



Rural Education & Action Development (READ)

Andimadam, Tamil Nadu, India

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Fiscal year April 2005- March 2006.

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Registration Act 27 of 1975 and registered
under the Foreign Contribution (Regula-
tion) Act of 1976).



Honourable President and Members of the General Body,

We are proud to complete our 12th year of service, in which we have encountered both successes and failures. We look at failures as our stepping stones to success. We are making progress in sponsoring new and continuing activities and in finding the right financial balance.

Many good hearts both here and abroad have supported us in our mission as has our staff and the executive committee.

I take this opportunity to present before you a brief report on the activities of our organization for your approval and guidance as we continue to serve the needy.

Sincerely,

D. Selvam (Secretary, READ)



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1. HIV/AIDS intervention- PEPP:

HIV/AIDS intervention has been an ongoing program for the past 8 years. The Perambalur Education and Prevention Program (PEPP) was a major activity started during last financial year with the support of the Elton John AIDS Foundation, UK, to educate strategic populations in Perambalur District on HIV/AIDS. This program was conducted through the AIM network of NGOs promoted by READ. This program involved first training of 20 NGO field staff (outreach workers), 52 barbers and 102 women self-help group leaders (peer health educators). These peer educators reached different sections of the rural population through a number of awareness programs, distribution of materials,



READ's main areas of activity are Andimadam and Senthurai blocks of Perambalur district.

and cultural programs .

To study the impact of the project, focus group discussions were held among select persons from peer health educators, outreach workers and barbers; these focus group discussions revealed that the program was successful.

2. Other HIV/AIDS related programs:

HIV/AIDS intervention is the primary focus program of READ due to the alarming situation in our area. Every year, several new HIV positive cases are identified through our intervention. This year, 4 HIV positive cases- 2 male and 2 female- were identified and recorded for follow-up services. In view of the situation the following programs were undertaken in this reporting year, some of which are continuation programs from previous years.



HIV Cultural Programs: In addition to song, dance and drama skits with actors, the street theater performances now also include a puppet show.



PEPP HIV awareness programs. (Top) A trained female Peer Health Educator uses flipcharts to educate a women's self-help group on HIV and AIDS. (Center & bottom) As part of their training, barbers do games to overcome their stigma and fear about condoms. The trained barbers, who operate their business in small shops or roadside stalls, talk to their customers about HIV and AIDS, and display the flipcharts, which waiting customers can view. Barbers also distribute and demonstrate how to use condoms.

2.1. HIV/AIDS awareness:

A cultural team has been in operation for the past 4 years, which is undertaking periodical cultural awareness program on HIV/AIDS. 73 programs were performed in this reporting year in different villages among specific groups of farmers, women, youth. Additionally, as in the previous years, school children were taught about HIV/AIDS in this reporting year. Approximately 2559 students from 37 schools were reached through this direct lecture and demonstration program.

2.2. HIV/AIDS care and support services and HIV positive peoples' network:

Care and support services to HIV positive and AIDS orphan children have been ongoing since 2003. 'Malarum Mottukkal' – a positive peoples' network – also continued its activities in

this reporting period. The network had monthly meetings to share their problems and recharge their confidence.

HIV-infected people including children were provided with food, materials, medicines, clothing and Rs.300 cash per month besides meeting their travel costs to the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine at Tambaram (Chennai) to receive government-supplied free medicines. ARV drugs and other drugs for opportunistic diseases were supplied free at the government hospital to HIV positive people. Support for CD4 and viral testing every 3 months were provided to two positive children in this reporting period also. Educational support for 18 children, both infected and non-infected but orphaned by AIDS-deceased parents, was given in this reporting year. And new suspects were identified and referred for voluntary



HIV rallies. On the occasion of World AIDS Day 2005, READ organized 32 AIDS rallies, while the other AIM NGO's organized 5 rallies. These annual rallies were designed to involve women self-help groups, youth groups and school students in spreading the message about HIV/AIDS. Rally participants paraded carrying placards, chanting slogans and distributing pamphlets to bystanders to promote HIV/AIDS awareness in the community.

counseling and testing at Ariyalur and Perambalur Headquarter Hospitals.

