

SEEDS

Silver Jubilee Souvenir



Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society
Sowing seeds of change since 1993

SEEDS

Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society (SEEDS) is a non-political, non-sectarian and non-profit organization dedicated to promoting educational and economic progress and development of the very needy in the State of Odisha, India and other parts of the world in general.

The group aspires to financially and technically support development that is Sustainable (long-term, self-supporting, and environmentally non-predatory), Non-violent (without brute force), Democratic, Equitable (fair and just, more for the needy) and Decentralized (not imposed from above, grassroots, and local/native solutions).

The group, in spirit, supports development and education that fosters awareness of rights and responsibilities among the people it seeks to help as well as among its own members. Thus, we emphasize "a participatory consciousness for sustainable and equitable development."

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Preface

This souvenir commemorates 25 years of service by a group of volunteers, who shared the vision to sow the seeds of positive change in the society. Initiated by a group of students in the North America, and closely supported by motivated collaborators in USA, Canada and Odisha, SEEDS has constantly endeavored to work in various developmental sectors such as education, agriculture, women empowerment, revival of artforms, etc. It has been an interesting experiment in initiating small changes that held the potential to snowball into tangible benefit for the sections of society that has fallen behind for whatever reason.

The articles capture the journey of SEEDS from a variety of angles, providing glimpses of personal stories woven into project ideas, execution, and successes. The ideas are rooted in sustainable development; the execution is based on collaboration and trust; the success is measured in terms of impact on the beneficiaries' lives.

We hope that the articles serve not only as record of SEEDS' journey for the historical value, but also to motivate other like-minded people to further the sustainable concepts experimented over a quarter-century. If a few folks are encouraged to join hands to change a few other lives, this effort will be considered successful. If you are interested in learning more about SEEDS or supporting the ongoing efforts in any way, please contact us at www.seedsnet.org.

We thank all the contributors for their thoughtful articles. The stories are a record of their close involvement on a variety of projects and provide a window into their benevolent minds! Articles for this silver jubilee souvenir are compiled by Sikhanda Satapathy and Sri Gopal Mohanty. The souvenir is edited by Sikhanda Satapathy. Editorial assistance of Mamata Misra is acknowledged. The cover art is by Tina Satapathy.



Reminiscences and Thoughts on the Creation and Early Years of SEEDS on the Occasion of its 25th Anniversary

Priyadarsan (Darshan) Patra

"Wherever you turn, you can find someone who needs you. Even if it is a little thing, do something for which there is no pay but the privilege of doing it." ~Albert Schweitzer

It was the year 1989 and I had recently joined the Ph.D. program at the University of Texas at Austin. Early, nebulous ideas of establishing a progressive, action-oriented group germinated in a series of informal discussions among several Indian, Indian-American, and American students on campus. I, fairly young and restless then, vividly remember the excitement when we founded the India Progressive Action Group (IPAG), a student organization, in the wake of a rally held to protest the insensitivity of Union Carbide towards victims of the gas tragedy at Bhopal, India. The protest was in connection with a visit to UT by a vice-president of that company to speak, ironically, on "How to do business in India".

While we, a gaggle of campus 'activists', focused on the various 'causes' and projects throughout India, my involvement gave me a special opportunity in 1990 to visit and work with Padwa Gramdani Sangh (PGS) in Koraput, Orissa. PGS, led by Sri Nishakar Das, worked to improve the socio-economic conditions of the villagers, in about 100 nearby villages, who were predominantly *Adivasi* (indigenous) people and were often stricken by famine, diseases and starvation deaths due to lack of irrigation facilities and clean water, compounded by official high-handedness. This was my first 'soul search' back in the remote areas of my birth state Odisha that I had left after high school. By 1991, the problem had severely metastasized to multiple regions -- Kalahandi, Bolangir, and Koraput districts were hit especially hard.

The Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput Famine

India Abroad (June 25, 1993) reported, "Even as officials gloated over the government's success in creating a huge wheat stockpile, a little girl in far-away Orissa was digging in the earth for wild roots. The 4-year-old Ankhita had

no special fascination for wild roots. She had had nothing to eat for days after her mother died of starvation in the southern district of Kalahandi, whose chronic starvation has come to symbolize the contradictions of the country's food situation. At least 11 million people, most of them in the tribes-dominated districts of Orissa and in Bihar, are reportedly trying to stave off hunger by eating wild roots, boiled leaves, and seeds, as famine and drought stalk over 6,000 villages."

