilience. These include:

- Ecosystem Development and Low-Emission Development Strategies
- Local Action on Community Resilience and Climate Adaptation through a localisation process
- Micro-Macro Linkage through strategic networking and partnerships
- Leveraging Resources towards sustainable food systems and stream rejuvenation
- Life Skill Building and Social Entrepreneurship
- Adaptive Action Research

### **OGANISATIONAL IMPACT**

- Rise in women’s participation in agriculture.



- Net income increase for women from farm and non-farm interventions.
- Reduced drudgery for women through improved tools and technologies.
- 2,000 distressed migrants (many women) skilled and self-engaged.
- 20 women's collectives engaged in nutrition farming and greening.
- Adoption of innovative farming and non-farming practices.
- Improved food and nutritional security for women.
- Increased area under cultivation, cropping intensity, and food production.
- Entrepreneurial and employable skills promoted for income enhancement.
- 2,000 hectares under resilient farming for soil carbon absorption.
- 25 onion shades leveraged as post-harvest technology.
- 10 ICT kiosks providing digital weather and climate-risk information.
- Strengthened community institutions for resource management.
- Developed resource pools of facilitators.
- Stakeholder networks built for carbon credits from biodiversity/forests.
- 25 CBOs engaged for resilient livelihood scale-up.
- 5 FPOs promoted for better market linkages and reducing distress sales.
- 5 citizen-action groups working on climate justice and SDG localization.
- Biodiversity restoration, forest preservation, and farmland development.
- 10,000 hectares protected for carbon sequestration and forest foods.
- 3,500 water harvesting, restoration, and rejuvenation micro-models.
- 3,500 solar lights installed.
- 3,500 fuel-efficient cookstoves distributed.
- 480 treadle pumps deployed.
- 9 biogas plants and 1 solar-energy centre established.
- 1,000 farmers onboarded to bio-char for soil carbon enhancement.
- Community adaptation measures evolved to reduce vulnerability.
- 8,000 distress migrants registered and given ID cards.
- 109,750 people vaccinated against COVID with resilience protocols.
- Relief and rehabilitation for stranded passengers and patients in disasters.
- 45 schools practicing sanitation, nutrition, and hygiene with environmental education.
- 200 community groups engaged in backyard nutrition and wastewater management.

## LEARNINGS

UDYAMA views failure as a stepping stone for growth, fostering adaptation and forward movement. There is a focus on building resilient institutions and communities, especially in times of crisis, while embracing continuous learning through research and grounded action. Direct engagement with communities ensures responses to real and pressing issues. Agroecology and nature-based solutions are promoted, along with the interlinking of food, water, nature, and livelihoods to reduce disaster risks. Grassroots change is catalysed with the intent to influence broader systems. ICT, AI and data are used strategically to manage complex challenges, acknowledging the interconnected and intensifying nature of today's crises. All actions are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals to drive long-term, meaningful impact.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### Bridging the Nutrition Gap in Rural Development

Nutrition, a major concern in rural communities, has often been overlooked in regular integrated development efforts. Udyama has tried to bridge this gap by embedding nutrition-focused interventions into its ongoing programs. Beyond field demonstration initiatives, it has undertaken activities such as awareness generation through wall paintings, promotion of household-level nutrition gardens, and cultivation of nutrient-rich crops at farmer field school sites.



### Farmer Field School – A Demonstration of Resilient Farming

Pabitra Jugunia, a progressive 50-year-old farmer from Podapalli village in Bongamunda block, runs a farmer field school in his backyard. During the last cropping season, he demonstrated System of Rice Intensification (SRI) paddy cultivation, vermicomposting, and the use of a pedestal pump in response to drought conditions. He also prepared organic manure using cow urine, cow dung, and locally available leaves, sharing his experiences with neighboring farmers to encourage knowledge exchange.



### Community Solutions for Safe Seed and Grain Preservation

In response to significant post-harvest losses, locally adopted seed and grain storage initiatives have been introduced to support marginal farmers, particularly women. These storage systems help preserve quality seeds for the next season and ensure food availability during periods of scarcity. During the kharif (lean) season, many marginal households face food insecurity due to the unavailability of grain, as they are fully engaged in fieldwork and have limited opportunities to earn from external sources.



## Value Addition and Marketing: Skill Building

**Leaf Plate Processing:** A leaf stitching program in Nayagarh helped women earn additional income and boost their self-esteem through skill-based livelihood support. **Support for Ultra-Poor**

**Women:** Manjulata Bhoi, a widow from Timanbhadi village in Titilagarh block, has been running a small grocery shop to support her family after being left behind by her husband 12 years ago. **Biodiversity Conservation:** To address declining forest cover and meet household needs, forest plantations have been established on abandoned community lands at 20 sites across both program districts.



## Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):

WASH was integrated into the livelihoods resilience and climate programs through sanitation campaigns, biomass use, water rejuvenation, treadle pumps, and rainwater harvesting. Community demonstrations promoted cleanliness, safe waste disposal, composting, and handwashing.

**Rainwater Management:** To support small and marginal farmers facing limited irrigation access, dug wells and shallow ponds were promoted to sustain nutrition-based farming near homesteads.

**Life Skill Training:** Market-led vocational training was provided to youth, focusing on skill enhancement to help them secure income-generating opportunities in a competitive market.



## Green Energy Initiatives:

**Biogas & Biomass Training:** To promote clean and sustainable energy, training sessions were conducted on the use of biogas and biomass. These sessions helped households understand the benefits of local bio-resources and how to use them effectively.

**Solar Home Lighting Systems:** Portable solar home lighting systems and solar dryers were introduced, including integrated energy units with two-point lighting and fuel-efficient cooking stoves, improving household lighting and reducing indoor pollution. Gochabari, a remote village with 28 households in Daspalla block of Nayagarh, lacked electricity connectivity. Through community solar electrification, the village now has access to clean and reliable energy, significantly improving daily life.

**Fuel-Efficient Stoves:** Advanced low-smoke, fuel-efficient cooking stoves were distributed to marginal and poor households. These stoves reduced fuel consumption, cooking time, and indoor air pollution, especially benefitting women.

**Treadle Pumps for Green Fields:** Treadle pumps, which do not require electricity or fuel, were provided to help small and marginal farmers irrigate their fields. This supported vegetable cultivation after the kharif season and mitigated the effects of drought.



## UDYAMA

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ANTYODAYA CHETANA MANDAL (ACM)

[www.acmmayurbhanj.org](http://www.acmmayurbhanj.org)

### **BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANISATION**

Antyodaya Chetana Mandal (ACM), a non-political and non-profit organisation, was established in 1982 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 by a group of young and senior Gandhians. These founders were highly motivated and committed to contributing their time, knowledge, skills, service, and energy towards the development and empowerment of socially disadvantaged and vulnerable tribal communities, including the most backward groups in rural areas of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, and Kandhamal districts of Odisha. ACM focuses on addressing poverty, community health, livelihoods, social transformation of the Lodhas (an ex-criminal tribe often treated as thieves in Mayurbhanj), illiteracy, education of poor and tribal children, gender-based discrimination, and environmental issues, with a vision to uplift tribal, Dalit, and downtrodden communities in their social, economic, cultural, educational, and health dimensions.

Since its inception, ACM has envisioned a just, equitable, peaceful, and poverty-free society where every living being—human, animal, or otherwise—is treated with dignity and enjoys equal rights to live on this planet. It strives to build self-reliant, sustainable, and empowered communities rooted in the spirit of Gram Swaraj, ensuring the all-round development of Adivasis, Dalits, and other marginalized groups through the balanced use of human and natural resources. Guided by the values of Mahatma Gandhi - equity, accountability, transparency, inclusion, non-violence - ACM works to promote human rights, gender equality, village industries, community health, good governance, and humanitarian response.

### **Target Population and Outreach**

ACM's focus is on the socio-economical disadvantaged and Antyodaya groups and communities of the tribal and poorest of the poor with special priority to tribal, Rural poor, women and children. The focus among these groups is again most vulnerable and the marginalized one. ACM also focuses on the inclusion of minorities and special groups like widows, physically challenged children, visually impaired children, Irreversible blind people and school dropout students covering population 2,00,000 in 10 blocks of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Kandhamal districts of Odisha.

### **SUPPORT ENTITIES**

ACM has received support from various international agencies, Government of India and Govt of Odisha, Foundations/Institutions, such as EZE, HIVOS, ACTION AID, OXFAM, BREAD FOR THE WORLD, Government of India Ministry of Rural Development, Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Human Resources, CAPART, CRC, HPI, Sight savers International, ODAF, GPC, GPF, Gandhi Darshan, Niwano Peace Foundation, AVARD, NHM, ZSS-DBCS, VIA, ONGC and many individuals of India and abroad.

## PROFILE OF CORE MEMBERS

Antyodaya Chetana Mandal is governed by its Board Committee, which serves as the key policy-making and governance body of the organisation and functions independently. The Board formulates and approves policies, organisational systems, and evaluates the overall performance of ACM on a periodic basis. The Board Committee consists of 12 members (both male and female) and is headed by a Chairperson. The ACM Board comprises development professionals, intellectuals, academicians, social activists, and peace builders. The Director of ACM serves as the Secretary to the Board. The Board functions in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Board Policies Manual. However, the day-to-day organisations operations are managed by a core group consisting of the following:

### **Mr. Aditya Patnaik is the Founder Secretary and Director of Antyodaya Chetana Mandal**

(ACM), with over 50 years of dedicated experience in the development sector. Deeply inspired by Gandhian values and Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Aditya began his social journey at the age of 19 from Sevagram Ashram. He led transformative movements on land rights, tribal development, anti-liquor campaigns, and youth mobilization, working extensively with Lodhas and other marginalized communities in Odisha. Under his leadership, ACM has pioneered initiatives in education, sustainable livelihoods, healthcare, and tribal empowerment. He founded the Mahatma Gandhi Eye Hospital, Gandhi Gurukul School, and multiple colleges for tribal students. Aditya has represented India in global peace forums, and served on numerous national and state-level advisory bodies, including the Gandhi 150 Committee under the President of India. His recognitions include the *Ashoka Fellowship (USA)* and *Parivartan Inspire Award*, acknowledging his lifelong commitment to equity, justice, and constructive rural transformation.

### **Mr. Pratik Pattnaik, Project Coordinator at Mahatma Gandhi Eye Hospital & Research**

**Institute of ACM**, is a Gandhian-inspired change-maker with 13 years' experience in social innovation and community healthcare. An engineering graduate from KIIT University with hospital-administration training at IIM Ahmedabad and LAICO–Aravind Eye Hospital, he drives low-cost eye-care services across Mayurbhanj and Balasore since 2021. Under ACM he pioneered **Project Gramodaya**, building a solar-powered community hub in Hudisahi, and launched a **Diploma in Optometry School** that equips tribal youth with paramedical skills. Earlier, his technical stint at Accenture sharpened his problem-solving skills. A former AIESEC volunteer, Pratik remains devoted to practical, community-led solutions that uplift marginalised populations.

**Mr. Pitambar Sahu, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer** at ACM, holds a graduate degree and brings over 42 years of experience since joining the organization in 1982. Deeply inspired by the ideologies of Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, and Jayaprakash Narayan, he has worked extensively for the upliftment of downtrodden communities under the guidance of the Founder of ACM. His contributions include tribal development among the Ludha community, disaster relief, socio-economic studies of displaced villages, and promotion of natural resource management. He has facilitated MGNREGA social audits, supported dropout education, organized health camps, and mentored MSW students from regional universities.

**Ms. Saudamini Parida, Senior Program Manager at ACM - MGEHRI**, holds a Bachelor's degree in Arts and brings over 26 years of experience in community development. Since 1996, she has worked extensively to empower tribal and marginalized women in Mayurbhanj through health, hygiene, and sustainable development initiatives. Inspired by Gandhian ideals, she coordinated the Mobile Health Project in Kaptipada, promoted herbal gardens, and facilitated SHG formation in 30 villages. Later, she led Vision Centres in Basta and Baliapal, delivering primary eye care. For her commitment, she was honoured with the **Gandhi Seva Award** in 2024.

**Mr. Laxmidhar Tudu, HR Manager-cum-Coordinator at ACM**, is a committed development professional with over 10 years of experience in human resource management, community coordination, and grassroots engagement. He holds a Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) degree and combines technical knowledge with a deep passion for social service. Mr. Tudu has a strong aptitude for designing and implementing effective interventions that empower individuals, especially those from underserved communities. His core strengths include management skills, professional software proficiency, creativity, critical thinking, leadership, and excellent communication and organizational abilities. Actively involved in volunteer engagement and field operations, he consistently works to create positive change. Guided by a deep sense of social responsibility, he remains focused on promoting inclusive development and value-based service through collaborative community action.

**Mr. Surja Tudu, Finance Assistant at ACM**, is a Commerce Graduate with over 20 years of experience in community development and financial management. He began his journey with ACM in 2003 as a community animator and later transitioned into finance, gaining practical knowledge under enior associates. Currently, he manages the day-to-day accounts of ACM/MGEHRI, prepares financial statements, supports annual budget planning, and ensures transparency and compliance in all financial operations. Surja has also contributed to community-based rehabilitation across Mayurbhanj. Known for his integrity and commitment, he remains a trusted and dedicated member of the ACM team.

**Ms. Punta Murmu, Accounts Assistant at ACM-MGEHRI**, is a dedicated finance professional with over 6 years of experience in accounting and administrative roles. Starting her journey with ACM in 2018 as a front desk assistant, she transitioned to the finance department in 2020. A graduate, Punta specializes in accounts receivable/payable, payroll, invoice processing, and bank reconciliation. She is proficient in Tally and Excel, optimizing processes to enhance accuracy and reduce costs. Her responsibilities include maintaining bookkeeping records, reconciling transactions with the general ledger in line with GAAP, and managing payroll and reimbursements across ACM's operations.

## **THEMATIC ENGAGEMENTS**

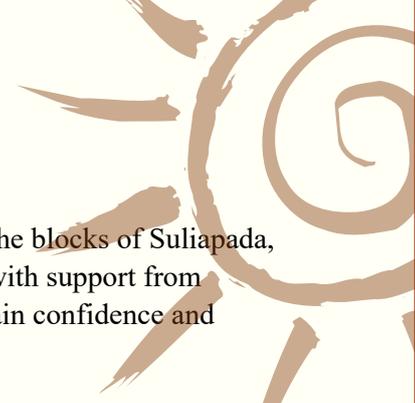
ACM focuses on key thematic areas such as women's empowerment, sustainable livelihoods, community health, education, rehabilitation of the visually impaired, capacity building of PRI leaders and community-based organizations (CBOs), and disaster relief—all aimed at uplifting marginalized tribal and rural communities.

### **Antyodaya Sustainable Development Program**

Implemented across 70 tribal-dominated villages in Mayurbhanj and Kandhamal districts, this program targets Adivasis, Dalits, women, and children. Key focus areas include women's empowerment, sustainable livelihoods, community health and hygiene, and education for school dropouts (via bridge courses), alongside advocacy. Activities include SHG promotion, enterprise development, skill training, natural resource management (NRM), and capacity building.