2.4. MSM Peer Education Program-Cuddalore.

Through the support of Tamil Nadu state AIDS control society (TANSACS), a Peer Education program has been started with Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), Aravani and General public in Cuddalore and surrounding areas. The staff, assisted by 15 volunteers and 30 peer educators, the staff, provided information on STD's HIV/AIDS, counseling and also distributed approximately 60,000 condoms.

2.5. World AIDS Day:

On World AIDS Day each December, READ organizes programs like rallies, public meetings and campaigns to reach the public with the HIV/AIDS message. This year, a public meeting was held focusing on the need for prevention in order to check further transmission of the HIV epidemic.

2.6. Collaborative action against HIV/AIDS:

READ was the fiscal agent in transferring funds and monitoring the financial aspects of 2 projects undertaken by SAATHI: i) Enhancing the response against HIV/AIDS in India through mapping of HIV/AIDS services and related advocacy for anti-retroviral therapy in Chennai and Kolkatta, and ii) Support center for voluntary agencies working on sexual health and related issues concerning sexual minorities in Eastern India. READ was also the fiscal agent for a research project on HIV risk and prevention among MSM in Chennai (by Dr. V. Chakrapani),

Additionally, READ undertook care and support services for people living with HIV/AIDS in Senthurai Block, Perambalur District in collaboration with Tamilnadu Voluntary Health Association (TNVHA), Chennai; this program provided counseling and referrals.

3. Service to disabled people:

Service to disabled people is another other priority program for our organization. . This is an ongoing program that includes both community-based rehabilitation and institutional services:

3.1. Capacity building:

As in the previous year, new Sangams were promoted in villages both in Andimadam and Senthurai Blocks for the disabled people. Currently, 7 Sangams in Andimadam Block and 9 Sangams in Senthurai Block are functioning. Once a month a capacity building training was organized for the Sangam members in their respective Sangams. Six such capacity building meetings/trainings were organized in this reporting year for the disabled adults. Physiotherapy and entrepreneurship development among orthopedically handicapped were undertaken. Mr.Rajesh and Ms.Meenakshi (from Vidyasagar) came to READ and gave "Disabled Rights and Issues" training to the staff and Sanga leaders.

3.2. Awareness on disability:

This was a program organized for non-disabled people to understand disabilities in an effort to enlist their services and cooperation in combating the problems of disabled in the area. This program was conducted in 50 self-help groups and in 15 villages. Our cultural team 'Vidiyal' also performed street plays and folk dramas in support of this awareness program.

3.3. World Disabled Day celebration:

Every year we celebrate World Disabled Day on 3rd December. This year we had a special meeting for disabled persons in the Sangams at Andimadam not only to commemorate the day but also to make the disabled to take pledge to win over their disability and live meaningfully.

3.4. Special Schools:

Our 'Anbagam' schools meant for mentally challenged children at Andimadam and Perambalur are continuing their service to the disadvantaged children in this reporting year too. Efforts are being taken to get government recognition for Perambalur Anbagam school – this is in progress.

3.5. Establishment of a facilitation and capacity building center for rural disabled people:

The Consulate General of Japan, Chennai, has granted READ money to construct a facilitation and capacity building center for rural disabled people in this reporting year. We have the land for this building and the construction work will be



On March 23 2006, Mr. Selvam of READ receives the grant award from Mr. Yoshiaki Kodaki, Consul General of Japan, for construction of a center for rural disabled people.

started soon. It will have facilities for all types of disabled persons in the area- learning, training and rehabilitation opportunities- so as to help them live independently. This center will start operating during the next financial year.

4. Children sponsorship program:

Children sponsorship is an ongoing program. Alliance for youth Achievement (AYA), Inc., USA and Sahaya international Inc., USA are sponsoring children for their studies and for their welfare in the case of HIV infected children. Twenty-five children are sponsored via AYA sponsors, including 7 orphans who receive full sponsorship, and 18 girls who receive educational sponsorship (i.e. school materials, clothes, school and boarding fees). Via Sahaya International Inc., 44 orphans (11 new orphans in this reporting period) are sponsored; this includes several HIV-infected children who also receive medical support, such as anti-HIV medications. A summer camp was organized for these sponsored children during the month of May 2005 to infuse values in them and to provide a platform to expose their inherent talents. This educational support reduced significantly the school drop-out rate among young girls, which was very common before.