We believed that these sorts of famines were man-made macroeconomic disasters, largely a function of local political and economic policies such as unemployment patterns, taxation, inflationary food prices, the absence of minimal employment or welfare relief, environmental degradation, and corruption. India Today (May 31, 1993) wrote that the governmental aid was all tangled up in bureaucratic bungling and corruption. So, we felt that it was a solemn duty to go beyond traditional charity, to do whatever possible to raise awareness and prod action widely.

IPAG lent its organizational support and a few individuals came forward to lead the so-called "Kalahandi-Bolangir Initiative (KBI)" which had by then grown to more than 60 ardent supporters/contributors over several regions in the USA and Canada and at various university campuses. It was growing into a movement for participatory consciousness about grass-roots and sustainable development, particularly in Orissa and generally in India. We raised some donations through presentations and were in touch with about half-a-dozen reputed volunteer development groups (NGO) in Orissa (now Odisha), several development experts in India, and a few progressive sister organizations in the USA.

On July 15, 1993, I sent out an urgent appeal, to many students and families of Odisha

origin across the campus and to many across the North American continent, which stated thus:

"I am part of a group of students, professionals, and professors keenly interested in participating in and contributing to people-oriented, sustainable development in Orissa, one of the poorest states of India.

In the wake of shocking new reports of destitution in the Kalahandi & Bolangir districts of Orissa, we have grown by drawing broad support of more than 50 students and professionals all over the USA & Canada to help, however modestly, the needy people of the said region by creating some developmental infrastructure in that area. We cannot, nor should we, largesse or "impose" our charity on the local people, alleviation of whose misery is all we seek. Our means are very limited and our tasks are enormous considering the great distance from the USA and our other responsibilities. We, want to succeed in looking after ourselves by lending each other a compassionate hand, but no hand-outs. The main wealth of our supporters here is their sincerity and zeal. I seek your support and ideas for this cause."

In this early phase, we sent correspondences and call-for-proposals out to social work groups such as Padwa Gramdani Sangha of Koraput, Orissa; India Development Service of Chicago; Orissa Society of Americas, North America; Pragati of Boston, USA; Parivartan of UPenn, USA; Center for Applied Systems Analysis & Development of Bombay, India; and Development Network of Pune for information and technical assistance, India; VISWAS of Khariar road, Kalahandi, Orissa; Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram of Sundargarh, Orissa; Jana Seva Parishad of Kendrapada, Orissa; and Sarvodaya Relief Fund, India.

From there, the "Kalahandi Bolangir Initiative" turned into a poignant journey. From the very

beginning, the spirit was young and willing, and the fellow sojourners came from many walks of life and many regions of the world. Our goal was grand, a few times mistaken as grandiose. We wanted to have a movement of 'participatory consciousness'. What it meant to us was to energize all young at heart to become aware of the problems of human progress and to participate in a process that vigorously leads towards a more satisfying existence for people and their environment. We wished to attract the Indians living abroad towards the cause of sustainable and equitable development for the people in India.

The first bunch to lead this journey turned out to be from Orissa. Also, there had been only limited activism among non-resident Oriyas and that the political & economic condition of the people of Orissa had been traditionally weak. Therefore, the choice of Orissa as the initial focus of the group seemed natural. The outbreak of famine (or at least the news about it) in the South-Western Orissa crystalized the fluid thoughts among hitherto unrelated individuals, making them speak their mind loudly. The easy availability of electronic media provided the crucial communication link among the 'new activists'. Some of the activists had prior experience with other progressive organizations and that helped garner immense support for the fledgling group. The group was neither philosophically oriented nor materially equipped for providing relief or charity. Involvement was voluntary and not remunerated. The primary focus was to catalyze the beneficiaries' interest and involvement in their own economic development, improve their political consciousness, functional education, and health & environmental well-being through our projects in Orissa (India). We also discussed, debated and learned the issues of development, education, political equity, and environmental sustainability, and we hoped to promote 'participatory' consciousness among non-resident Oriyas and Indians, in general.

Around 1992, our group (although not officially called SEEDS yet) had started working independently of IPAG as our focus narrowed down to Orissa.

Our First Kalahandi Project

Some people argued that poverty in Kalahandi (for example) was assiduously cultivated and marketed, while some others felt that there were no widespread starvation deaths in Kalahandi-Koraput-Bolangir area. While there may be some truth in each of the propositions above, the fact remained that a vast majority of people suffered inhuman misery, perhaps short of death, and failed to be contributing and happy citizens of the world. They represented one of the starkest examples of neglect and absence of basic human rights to food, healthcare, education, and shelter. We had realized that indiscriminate, ill-thought pumping of external aid to the region could even pervert and deprave rather than bring succor. Therefore, we decided to take a different experimental approach with Kalahandi area being the ground of our first experiment. We wished to:

1. Promote grass-roots effort for sustainable and equitable development and
2. Build our experiments on any existing local, non-governmental initiatives that showed potential and strength.