### **Community-Basead Rehabilitation (CBR)**

Aimed at mainstreaming visually impaired individuals, the CBR program has rehabilitated 747 incurably blind persons through four phases. Beneficiaries received training in daily living, orientation and mobility, and income-generating activities such as sal leaf stitching and sabai rope processing.



### **Integrated Education Programs**

These programs promoted the formal school inclusion of blind children in the blocks of Suliapada, Kuliana, Morada, and Badasahi in Mayurbhanj district. Launched in 1996 with support from Sightsavers International, the initiative helped visually impaired children gain confidence and acceptance among peers.

### **Relief and Rehabilitation in Natural Disasters**

Since 1999, ACM has actively responded to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, droughts, and earthquakes. Relief and recovery efforts have supported approximately 20,000 affected families across Jagatsingpur, Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts.

### **Training and Capacity Building**

Since its inception in 1982, ACM has been involved in building the capacities of tribal youth, NSS students, women, SHG members, ASHA workers, and PRI representatives. The training has covered issues such as human rights, gender equality, climate change, and grassroots advocacy.

### **Community Empowerment**

ACM has run bridge education centers for 73 dropout and underprivileged students, promoted Adivasi languages such as Ho and Santali, and provided training to PRI leaders on government schemes like MGNREGA and PESA. It has strengthened community-based organizations and promoted sustainable agriculture through the construction of check dams, water harvesting structures, and nurseries.

### **Community Health**

The organization has promoted health awareness, personal hygiene, the use of herbal medicine, and eye care. It operates a Mobile Health Unit—supported by NRHM/ZSS—to serve remote tribal areas where healthcare facilities are lacking. The unit combats harmful traditional practices, including reliance on quack doctors and superstitions.

### **Mahatma Gandhi Eye Hospital**

Established in 2000 with support from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Sightsavers International, the hospital aims to control blindness in North Odisha and neighboring states. To date, it has served over 6,00,000 patients in its OPD and restored vision to more than 102,000 cataract patients.

## **MILESTONES**

The efforts of ACM have crossed many milestones; a few key points are highlighted below:

- ACM implemented Antyodaya Sustainable Development Project in 70 villages, improving livelihoods, health, education, and advocacy for marginalized communities.
- Rehabilitated 747 incurable blind persons through community-based rehabilitation, offering skills training and sustainable income opportunities.
- Since 1994, Antyodaya Vidya Pitha has provided free, quality middle and secondary education to poor tribal children.
- ACM obtained FCRA registration and MoHA certification in 1986, enabling international funding for community development initiatives.
- Introduced Integrated Education for visually impaired children in formal schools across Mayurbhanj, expanding with Sight Savers' support.

- ACM established four intermediate colleges in tribal areas, delivering higher secondary education, technical skills, and holistic development.
- Established Mahatma Gandhi Eye Hospital in 2000 and accredited by NABH in 2025, ensuring quality eye care services. The eye hospital has served 6,50,000 eye patients in North Odisha with retention of vision of 1,00,200 through cataract surgeries of avoidable blindness people.
- ACM founded Gandhi Gurukul, providing quality CBSE Pattern English-Medium education and holistic learning to rural tribal children.
- Promoted Adivasi language education and tribal culture preservation through dedicated centres teaching language and indigenous scripts.
- Constructed check dams and water harvesting structures, strengthening sustainable agriculture practices in tribal villages.
- Strengthened community capacity by training youth, women, SHGs, PRI members, and ASHA workers in leadership roles.
- Operated mobile health units, ensuring essential health care delivery to remote and underserved tribal communities.
- Established 100+ Child Education Centres in remote tribal villages, enabling children aged 3-10 to access schooling up to class 5.
- Encouraged 200 overseas young students through cultural exchange programme .
- Transformed a tribal village on Gandhian concept of development with constructive programs by 40 IIT students of Karlsruhe Germany EWB in Hudisahi village in Kaptipada block.

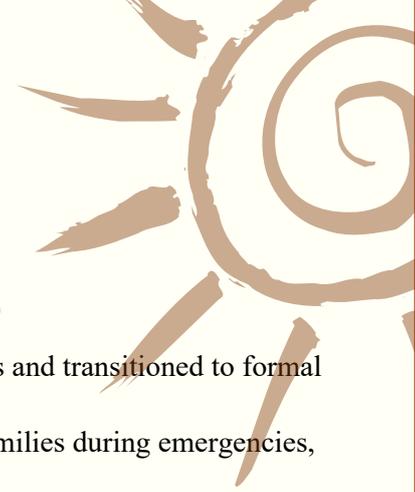
### **SPECIALISATION AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC**

ACM manages people's organisations by effectively utilising local and regional resources for sustainable development. A key specialisation of ACM is its focus on building leadership and managerial skills among local youth, enabling them to lead community development efforts and contribute meaningfully to grassroots transformation.

ACM provides valuable opportunities for students from universities in North Odisha to engage in rural development initiatives and gain practical exposure through field immersion. It also offers internship opportunities to overseas volunteers, allowing them to participate in Gandhian constructive work and experience community-based action in tribal regions.

The organisation has established academic institutions, including schools and colleges across Mayurbhanj - to promote education and youth empowerment. ACM has played a catalytic role in promoting and supporting small organisations at the regional and state level, helping them mobilise resources from government and non-government agencies for community development.

ACM extends solidarity to like-minded organisations working for forest fire prevention and forest protection. It actively encourages women's organisations to form Self-Help Groups for economic and social empowerment. Furthermore, ACM is known for providing timely relief and rehabilitation to people affected by natural disasters across the state, showcasing its commitment to humanitarian response.



## ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT (Qualitative and Quantitative)

- Over 3,000 students received holistic education at ACM centres and transitioned to formal secondary schooling successfully.
- Provided relief and rehabilitation to 20,000 disaster-affected families during emergencies, including the 1999 super cyclone.
- Delivered medical treatment to 6,00,000 OPD patients and restored vision for 102,000 cataract-affected individuals.
- Antyodaya Vidya Pitha offered quality high school education to 5,000 tribal students through inclusive, experiential learning methods.
- ACM's Bridge Course supported 700 dropout students from 120 villages to resume studies and pursue college education.
- ACM's Adivasi Language Education program helped 1,000 students learn and preserve tribal languages across 30 villages.
- ACM's Higher Secondary Institutes empowered 6,000 tribal students with technical, academic skills and holistic development.
- Gandhi Gurukul enabled 300 rural children to access CBSE education and qualify for Navodaya, Adarsh school entrances.
- ACM's Integrated Education program ensured 2,000 visually challenged students accessed inclusive schooling, reducing stigma and discrimination.
- ACM managed community-based organisations using local and regional resources for sustainable development and empowerment.
- ACM created leadership and managerial skills among local youth for community-led development and social transformation.
- Provided opportunities for North Odisha university students to engage in rural development and community service activities.
- Facilitated internships for overseas volunteers on Gandhian constructive work, promoting global learning and solidarity.
- Established schools and colleges across Mayurbhanj to promote education, youth empowerment, and community resilience.
- Promoted and supported Panchayat-level organisations to mobilise government and non-government resources for development.
- Extended solidarity to like-minded organisations for forest protection and prevention of forest fires in the region.
- Encouraged women's groups to form Self-Help Groups for economic empowerment and social inclusion.
- Provided timely relief and rehabilitation to people affected by natural disasters across Odisha's tribal regions.
- Constructed a YATRI NIVAS for the tribals at Gholmuhan in Moroda Block for the cultural exchange and youth empowerment in collaboration with ONGC.

## KEY LEARNINGS (from long interventions)

From its more than four decades of interventions, ACM has learned that building local leadership ensures community ownership and sustainability, while integrated approaches combining education, health, and livelihoods create lasting impact. Mobilizing local resources and partnerships significantly

amplifies outcomes, and quality education serves as a powerful driver of social change. Preserving tribal culture and language strengthens community identity and pride. Disaster preparedness and strong local capacity are crucial for resilience. Inclusive models help reduce stigma and promote equality. Small, local institutions play a vital role in grassroots development. Adaptation and innovation are essential to meet evolving needs, and global-local linkages enrich learning and practice.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### A Ray of Light : Jamuna Tudu’s Journey from Darkness to Sight

At 69, Jamuna Tudu, a tribal woman from Uparbeda village in Kusumi block of Rairangpur, North Odisha, had been living with vision loss in her left eye caused by cataract, silently enduring the challenges of old age and isolation. Deprived of basic entitlements like a Food Security Card or Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) health card, she was unable to access treatment despite her deteriorating condition. Her plight highlights the stark reality faced by many elderly tribal women. During a community outreach eye screening camp organized by Mahatma Gandhi Eye Hospital and Research Institute (MGEHRI) of ACM with support from ASHA worker Bale Tudu, the medical team identified Jamuna’s cataract and offered her surgery under the District Blindness Control Society and Sightsaver’s support. Though she lacked eligibility documents, MGEHRI extended its support unconditionally.



Dr. Subhendu Dash, Senior Ophthalmologist, successfully operated on her on 22nd February. Her vision improved remarkably—from 1/60 to 6/18—and is expected to improve further. Overwhelmed with joy, Jamuna expressed deep gratitude, saying she had never experienced such compassionate care. She appreciated the hospital’s boarding, lodging, and respectful treatment.

Jamuna’s story is one among thousands treated by ACM-MGEHRI, which has restored vision to over one lakh individuals and provided eye care services to more than six lakh patients. Her recovery reflects ACM-MGEHRI’s unwavering commitment to reaching the unreached with quality eye care. *“Every individual deserves the right to see. ACM-MGEHRI invites institutions and individuals to join hands in eliminating avoidable blindness—because together, we can make a difference,”* says Aditya Patnaik, Founder of ACM.

### Restoring Sight: A Rare Congenital Cataract Case Successfully Treated at ACM Eye Hospital

Bharat Bindhani, a 10-year-old boy from the remote Kautuka village in Sudarshanpur Panchayat, Mayurbhanj, spent his childhood seeing the world through a foggy lens. Born with cataracts in both eyes, Bharat never realized his blurred vision wasn’t normal—until his teacher noticed he struggled to read the blackboard despite sitting up front.

Bharat's father, working as a security guard in Bangalore, could barely make ends meet, while his mother, burdened by poverty and isolation, couldn't afford treatment or travel. Hope arrived when a Free Eye Screening Camp, organized by Mahatma Gandhi Eye Hospital & Research Institute (MGEHRI) with Sight Savers India, came to their village. At the camp, Bharat was diagnosed with congenital cataracts, an uncommon and serious condition.



With parental consent, Bharat was swiftly taken to MGEHRI's Rangamatia hospital. There, expert surgeon Dr. Shipra Rani Paul performed Phaco Emulsification with foldable PC IOL insertion on his left eye. The surgery, handled with precision, was a success, restoring Bharat's vision to VA 6/24. His second eye surgery is soon to follow.

Bharat's story mirrors that of many rural patients whose lives have been transformed by MGEHRI's outreach—bringing the gift of sight to those who thought it lost forever.

### Reviving Strength: A Journey of Ratnamani from Weakness to Wellness.

A 57-year-old Ratnamani Patel from Radiguma village, Kotagarh, had been silently struggling with fatigue, appetite loss, dry skin, and numbness in her limbs. She visited the Mobile Health Unit (MHU) at Judabali, led by Dr. Deepak Ranjan Swain, who initially suspected age-related issues and prescribed basic medication with advice for follow-up.

A week later, Ratnamani returned, reporting no improvement. Observing her weight loss and slightly elevated blood pressure, Dr. Swain suspected an underlying issue and advised blood sugar tests. The results confirmed high glucose levels—undiagnosed diabetes. Dr. Swain immediately revised her treatment, initiating anti-diabetic medication and counselling her on lifestyle adjustments.



Fifteen days later, Ratnamani revisited the MHU, visibly healthier and more energetic. Her glucose levels had stabilized, and she had regained her ability to work and engage in daily life with happiness.

*"I feel like I've got my life back. Thanks to Dr. Swain and the MHU team, I can work, eat, and sleep well again. I'm grateful for their care and timely treatment, Ratnamani shared joyfully.*

### From Migration to Cultivation: Hadaghut's Water Transformation

Hadaghut, a small tribal village in the Kaptipada block of Mayurbhanj, long struggled with drought and erratic rainfall. With no irrigation facilities, farming was unviable, forcing many villagers to migrate to cities like Chennai, Kerala, and Goa in search of work—at the cost of their children's education, health, and family well-being.

In 2011, ACM stepped in to address the root cause - lack of irrigation. It began by supporting land development, levelling 13 acres of upland for 16 farmers. Responding to the villagers' collective dream, ACM helped initiate the construction of a check dam across the Kendua Nala. With ₹1.22 lakh support from ODAF and weekly voluntary labour by the farmers, a 350ft long and 5ft wide check dam, along with a hand-dug canal, was completed by



July 2013. The check dam transformed agriculture in Hadaghut, bringing irrigation to 40 acres of land and benefiting 41 farmers during the kharif season. For the first time in years, lush green fields and full grain harvests returned.

This water harvesting success sparked new hope among the farmers. Villagers now maintain the dam collectively and, through the Palli Sabha, plan to seek support from the Panchayat and Block for more such initiatives - demonstrating how collective action can lead to sustainable rural development.

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### Restoring Sight, Restoring Life at 70: Dhani Soren's Story

Dhani Soren, a seventy-year-old widow from Jambhirapal village in Rasgovindpur block of Mayurbhanj, lives with her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. While her children work daily to make ends meet, Dhani silently suffered from worsening vision after her husband's passing. For the

ends meet, Dhani silently suffered from worsening vision after her husband's passing. For the past few months, she could only sense light in her right eye and had poor vision in the left. Her impaired eyesight made everyday life a struggle, but the family lacked the resources and time for medical treatment. One day, her grandson heard about a free eye screening camp in the village,



organized by the Mahatma Gandhi Eye Hospital and Research Institute (MGEHRI) of ACM in collaboration with Sightsavers India. Dhani was brought to the camp, where she was diagnosed with cataracts in both eyes.

With her consent, she was taken to MGEHRI in Rangamatia on June 10, 2025. Using her Ayushman Bharat card, she was admitted under the GJAY scheme, making the treatment entirely free. On June 11, Dr. Soumitra Kumar Das, an experienced ophthalmologist, successfully performed cataract surgery on her right eye using phaco-emulsification and implanted a foldable intraocular lens.

The next morning, her vision improved to 6/24. Overjoyed, Dhani said, “I never thought I’d see clearly again. Now I can manage by myself. I’m truly thankful to the doctor and staff for giving me back my sight.”

### **ANTYODAYA CHETANA MANDAL (ACM)**

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# VOICES OF CHANGE:

## THEMATIC INSIGHTS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN ODISHA

Stories from the Grassroots and Communities

### ABSTRACT

This publication brings together a collection of in-depth articles authored by prominent sector leaders from across the state, delving into critical themes and highlighting the impactful contributions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in these areas. Beyond exploring thematic insights, the compilation also captures the personal journeys, challenges, and successes of these leaders, offering a unique perspective into their work. Through these narratives, the publication seeks to inspire and inform readers about the transformative role of CSOs and the individuals driving meaningful change at the grassroots level.

