



Rural Education & Action Development (READ)

Andimadam, Tamil Nadu, India

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Fiscal year April 2006- March 2007.

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Honourable President and Members of the General Body,

With the abundant blessings of our Almighty God and our patrons and well-wishers, READ has completed yet another year in its noble service to humankind.

I take pleasure in presenting this report of activities of READ for the year 2006-2007 before this honorable General Body and seek its approval and further guidance to continue our service in the following year too. The following is the detailed report on our activities in this reporting year.

Sincerely,

D. Selvam (Secretary, READ)



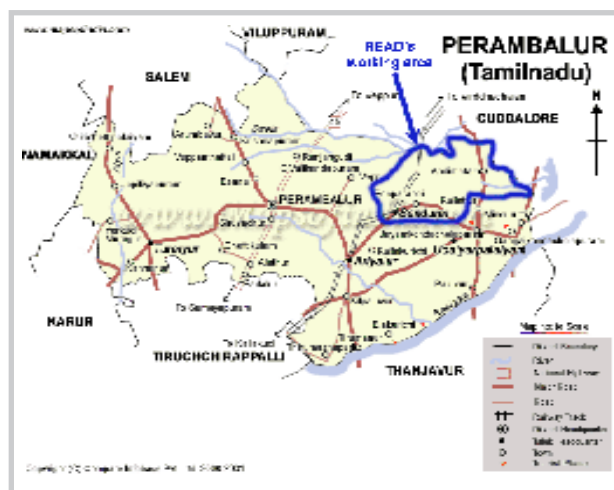
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1. Schools.

READ runs 3 primary schools including pre-primary sections- the Mother Teresa School in Periyakrishnapuram (67 students, 6 teachers), the Mother Teresa school at Thirukalapur (21 students, 2 teachers), and the Jawahar matriculation school at Andimadam (60 students, 6 teachers). Quality education was the objective and the medium of instruction is English.

Thanks to fundraising by Sahaya International, a new school building is currently being constructed for the Mother Teresa School of Periyakrishnapuram and is expected to be used from June 2008 onwards.



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

2. Children sponsorship program.

This is an ongoing program in close collaboration with the Alliance for Youth Achievement, Inc., USA (AYA; www.allforyouth.org) and Sahaya International (www.sahaya.org). Orphan and semi-orphan children who are poor without any living or development assistance, are supported in this program to pursue their education without financial constraint. Via AYA, 18 girls (3 groups of 6 children) are sponsored for only their schooling needs. In addition, 85 children, including 8 HIV-infected children benefit from individual sponsorships via AYA and Sahaya International, which provides for school expenses and other basic needs (clothing, nutrition etc).

In addition, we organized a summer camp with a tour to Gangaikondacholarapuram, and on February 10, 2007, a field-trip to Silver Beach (Cuddalore) for these sponsored children.

READ was also the fiscal intermediate agent for money that was donated for Embracing Hands, a support home for needy children near Madurai.





Our orphan sponsorship programs benefit many children and also provide their families with money to start an income-generating activity, such as rearing goats.

3. Vocational training program.

We offered vocational training courses to rural girls on tailoring (30 students) in Andimadam and Variyankaval, typewriting (10 students), basket-making (60 students), and greeting card production (20 students).

The production of embroidered greeting card is an important fundraising activity of READ, and the cards are sold in the USA and Belgium by our network of well-wishers.

In this reporting year, NABARD, Chennai provided a one-month training grant to train 30 women on producing embroidered greeting cards; the grant covered the cost of raw materials, trainer's salary, stipend for trainees and exposure visit of trainees. Nine of the trainees became employed in our card-production unit after the training.