So, we went through a long process of project solicitation, selection, and debating and finally accepted a project proposal from Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA), Sundargarh. We established guidelines for its funding, execution, monitoring, and reporting. We scheduled for our colleague Dhanada Mishra to visit VKA and the project area - Lanjigarh block of M. Rampur Tehsil in Kalahandi. The project called for the establishment of approximately two 'multi-purpose, one-teacher' schools and one fruit-sapling nursery per *panchayat* in 9 of the 12 Gram (village) Panchayats of Lanjigarh. VKA apparently drew inspiration and resources from Friends of Tribals Society (FTS) whose brochure stated that, "the 70 million vanavasis (tribals) living in 50,000 Indian villages have average, annual family income less than \$7, with literacy among men being 12% and among women 5%, while health care available to them is poor to non-existent."

Our guidance to VKA quoted below reveals the founding philosophy of SEEDS. "*Sustainability and self-sufficiency are the cornerstones of*

our philosophy. Hence, we would strongly request you to add a few more plant-nurseries and cut down a few village-schools in their place. We want to see people grow and take care of themselves and not be dependent on handouts. We also feel that it is better to do a few things well than to do a lot poorly. Therefore, we ask that you take up 15 'one-teacher schools' and 10 plant-nurseries attached to 10 of those schools. The nurseries should be built by the village beneficiaries themselves and should be tended by the students, too. Environment-friendly agro-techniques and development of means of earning through the cooperative selling of produce/saplings should be properly emphasized."

Dhanada and Umakanta and I had separately visited this project area. Here is an excerpt from Dhanada's excellent report:

1. VKA's punctuality/promptness - I cannot over-emphasize how meticulous this group is in terms of being prompt and punctual in communication. Whomever I spoke with in Orissa, they had only words of praise for them.

2. Regarding the skepticism among people - this is the worst negative fact of life for any effort in doing anything. Be it business, social work or anything, the first battle is to keep yourself above the sea of pessimism that is all-pervading. VKA's workers have done well in this regard. This is also related to corruption in all walks of life.

3. Regarding the two Ayurvedic doctors I met at VKA dispensaries. I must say I was moved by their dedication. It is a fact that no MBBS degree holder would do the job they had taken up at very nominal compensation. I think it's wonderful to have any doctor at all in areas such as these. The doctor at Dhadel has saved many lives already in the few months he has been there!

4. The school at Kanya Ashram teaches the students along the prescribed syllabus of the Board of Education of Govt, of Orissa. There are no religious teachings as such. Sanskrit is taught purely as a language supplemented by learning of the Gita.

During this period, in 1993, we named our group **Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society** or "**SEEDS**" that best represented our philosophy and mission in both its short and long forms. In 1995, I completed my Ph. D. in Austin and moved to Portland, Oregon, where I continued the work that I had started in

Austin. We registered SEEDS as a US nonprofit at Oregon state as well as Internal Revenue Service (I manually prepared and filed all the paperwork to avoid costs of professional help -- eliminating overheads to support the project beneficiaries to the full extent has remained a hallmark for SEEDS.). Gradually we undertook many more projects as we got approved as a public foundation.

In those early days, I was lucky to gain friendship and trust from a number of volunteers such as Srinivas Praharaj, Himanshu Baral, Umakanta Choudhury, Pritiraj Mohanty, quickly followed by Lalu Mansinha, Dhanada Mishra, Smriti Panda, Sri Gopal Mohanty, Somdutt Behura, Abani Patra, Gopal Mohapatra, Sikhanda Satpathy and many others. Also, equally importantly, many generous people throughout North America, including some of my professors, provided donations to execute our projects in Odisha. Not only generous individuals who heard or came across us but also several regional chapters of the Odisha Society of America had financially contributed to SEEDS projects. I note that from the inception to the present day, SEEDS has been a "negative overhead" organization. Every penny we collect as a donation to SEEDS goes directly to the projects; there is no remuneration for volunteers and SEEDS executives, and additionally, the SEEDS volunteers and executives often spend their own funds to pay expenses related to SEEDS projects, such as project visits, donation shipment, telephone costs, etc. Many of the volunteers and donors have been supporting SEEDS in that capacity from the beginning until now. I will blog-post photocopies of some of the memorabilia (letters from our early generous supporters and project photographs) to www.seedsnet.org

After about a decade, starting in 1999, SEEDS entered into a new phase, what we now call Phase II of SEEDS. In the next few paragraphs, I recall how that came about, prompted by a natural disaster.