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## From Relief to Resilience: CYSD's Journey in Disaster Risk Reduction

Written by: Jagateswar Parida, Senior.  
Manager, Communication, CYSD

This monograph traces the leadership journey of Shri Jagadananda in disaster risk reduction (DRR), starting with the catastrophic Odisha Super Cyclone of 1999. It explores how CYSD and the Odisha civil society collective, under his stewardship, developed models of coordinated disaster response, built resilient community institutions, and influenced national and DRR practices. His leadership extended to Pan-India responses - from the Gujarat's Bhuj earthquake to the Tamil Nadu tsunami, Uttarakhand and Kerala's floods - making him a pivotal figure in civil society-led humanitarian action.

*"When the Sea Turned Against the Shore, thousands of lives were lost and millions displaced, as the 1999 Super Cyclone marked a devastating turning point in Odisha's history and the beginning of a collaborative civil society response."*

On 29th October 1999, Odisha was struck by a catastrophe of unimaginable scale. A Super Cyclone swept through 14 coastal districts with wind speeds exceeding 260 km/h, leaving behind massive destruction. Over 10,000 lives lost, millions evacuated, and livelihoods shattered. The state's infrastructure collapsed under the weight of the crisis.

In this moment of devastation, civil society rose to the challenge. Voluntary organizations, youth groups, and local leaders united in an extraordinary show of solidarity to join hands with each other to respond to the crisis. At the forefront of this coordinated response was Jagadananda, the Co-founder of the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD). With deep roots in youth and community work since the 1970s and serving as the national coordinator for disaster response at the Joint Assistance Centre in the 80s', a civil society collective of national organisations. He believed in building coordinated voluntary action. Drawing on his long experience of working with youth groups, he laid the foundation for a robust disaster risk reduction (DRR) model that would later guide CYSD's work for decades and be scaled across Odisha and beyond.

In the Super Cyclone's aftermath, Jagadananda convened over 80 voluntary organizations and galvanized them to form the Odisha Disaster Mitigation Mission (ODMM). This coalition not only facilitated immediate relief efforts but also emerged as a powerful policy engagement platform, championing the creation of a permanent institutional framework for disaster governance.

One of ODMM's landmark achievements was its catalytic role in the establishment of the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), the first such authority in India set up by a State Government, and a precursor to the National Disaster Management Authority



(NDMA). ODMM exemplified how Odisha moved from chaos to coordination in managing disasters. Following the Super Cyclone, CYSD embarked on the critical task of rebuilding lives and communities through its early relief efforts, reaching 2.5 lakh people across 411 villages with life and livelihoods support, by setting up of a dedicated Disaster Response Unit 'RACHANA', which became the lifeline of CYSD's programmatic agenda under the guidance Jagadananda. RACHANA established 21 multipurpose cyclone shelters in the coastal blocks of Balikuda and Erasama in Jagatsinghpur district, irrigated 20,000 acres of farmland, generated 1.5 lakh workdays of employment, and helped revive 246 schools. "We weren't just distributing aid; we were redesigning the state's disaster preparedness," Jagadananda later reflected.

### **CYSD's Disaster Response and Resilience Efforts led by Jagadananda:**

#### **Flood Response (2001–2007)**

- Reached 1.15 lakh households with immediate survival and livelihood support, cash/food-for-work programs, and child-focused interventions.
- Created 85 child-friendly spaces.
- Provided nutrition to 13,000+ children.
- Ensured safe drinking water access for 32 schools.

#### **Cyclone Phailin (2013) & Cyclone Hudhud (2014)**

- Supported 3,500 families with livelihood restoration.
- Generated 10,165 workdays for 260 vulnerable households.
- Provided cash-for-work to 1,200 affected families.

#### **Cyclone Fani (2019)**

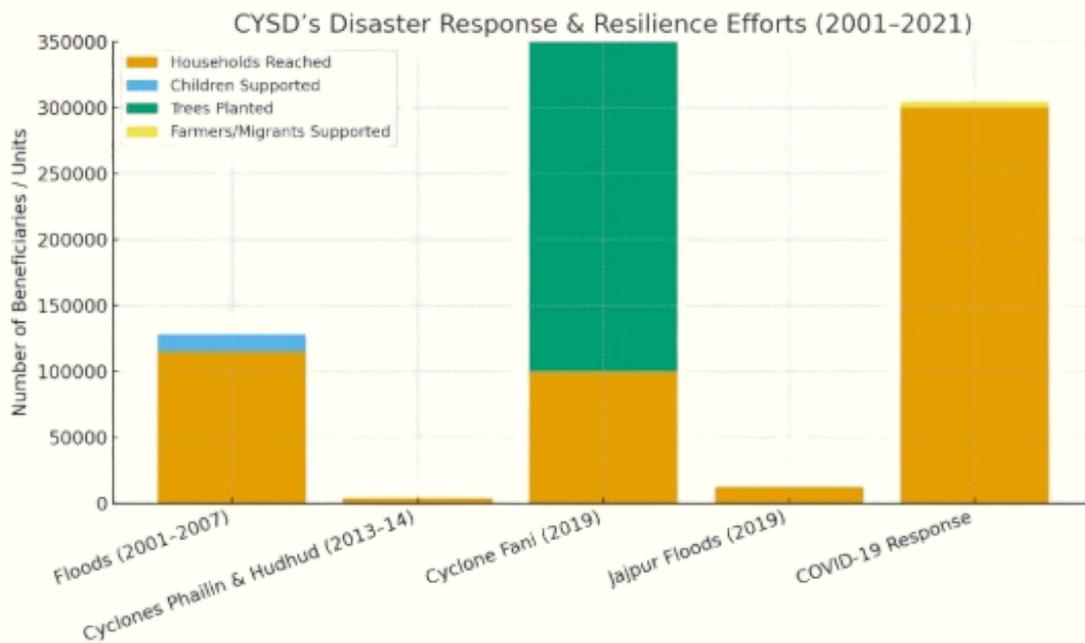
- Relief reached 1.0 lakh+ households.
- Ensured safe drinking water access for 32,268 people.
- Provided healthcare support to 2,500 individuals.
- Rebuilt 9 climate-resilient schools.
- Planted 2.5 lakh cyclone-resistant trees.
- Constructed 135 traditional intermediate shelters for the most vulnerable families.
- Created 13 child-friendly safe spaces for 178 children to continue joyful learning for six months in Krushna Prasad and Brahmagiri blocks of Puri district.

#### **Odisha (Jajpur) Floods (2019)**

- Supported 12,000 vulnerable households with agri-inputs to resume livelihoods through vegetable farming.
- Trained 300 returnee migrants in alternative livelihoods (mushroom cultivation, enterprise building, livestock rearing, etc).

## COVID-19 Response

- Reached 3.0 lakh+ people with verified information using digital tools and grassroots networks.
- Distributed 27,335 survival and hygiene kits.
- Provided 20,000+ hours of oxygen support.
- Extended agri-input support to 4,781 small and marginal tribal farmers. Facilitated 1,894 migrant workers in accessing entitlements by establishing 20 migrant support centres.



Unlike other natural disasters, CYSD mounted a swift and compassionate response to the Bahanaga triple-train tragedy on 2nd June 2023—India’s deadliest rail accident in three decades, claiming 288 lives and injuring over 1,280.

Under its ‘Citizen Action Response,’ CYSD mobilized 120+ volunteers across response hubs, aiding in rescue, emergency care, cash support, and family reunification. At SCB Medical College, CYSD supported treatment of 82 survivors, offering trauma counselling and food for attendants. It also facilitated documentation for compensation and assisted survivors' safe return to native places—reflecting CYSD’s deep



commitment to humanitarian support in times of non-natural catastrophes. In late 2024, unseasonal rains from the DANA system triggered floods in Odisha’s Rajnagar and Chandbali blocks. CYSD, reached 29,360 people with humanitarian aid. This included ₹5,000 cash transfers to 1,000 households (5,116 individuals), in-kind kits to 1,500 households (7,519 individuals), and health awareness for 1,406 people. The response prioritized women-headed families, Scheduled Tribes, and 126 persons with disabilities, ensuring timely, inclusive support.

Across all interventions, CYSD has consistently prioritized women, children, and vulnerable communities impacting over **1.5 million people across 11 disaster-prone districts.**

## THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT

Jagadananda's thematic leadership was marked by a series of bold and strategic innovations that redefined disaster response and community resilience. His initiatives ranged from mobilizing thousands of volunteers across states to launching rapid sanitation and public health drives in crisis zones. He championed the rehabilitation of livelihoods and artisans, while envisioning multi-purpose school-cum-cyclone shelters as safe community assets. By fostering frontline civil society coordination at both state and district levels in Odisha, he built a responsive ecosystem. Notably, his leadership footprint extended far beyond borders, inspiring collaborative action and policy shifts across regions and sectors.

The strategic foresight of Jagadananda has shaped **CYSD's Disaster Management Model** around four transformative pillars. At its core is **Community-Centered Planning**, rooted in indigenous wisdom and participatory action, ensuring that local voices guide local solutions. Through **Technology-Enabled Rapid Assessment**, CYSD captures real-time ground realities, enabling swift, data-driven responses when every second counts. **Strategic Multi-Stakeholder Engagement** stands as a powerful bridge—linking the intent of government, the reach of civil society, and the innovation of the private sector into a unified force for resilience. Finally, CYSD's unwavering commitment to **Long-Term Restoration and Recovery** redefines disaster response—not as an endpoint, but as a pathway to stronger, more sustainable livelihoods beyond the crisis.

The thematic engagement of CYSD, steered by Jagadananda, revolves around **Volunteer Mobilization Across States, Rapid Sanitation and Health Drives in disaster affect areas; Livelihood and Artisan Rehabilitation** of affected communities; establishment of **Multi-Purpose School-Cum-Cyclone Shelters** as safe community infrastructure; **Frontline Civil Society Coordination in Odisha** to strengthen collaboration at the state and district levels; and **Expanding the Leadership Footprint Beyond Borders** to inspire cross-regional partnerships and policy innovation.

Jagadananda institutionalized *volunteerism as a core DRR strategy* enabling rapid and organized grassroots action. Thousands of local youth volunteers were trained using CYSD's disaster manual for rapid deployment in crises. The young volunteers supported CYSD starting from Super Cyclone (1999) for Evacuation and relief distribution; Emergency coordination and

public health drives during major floods (2003–2020); Shelter management, carcass disposal, and restoration during cyclones like Phailin, Hudhud, Fani, and recently devastating Dana in 2024 and the biological disaster COVID-19 through community-level health messaging and containment. He steered CYSD's Health and Sanitation Campaigns to prevent disease outbreaks in disaster-affected areas and restore



the dignity of affected communities. The organization launched intensive health drives using folk media and mobilized community volunteers for effective outreach. In the aftermath of Cyclone Fani, over 60 shelters were sanitized, around 50 health check-up camps were organized with treatment and referral services, and hygiene kits were distributed to 15,000 families—ensuring safer living conditions and promoting public health.

Under his strategic leadership, CYSD prioritized **Livelihood Rehabilitation** to restore economic stability in disaster-affected communities. Rural and tribal smallholder farmers received quality seeds, essential inputs, and market linkages through SHGs to restart agriculture. Also, the skills of coastal artisan's dependent on coconut cluster - coir and stick products and Patachitra (scroll painting) were upgraded, input support provided, and connected with



market links. This focused approach moved beyond immediate relief, enabling long term livelihood recovery and building resilience in vulnerable communities.

### The Innovative Shelter Model

The Innovative Shelter Model championed by Jagadananda guided CYSD in establishing 21 multi-purpose school-cum-cyclone shelters across coastal Odisha. These centres function as schools during normal times and serve as safe shelters during disasters. This dual-purpose design not only safeguards communities in times of crisis but also empowers them through continued access to education and enhanced disaster resilience.

### Coordinating Civil Society Response

It has been a key thrust of Jagadananda's leadership in disaster management. Under his guidance, CYSD emerged as a vital bridge connecting local NGOs, government agencies, donors, and communities to enable a unified and efficient response. At the state level, CYSD led the formation of decentralized clusters to coordinate relief efforts, mentor grassroots organizations, and avoid duplication of services. He believes that "Decentralised coordination is the lifeline of disaster response—without it, we lose precious hours and lives," This underscores the importance he placed on timely, organized, and community-driven action.



## CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

### ASHA 2000: A Vista of Livelihoods Revival

The 1999 Super Cyclone devastated Odisha's coastal belt, destroying homes, displacing millions, and ruining vital summer crops. Along the Alaka River, communities faced the loss of both shelter and their last hope—the upcoming harvest. Amid this crisis, community resilience, guided by traditional wisdom, sparked action. With CYSD's support, villagers revived an age-old drought mitigation practice: building temporary check-dams to retain freshwater and block saline intrusion. On 27 December 1999, 15 villages formed a people's steering committee to lead the effort. Villagers worked daily, pausing only for high tide, while the committee reviewed progress each evening. CYSD provided food and solidarity.



By 2 January 2000, a 20-foot-high, 400-foot-long earthen dam stood at Paladhua in Jagatsinghpur district, irrigating 4,000 acres and benefiting 2,702 households across 35 villages. Asha 2000 became a symbol of community-led recovery—combining local knowledge, leadership, and CYSD’s facilitation to inspire disaster-resilient, people-driven solutions across Odisha.

### Sheltering the Homeless: Rebuilding Lives after Cyclone Fani

Loss, despair, and uncertainty gripped Krushna Prasad Block in Puri district after Cyclone Fani struck on 3 May 2019. Kishore Pahan, a landless labourer from Bhoisahi village, returned from the cyclone shelter to find his home flattened and all his belongings swept away. Government relief—polythene sheets, rice, and cash—provided temporary comfort, but not the dignity of recovery. While many agencies moved on, CYSD stayed. After a Gram Sabha-led assessment, it identified the most vulnerable—landless families, persons with disabilities, widows, and women-headed households.

With community participation at its core, CYSD facilitated the construction of 35 transitional shelters. Beneficiaries were selected by the community, provided materials and carpentry support, and contributed their own labour. “CYSD gave us not just a shelter, but dignity and hope,” Kishore shared with quiet pride. This model of vulnerability mapping and community-led rebuilding showed how civil society can go beyond relief to restore lives and uphold the right to shelter in the aftermath of disaster.



### From Rising Waters to Rising Hope: Sulochana Devi’s Quiet Fight for Dignity and Livelihood

Sulochana Devi, a 55-year-old widow from Sahoopada village in Kanasa Block, Puri district, had been living alone for seven years after her son’s marriage. Her modest livelihood depended on selling vegetables, earning just ₹40 a day. But during the devastating floods of November 2022, when the Daya River overflowed, her village remained submerged and cut off for over two weeks. Trapped in her home without income or help, she found the flood more terrifying than even the COVID-19 pandemic. Hunger became her biggest fear. Just when survival seemed impossible, relief arrived. CYSD along with APF, stepped in with dry ration kits capable of sustaining families for a month. This timely support gave Sulochana the strength to hold on until the waters receded and she could resume her routine. Like her, 2,000 flood-affected families across Puri district received similar aid—offering not just food, but hope for recovery and resilience.