5. Schools and Tuition centers:

Formal schools and tuition centers (after-school educational coaching centers) are ongoing programs since the year 2000, providing quality education and learning atmosphere to poor rural children to help them achieve academically.

5.1. Formal schools:

Three primary schools including pre-primary sections are being run by our organization- one at Periyakrishnapuram, one at Thirukalapur and the other at Andimadam. Quality education was the objective and the medium of instruction is English. A total of 122 rural children from different villages and 13 teachers are in these schools.

5.2. Tuition centers:

Children who do not have a reading atmosphere and back-up coaching support at home are given coaching at this center. An educated local person serves as tutor with a nominal monthly payment from READ. In 4 villages this center is in operation catering to the needs of 90 children of various classes. The growth in educational performance and personal discipline are observed to be appreciable after the start of these coaching centers. We plan to continue this program in the coming years also.

5.3. School Annual Day celebration:

Every year we celebrate school Annual Day to bring out the extra-curricular talents in students and to offer thanks to the employees and administrators for their service during the academic year. In this reporting year too, we celebrated School Annual Day at Periyakrishnapuram. Mr. Koen Van Rompay, Ms. Elisabeth Sherwin and Ms. Mirriam Rafiq from USA, presided over the function and distributed prizes to students who performed well in education, sports and other activities.

6. CIIL program:

Central Institute for Indian Languages, Mysore, a department coming under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, India, has granted a fund to augment interest among learners of the Tamil language. Through five centers- Rangiyam, Vilandai, P.K. Puram, Maruthur and Sathanapattu- in Andimadam Block, we have promoted Tamil language learning opportunities for 106 persons.



Children of the Jawahar Matriculation School (top), and the Mother Teresa schools of Periyakrishnapuram (bottom left) and Thirukalapur (bottom right).

7. Women Development program:

This program, which has been a priority since the beginning of our organization, has as objective to promote women empowerment through self-help group formations, education, capacity-building trainings, skill training, micro-credit and resource mobilization. In this reporting year, the following activities have been undertaken:

7.1. SHG Training:

So far 1044 SHGs have been promoted by READ among poor rural women; in this reporting year 356 SHGs- 248 SHGs with 3968 members in Andimadam and 108 SHGs with 1836 members in

Senthurai- have been promoted. Regular training is imparted to build their skills in different areas including micro-finance, enterprises development, management, problem solving and collective development approaches. All 356 SHGs with 5804 women have undergone training in this reporting year.

7.2. Animator and Representative Training (A&R Training):

This is a regular ongoing program and in this reporting year 712 Animators and Representatives from 356 SHGs participated in training on different occasions in the year. The training featured



The Annual Day celebration at the Mother Teresa school of Periyakrishnapuram in February 2006 involved song, dance, and skits.

leadership development, new thinking and planning.

7.3. Entrepreneur Development Training (EDT):

Economic empowerment helps to determine one's status in the society. To raise the status of women, ED training was given to prepare them for economic activities and thereby empowering them. In this reporting year, men in male SHGs were also given ED training. Thus, 40 men from 8 male SHGs and 40 women from 8 female

SHGs in Andimadam Block, and 40 men and 40 women from Senthurai Block from 8 SHGs each, underwent ED training in this reporting year. The ultimate aim of this program is to raise rural employment and economy and thereby reduce occupational migration to urban areas.

7.4. Panchayat Level Federation (PLF) Training:

Select representatives from each SHG form this PLF. This representative group has wider contact with other PLF groups outside their area

for exposure that they can share with their group members. In this reporting year, no special training was given to PLF leaders, but regular meetings were conducted to refresh their activities.

7.5. Micro-finance:

AYA Inc., USA provided a revolving fund to launch micro-finance programs among SHG members to initiate economic activities in the area. In this reporting year, 403 women were given credit of Rs. 5000 each to buy goats, cows etc., Rs.2,335,000 is being credited this way in this reporting year. The credit was utilized to promote the following economic activities:

Activity	No. of beneficiaries
1. Cows – Dairy	122
2. Goat rearing	52
3. Tiffin center	7
4. Chicken shop	4
5. Educational expenses	2
6. Handloom weaving	89
7. Vegetable vending	14
8. Carpentry	11
9. Agriculture activity	50
10. Cashew nut business	4
11. Textile business	13
12. Tailoring	11
13. Cycle Hire & repair shop	4
14. Tea and petty shop	11
15. Peanut selling	6
16. Wood business	3
Total	403

As stated in 7.3, this is yet another credit support program to empower women economically and to stop occupational migration to urban areas.