1999 Orissa Super Cyclone and Phase II of SEEDS

Orissa had been completely shattered by the worst-ever cyclone of the 20th century. Little did

the people living in the coastal area knew that the frenzied storm would bring their lives to an absolute halt at once. On the early hours of 29th October, Black Friday, as it came to be known, a massive and merciless cyclonic storm hit the coastal belt of Orissa killing thousands and displacing millions. The wind blew at an unbelievable velocity of 250-260 km per hour. The turbulent sea, rising up to 5-8 meters high, with accompanying continuous rain, had swept lakhs of houses out of existence. Such was the fury of nature that nothing except lifeless concrete structures had survived. Children had lost their mothers and adults were constantly looking up for the never-reaching food packets. Cattle had died in thousands and other animal casualties were unthinkable. The aerial survey showed that the coastal Orissa from Puri to Balasore had become the *extended* Bay of Bengal. Bhubaneswar, the capital city, was lying quietly in darkness and all possible links with the outer world had been cut off by this Super Cyclone. Though there was no official estimate of the human casualties available yet, independent observers and local workers figured it to be at least 20,000. The port city of Paradip had casualty ranging between 8000-10000, where the deceased were mostly daily wage laborers, fishermen and women. Many general physical and power infrastructures were severely damaged. Crop loss was at 100%.

The worst affected districts were Jagatsingpur, Kendrapada, Puri, Khurda, and Balasore, that had been totally disconnected from the rest of the country. Under these circumstances, we decided to intervene in those areas in some way. We didn't have the manpower to investigate, visit, implement, monitor and document every place. So, we selected a couple of local NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) who could ably assist. And we focused on mid-term rehabilitation, starting with farmers. We decided on helping the numerous areas on a rolling basis – few villages/panchayats at a time. The farmers constantly faced the problem of "too much and then too little" water. To deal with that problem, we introduced a project using the scientific method of micro-lift irrigation (MILP). We recruited the experts (agriculturists, irrigation engineers In Odisha) to help and reduce

implementation cost. Moreover, my colleagues and I thought of a way to get the local communities deeply engaged. We created a soft contract with a beneficiary village that would take the responsibility of recouping the project cost (given to them by SEEDS) from their next crops, which could then be used for the next MILP at a 'neighboring' village, making it a new beneficiary agreeing to the same contract. Thus, the notions of 'self-help' and 'community bootstrapping' spread from one village to another and the *Pani Panchayats* came into existence.

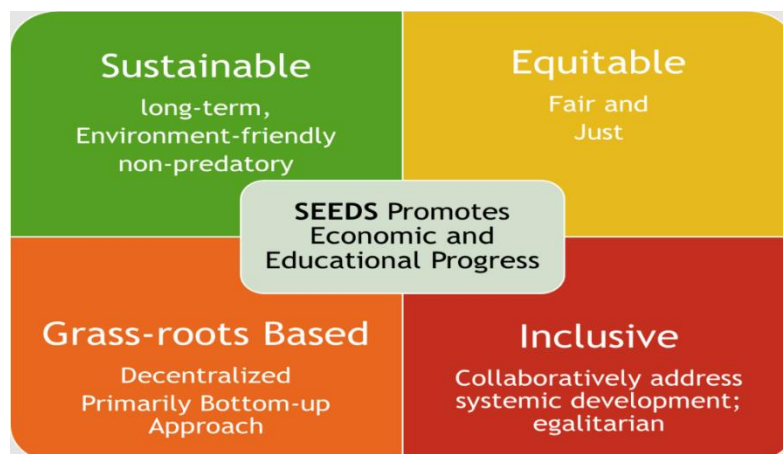
The success stories of the *Pani Panchayats* spread and even the government took some cues. The amount of money we raised for this rehabilitation was substantial (second only to that raised for the rehabilitation after Gujarat Earthquake in 2001, when we collaborated with another group). Yet, we had many challenges too, especially in maintaining, recycling funds and sustaining the project for long periods. The learnings from the successes and challenges led to a second revolution in our thinking and we got energized to enter *Phase II* of SEEDS. The MILP got refined, optimized, and scaled to many villages in coastal regions and later implemented

in Bolangir district as well. The model being low-cost, effective, community-driven, and planned for self-replication (applied at about 14 panchayats), could help the most with the least.