### Returning to the Mainstream of Life: After the Disaster Phailin

Smt. Kunti Behera, a Scheduled Tribe woman from Lunipada village in Ganjam district, lost nearly everything when Cyclone Phailin struck on 13th October 2013, followed by another cyclonic storm and floods from the 21st to 26th of the same month. A marginal farmer and daily wage labourer, Kunti also depended on fishing in the Dhanei Dam to support her five children. With two daughters married, one in high school, and two sons who had migrated to Surat 15 years ago, she was left to cope alone.

The cyclone washed away her crops, fishing nets, boat, and even blew off the roof of her house. She and her daughter took shelter in a nearby school building. Government relief was limited to ₹500 and 50 kg of rice, and no rehabilitation support reached her.

“The NFI kit supported by CYSD saved our lives,” Kunti said. “It protected us from rain and cold, and upheld our dignity. The lantern kept us safe from snake bites, the tarpaulin covered our damaged roof, and the groundsheet gave us a place to sleep. I’ll always remain grateful for this timely support.”



### LESSONS LEARNED

- CYSD’s work demonstrates that ***volunteerism must be local and trained***, as speed and effectiveness in disaster response depend on having ready, embedded local volunteers who ensure timely access and empathetic engagement during emergencies.
- The experience shows that ***CSO coordination is not optional***—collective platforms of civil society organizations help reduce duplication, broaden geographic and demographic coverage, and enable shared learning for more effective humanitarian action.
- It also highlights that engaging the state requires strategy; working with the government demands both tact and tenacity to build constructive partnerships that maintain accountability and scale without compromising community-centric values.
- A key takeaway is that recovery must prioritize dignity—going beyond infrastructure to ensure that people actively participate in rebuilding their homes, livelihoods, and sense of agency, thereby reinforcing their resilience and self-worth in the aftermath of disaster.

## FUTURE DIRECTION:

Under Jagadananda’s visionary stewardship, CYSD is moving beyond conventional disaster risk reduction towards a comprehensive climate-linked resilience agenda. Embracing the shift *from risk reduction to resilience*, this forward-looking approach integrates preparedness, climate adaptation, and social equity—ensuring that the most vulnerable communities are not only protected but also empowered to thrive amid growing climate uncertainties.

### *Future Strategies:*

- CYSD is developing **early warning and digital dashboards** as scalable systems to alert, inform, and coordinate at the last mile by leveraging real-time risk intelligence and fostering community feedback loops.
- Through the formation of **youth climate brigades**, trained young volunteers are being embedded in coastal and tribal communities—ready to support both disaster response and climate adaptation while being nurtured as empowered community disaster warriors.
- **School-based disaster literacy** is being promoted by embedding risk reduction and climate resilience concepts into the education system, helping shape a new generation of disaster-aware and climate-conscious citizens.
- **Eco-DRR innovations** are being integrated into community strategies by promoting ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction approaches such as mangrove regeneration, wetland restoration, and forest-based livelihoods—linking nature conservation with long-term community safety.
- Initiated by CYSD, the **Odisha Climate Action Practitioners Collaborative (OCAPC)** is a multi-stakeholder forum engaged in addressing climate challenges and promoting effective solutions through research findings and consultations.
- The initiative to transition from *kutcha to pucca* housing for poor and vulnerable households in the coastal regions of Odisha, championed by Jagadananda over the years, needs to be formally integrated into the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) agenda of the Odisha Government.

## CONCLUSION: Leadership in Action, Not Appearance

In every disaster—from the battered coasts of Odisha to the fragile Himalayan valleys of Uttarakhand—Jagadananda’s leadership has stood out not through media glare or dramatic visibility, but through quiet, consistent stewardship rooted in systemic thinking, deep empathy, and the power to mobilize communities.

His approach has created a replicable and scalable model of disaster response that is not only efficient but profoundly human.

Jagadananda, reflecting on CYSD’s philosophy, once said: “We do not build a resilient society after the storm; we nurture it long before the first cloud appears.”

This philosophy has shaped CYSD’s long-standing commitment to resilience-building, volunteerism, and preparedness, offering valuable lessons for the broader disaster risk reduction community.



## From Stigma to Self-Reliance: The Transformative Journey of the ‘Lodhas’ with Antyodaya Chetana Mandal

Written by: Mr. Pratik Patnaik, Project Coordinator, Mahatma Gandhi Eye  
Hospital & Research Institute, ACM

*"True transformation begins when we stop viewing communities like the Lodhas through the lens of their past and start walking alongside them toward a future of dignity, rights, and self-reliance," says Shri Aditya Patnaik, a Gandhian follower.*

Amidst the sal forests and sabai grasslands of northern Odisha live barely 5,000 Lodhas—one of India’s 75 “Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups” (PVTGs). For centuries, they lived in harmony with the forest, hunting small animals and gathering wild produce for food and trade. Their life, though simple, was self-sustained and deeply rooted in nature. But with the British Raj came sweeping changes—commercial logging, migration of farming communities, and the harsh 1871 Criminal Tribes Act. In one blow, the Lodhas lost access to land, forest, and dignity, as the law branded them “born criminals.”

By the late 1970s, Lodha hamlets in Mayurbhanj’s Morada and Suliapada blocks were facing a perfect storm: vanishing forests, extreme poverty, widespread social stigma, and no access to education or healthcare. Survival turned into desperation. Even now, the old label refuses to fade. A petty theft in a nearby village still leads to suspicion of the Lodhas—often without a shared of evidence, reflects Aditya Patnaik.

Young Aditya, guided by Gandhian ideals of justice and dignity, was deeply jolted by the plight of poverty, social stigma, and exclusion endured by the Lodha tribe. Convinced that passive sympathy was insufficient, he mobilized Antyodaya Chetana Mandal (ACM) to foster their rehabilitation—securing access to education, health care, land rights, and sustainable livelihoods as a moral imperative rather than charity.

One quiet Sunday, Aditya arrived at Baripada station determined to witness their reality first-hand. His field survey revealed that most Lodhas lived in Moroda and Suliapada blocks of Mayurbhanj district, still burdened by the colonial-era “criminal tribe” label that bred mistrust. This on-the-ground insight shaped ACM’s long-term strategy to restore the community’s dignity, rights, and self-reliance.

Patnaik rented a small house in Baripada town and began visiting Lodha villages regularly. Soon, a group of like-minded people joined him, inspired by his mission. This included Uma Sashi

Mahapatra, Gunilata Jena, Pitambar Sahoo, Karnat Kishore Jena, and Hemant Giri. Together, they decided to live among the Lodhas to understand their struggles better. They stayed at Barkand High School in Moroda and travelled on foot or bicycles to reach remote villages. They listened to the community—learning about the lack of schools, health facilities, and job opportunities. Lodha youth shared their frustrations over unemployment, women spoke of harassment, and children were denied access to education due to stigma.

After six months of deep engagement, the team organized a public meeting in Tianshi village, inviting all Lodha families and tribal leaders. For the first time, the community gathered openly and shared their pain, hopes, and dreams. Aditya promised to stand with them—not as a saviour, but as a partner.

At that very moment, he announced the formation of Antyodaya Chetana Mandal (ACM)—a voluntary Gandhian organization dedicated to empowering the Lodhas. The goal was clear: ensure education, healthcare, livelihoods, and dignity for the community. What started as a personal mission soon became a people’s movement, committed to restoring the Lodhas’ rightful place in society and rewriting their future with hope and respect.



## ABOUT THE LEADER OF ACM

Aditya Patnaik, the Founder-Secretary and Director of ACM, is a Gandhian social worker with over five decades of grassroots experience. Inspired by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, he began his journey at Sevagram Ashram at 19 and joined the J.P. Movement in 1977, fighting landlord exploitation and liquor abuse in Mirzapur, leading to the closure of 25 liquor shops. A national executive of the National People’s Committee, he contributed to social reform across India. He worked under the Gandhi Peace Foundation in Assam and later aided tornado victims in Keonjhar. Since 1982, based in Rangamatia, he has pioneered tribal upliftment in Mayurbhanj. Under his leadership, ACM founded eye hospitals, tribal schools, and colleges. He is an Ashoka Fellow and Parivartan Inspire Awardee.

## Intervention by ACM for the Holistic Development of Lodhas

Under the leadership of Aditya, ACM adopted a multi-pronged approach focusing on restoring dignity, ensuring basic services, and enabling economic self-reliance through:

- **Legal & Social Empowerment:** Lodha families were educated on their constitutional rights, while local police were sensitised through peace committees—helping reduce wrongful arrests, harassment, and social mistrust.
- **Livelihood Promotion:** Youth and women received hands-on training in sustainable, income-generating activities like sabai rope-making, bamboo crafts, sal-leaf plate stitching, beekeeping, and herbal medicine—building economic self-reliance and reviving traditional skills.
- **Education for Change:** Open-air learning centres, rooted in culturally relevant methods, were introduced to improve literacy. These later evolved into structured day schools with hostels and mid-day meals, ensuring continued education for Lodha children.



- **Health & Nutrition:** Mobile health clinics were launched for regular check-ups, malaria and anaemia detection, immunisations, and counselling. Backyard kitchen gardens were also introduced to combat malnutrition and improve family nutrition.
- **Land and Forest Rights:** Lodha households were supported in securing land entitlements (pattas), while community mapping and sal/bamboo plantations helped regenerate forests and ensure long-term access to natural resources.
- **Policy Advocacy & Institutional Recognition:** ACM consistently highlighted Lodhas issues at state and national forums, leading to the creation of the Government’s Lodhas Micro Project in 1987—marking a significant step towards institutional inclusion and focused tribal development.



## SUCCESS STORIES

Despite delays in policy and gaps in development support, powerful stories of change began to emerge—proving that the early efforts of ACM were bearing fruit. These success stories reflect how real empowerment begins when people are given both dignity and opportunity.

### Sabai to Saks Fifth Avenue:

Basanti Jena, who once earned just ₹8 by making sabai rope, joined ACM’s design workshop where she learned new skills like natural dyeing and making decorative home products. In 2004, her women’s group made their first big shipment to an export agent. Over the years, the group grew stronger, and just last year, they earned a profit of ₹4.8 lakh,



which they used to build a hostel block for girl students—a proud moment of giving back to their own community.

### **From Suspect to Change-maker:**

Prakash ‘Pinku’ Lodha grew up watching his father being wrongly beaten and accused by police. Through ACM’s outreach, he joined a bridge school for dropouts, learned driving, and later appeared for the Odisha Police Constable Exam, which he cleared in 2012. Today, Pinku serves as the head of the Community Policing Cell in Morada, helping to build trust between police and the Lodha community—turning his childhood pain into a source of hope for others.



### **Honey Heals Hunger:**

Kambala Marandi became one of the first Lodha youth to take up beekeeping with ACM’s support. She produced over 180 kg of honey each season. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Karmi used traditional Lodha knowledge to make herbal cough drops from forest plants. Her efforts not only provided income but also supported 27 families during tough times, earning him district-level recognition for innovation and resilience. These stories show that even in the face of struggle, change is possible—with the right support and a strong community spirit.



## LESSONS LEARNED

ACM's journey showed that real change starts with trust—by living among the Lodhas, not just working for them. To make systems last, joint monitoring helped keep empathy part of the process. Combined efforts worked better than separate ones—land rights, education, and health brought greater impact when linked together. Social stigma reduced more quickly through shared spaces, like the Lodha–Santhal football league, proving the value of inclusion through community events. Policy changes happened when field experiences reached responsive officials—showing that action and advocacy must go hand in hand. Most importantly, women proved to be the strongest pillars—female-led sal-leaf groups survived economic shocks better than male wage earners, showing that empowering women builds stronger communities.

### **WAY FORWARD for Lodha Tribe's Development (2025–2030):**

Now, a quiet transformation is underway. Lodha children are going to school, youth are voicing their concerns in village meetings, and more NGOs are joining efforts to support their rights and livelihoods. Still, the journey is far from over. *"The Lodhas don't need sympathy—they need respect, opportunities, and inclusive policies,"* Aditya reminds the young changemakers joining ACM.

To consolidate gains and address gaps, ACM and stakeholders aim to scale efforts with a forward-looking, integrated strategy:

- Expand sustainable livelihoods by scaling sabai, bamboo, honey, and millet-based enterprises while linking producers to markets through FPOs and cooperatives.
- Invest in climate-resilient agriculture on reclaimed wastelands and titled lands using local manpower and technical know-how.
- Upgrade education by introducing solar-powered digital classrooms, bridge education centres, and vocational learning pathways for Lodha children.
- Strengthen community health through regular nutrition camps, anaemia screening, promotion of traditional herbal medicine, and community nutrition gardens.
- Empower women and youth through SHG leadership, driving skill training, incense stick production, and local governance participation.
- Leverage renewable energy via solar micro-grids and clean cookstoves to reduce fuelwood dependency and improve indoor air quality.
- Promote social inclusion by organising inter-community sports, cultural exchange programs, and a tribal crafts and storytelling festival to dismantle stigma.
- Ensure policy convergence and accountability by coordinating departments (Tribal, MSME, Forest, Education, Health), and encouraging participatory planning.

*"I am confident that this holistic roadmap will shift the perception of the Lodha community—from being viewed with suspicion to being acknowledged as empowered, contributing citizens of mainstream society,"* says 69-year-old Aditya Patnaik.



## Community-owned and Managed Water, Sanitation & Hygiene for Improved Quality of Life.

Written by: Mr. Liby Johnson, Executive Director, Gram Vikas

### Introduction

A piped water connection at home used to be a distant dream for most people in India's villages. Small efforts made by various State governments and non-governmental organisations had shown that it was feasible to provide water taps to rural households. In many parts of the country, user communities and local governments also came forward to operate and maintain the water supply infrastructure within their villages. The Jal Jeevan Mission of the Government of India has enabled taking these early experiences to a saturation mode.

### Thematic Engagement

Gram Vikas is among the pioneers in developing a community-based approach to drinking water and sanitation sector. Its approach of integrated water and sanitation involves creation of household level infrastructure and village level institutional systems. The systems package consists of the following components:

1. Twin-pit pour flush toilets and bathing rooms for every family
2. Piped water supply system with a source (bore well/sanitary well/spring) pumped/diverted using electric/solar power or gravity flow into an overhead water reservoir/sump and distributed through two or three taps in every family
3. The Village Development Committee or the Village Water and Sanitation Committee for the ownership and management of the Water and Sanitation systems
4. The village corpus fund, set up with initial contribution of Rs.1000 on average per family, maintained in a bank fixed deposit, whose interest income is to be used by the Village Committee to provide financial assistance to new families coming up in the village to build toilets and access water supply ensuring 100% coverage at all times
5. A maintenance fund managed by the Village Committee to pay for regular upkeep and repairs of the piped water supply system

The work is built on the five principles collectively known as MANTRA (Movement and Action Network for Transformation of Rural Areas). The MANTRA approach has since become the base of Gram Vikas' work in all sectors. 'All or none,' 'share costs,' 'taking responsibility,' 'participatory management' and 'in-built financial sustainability' are the

key principles of MANTRA. The work has covered more than 1.1 lakh households in 1500+ habitations of 25 districts of Odisha and two districts in Jharkhand. The programme has received wide recognition at the national and international level.