4. Empowering persons with disabilities through self-help group action program.

The ABILIS Foundation (Finland) supported this two-year project, which started in 2005 and continued in 2007. Its objective is to empower persons with disabilities through self-help group (SHG) activities. We had already promoted Sangams (SHG) for disabled people in 5 villages. This project helped us promote 26 more Sangams for the disabled in 15 villages. A special training was arranged for rehabilitation workers and supportive stimulation materials were purchased to provide better training. We provided capacity-building training for 26 Sangam leaders with various disabilities. We also gave training to parents on how to handle their disabled children and be supportive to this project. The disabled members in the Sangams met in periodical meetings to raise their confidence to achieve to their capacity. All types of disabled people with all degrees of disability (mild to severe) are in the Sangams. Other components of the project included an advocacy campaign and network



The children of the Mother Teresa School go green and dance at their Annual Day (February 15, 2007).

activities. To honor the disabled people, the World Disability Day was celebrated during December 2006.

5. Anbagam special school for mentally retarded children.

These 2 special schools for mentally challenged children have been run since 2000 in Perambalur (32 children) and Andimadam (15 children). The schools were recognized by the State Government. In this reporting year, we have received a maintenance grant from the State Commissioner for Disability (Chennai) to meet the food expenses of 30 hostel children in Perambalur.

6. Establishment of a Resource Center for the rural disabled people.

Disabled persons have access to very few services in our block and district. We have successfully applied to the Japanese Embassy, Chennai for grant support to construct a Resource Center in Andimadam to educate, train and rehabilitate the disabled people. This center will include training on daily living, vocational training, counseling and career guidance for the disabled. The building will also accommodate a residential special school for mentally disabled children. The construction work is in full progress and will be completed shortly. Additional support for infrastructure in this building was provided by Sahaya International.

7. HIV/AIDS awareness, care & support program.

This is also an ongoing program. As a follow-up of our Perambalur Education and Prevention Program (PEPP) implemented during

last financial year, we continue identifying HIV-infected people in the villages through our outreach workers and peer educators. We printed more educational booklets on HIV/AIDS to help low-literacy people learn about HIV/AIDS. A positive network met monthly, and we provided financial support (for travel, nutrition and treatment of opportunistic infections), counseling and moral support. Eighteen members (14 adults and 4 children) are receiving antiretroviral therapy through the government-sponsored program, for which we assisted with travel expenses. This program is supported by Gilead Sciences and Sahaya International.

READ is the District Resource Center for TNVHA, Chennai's activities. In partnership with TNVHA, READ undertook a care and support program for PLWHA (People living with HIV/AIDS) in this reporting year. TNVHA provided Rs. 2500 to 4 PLWHA for small income-generating activities like buying goats, chicks etc., This year, to commemorate the World AIDS Day, we have organized an HIV/AIDS awareness rally, which was sponsored by IHN- APAC, Chennai.



Construction of the Resource Center



Children of the Jawahar Matriculation School, which provides basic education to 60 children. The school is currently run in a rented building, which will be demolished soon. A new school building is scheduled to be constructed in 2008 with support from Sahaya International and its network of volunteers and donors in the USA and Belgium.

The grant included the cost of placard, banners, audio-video equipment rental, seminar/workshop expenses, resource persons' honorarium, advertisement cost, exhibition materials cost and refreshment for the participants. Approximately 560 people participated in this rally; 250 attended the workshop and seminar.

8. Prevention of HIV/AIDS and trafficking of women & children.

In this reporting period, we have undertaken a new project on prevention of HIV/AIDS and trafficking of women and children in the Cuddalore area. This one-year project was sponsored by UNDP (New Delhi). Field officers were trained first on women and child trafficking issues; the field officers then trained peer educators to disseminate information among common people and targeted groups. We printed IEC materials on women and child trafficking and on HIV/AIDS and distributed them to targeted groups in the Cuddalore area.

9. MSM intervention.

In this reporting year, another new project was implemented in Cuddalore, thanks to funding by the Tamilnadu State AIDS Control Society (TNSACS), Chennai. This project works with MSM (men-having-sex-with-men) populations in Cuddalore town and surrounding areas to aware and control HIV/AIDS among MSM. This was a one-year project which undertook baseline and need assessment, trained peer educators on advocacy and on methods to reach MSM in the cruising areas. The program had a drop-in center for counseling and regular group meetings. We developed behavioral communication change (BCC) materials.