More than 15 years have passed since then, and our primary focus has shifted to "systemwide initiatives". While we did and still do engage in some immediate disaster relief after major disasters, being true to our philosophy, we have spent most of our resources and time on long-term rehabilitation and development projects in rural Odisha across a wide range of fields: education, health, women empowerment, water harvesting, applying Light Emitting Diode (LED) & Fly ash technologies, sustainable agriculture, and preservation of dying arts & crafts in Odisha. We hope to describe some of it elsewhere.

Thank you to all who have been a part of the SEEDS Journey or have supported it in other ways! Whether you are currently active in SEEDS or not, please visit us at www.seedsnet.org from time to time and stay connected!

Priyadarshan Patra, Founder and a Board Member of SEEDS, is a Dean and Professor of Computer Sciences, University of Petroleum and Energy Studies, Dehradun, India.



A journey of 25 years with SEEDS!!

Dhanada Mishra

As I cross 50, my high school recently celebrated golden jubilee having completed 50 years. Now Sustainable Educational and Economic Society (SEEDS) – a small yet significant source of inspiration for me completes 25 years. It is a milestone that brings back memories and makes me reflect on where we started, where we are today and what the future may hold. I have been blessed by the fact that my life's journey has brought me opportunities to work with many well-known non-profits dedicated to social welfare. Prominent among them are the Association for India's Development (AID), Pratham and the Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture (SPIC MACAY). Volunteering for these organizations brought me great satisfaction, learning and growth as an individual. SEEDS had a very special place in this journey over the last 25 years – unique in the way it has shaped me as I evolved in my thinking about Odisha's problems and their likely solutions. More importantly, it has taught me that what I received in the process of trying to help a cause was far greater than what I have managed to contribute.

It feels like it has been a long long time now when almost 30 years ago, I distinctly remember reading the news of distress from the infamous Kalahandi-Balangir region of Odisha. It was widely reported internationally including in the student newspaper of the University of Michigan



AID Rural Technology Resource Center (ARTRC) at Ranadevi village near Paralakhemundi

– The Michigan Daily. This was in the early nineties as I was starting my doctoral program. Coincidentally we had just started using the internet to start connecting with other Odiya graduate students and academics in the USA. Before long, the Kalahandi-Balangir Initiative (KBI) took shape and we had a critical mass of volunteers, members, donors and supporters to do something to help on the ground instead of engaging in endless discussions and blame-game. The passion and leadership of Dr Priyadarshan Patra, Himansu Barala, Dr Sikhanda Satapathy, Prof Lalu Mansinha, Prof Srigopal Mohanty etc in those early days was crucial in transforming KBI into SEEDS not before long with a proper constitution as a duly constituted and recognized non-profit. We even managed to get the 501c status from IRS which meant that our donors could get tax exemption. Many others like Mr Somdutta Behura, Mr Sandip Dasverma, Ms Ranu Mahanti, Smt Mamata Misra, Sri Subhas Choudhury, Prof. S.P. Mohanty, Sri Pranabesh Dash joined along the way and played important role in our journey.

The early years of SEEDS not only provided an opportunity to engage in some serious ground-level projects in remote locations in Odisha but also brought one in touch with like-minded friends who were a delight as a company. I benefited particularly from the close proximity of Lalu babu and Srigopal babu across the border in Canada from where I was in Ann Arbor. Every year we would also meet at the Odisha Society of Americas (OSA) gathering held in different cities which helped us to develop life-long friendships. With the SEEDS network, I never felt without help and support even on personal issues.

Our early projects such as the 'One Teacher Schools' with Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram in Kalahandi allowed me to visit parts of the state that I had never visited before. It was quite an adventure and an eye-opener in many ways. Visiting tribal villages so remote that it would be quite an effort to just get there and seeing the hardships endured by people made me reflect

deeply on the inequities ingrained in our society. It was in a true sense the beginning of my transformation as an adult engaging deeply with difficult questions that one would otherwise prefer not to confront. Having developed a keen interest in Gandhi, the work of Mother Lea Provo that I had volunteered within Tamil Nadu earlier during my undergraduate days, SEEDS was my first brush with real-life social challenges on my own.