## Case Studies and Examples

### *Women taking leadership in ensuring that piped water supply becomes a reality for their communities*

The experience of Ghodaghaguri village in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha bears testimony to this. Rashmi Rekha Mahanta, who is the President of the Village Water Committee recounts how they got piped water in their homes. “Nearly 900 people depended on the three tubewells where water lies 200 meters below. Fetching water was the only thought I had the moment I woke up in the morning. After that, I spent most of my time waiting in a queue and fetching water 8-10 times a day. I went to the Jhagada river two kilometers away to bathe and wash clothes. But did I have a choice? We needed water.”

Rashmi Rekha Mohanta and her friend Jayanti Mohanta, went door to door explaining the benefits of having piped water at home. Though both women did not receive any support from their husbands, they decided to do daily house visits. Women who wanted to join the campaign were rebuked at home and outside by the men. They believed that women had, for generations, fetched water for cleaning, cooking, and washing and that it should continue. Some others thought that money spent on the community contribution was an unnecessary and wasteful expenditure. When more women joined them, Rashmi Rekha and Jayanti persisted with their requests to the village committee for a chance to engage with residents on the issue of water during village meetings. After over a year of meetings and convincing, most residents agreed to build a water supply system for their village.

Jayanti Mahanta, could not hide her excitement, “This is like have been a dream come true. I can cook meals and serve food to my family on time. My son used to go for his coaching classes in the morning without breakfast as I was engaged in fetching water. I have more time to rear and look after my goats. I am planning to increase my livestock for better income”.

### *Village communities, led by their Water Committees ensure water supply infrastructure is maintained in a sustainable manner*

In Nuasahi village of Ganjam district in Odisha, where Kondh adivasis live, the water user fee collection was initially done on a yearly basis where each family paid ₹500 during the harvest season. Realising the difficulty in collecting such bulk payment, the village decided to switch to



monthly collection of ₹30 and assigned the responsibility to women's self-help groups (SHGs) in the village. The SHGs collect the user fee during 13th to 16th (Odia Sankranti) of every month. For ten months in the year, the village uses mainly water from a spring source, fed by gravity. During these months the electricity charges are low at about ₹150 per month. In the two summer months, water is pumped from a borewell, as a result of which the electricity charge goes up to more than ₹1000 per month. The water charges are managed by the village keeping in mind these costs.

In Chasa Kanamana village in Ganjam, the Village Water Committee has put in place strong systems for managing the water supply system. The Committee has an office facility with all the records kept there. They have distributed a small book to each household to record user fee. User fee is collected during general body meetings organised during Sankranti days every month. The user fee varies between ₹30 to ₹100 per month, depending on the size of the household. The villages have a system of 'late fee' for delayed payment of user fee. Dasarath Pradhan, Secretary of the Committee, says "We have a proper system for everything. Our operator never switches on the pump when the voltage is low even if the tank is empty. Such care is important in ensuring better life for the pump".

Village Committees also take steps to address bigger maintenance issues. The 10 HP pump of the piped water supply system of Tamana village in Ganjam district failed twice. The first time the Committee spent ₹17,000 for repairs, but it did not work for long. After the second breakdown the Committee decided to purchase a new one spending ₹70,000. In both cases, money was available from the maintenance fund of the Committee.

### ***Backyard kitchen gardens using wastewater***

An area where piped water supply at home is contributing to improvements in availability of fresh vegetables at home. Many village communities have put in place methods to manage the waste water from the taps by taking up backyard vegetable gardens. These have helped improve nutrition intake by children and women and to reduce household expenditure on food items.

The experience of Chandrakala Mallik from Mandapathar village in Ganjam district is testimony to this development. Here is what she has to say.

"Before I started growing vegetables in my backyard, I used to walk up to four kilometres to buy vegetables from the weekly *haat*. It was tiresome and difficult carrying two bags of vegetables every week. My husband works as a daily wage labourer and walks long distances to look for work in other villages. So, I don't burden him with buying vegetables on his way back home in the evening. I used to spend nearly ₹250-₹300 every week buying vegetables from Khajuripalli. During the start of a season, beans, cauliflower, peas, etc. sell at a higher price. I have spent up to ₹350 a week, when my husband and daughter wanted to have these vegetables. But those used to be rare occasions, when we spent so much. Otherwise, we usually settled for potatoes, leafy vegetables, and pumpkins, which were sold at a comparatively lower price."

Initially, the wastewater from Chandrakala's kitchen accumulated in the backyard. It caused a foul smell and attracted flies. Then she started using it to irrigate vegetable plants.

“I started my garden growing onions and garlic. Then, staff from Gram Vikas, the NGO that supports our village, explained to us how the type of food we eat can affect the health of women and children. They trained us to set up vegetable gardens in our backyards and become self-reliant. They also told us where good quality seeds at subsidized rates are available, so that we could afford to buy the seeds and grow our own vegetables. This is how most of the households were encouraged to grow cauliflower, cabbage, peas, beans, tomatoes, ladyfinger, brinjals, and radish in their backyards and eat healthily. My kitchen garden now fulfils the wishes of my daughter and husband with a choice of their favourite vegetables, which I cook for them every day. I get to save ₹250-₹300 every week which now buys cooking oil, sugar, pulses, fish, and books for my daughter. I avoid walking long distances to the weekly *haat* and instead finish other chores at home.”

## Lessons Learnt and Future Directions

Successes achieved can be attributed to the strong focus on building community level capabilities and institutional processes. Wherever the focus on the MANTRA principles was not diluted, the results have been remarkable. The work of Gram Vikas is almost entirely dependent on grant resources raised from donors or programme funds mobilised from government schemes. Over the past several years, the scale and time-bound result orientation of such funds have become more prominent. Undiluted focus on the MANTRA principles require that sufficient time is spent on each village, as per the existing social and economic condition. This gets short shrift in case of time bound large-scale funding, where the completion of the water and sanitation infrastructure, rather than institutional process, assumes greater importance.

There are three aspects that will determine the sustainability of interventions in rural drinking water, sanitation and hygiene sector.

Institutional aspects, of creating village level managerial and technical capabilities, ensuring social and gender equity and access to financial resources for maintenance, expansion and upgradation of social infrastructure is the first part. Experience in this regard is at best mixed and a lot more needs to be done. A critical area, where non-government organisations such as Gram Vikas have not matched up, is in engaging with panchayati raj institutions and building citizen level capabilities for more effective participation in local governance processes. Effective convergence of village level institutions and panchayati raj institutions will enable stronger sustainability. At the same time, affirmative and conscious action is needed to ensure social and gender equity at all levels.

Environmental aspects, related to availability and use of natural resources, particularly water, is the second area. Gram Vikas has been advocating environmental sustainability, at all levels of programmes. About one-third of the drinking water sources that Gram Vikas had helped harness are mountain springs. The conscious effort to promote springs, in place of deep borewells has helped in creating greater understanding and awareness among the village community on the need for sustainable management of hill slopes. Natural phenomena, such as changes wrought by climate change, have emerged as critical areas that need attention. Interventions of any kind are bound to have a short shelf-life, given the rapid pace at which changes are taking place in the natural environment.

Behavioural aspects, particularly those related to sanitation and hygiene, form the third area of sustainability. Access to safe sanitation and clean water can lead to improved health and nutrition outcomes only if the infrastructure components are backed up with strong individual and social behaviours. These include addressing areas of personal hygiene, handling of drinking water, kitchen sanitation and child feces management. With changes in consumption patterns in rural areas and resultant increase in the proportion of non-biodegradable waste, creation of individual, household and village level systems and appropriate mind-sets towards waste management, are emerging as areas requiring attention.

### About the leader of Gram Vikas

The Author, Liby John has led large-scale, impactful, poverty eradication efforts in his nearly three decades of social development work, in diverse sectors of water, sanitation, livelihoods, disaster management and community institutions. He has worked with grassroots development organisations, government programmes and the United Nations.



## Another Childhood is Possible

Written by: Dr. Sumitra Mohanty, People's Cultural Centre.

A few years ago, I visited a motivation camp for rescued child labourers in Keonjhar. There, a child ran up to me, hugged me tightly, and burst into tears. I learned he had once attended school but, as a slow learner, was scolded and beaten by his teacher. Several times, he was even forced to kneel with stones under his knees. Fear kept him away from school, and with no support from his poor, illiterate parents, he eventually became a child labourer. He was rescued, joined a motivation camp previous year, and returned to school. Now enrolled in a residential ashram school, he had come back to the current camp grateful and happy to be learning again.

This powerful experience, shared by Mr. Ranjan Kumar Mohanty, Secretary of PECUC, captures the spirit of a movement that has changed thousands of lives. It reflects the belief that every child deserves education, play, and the chance to dream not a life of labour.

With over 35 years of tireless work, Mr. Mohanty has become a strong voice for the voiceless, believing that each rescued child means a future saved, a family uplifted, and a stronger community.

He says, *“Many believe eradicating child labour is impossible, but experience proves otherwise. Civil society and government efforts have rescued millions. Though child labour is a complex issue linked to illiteracy, poverty, and attitudes, ensuring every child’s right to full-time schooling is key to its eradication. The nation must prioritise safe, quality education to bring smiles to millions of young faces.”*

Under his leadership, PECUC has rescued and rehabilitated over 36,000 children, creating 22 child labour-free villages in Keonjhar and 2 Gram Panchayats in Khordha living proof that systemic change is achievable.

### The Genesis of Hope:

The journey to protect childhoods began in the late 1980s when passionate activists, educators, artists, and volunteers united with a vision. In July 1990, this gave birth to People's Cultural Centre (PECUC) not just an NGO, but a movement. PECUC believes child labour steals childhood and destroys futures. It is both a cause and result of poverty, worsened by debt, poor safety nets, and crises like COVID-19. When children are forced to work, they miss out on education the key to breaking poverty.



As Mr. Ranjan Kumar Mohanty says, “*Child labour is the worst form of child rights violation... denying children their right to education, health, and development. Any child out of school is a potential child labourer.*” Under his leadership, PECUC adopted a comprehensive strategy to combat child labour rescuing children, providing bridge education through *Sradha Bhavan*, and ensuring retention. Rescued children are mainstreamed into schools with follow-up support.

PECUC promotes child participation through *Sishu Sabha*, forms Child Rights Protection Committees at village and block levels, counsels parents, promotes alternative livelihoods, and advocates for stronger laws. The approach includes awareness campaigns, capacity building, collaboration with duty bearers, and linking families to poverty alleviation schemes.

**Rescue Operations: The Frontline of Hope** - PECUC’s mission began with the courage to reach the darkest corners where childhood was being stolen. Rescuing child labourers became a key effort. The rescue operations are also conducted in partnership with government. But PECUC doesn’t stop at rescue. With strong commitment, it uncovers violations, leads fact-finding missions, and fights for justice locally and globally always focused on lasting solutions to end child labour.

**Residential motivation camps:** Rekindling the Spark of Childhood - Since 2007, PECUC has been organizing motivational camps for children from various backgrounds child labourers, slow learners, children who never enrolled in school, and dropouts, creating an inclusive environment where every child's potential is celebrated. Every year around 100 children participate in this camp. Children are engaged with multifarious activities like counselling, drawing, yoga, exercise, storytelling, dance, song, interaction with expert motivators in the camp. The underlying motive is to generate interest for education and regular schooling.



### **Sradha Abhijan: Innovation Born from Crisis –**

The 1999 super cyclone left families devastated, pushing many children toward child labour. Seeing both a crisis and an opportunity, Mr. Mohanty launched Sradha Abhijan a powerful campaign to ensure care, protection, and education for children in disaster-hit areas.

This led to the creation of **Sradha Bhawans** child-friendly spaces that became PECUC's flagship initiative. These centres offer preparatory education for beginners, bridge courses for dropouts, and supplementary education for slow learners and school-going children, to uphold every child's right to learn and grow.

### **Transforming Lives:**

Stories of Hope Arjun's Journey - Arjun Majhi from Godhirampada village dropped out of Class 4. When PECUC identified him in 2008 and brought him to Sradha Bhawan, his life transformed. Today, he's a successful contractor, forever grateful to PECUC for giving his life a new direction. His story represents 36,334 children who reclaimed their childhood and built brighter futures.



### **Mainstreaming Through Education: The Path to Freedom**

Mr. Mohanty's firm belief that "education is the prerequisite to end child labour" lies at the heart of PECUC's work. This belief drives efforts to bring child labourers and dropouts back to school through bridge courses and joyful learning at Sradha Bhawan centers -beacons of hope in vulnerable communities.

These centers welcome all children whether in school, out of school, or never enrolled offering learning, play, and care in an inclusive space where no child is left behind. PECUC ensures school enrollment, but knows the real challenge is retention, especially for girls often forced to drop out. To address this, PECUC trains teachers on positive discipline, child-friendly environments, and relevant laws and legislations, while promoting joyful learning. School Management Committees are sensitized to protect children's rights and ensure they remain in school. Children also take part in school committees, raise issues like lack of toilets or drinking water, and use suggestion boxes to share concerns creating a child-friendly environment.

Under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP), PECUC successfully rescued and mainstreamed 300 child labourers through 5 NCLP schools, showing that committed, systematic action brings real change.

### **Children as Peer Educators: Sisusabha in Action**

PECUC believes children are not just beneficiaries but strong voices for their own protection and growth. With this belief, *Sishu Sabha* Child Rights Clubs for children aged 6–14 was formed in villages.

Mr. Mohanty's vision is to build a safe, healthy society where every child enjoys their rights and childhood is celebrated.

*Sishu Sabha* promotes participation, builds confidence, supports dropouts, stops child labour, and encourages values of care and equality. Weekly meetings led by children focus on rights, education, safety, and governance helping them grow as learners and leaders.



**Historic breakthrough:** *A groundbreaking moment came in 2008 when children in Bhograi, Balesore district, questioned why they couldn't participate in Gram Sabha meetings. PECUC facilitated this revolutionary participation, convincing three Sarpanches to allow children to present their issues in writing and interact with Sarpanch and others before the Gram Sabha starts. The success of this initiative created a ripple effect across all PECUC operational areas. Government of Odisha has already announced to adopt Bal Sabha at the panchayat level.*

### **Promoting child protection mechanism at community level**

PECUC's child protection work goes beyond individual support by building strong, community-based safety nets. Village-level Child Protection Committees, comprising concern citizens, Elected Panchayati Raj Institution Representatives, Teachers, Anganwadi and ASHA workers, Women Self Help Group Leaders, and others, form a united front for child safety since 2003 in its operational areas.

These committees raise awareness, identify vulnerable children, link families to schemes, and coordinate with police, CWC, JJB, and other bodies. They actively rescue, counsel, and rehabilitate children, while ensuring regular safety checks. PECUC strengthens their role through training and capacity building. This community model has gained national recognition, shaping state and national frameworks.