7.6. ICICI Insurance coverage:

ICICI Prudential Insurance Co. offered an insurance program for our SHG women with a risk amount of Rs.5000 at a one-time premium payment of Rs.50. In this reporting year, 5000 women from different SHGs have been covered under this scheme.

7.7. Tailoring training:

Since the beginning of our organization, this skill-training in sewing has been offered to poor women. This year 30 girls were trained in both tailoring and embroidery.

7.8. Greeting card making training:

This is a training-cum-production program in which 16 girls were newly trained in this reporting period. The cards are being marketed in the USA and Belgium mostly by the network of volunteers of Sahaya International Inc., to raise funds for our activities.

7.9. Typewriting training:

We have a government-recognized institute for typewriting and every year we send trainees to attend government certificate examination. In this reporting year, 16 girls underwent the typewriting exam, and all passed. This skill development program is useful for rural girls who opt for employment in offices.

8. New Guesthouse:

A new guesthouse was constructed and dedicated for public service in this reporting year. Sahaya International Inc., USA met all the expenses of this guesthouse. It also offers a small conference hall that can be used to organize conferences or to conduct trainings in the future.

9. Other programs:

In addition to the major projects to achieve specific objectives, our organization regularly conducts several smaller programs:



Sahaya Illam, a guesthouse & conference center.



READ has organized more than 1,000 self-help groups with micro-credit and savings activities (top). Many of them are involved in micro-enterprises, such as cashew-nut processing or small shops (middle). Thanks to a loan, one self-help group has started to manufacture bricks.

9.1. Health awareness program:

Health awareness particularly reproductive and child health features in our regular awareness programs. In this reporting year, health awareness meetings were conducted in 329 SHGs and 10 children's groups.

9.2. Consumer awareness program:

Rural consumers are easily exploited by marketing people with sub-standard products, under-weighted products, 'expired' products and so on. This exploitation is also found in agricultural commodities and medicines. In order to alert rural people to these dangers, consumer awareness meetings are regularly conducted in the villages particularly among SHG women. In this reporting year, 135 women from 45 SHGs were given training on consumerism.

9.3. National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC):

Every year, with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, India, we organize a national environmental awareness campaign. In this reporting year too, we organized a campaign for two days in Rangiam and Vadugarpalayam villages. The theme of this year was Waste Management people participated in the campaign and in the follow-up demonstration of rain water saving system.

9.4. 'Namathu Gramam' (Our village) cultural program:

To infuse a feeling of integrity and ownership of people toward their native land and culture, a cultural program called 'Namathu Gramam' (Our Village) was organized by the Block Development office of the state government along with READ in this reporting year in 26 villages. 2676 people participated in this program.

9.5. Staff welfare:

A staff welfare fund has already been created in our organization by saving 10% of staff monthly salary along with our 5% matching contribution. For emergency needs, the staff can take a loan from this fund. And medical support is offered to every staff up to a limit of Rs.2000.

10. Trainings and meetings:

Trainings and meetings are important education tools in development work and help reinforce best methods so our staff will perform well in their work. In this reporting year, the following trainings and meetings were conducted:

10.1. Staff training:

As in the past, this year also, we have arranged a staff training at the beginning of this year to refresh and reinforce their attitudes. This was a two-day refresher training.

10.2. Staff review meeting:

Staff review meeting is a regular process at the end of every week and at the end of every month. Staff activities and attitudes are assessed and amended suitably to fit in the program activities. All staff members must attend this review meeting without fail. This was followed in this reporting year.

10.3. Disabled sanga leaders training:

The leaders of disabled sangams are regularly called for trainings on resource mobilization and link establishment to get the best from various resources. In this reporting year 3 such trainings were organized.