The subsequent years saw many engagements until the eve of the year 2000 when the state of Odisha was devastated by the super cyclone. I was based in Australia by then. I was not only as active as always in volunteering myself for several social causes but was also very keen to explore a full-time engagement eventually back home. I must thank SEEDS for planting the 'seed' of that thought which eventually saw us (now with my wife Babita and 5-year-old son Anish) relocating back to Odisha in 2003. The relief and rehabilitation work following the super cyclone got me to interact and work with several organizations in Odisha. This was when I came to know many key personalities in the development sector in Odisha such as Sri Jagadanand of CYSD, Sri Joe Mediath of Gram Vikas, Sri Sudarsan Das of Unnayan, Sri Mohamad Amin of Adhikar and Madhu Bhai of Abhiyan among many others. Each is a person of great character in their own unique way and I have learnt a lot over the years through those relationships.

The journey with SEEDS involved meeting co-travelers who left indelible impressions on me. One such was late Dr Subhas Mahapatra, who gave much for the development of Odisha but on his own terms. A man of great ideas and strong opinions, Subhas babu was particularly fond of me. One of the earliest Odiyas to settle in North America who was involved in setting up of Odisha Society and subsequently his own non-profit – Indo-American Friendship Foundation (IAFF), Subhas babu was steadfast in his efforts to break the mold of traditional welfare and hand-out based approach to social development. He strongly advocated the power of new ideas and technology leveraged entrepreneurial mode of thinking to address the pressing problems of rural Odisha. Although an academician, he didn't believe in preaching but actually practising what

he preached no matter how hard it may have been. Among many of his ideas, one was the 'soil-less agriculture' which is a part of 'controlled environment agriculture'. He promoted it by setting up a demonstration farm in his own village in Dhenkanal which I had the privilege of visiting. His demonstration of growing plants on a bed of sand was as educative as it was instructive in society (particularly in rural Odisha) that is steeped in traditional belief bordering often on blind faith. Scientific temper is still a virtue that is not yet common among the masses. It reminded me of my own trials with low-cost concrete boats (supported by SEEDS) which had resulted in many to re-think the belief that country boats can only be made of wood as it's lighter than water! Although we see airplanes fly and ships built out of steel float in the ocean, still for many it is hard to believe that something as heavy as concrete can float! Subhas babu not only appreciated our efforts but actually was our first client to purchase one and take it to his farm. Among his plans was to make a floating platform for agriculture that would survive when water levels rose during floods or monsoon!! Subhas babu visited our Rural Technology Resource center at Paralakhemundi and we spent some quality time discussing various ideas to tackle issues facing rural populations ranging from agriculture to renewable energy and low-cost housing to education. I would never forget his counter-intuitive thinking and energy to go against the flow which probably didn't win him many friends. I have only SEEDS to thank for my acquaintance with him and his blessings.

SEEDS also was a major reason for my close relationship with Sri S C Choudhury in more recent years. A retired officer of the Indian Revenue Service, Choudhury babu was keenly into social work much before he completed his tenure. Having completed his successful career as a commissioner of excise and customs in Vishakhapatnam, one would think he would have enjoyed walking into his retirement looking for a comfortable life without stress and responsibility. Vikas Educational Charitable Trust was set up a few years before Choudhury babu's retirement for the sole purpose of raising funds for poor and meritorious students to pursue his/her higher studies. Thanks to his efforts many hundreds of carefully chosen students could have a smoother

passage through college. He was also the main coordinator for the Foundation for Excellence (FFE) scholarships administered in Odisha. This required diligent work creating a network of volunteers to find suitable candidates, checking their credentials, assisting with applications and disbursing the scholarships etc. That process has set up a very



Damaged campus of ARTRC in recent cyclone.

reliable and efficient system that works to date and benefits countless students. On top of it Vikash doesn't spend any money it collects towards overheads. Just like SEEDS it is a negative overhead organization with Choudhury babu generously spending his own money to cover all overheads besides giving much of his time for the same pro bono. Again, I must thank SEEDS for bringing me the opportunity to work with and get to know both personally and professionally such a wonderful person.

Each person on this journey – be it Lalu babu, Srigopal babu, Priyadarshan, Abani, Ranu apa or Gopal and others have played a special role in my life and consciousness. We may not have spent much time together physically, but we have always felt like a family. Someone said one of the hallmarks of a 'good' person is that he must have 'old' friends. On this count, I have been very fortunate. We have stuck together for whatever it is worth for 25 years and more. As we go forward with SEEDS established in Odisha and Darshan having just relocated, a new chapter would begin soon. One thing I have learnt working in the social sector in Odisha is that it's an endless journey! In fact, the journey indeed is the goal rather than the path to a goal. In that sense, it gives me great satisfaction. On the other hand, it makes me acutely aware of the challenges that remain and stare us in the face.