**Family Centered Interventions: Protecting Children Within Families** - PECUC believes child protection starts at home. Many parents, driven by poverty and lack of awareness, don't realize that sending children to work risks their future. Through regular visits, counselling, and motivation, PECUC patiently helps families understand the value of education and children's rights.

To break the cycle of poverty and child labour, PECUC supports women's SHGs and farmer groups with income-generating activities like kitchen gardening, turmeric and tamarind processing, goat and poultry farming, leaf plate making, organic farming, and many other trades. These groups are also linked to programmes under MGNREGA to boost incomes. With these family-centered efforts, PECUC empowers parents and protects every child's right to learn, grow, and thrive.

**Awareness Building: Changing Hearts and Minds** - Driven by Mr. Mohanty's belief that "Awareness is the first step to ending child labour," PECUC runs powerful and creative campaigns to inspire action. When parents and communities understand the harm, they are more likely to keep children in school and safe. PECUC's efforts include rallies, signature drives, a 44-days campaign (April 30–June 12), social media outreach, workshops, wall writing, Audio visual materials, Posters, Leaflets, brochures and child-led competitions such as drawing, essays, and debates. Innovative tools like sand art, media outreach, and simple IEC materials help spread the message widely, ensuring every voice hears the call to protect children.



**Policy engagement:** Under the visionary leadership of Mr. Mohanty, PECUC continuously engages for strengthening pro-child policies, with a strong focus on the eradication of child labour and implementation. The organization works closely with government bodies, civil society networks, and stakeholders to influence child-friendly legislation and its effective implementation. PECUE actively participates in consultations, submit policy recommendations, and raises critical issues related to child labour both state and national forums.

## Network & Alliances: Strength in Unity

Under the visionary leadership of Mr. Mohanty, PECUC has built powerful alliances to advance the fight against child labour. Recognizing that lasting change requires collective action, PECUC has collaborated with the Department of Labour and various civil society organizations to achieve the shared goal of a child labour-free society.

His leadership extends beyond PECUC's direct work through key roles in major networks. PECUC hosts the State Secretariat of the Odisha Alliance for Child Rights (OACR), uniting CSOs for children's rights across Odisha. He serves as National Executive Committee Member and former Chairperson of the National Action & Coordination Group for Ending Violence Against Children (NACG EVAC) India - a country level civil society platform of SAIEVAC – South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children, an Inter-Governmental Apex Body of SAARC, State Core Team for the *Destination Unknown: Children on the Move* campaign. PECUC hosted the Odisha State Secretariat of CACL (1999-2003), the National Secretariat (2003-2007), during which Mr. Mohanty was National Convener, and today PECUC remains on its National Executive Committee.

## Learning

PECUC's journey offers powerful learnings in combating child labour through a holistic, multi-pronged approach. Its work shows that rescue alone is insufficient—sustainable change requires combining education, child participation, community-based protection, family livelihood support, and widespread awareness. PECUC's success stems from persistent parent counseling, empowering children as change agents, creating inclusive learning spaces like Sradha Bhawans, and forging strong government and community partnerships. The model highlights the importance of addressing both immediate risks and root causes—poverty, discrimination, and lack of awareness. Most importantly, PECUC's experience reinforces that child labour eradication demands both grassroots action and systemic advocacy.

## Way Forward

With over three decades of impactful work, PECUC envisions a child labour-free future. The path ahead focuses on stronger partnerships with government, civil society, media, and communities to enforce child rights and strengthen child protection systems. PECUC aims to expand its successful models - child labour-free zones, and work to strengthen policies, laws and legislations. Recognizing that real change requires a shift in mindset, PECUC will intensify awareness and capacity-building efforts to inspire collective action for a world where every child lives with dignity, protection, and opportunity.

## Conclusion

PECUC continues to break the chains of child labour, guided by the simple yet powerful belief: *“Children should be in School, not in the Workplace.”* This reflects its strong commitment to every child’s right to a joyful and nurturing childhood.

The journey of PECUC and Mr. Ranjan Kumar Mohanty shows how compassion, strategy, and dedication can transform lives, communities, and systems. With over three decades of work, PECUC has proven that child labour is not inevitable it can be ended through collective action and a strong belief in children’s rights to education, protection and dignity.

PECUC’s efforts inspire hope, showing that with the right approach, every child can have a better future.



## **Empowering Communities, Restoring Ecosystems: The Transformative Journey of NIRMAN**

**Written by : Siddharth Rout, NIRMAN**

Odisha's Nayagarh district, exemplified the deep rural distress caused by unsustainable agriculture and environmental degradation. Farmers faced repeated crop failures, declining soil fertility, and rising debt due to a shift from traditional, diverse farming systems to monocultures dependent on chemical inputs. At the same time, self-initiated Community Forest Management (CFM) efforts—though effective—were sidelined by formal forest governance structures, leaving forest-dependent communities without legal recognition or support.

In response to the growing agricultural and ecological challenges in rural Odisha, Mr. Prasant Mohanty, a development practitioner and native of Biruda in Nayagarh, founded NIRMAN in 1997. What began as a grassroots initiative has since evolved into a respected organization working at the intersection of agroecology, natural resource governance, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods.

Under the leadership of Mr. Mohanty, who brings over two and a half decades of experience in the development sector, NIRMAN has emerged as a trusted partner for civil society, government institutions, and international donors. His leadership has effectively bridged grassroots wisdom with policy advocacy, ensuring that marginalized communities are not just beneficiaries but active agents of change.

NIRMAN's holistic, people-centric development model strengthens local forest governance, revives degraded ecosystems, promotes ecological farming, and builds economic resilience, all while aligning with national and global development goals, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 13, and 15.

Demonstrating proven impact at scale, NIRMAN has directly supported over 1,00,917 tribal and farming families across 13 districts in Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The organization's core thematic areas include sustainable agriculture, forest and land tenure, climate adaptation, and rural resilience, with a strong emphasis on community ownership, indigenous knowledge systems, and gender equity.

### **Key Thematic Engagements and Impact**

NIRMAN's core thematic interventions are grounded in an integrated and holistic development approach, focusing on three key pillars: Food System Transformation through Agroecology, Landscape Restoration and Climate Response, and Knowledge Co-creation. The organization advances sustainable and equitable food systems by promoting agroecological practices that enhance soil health, biodiversity, and community resilience. Simultaneously, it works to revitalize degraded ecosystems and empower communities to develop localized, adaptive responses to climate change. Through inclusive and participatory spaces, NIRMAN also facilitates community-led learning, innovation, and knowledge. NIRMAN's first breakthrough came in 2004, when it received project support from the Regional Centre for Organic Farming. This was followed by collaborations with respected institutions

such as ICRISAT, WWF, AgSRI, Tata Trusts, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), GGF, AJWS and International Land Coalition. During the COVID-19 pandemic, NIRMAN played a critical role in distributing seed relief, food kits, and protective gear to vulnerable families, while reviving traditional millet farming to strengthen local food systems.

NIRMAN has first initiated a campaign for revival of millets in the state in 2011 and subsequently organised series of workshop on revival of Millets and has drawn state attention on Millets. By 2012, the organization secured its first direct foreign grant after registering under FCRA in 2010. Today, NIRMAN is a recognized development partner of Odisha Millet Mission, a key member of the Millets Network of India, and an acknowledged innovator in natural farming and eco-friendly rural technologies.

**Food System Transformation through Agroecology:** NIRMAN’s journey in agroecology began with a simple but radical question posed by Mr. Mohanty: “Can we grow food in a way that feeds both people and the planet?” Guided by this belief, the organization mobilized small farmers, tribals and forest dwelling to shift from chemical-intensive models to resilient, diverse, and regenerative farming systems.

Today, over 30,400 farmers practice natural farming across 24,996 acres of land in four districts. These efforts are supported by three Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) and community seed banks that serve over 10,000 farmers.

As a strong proponent of millet as “Shree Anna,” Mr. Mohanty spearheaded campaigns to revive indigenous grains, resulting in a 40% expansion in millet cultivation and a 30% increase in yields. His leadership also catalyzed the PGS certification of 1,500 households, improving market access and farmer incomes.

Through NIRMAN’s revival of 270 indigenous seed varieties—including millets, pulses, vegetables, and oil seeds—Mr. Mohanty promoted seed sovereignty and agro-biodiversity. The documentation and revival of indigenous livestock breeds like the Chilika buffalo, traditional goat and poultry varieties were another key initiative he championed.

**Impact Story:** In the remote tribal village of Raisar, Nayagarh, the establishment of a Community Seed Bank by NIRMAN has revived over 80 indigenous seed varieties, including millets, pulses, and vegetables. Led by local women and youth, the seed bank ensures year-round access to climate-resilient, chemical-free seeds. Farmers who once depended on costly external seeds now save up to 2,000 annually. Rama Kanhar, a smallholder farmer, says, “We no longer worry about crop failure. These seeds are our strength.” This initiative has not only preserved biodiversity but also restored community confidence in traditional farming practices and seed sovereignty.

**Landscape Restoration and Climate Resilience:** Recognizing the intertwined challenges of deforestation, soil degradation, and climate vulnerability, Mr. Mohanty led NIRMAN’s strategic pivot towards landscape restoration. He emphasized community-led forest governance, climate action, and nature-based solutions as essential pathways.



Under his direction, 158 tribal villages secured community rights over 23,500 acres of Community Forest Resources (CFRs). Eleven Gram Panchayats documented their Community Biodiversity Registers (CBRs), preserving local knowledge on flora, fauna, and traditional conservation practices.

In response to erratic climate patterns, NIRMAN has facilitated Climate Action Plans in 10 villages of Nayagarh district using Participatory Vulnerability Assessment.

To tackle water stress, NIRMAN implemented graded bunds, sub-surface dykes, and land development models, benefitting 1,800 households across 2,500 acres. These interventions helped restore degraded lands, improved soil moisture, and strengthened water security.

**Impact Story:** In the undulating terrain of Sanakemiti village, Daspalla block, 40 acres of barren and erosion-prone land once lay unused due to severe water runoff and poor soil retention. Through NIRMAN's intervention, a series of graded guide bunds were constructed with community participation. Within two seasons, the landscape transformed—moisture retention improved, and native vegetation returned. Today, over 30 smallholder families cultivate millets, pulses, and vegetables on this once-degraded land. "This land was once lifeless, now it feeds our families," shares farmer Laxmidhar Mallik. The intervention has boosted food security and climate resilience for the entire community.

NIRMAN also prioritized clean energy access for remote regions. Over 330 households now use solar-powered irrigation, while three central processing units for millet, oil, and rice have transitioned to solar power. These solutions reduced dependence on diesel and aligned strongly with India's climate commitments.

NIRMAN also distributed 4,500 solar lights and promoted fuel-efficient stoves in collaboration with IIT Kharagpur, decreasing fuel wood dependency by 65% and improving women's health.



**Knowledge Co-creation and Local Enterprise:** From the outset, Mr. Mohanty believed that sustainable change must grow from the community's own wisdom. He championed the creation of learning platforms, community resource centers and inclusive institutions that enabled farmers to become agents of transformation—not just passive beneficiaries.

To date, NIRMAN has supported 782 grassroots, including Self-Help Groups and Producer Groups, FPOs that are now key drivers of rural entrepreneurship. These efforts have led to a 20 to 30% average income increase among smallholder families.

**Impact Story:** In the remote hills of Nagada in Jajpur district, the Juanga tribal community long suffered from chronic malnutrition and limited food choices, relying heavily on forest produce and rice. With NIRMAN's intervention, Nutri-Gardens were introduced to 70 households, providing seasonal vegetables like spinach, okra, carrots, beetroot, and green peas right at their doorstep. Families began including these fresh, homegrown vegetables in their daily meals, diversifying their diet and improving health. "Our children eat more greens now, and their energy levels have improved," says Lakshmi Juanga, a mother of three. The initiative has reshaped food habits and revitalized nutrition for this vulnerable tribal community.



Through Nutrition Gardens, the organization introduced dietary diversity interventions among tribal households, first in Nagada's Juanga villages and now across multiple districts. Over 6,000 households now follow mixed cropping practices and consume home-grown vegetables year-round.

In Rayagada and Gajapati, 4,241 adolescent girls and 2,500 women were oriented on health and nutrition practices along with providing nutritional supplements, helping address anemia and undernourishment. NIRMAN's approach to knowledge-sharing is participatory, merging traditional wisdom with scientific approaches. Mr. Mohanty frequently engages in farmer field schools, policy forums, and national networks (like the Millets Network of India) to advocate for farmer-friendly systems rooted in equity and sustainability.

Under his leadership, NIRMAN has evolved from a small initiative to a regional-level catalyst for landscape restoration and transforming food system through agroecology, and rural transformation. His 28-years journey from field trenches to policy tables—reflects the spirit of constructive action that NIRMAN embodies: to rebuild the path in the face of adversity.

Today, NIRMAN's integrated model reaches thousands of households across six districts, aligning strongly with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17).

With deep roots in community engagement and a future-oriented approach to sustainability, NIRMAN continues to empower the community by reviving indigenous seeds, land and forest and natural resources.

The contributions of NIRMAN have been widely recognized. It has received accolades from ATMA and the International Justice Prize by NAMATI, USA (2019).

NIRMAN's long-standing interventions have generated several critical Learnings that inform its people-centric, ecological approach to development. Community ownership emerged as a cornerstone for sustainability—initiatives led by tribal communities, such as Community Forest Rights management and indigenous seed conservation, have sustained themselves beyond external support. Reviving indigenous knowledge systems—including traditional crops, livestock breeds, and ecological farming practices—has enhanced biodiversity and community resilience to climate change. Integrated agroecological models, combining natural farming with nutrition-sensitive efforts like Nutri-Gardens, have significantly improved household food security and livelihoods.

The adoption of clean energy technologies, such as solar irrigation and agri-processing units, has reduced dependency on fossil fuels and supported year-round cultivation.

Through participatory climate planning, communities have taken charge of identifying vulnerabilities and shaping local solutions. NIRMAN also learned that strategic partnerships with research institutions, government bodies, and Farmer Producer Organisations amplify impact. Finally, inclusive learning platforms foster continuous innovation, peer learning, and the widespread adoption of sustainable practices.

Over the next five years, NIRMAN aims to deepen and expand its community-centric initiatives. It plans to scale up agroecological practices to 50,000 farmers, promoting food sovereignty and climate resilience. In 500 tribal villages, it will strengthen forest governance and biodiversity conservation. New mangrove restoration efforts will address coastal ecosystem fragility while supporting livelihoods.

To enhance nutrition security, NIRMAN will reach 10,000 farming households through diverse cropping, Nutri-Gardens, and traditional food revival. A key focus will be creating women-led knowledge platforms, empowering women to lead in agroecology, health, and resource governance for building resilient, equitable communities.