10. Tamil language proficiency classes.

Every year we run a program in select villages to upgrade Tamil language proficiency among youth. This program is supported by the Central Institute for Indian languages (CIIL, Mysore), a unit of Ministry of Human Resource Development, government of India. In this reporting year, we ran 5 centers in 5 villages to teach Tamil to 125 illiterate and dropout women. The grant included the cost of educational materials to the students and the honorarium for the teachers.

11. National Environmental Awareness Campaign.

Every year we conduct a National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC) in our area on a specific theme of that particular year. In this reporting year, we have conducted a program on the theme of 'solid waste recycling'. We have organized meetings with selected 25 self-help groups and conducted a demonstration on vermin composting to recycle organic waste to select SHGs. This program was funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (Government of India), through the nodal agency CPR Foundation, Chennai. We developed and printed resource materials, posters, banners and a vermin compost pit under this program. One vermin compost pit was established at READ.

12. Youth leadership program.

Being a District Resource Center of the Tamil Nadu Voluntary Health Association (TNVHA), READ undertook a youth leadership program in partnership with TNVHA, Chennai. Approximately 100 youth participated in this program. This program for three years and this is first year we are run this program for creating awareness about Reproductive sexual health issues.

13. Women development program.

This is an ongoing program, but this year due to reduced funding by the government, the activities were kept to a minimum. Because organizing women SHGs as a tool to empower women is one of our base programs, we continued this with our own effort. In this reporting year, we have formed 111 new women SHGs and 42 men SHGs in Andimadam and Sendurai blocks. This brings our total to 996 women and 78 men SHG. Sixty women have undergone Entrepreneur Development Training; 69 SHG have undergone Animator and Representative (A&R) training. There were 18 staff meetings in this reporting year.

Starting from this year, READ also functions as a representative of ICICI Prudential Insurance company. READ has mobilized SHG members to insure their lives under the ICICI Prudential Insurance scheme to provide more security to their family.



Children of the Mother Teresa School of Periyakrishnapuram. The school is currently run in a hut with thatched-leaf roof. Construction of a much-needed new school building was started in 2007 with support from Sahaya International (USA) and SAWES (Belgium). The school is expected to be completed in 2008.

14. Micro-finance program.

Micro-credit and savings activities are important tools to empower women who were previously never able to access financial resources to meet their needs. READ started micro-finance activities a year ago with the support of a grant from the Alliance for Youth Achievement, and now new support groups are coming forward to partner with READ to extend micro-finance to local people. In this reporting year Nanayasarabhi Development Financial Services, Trichy partnered with READ to provide loans. A total of 100 women of 22 SHG were given loans ranging of Rs. 5000 to Rs. 1000 for a total amount of Rs.500,000. READ is currently exploring possibilities to receive a bulk loan from HDFC Bank and other financial sources to expand its micro finance activities.

15. Toilet – public hygiene program.

Thanks to money that was raised by Sahaya International in 2005, a revolving loan fund was started to build family-unit toilets. So far, 50 toilets have been constructed. The repaid money is used to extend loans to additional families to construct such toilets. An additional 15 toilets were constructed thanks to direct donations (without the need for repayment).

16. Vazhndhu kattuvom project.

In this reporting year we have undertaken another new project named 'Vazhndhu Kattuvom'. This is a Tamil Nadu government program with support from the World Bank. We have adopted Nallur Block in Virudhachalam Taluk, Cuddalore District for this project. The grant provided salary to a staff to implement the program. This project aims to identify the disabled and vulnerable groups in this block and organize these people in self-help groups. The village poverty reduction committee will help these people for economic and social empowerment. This project started in January 2007 and will be finished by the end of December 2007.

We thank all of our contributors and donors for their generous support and our staff for their dedicated efforts in helping us achieve our mission. A special thanks to the networks of Sahaya International in the USA and Europe. As we have to continue this work, we request your support and valuable guidance also in the coming year. Thank you once again for making a difference.