If we say SEEDS has under-achieved its potentials, then it would be an understatement for sure. Given the caliber of people involved and the amount of time each has put in; we have dis-proportionately little to show for it on the ground. But like they say, it is only a beginning and hopefully, the best is yet to come.

The recent damage we suffered at the campus of the AID Rural Technology Resource Center that runs the small pre-school 'Shaala' and practices organic agriculture among other things is symptomatic of the challenges we face. Built with support from AID and SEEDS (we have installed rooftop solar energy with support from SEEDS in recent times), the campus has seen better days and does struggle to meet its maintenance cost without donations! It is a challenge that is as old as my initiation into the social sector itself and much older. How to make our intervention sustainable and self-sufficient? One way is to give it your own resources and time like Choudhury babu does, but the more important challenge is to find a way that the project will earn for itself and grow! As we go forward, I plan to grapple with it.

SEEDS may or may not have brought succor to a very large number of its intended beneficiaries unlike non-profits like Pratham or SPIC MACAY that work on scale, but like the proverbial story in which the little boy keeps throwing the jellyfishes back into the sea, the ones among the millions stranded that got the help survived! From the very beginning, we in SEEDS recognized that all we can afford to do is be catalysts for positive change and time and again we have proven ourselves to be just that. Whether it was 'Computing for Masses' or helping to revive 'Pala' or our latest effort in setting up a community digital library, we have shown a model for larger NGOs or governments to replicate and scale. But much more important than the process of SEEDS has been an education in 'life' for each one of us as we visited remote rural areas, met and interacted with people struggling with challenges of life and appreciated their challenges and played role however small in trying to help overcome them. Such exposure, training and opportunity should be made available to everyone without which education itself remains dry, purposeless and incomplete.

Dhanada Kanta Mishra, a Board Member of SEEDS India Trust, the Director of KMBB College of Engineering and Technology, Odisha, India, is currently visiting as Research Scholar at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology on a sabbatical leave.

A quarter century of service with humility

Gopal Mohapatra

I still remember the day almost twenty-five years ago when Somdutt and I drove to Austin to meet Darshan bhai at UT. I had travelled from University of Arizona, Tucson to do a summer internship with Exxon. Somdutt was at University of Houston. Both of us wanted to get involved with projects to do good for people in rural Odisha. SEEDS had just taken birth and after a good discussion with Darshan bhai both of us came on board. That journey which started in summer of 1993 is still going on and will continue till I can no longer remember my own name.

We were young then. There is nothing more precious than youth and the enthusiasm backed energy it comes with. The urge to do something for Odisha was always burning inside. SEEDS had taken projects in the KBK area (Kalahandi Bolangir Koraput). This region was the talk of country then because of drought, deaths, and children trafficking. I was not a key player in this KBK effort except my monetary support. But this effort brought SEEDS into limelight among Odias in USA and in Odisha.

The year 1997 was a memorable year in my life from many angles. Among those one that stands out is the OSA convention in Houston. That convention still holds the distinction of being the most unique because of the largest ever participation from the government and industry in Odisha in a one-day business symposium. A lot of work by Manas, Somdutt and me led up to that successful symposium, so much so that one of the the-then bureaucrats from Odisha started calling us the three musketeers. In that process, I came to know more about Odisha – the poverty as well as the potential. This instilled in me a bigger urge and urgency to do something, however little may be, in Odisha to help the poor and folks lacking opportunity. As it would happen, during that time I also came to know about a village called Dalijoda near Cuttack-Dhenkanal border which would be a place for some great projects that SEEDS would ultimately be involved.

Daijoda is a village near hills and forests in Dhenkanal at an hour's drive from Cuttack. Residents of this village mostly belong to the lowest level of economic strata and to SC/ST class of society. A good number of the villagers earn their livelihood by working in agriculture, horticulture, cattle farming promoted by a local charitable trust. This trust, Sri Aurobindo Srikshetra, founded in 1960s is located over a 200-acre land donated by a family. Free integral education, consisting of training of mind and body, is provided by the trust to more than xxx children of Dalijoda and adjacent villages. The emphasis of the education is not only on textbooks but also on yoga, meditation, and physical exercise. The trust sustains itself through income generated by agriculture and horticulture while playing an integral role in the lives of the villagers by providing them employment, their children free education and above all awareness on health, hygiene and safety through training camps.