From its humble beginnings in a remote village of Nayagarh, NIRMAN has grown into a transformative force across Odisha. Backed by a strong team of professionals and community leaders, it blends local wisdom with scientific knowledge and participatory governance. As it enters a new chapter, NIRMAN remains committed to building sustainable, self-reliant communities anchored in justice, dignity, and ecological harmony—true to the spirit and meaning of its name

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## **From Institutions to Families: Reinventing Child Care through Family-Based Alternatives in Odisha**

**– YCDA’s Journey of Ground Practice, Learning, and Policy Influence**

**Written by: Mr. Rajendra Meher, Secretary-cum-Chief Executive Officer, YCDA**

In the early 1990s, India’s child care system was predominantly institution-centric, with children who were orphaned, abandoned, or without adequate parental care being placed in government or NGO-run Child Care Institutions (CCIs). This model was largely driven by the absence of structured family-based care systems, limited awareness about alternative care, and a lack of policy frameworks that prioritised the child’s right to grow up in a family. Kinship and informal care arrangements did exist culturally but were unrecognised and unsupported, while institutional care was perceived as the only formal and safe solution for children in need of care and protection.

This institutional reliance, however, failed to consider the emotional, psychological, and developmental needs of children, many of whom spent years in group settings devoid of individual attention, stable relationships, and a sense of belonging. With no clear reintegration pathways or exit strategies, countless children aged out of care with limited life skills and minimal community connections. The lack of investment in preventive and family-strengthening services further perpetuated the cycle of family separation, pushing more children into institutional care.

Children in institutions also face a disrupted sense of belonging & Identity. they grow up in structured, impersonal environments that do not resemble real family life, making it more difficult for them to reintegrate into society

Over time, growing global evidence led by research from UNICEF, the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) highlighted that family-based care is not only the most appropriate but also the most effective environment for a child’s growth and well-being. These frameworks affirm that children have the right to grow up in a family environment, and alternative care should only be considered when family-based options are unavailable or unsafe. Compared to institutions, family-based care provides children with emotional attachment, continuity in care, identity, and better long-

term outcomes in education, health, and social integration. India, including the Government of Odisha, has increasingly embraced this understanding in recent decades, setting the stage for a gradual but critical shift towards family-based alternative care systems.

### A Shift in Policy: Government Commitment to Family-Based Care

In response to growing concerns, both the Government of India and the Government of Odisha have taken meaningful steps toward transitioning from institutional to family-based care:

- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 mandates that institutionalisation should be the last resort and emphasises restorative, family- and community-based alternatives.
- The Integrated Child Protection Services (ICPS) Scheme, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, promotes non-institutional care options like foster care, sponsorship, and aftercare.
- Odisha, in particular, has made progressive strides by initiating pilot programs in kinship and foster care, improving gatekeeping mechanisms, and strengthening District Child Protection Units (DCPUs).
- The state is also working closely with civil society organisations like YCDA, IACN, and UNICEF to roll out technical models, training, and implementation strategies for scaling family-based care.

### YCDA's Leadership in Demonstrating Alternatives to Institutionalisation

As a pioneer in family strengthening and child protection, Youth Council for Development Alternatives (YCDA) has taken a holistic and evidence-based approach to promote family-based alternative care in Odisha. Over the years, YCDA, in collaboration with the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), has worked across districts to demonstrate how family and community environments can provide far better outcomes than institutions.

#### Key Interventions Include:

- **Kinship Care Support:** Identifying and supporting extended family members to take care of orphaned or vulnerable children, an age-old practice that YCDA has strengthened through counselling, financial aid, and monitoring.
- **Foster Care Demonstration:** Facilitating both short-term and long-term foster placements with trained caregivers, in partnership with district child protection structures.
- **District Caregivers Associations:** A unique innovation where foster and kin caregivers form collectives to receive training, share experiences, and advocate for recognition and support.

- **Family Support Groups:** Community-level groups that offer emotional support, parenting guidance, and peer learning among vulnerable families.
- **Case Management & Gatekeeping:** YCDA supports caseworkers in conducting **child assessments, care planning, and referral services** to ensure that institutionalisation is prevented wherever possible.
- The **Odisha Care Leavers Association (OCLA)** is a youth-led collective of individuals with lived experience in care, working to amplify the voices of care leavers and engage with various service providers for their rights and entitlements. Supported by YCDA, OCLA provides a platform for peer support, capacity building, and engagement with policymakers to improve aftercare systems in the state.

Kinship care in Odisha is emerging as a powerful and culturally informed form of family-based care that honours traditional caregiving while aligning with modern child protection standards. Historically, children who lost biological caregivers due to death, abandonment, or poverty were often placed in institutional settings due to the absence of structured alternatives. Over time, families have informally cared for these children through lateral kinship networks, an arrangement deeply rooted in Odisha’s social fabric where village and family ties form part of the child’s identity and support system. However, until recently, such practices were largely unregulated and unsupported, lacking formal recognition, training, or resource assistance.

Recognising the benefits of kinship care for emotional stability, continuity, and social belonging, various civil society organisations and the Odisha government have collaborated to design and scale programs that formalise and strengthen this model. Interventions support children by empowering extended family caregivers through parenting training, safeguarding education, health and nutrition guidance, and regular monitoring by district child protection units. This approach ensures minimal disruption in children’s schooling and cultural life while enabling families to stay intact and resilient.

At the policy and systemic level, Odisha has integrated kinship care into its broader non-institutional care mandate under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). The Odisha State Child Protection Society (OSCPS) supports mapping of vulnerable children, implementation of kinship pathways, and coordination across district units. State-level consultations and capacity-building initiatives supported by UNICEF and civil society partners have led to reductions in institutional placements (from 450 to 229 CCIs) and migration toward family-based care as a preferred option. Kinship care in Odisha thus offers an evidence-based, culturally rooted, and child-centric alternative that nurtures belonging, enhances continuity and promotes dignity,

### Evidence Building and Knowledge Sharing

YCDA has also played a central role in building knowledge and influencing policy. With support from partners like IACN and UNICEF, YCDA led a state-level study on Kinship Care in Odisha, offering insights into challenges such as poverty, inheritance disputes, lack of formal recognition, and gaps in support systems.

The organisation's experience and documentation have been presented at several state and national policy forums, influencing discourse on care reform, child protection, and aftercare. These learnings are being used to develop toolkits, training manuals, and policy briefs for wider replication.

### **Looking Ahead: A Collective Vision for Care Reform**

YCDA's experience reaffirms a powerful truth: Families, not institutions, are the best place for children to grow and thrive. But for this to become a national reality, collaborative action is essential from governments, civil society, donors, and communities.

As Odisha continues its journey toward a more inclusive and child-centred care system, YCDA remains committed to:

- Expanding foster care placements, especially in urban areas like Bhubaneswar and Puri, for enhanced visibility and policy influence
- Training and deploying additional caseworkers to manage the growing network of family-based care placements
- Continuing dialogue and collaboration with IACN, UNICEF, and government agencies to strengthen policy implementation
- Empowering care leavers through mentorship, capacity building, and platforms for self-representation

### **Conclusion: Transforming Care, One Family at a Time**

With its deep-rooted field experience, commitment to innovation, and strong policy engagement, YCDA is helping to build a future where no child is raised in isolation, and every child has the chance to belong, to thrive, and to dream. Together, with collective resolve and shared responsibility, we can move closer to a care system that prioritises families, promotes healing, and protects the rights and dignity of every child.

### **About the Leader:**

Rajendra Meher is the Secretary-cum-Chief Executive Officer of YCDA. With over three decades of experience in grassroots development, he has led significant advancements in child protection, family-centred programming, and civil society engagement in Odisha. He has also served as a member of the Child Welfare Committee and the Juvenile Justice Board in Boudh. Recognising his expertise in child protection, he was later appointed as a Member and Chairperson (In-Charge) of the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR).

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## Utkal Sevak Samaj: A Beacon of Hope in Odisha's HIV/AIDS Response

Written by: Ms. Sushree Suryasnata, Team Lead, Resource Mobilization,  
Utkal Sevak Samaj

The 1990s marked a critical period in India's public health history as the country dealt with the emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic. What began as a few isolated cases in the late 1980s quickly evolved into a growing public health concern, exposing the vulnerabilities in India's healthcare system, social fabric, and public awareness. Among the states affected, Odisha (then Orissa) stood at a unique crossroads relatively low in early HIV prevalence but deeply susceptible due to socio-economic factors such as poverty, migration, and lack of healthcare access.

India's first recorded HIV case was reported in Chennai in 1986. While states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh witnessed significant rises in HIV infections during the 1990s, Odisha experienced a slower but steady increase. The state's economic challenges, high levels of migration, lack of health seeking behaviour, poor awareness level and limited healthcare infrastructure placed it at considerable risk.



Most of cases in Odisha were detected among migrant workers and truck drivers returning from high-prevalence regions. Initial cases were sporadic and the general public had limited awareness of the disease. The stigma around HIV was particularly intense in Odisha's rural areas, where traditional attitudes toward sexuality and disease contributed to silence and misinformation.

When community resistance to HIV/AIDS was at its peak and often marked by stigma, discrimination and fear, under the leadership of Dr. Amiya Bhusan Biswal, Utkal Sevak Samaj (USS) played a crucial role in bridging the gap between awareness and acceptance.

USS engaged in door-to-door awareness campaigns, community mobilization, free condom distribution and voluntary testing for prevention and early detection. Same time providing counseling and Psychosocial Care and support to people living with HIV (PLHIV) to halt and reverse HIV from further transmission. Furthermore, as a preventive strategy to halt the further spread of HIV, Dr. Biswal conceptualized an innovative approach: arranging marriages for unmarried PLHIVs or those who had lost their spouses.

This initiative has led to five successful marriages, setting a precedent that was later adopted by other NGOs.

Through grassroots level outreach, it continuously sensitizes communities about HIV/AIDS, debunking harmful myths, misconception and reducing stigma and discrimination. By involving local leaders, peer educators, and infected & affected individuals, USS fosters open dialogue and community ownership of health issues. Its holistic approach combining health services, psychosocial support, and advocacy helps transform resistance into resilience, enabling affected individuals to access care with dignity respect and without fear.

Over the years USS crossed major milestones, leaving an indelible mark on society through its pioneering work in the field of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. USS organized hundreds of Public Rallies, Public Meetings, Workshops, Seminars, get together, Youth conclaves, Public Gatherings, Road Shows, marathons Street Plays and Concerts etc. both independently as well as in collaboration with Govt, Corporates, Educational Institutions, Knowledge Groups, formal and informal community leaders, Physicians Associations and private institutions to sensitize the community on HIV/AIDS.

Efforts are made under the stewardship of Dr. Biswal to improve the early identification by introduction of community testing, including HIV testing for discordant couples and their family members, promoting proactive health management.



During the period of 2000 to 2015, USS under the guidance of Dr. Biswal played a game changing role in prevention of HIV/AIDS by strengthening Eco-system towards sustainable impact of various positive interventions and care and support initiatives for people living with HIV/AIDS by forming and strengthening PLHIV Networks both in District and State level including playing a lead role in passing of HIV AIDS bill in the country.

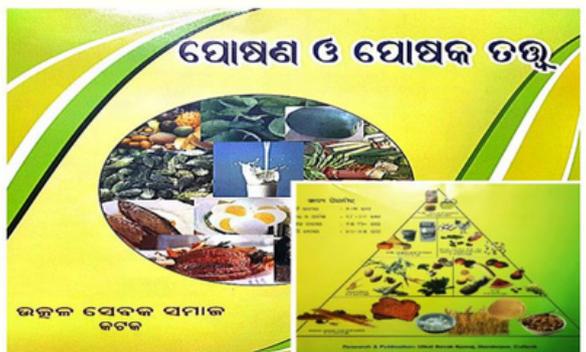
By internalizing the need of awareness among the migrated community on HIV/AIDS Dr. Biswal was determined to work in this regard. As a result of which in the year of 2004-2005, he produced two pioneering full-time movies in the state of Odisha (ASHARA SAKALA- a 45 minutes' film and A NEW BIGINING- 15 minutes film) on how unsafe migration is leading to spread of HIV.



The wide acceptance of these two movies in local language changed the existing awareness strategy to a targeted behaviour change communication methodology focusing on need and importance of an enabling environment / strengthening Ecosystem to community specific awareness strategy on HIV/AIDS including stigma related to it. Besides one book (ASHARA ALOK) published on HIV & AIDS awareness, one book (POSAN & POSAK TATWA) published on nutrition food for PLHIVs and more than 20 IECs in form of Booklets, leaflets on various components of HIV/AIDS intervention.

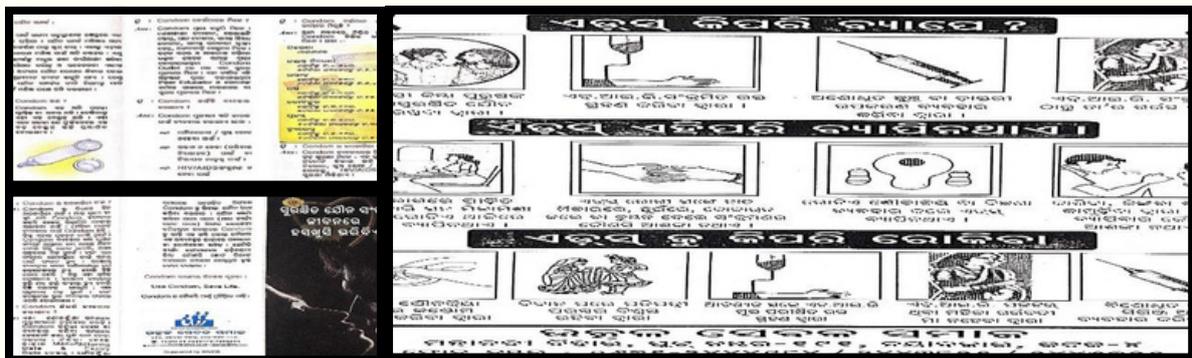
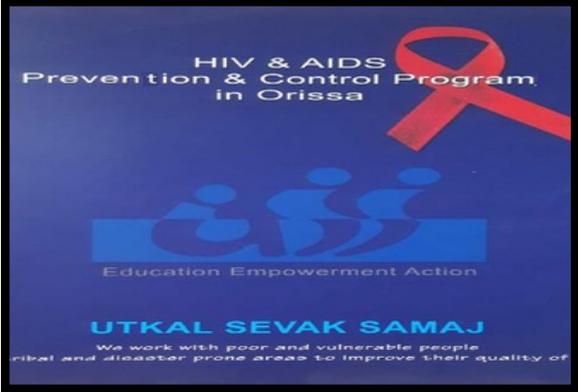


In 2010 to address the possible transmission from blood to blood, he advocated for and able to succeed in influencing govt to establish NATPCR machines in all leading blood banks of Odisha to reduce transmission of HIV through blood transfusion. Under Dr. Biswal's visionary leadership, in between 2015 to 2020 the organization is able to file two Public Interest Litigations (PILs) in the High Court of Odisha and got favorable orders.



One PIL was on smooth functioning of Anti-Retroviral Therapy center, Cuttack and got order for immediate appointment of qualified and trained doctor including other appropriate facilities to ensure appropriate treatment to PLHIVs. Similarly, due to constant persuasion the patient's rights charter recommended by NHRC and accepted by Government of India is now adopted by many states. His fight for a stigma and discrimination free environment for PLHIVs yielded satisfactory result in form of HIV & AIDS (P&C) Act, 2017 protecting and promoting the rights of person infected with HIV came into force. The District Administration and Chief District Medical Officer have acknowledged Utkal Sevak Samaj's remarkable work in driving social change in the field of HIV/AIDS.