11. Recognition and membership statuses

READ continued to hold its recognition and membership status in the following Block level, District level and State level Bodies/ Organizations:

- District Hospital Development Advisory Board.
- District Task Force for Adolescents.
- District Family Welfare Advisory Committee.
- Block Level Task Force for female victims.
- District committee member of SSA- Andimadam and Senthurai Blocks.
- Andimadam Block and Panchayat level SSA committee and building committee member.
- Member NGO in Campaign Against Child Labour, Tamil Nadu.
- District Convener and Resource centre for TNVHA's health program, Chennai (for Perambalur District).
- Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)

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- Facilitation center for Perambalur District for TNVHA, Chennai.
 - Co-opted member(Board) of TNVHA, Chennai.
 - Member of Governing Body of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Perambalur (State Government body).
 - Board member of CBR forum- network of disabled activities (Network of NGOs in Tamilnadu and Pondicherry).
 - Member of National Trust for Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability, New Delhi.
 - vii) CPR Foundation, Chennai
 - viii) BDO, Perambalur
 - ix) CIIL, Mysore, Ministry of Human resources Development, GOI
 - x) Tamilnadu Voluntary Health Association, Chennai
 - xi) Mahalir Thittam, Government of Tamilnadu, Perambalur
 - xii) Donations, member contributions, public contributions, training center income, tailoring income, typewriting income, computer course income, card sales income.

12. Representative status

READ continued to enjoy the following representative status this year:

- i) Regional Representative for Alliance for Youth Achievement (AYA), Inc., USA.
- ii) Nodal Agency for Sahaya International Inc., USA in appraising projects and transferring funds to local NGOs.
- iii) Fiscal agent to transfer fund to SAATHI, Chennai and to monitor its accounts.

13. Visitors

The following dignitaries visited READ and its activities in this reporting year:

- i) Dr. Koen Van Rompay , Sahaya International Inc., California, USA.
- ii) Ms. Elisabeth Sherwin, Director, Sahaya International Inc., California, USA.
- iii) Mr. Karl Krupp, Director, Sahaya International Inc., California, USA.
- iv) Ms. Mirriam Rafiq, Director, Sahaya International Inc., California, USA.
- v) Mr. Pelle Wallin, Sweden.
- vi) Mrs. Gittan, Sweden.

14. Resources

We have received financial support from the following organizations/government departments to carry out the activities detailed above:

- i) Sahaya International Inc., USA
- ii) Alliance for Youth Achievement (AYA), Inc., USA
- iii) Elton John AIDS Foundation, UK
- iv) Connaught Foundation, Canada
- v) Consulate General of Japan, Chennai
- vi) Gilead Sciences (via Sahaya International)

15. Conclusion

We have completed another successful year. Many people have supported us financially, physically and morally throughout this reporting year and have walked with us in good times and bad. Thanks to everyone without whose help we could not have continued.

This year, as special projects, we developed infrastructures for our activities, like the guesthouse-cum-conference center. We have grant support to construct a building center for disabled people. Our gratitude and special thanks go to Dr. Koen Van Rompay and the network of Sahaya International Inc., USA for their support to many programs, and to the Consulate General of Japan, Chennai for the sanction of the grant for disabled center. Additionally, many individuals have supported our missions.

I also want to give special thanks to AYA, Inc., USA for its children sponsorships and for the micro-finance support to empower our rural women. Our thanks are due to our State and Central Government departments for their support for some of our key programs related to women, children and environment. And I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues, staff and executive members for their wonderful cooperation and constant service in achieving our objectives in this reporting year.

While thanking you all, I sincerely beseech your cooperation and support in the coming year to continue service to our bereaved human community.

Thank you one and all.

D. SELVAM

Development of Educational Materials on HIV Prevention, Treatment and Care

In collaboration with Sahaya International and I-TECH (www.go2itech.com), READ developed two educational sets of flipcharts: one on HIV Prevention, and one on HIV Treatment and Care.

Myths and Facts about HIV/AIDS

a practical guide to prevention, health & life



PART I: HIV PREVENTION



Ministry of Health & Family Welfare



Each set provides comprehensive information on HIV/AIDS, with simple cartoons on the front, and English and tamil text on the back. They are useful to educate low-literacy communities, especially in rural areas where villagers have little access to other forms of media.

The same cartoons have also been used to produce small booklets and pamphlets with a summary of the information. These materials are handed out to villagers during the programs.



Translations of these materials into several other languages (including Urdu, Telegu, Kannada, Marathi) by collaborating organizations are currently already in progress or are planned for 2006. These materials will be used in HIV programs in many other states of India, and in Pakistan.