As a testament to this, Dr. Biswal has been appointed as a member of the District Level Grievance Redressal Cell for HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the Odisha State AIDS Control Society (OSACS) has further acknowledged Dr. Biswal's expertise and appointed him as a member of the sub-committee constituted for the formation of State Specific Rules for implementation of HIV & AIDS (P&C) Act, 2017 in the state.



Most of Dr. Biswal's initiatives have been adopted by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO). However, one key idea he continues to advocate for is to put in place an online system connecting all ART centers of the country, enabling patients to access treatment from any center of his choice. He considers this would not only ensure universal access to treatment but also uphold confidentiality, privacy and choice of a PLHIV.

USS has organized Cuttack's 1st **Mini Marathon** involving 5000 youth for awareness on HIV/AIDS on the occasion of World AIDS Day and followed the same consecutively for next three years. One 10 bedded Hospital exclusively for PLHIV managed by USS since Feb 2007 -2013 with Clinical Management, Nursing, Counseling, Nutritional Care, Support and Information.



Dr. Biswal was the pioneer in the formation of one District Level Network and one State level Network in the year 1989 involving PLHIVs aimed to serve as a platform to raise their issues and demand for their rights.

He participated various **Television Debates and Talk** shows on HIV and AIDS, he delivered 150 talks to aware & train thousands of student volunteers in 30 colleges on sign & symptoms of HIV/AIDS and its prevention measures to address stigma & discrimination and arrest further spread. 1153 number of village volunteers trained on STI/HIV/AIDS & Various Social Security Schemes and 411 PRI members trained on HIV & AIDS prevention strategy. 200 numbers of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS availed Small Income Generation Support.

These long years of struggle against stigma and discrimination towards HIV and AIDS, USS is successful to introduce the peer led strategy for HIV/AIDS intervention and it is found to be very effective for mobilization of targeted population. The uses of locally developed IEC, Health Games, and Quiz Competitions among targeted population are also found as a successful medium to reach out the people and enhance their knowledge and awareness level on health seeking behaviour and treatment adherence.

During COVID pandemic to avoid drug resistance due to discontinuation of the treatment and ensure treatment adherence of PLHIVs, a special drive to make available ART medicine at door step was started by USS under the leadership of Dr. Biswal. On his request the ARTC and local police not only agreed to this idea but also extended their cooperation for easy movement to reach-out PLHIVs under treatment when lock down and shut down was in force.

Similarly, to ensure food security to the poor and vulnerable PLHIVs a special relief package containing dry rations at least for a month was made available to PLHIVs during COVID period. These two unique initiatives were widely praised by both the PLHIV community and the Government. This was treated as a good practice and included in the disaster preparedness module to better face coming disasters in future.



Dr. Biswal fostered a culture of giving by initiating the concept of "**Dana Utsav**," to mobilize support from the community for poor and vulnerable PLHIVs, bridging the gap between those who have and those who don't have.



The journey of Utkal Sevak Samaj began when HIV was stigmatized and untouched due to lack of correct knowledge leading to lot of myths and miss conceptions not only by the community but also by healthcare providers. Now, it has expanded its horizon of work in to 7 more districts of Odisha and intensively working in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention care & support. Despite facing resistance from local communities, USS remains committed to this critical work under the leadership of Dr. Biswal. Besides direct economic support to address the poverty and vulnerability issues faced by PLHIVs, the continuous effort has been made by USS to link them various government schemes and entitlement provisions to uplift them.

Through its own Community Radio named Radio Utkal 91.2 FM, USS disseminates awareness on HIV/AIDS via community radio broadcasts and narrowcasts, ensuring a wider outreach. Furthermore, USS strives to make quality medicines accessible through Anti-Retroviral Treatment Centers (ARTCs).

Additionally, one Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendra was established by Utkal Sevak Samaj to address the healthcare needs of PLHIVs to make available generic low-cost quality medicines for opportunistic infections that often affect them.

As USS believes that the problem related to HIV is very complex and interlinked, hence an integrated approach was adopted by the organization under the leadership of Dr. Biswal to holistically address all the factors contributing to this problem. As a result of which a visible change was found in the form of reduction in HIV transmission rate, availability of free treatment, care and counselling to the PLHIVs by the govt. leading to a better living environment.





### About the Leader of USS

Dr. Amiya Bhusan Biswal, the Secretary of USS, brings over four decades of experience in the voluntary sector, focusing on governance, health, education, livelihoods, and civil society empowerment. He has spearheaded initiatives in HIV & AIDS prevention, care, and support, alongside work in disaster management, child rights, and advocacy for marginalized groups. A strong voice against stigma around leprosy, TB, and HIV/AIDS, he leads the DLNCC network in Cuttack and founded the Odisha State Patient's Rights Forum to uphold patient dignity. As a key promoter of Odisha's Community Radio Movement and former State Child Welfare Committee member, his tireless commitment to social development is widely recognized.

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## **Nurturing Nature, Empowering People, Sustaining Life — SWATI's Living Legacy**

**Written by: Mr. Pradip Kumar Swain Program Manager, SWATI, Kandhamal, Odisha**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the lush, forested hills of Kandhamal in Odisha, life has long been shaped by paradox. With over seventy percent of the land covered by forests and more than half of its people belonging to tribal communities, the region is blessed with natural wealth and a rich cultural heritage. Yet, for decades, these very communities were trapped in deprivation. Poverty, unemployment, migration, indebtedness, illiteracy, poor health, and even human trafficking formed a grim reality. Despite its abundance, Kandhamal came to be known as one of the most backward districts of Odisha.

It was against this backdrop that a young engineer, Er. Harisankar Rout, chose to redefine the narrative. What began as a spark of conviction eventually grew into SWATI - the Social Welfare Agency and Training Institute, an organisation that has spent over two decades empowering rural and tribal communities through sustainable, resource-based development. “True development is not given—it grows from the soil of people’s lived experiences, nurtured by their participation and rooted in dignity”, says Harisankar.



### **THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT**

SWATI was established in 1999 with a mission to empower rural and tribal families, particularly women, by linking development with the sustainable use of natural resources. Its first steps were modest—watershed management, drought-proofing projects, and small-scale livelihood initiatives supported by government agencies. But over time, the organisation’s reach and impact grew.

Barren uplands were transformed into fertile fields, fruit orchards flourished, and infrastructures like check dams, bore-wells, and deep wells revitalized agriculture. Women’s self-help groups reduced villagers’ dependence on moneylenders, while forest rights claims gave families ownership of land they had cultivated for generations. The results were tangible: more than 2,000 acres of upland converted into farmland, 1,500 acres of orchards established, over 200 irrigation structures built, and hundreds of women’s groups becoming agents of change.

With the leadership of Er. Harisankar, what made SWATI stand out most was its community-centred approach village development committees, youth groups, and women's federations became the driving force of progress. Over the years, the organization partnered with major livelihood and agricultural missions such as MGNREGA, NABARD, OTELP, Odisha State Forest Sector Development Program (Phase-2), Focused Area Development Program, Mukhya Mantri Janajati Jivika Mission, Special Program for Integrated Farming and the Odisha Millet Mission, ensuring that development was not imposed but co-created.

SWATI's hall mark emerged from the innovation of Er. Harisankar, whose ideas transformed challenges into opportunities and aspirations into achievements . Where perennial streams went dry before reaching farmlands, diversion-based irrigation was introduced. In Dangarpadar, a pico-hydro project brought electricity to a remote village, earning him the Shambhavi Puraskar in 2018. In places where ambulances could not reach, bike ambulances and Mothers' Waiting Homes were established. Solar energy powered irrigation and lighting, while agro-ecology practices promoted sustainability. Each solution was grounded in local realities, proving that development succeeds when it grows from the soil of people's lived experiences.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE SECTOR LEADER**

Born in 1970 in Berhampur, Er. Harisankar Rout's academic path could have easily secured him a conventional career. With a degree in civil engineering and Master's degrees in Political Science and Law, he had every opportunity to pursue professional success. Yet, his exposure to the stark realities of Kandhamal in the mid-1990s altered his trajectory.

Working with a voluntary organisation at the time, he witnessed communities selling forest produce like *mahua* and tamarind for a pittance, while streams that flowed year-round failed to irrigate parched fields. Farmers cultivated land without ownership rights, livestock lacked veterinary care, and youth migrated to faraway states in search of their livelihoods.

As a young and enthusiastic engineer, Harisankar saw solutions where others saw despair; he envisioned opportunities for change where many perceived only obstacles. His vision was not charity but empowerment - rooted in the belief that sustainable resource management could transform lives. With a few like-minded friends, he founded SWATI, which over the years has grown into a trusted institution for grassroots development in Odisha.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **Orchards of Dignity: Replacing Shifting Cultivation with WADI.**

In the small village of Sana Kanjikana in Kandhamal, just 42 people from nine Kutia Kandha families once depended on shifting cultivation and forest gathering for survival. With limited hill-slope land and the declaration of their area as a wildlife sanctuary, they were forced to abandon these practices, leaving families in hardship. Hope returned when SWATI introduced



the **WADI program**, enabling villagers to secure land through the Forest Rights Act and shift toward sustainable orchard-based farming. With SWATI's support in land preparation, irrigation systems, and quality mango and cashew saplings, the families began cultivating WADI fields. An *Udyana Vikas Samiti* now oversees management, fencing, and intercropping. Vegetable seeds, tools, and training further strengthened their resilience. Farmers like Rajesh earn ₹30,000 a year, while elders like Balabhadra enjoy harvests from nearby orchards instead of distant hills. For Suti Majhi and others, WADI has replaced shifting cultivation with dignity, security, and

sustainable livelihoods. SWATI has implemented WADI development program in 750 acres of hilly lands of 30 villages in Belghar and Gumma Panchayat of Tumudibandha Block.

### Tapping the Stream: Kuanbadi's Journey to Food Security

Kuanbadi, a remote village in Lankagada GP of Tumudibandha block, is home to 18 families who once struggled with neglect and lack of water access. Dependent on agriculture and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), their livelihoods were insecure until 2015, when SWATI, with support from TATA Trust, introduced a **Diversion-Based Irrigation (DBI)** project. Water was piped from a stream one kilometer away, providing 24-hour drinking water and irrigation. This eased the burden on women, who no longer had to fetch water from distant sources.



With irrigation in place, families began cultivating seasonal vegetables with seeds, tools, and training provided by SWATI. Farmers' groups adopted a ½-acre mixed model, growing bananas, root crops, and market vegetables. Today, Kuanbadi enjoys year-round vegetable production, ensuring food security and steady income. Villager Jogarai Patra now earns about ₹30,000 annually from vegetable farming and plans to expand, reflecting the DBI project's transformative impact. SWATI has established 28 diversion-based irrigation structures in Phiringia, Nuagaon, and Tumudibandha Blocks to provide essential irrigation and drinking water facilities to remote villagers.

## Securing Forest Rights, Securing Livelihoods: SWATI's Impact in Phiringia Block, Kandhamal

In the district of Kandhamal, Odisha, the Forest Rights Act(FRA) of 2006 promised dignity and security to tribal and forest-dwelling families. Yet, in remote Phiringia and Tikabali blocks, lack of awareness and complex procedures kept many villagers from accessing these rights. SWATI stepped in to bridge this gap. Through posters, wall paintings, and village meetings, communities learned about their entitlements. Trained community workers provided hands-on support in filing claims, turning hesitation into action. Soon, over 1,000 individual and 150 community claims were successfully submitted in Phiringia Tahasil alone.

The transformation didn't stop at land titles. SWATI linked families with MGNREGA support for land development, plantation drives, and fencing. Forest patches that once lay underutilized are now productive farmlands.

Today, empowered families cultivate vegetables, fruits, and agro -forestry crops - proving that securing forest rights also secures sustainable livelihoods for generations to come.



## Mrs. Renu Mallick: A Torchbearer of Natural Farming in Kandhamal

In Kamarikia village of Kandhamal, Mrs. Renu Mallick has become a symbol of resilience and sustainable farming. Inspired by her reverence for soil as “mother,” she abandoned chemical inputs and embraced natural practices. The early years were harsh—yields declined, income fell, and her vegetables were rejected at markets for lacking the artificial shine of chemically grown produce. Refusing to give up, Renu mastered the preparation of traditional bio- inputs like Handi Khata (fermented manure), Nimastra (Neem-based pesticide), and Brahmastra (multi-herbal protectant).

Gradually, soil fertility revived, crop quality improved, and customers began seeking her produce at weekly markets. As leader of the Jeevan Jyoti SHG, she keeps natural farming on every agenda, encouraging women to adopt bio-inputs, preserve indigenous seeds, and share resources. “Eating good and serving good food to others is not just farming, it is our duty to life itself,” says Renu, echoing her deep belief in natural living. Today, her farm ensures food security, supports her children’s



education, and inspires others. By lighting the path for fellow farmers and motivating women to embrace chemical-free agriculture, Renu truly stands as a torchbearer of natural farming in Kandhamal.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Over twenty-seven years of engagement in Kandhamal, several key lessons have emerged from SWATI's journey:

- Natural resources are the foundation of rural prosperity. If harnessed sustainably, they ensure food security and livelihoods.
- Participation is essential. Development endures when communities plan, own, and manage their resources.
- Integration creates lasting impact. Linking health, education, livelihoods, and ecology generates deeper, long-lasting outcomes.
- Youth engagement is critical. Rural youth often migrate for exploitative work or adopt harmful farming practices. Equipping them with skills in agro ecology, value chains, and entrepreneurship re-roots them in their land and culture.
- Innovation must be context-specific. Success lies not in copying models, but in adapting to local needs—whether through pico-hydro power, bike ambulances, or millet-based livelihoods.
- These lessons underline SWATI's philosophy: development must be both people-centred and nature-centred, creating harmony rather than conflict between human progress and ecological balance.

## FUTURE DIRECTION

Today, SWATI's initiatives extend far beyond its early years. The organisation is building 174 farm clusters, establishing value chains, operating Kandhamal Fresh outlets, and expanding agroecology practices across blocks. Farmer Producer Companies and youth entrepreneurs are being nurtured to ensure that progress is community-owned and market-linked.

Looking ahead, Er. Harisankar envisions development in Kandhamal as an integrated, sustainable process where every family has secure livelihoods, every youth sees a future in their village, and every community thrives in harmony with its environment. His vision is clear: to make development synonymous with dignity, participation, and ecological balance.

To conclude, the story of Er. Harisankar Rout and SWATI is not just about an NGO's achievements—it is about resilience, trust, and the transformative power of grassroots leadership, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire communities and future generations. In Kandhamal, where deprivation once defined daily life, a new culture of self-reliance and sustainability has taken root. It is a story that teaches us an enduring truth: real change, like a forest, grows slowly but surely, rooted in trust, nurtured by participation, and sustained by the bond between people and the land they call home.