I visited Dalijoda at the request of a family friend in 1997. I was impressed by the diversity of flower plants, herbal plants, fruits and vegetables apart from regular crops such as paddy. The whole ambiance had peace, order and organization that is rarely seen in such rural conditions. Students in green and white uniform, both girls and boys, exuded confidence, humility and eagerness to learn. A dozen of permanent residents in the institution managed the place which is quite a task. It left no room for someone seeking outgrowth opportunities, hence no external visibility and not much help apart from visitors who came there, got impressed and provided personal help. Dharani bhai, the team lead there, explained to me the harsh conditions – weather, malaria, elephant incursions, the team lives but puts its best to sustain the place and make a difference in lives of the local people.

One of the immediate need Dharani bhai talked about then was the urgent need of a deep tube well which would help during summer months when the wells go dry as water table

drops. I brought the proposal to SEEDS and it got approved. This deep tube well project was the first project at Dalijoda by SEEDS. Drilled to more than 120 ft, this deep tube well till date provides the necessary potable water to the residents, students, and visitors.

The second project SEEDS undertook was 'Adopt A Student Project' - AASP. I led this project and we had donors in the US sponsoring more than 30 students consisting of boys and girls from different age groups. All these students were from poor families, with one or no parent. The students got free meals, clothes, books and pocket money for miscellaneous expenses. Donors used to receive letters from students. SEEDS website hosted a section for AASP where students were featured for possible sponsorship. The project ran well for three years and stopped sometime in 2000-01. By this time the super cyclone of 1999 had taken a devastating toll on coastal Odisha. Dalijoda was no exception and the rebuilding effort post super cyclone stopped the program and it could never recover again.

Talking about super cyclone, it occurred in December of 1999. People were caught off guard and thousands perished; many coastal villages were flooded. In Dalijoda, school buildings made up of mud blocks collapsed, gardens and greenhouses suffered heavy damage. It would take a year or two to get onto feet, let alone education. Dalijoda requested funding to rebuild the school, this time with brick and cement. There was a big fundraising effort in the US by OSA and SEEDS to help with super cyclone relief and rehabilitation efforts. In Houston, I led the effort and we raised about \$25,000. I must mention the help of a senior alum of IIT-Kharagpur, Joe Sreshta, who took me to some of his rich clients and connected me with some Indian organizations in Houston. We approached another non-profit org IDRF which also agreed to support. With SEEDS and IDRF support, Dalijoda was able to construct two brick cement buildings which till date house many classrooms without worrying about any future disasters.

The school building project was the big project at Dalijoda for a long time till 2018. In the meantime, SEEDS volunteers in their personal capacity have helped Dalijoda financially or connecting with experts in horticulture, education,

and health related fields. One such help was to build a couple of guest rooms to provide modern accommodation to visitors.

All along its journey, Dalijoda has been having a persisting issue of elephant incursion from nearby forests. The dwindling forests drive the elephants to nearby areas for food and shelter. Dalijoda premise, full of crops, vegetables, and fruits, is a favorable destination which the elephants have taken full advantage of with their intelligence and memory. There has been threat to life of residents too. Fencing the 200-acre land, about 5km in perimeter, with a brick-cement or heavy-duty wire fence has proved to be cost prohibitive. In recent years solar power enabled fencing has become usable and capable to provide enough electric shock to prevent the elephants, cows and other animals from encroaching. Dalijoda requested SEEDS funding for such a project to protect and preserve the self-sustainability which it has achieved over the years. SEEDS approved the project and it is currently in progress.

During last few years, SEEDS has also taken up the E-library project. Not all places in India have been on the entire digital map, especially wireless communication. The e-library system contains volumes of educational material in all fields of science, math, technology and other subjects for students to learn in a client-server set up without depending on internet. The system is built entirely by Darshan bhai in a cost-effective way. SEEDS funded this project in Dalijoda to get the students on e-learning curve without falling behind their peers elsewhere.

SEEDS, since its inception, has done a variety of socio-economic, educational, cultural and health science related projects in different parts of Odisha in last twenty-five years. As a board member and volunteer, I have contributed my time and financial resource all along and am pleased about what we have been able to achieve. We have taken up projects in needy areas and entrusted the work to able organizations like Dalijoda and see the fruit enjoyed by people who deserve it the most. It has been a fulfilling and meaningful journey in life through SEEDS. I hope more and more folks would jump into SEEDS boat and enjoy the benefit of sailing in the ocean called humanity.

Gopal Mohapatra Treasurer of Board, SEEDS, is a geophysicist living in Houston, Texas, USA, working at the Hess Corporation as a technical advisor.

Recounting my 'SEEDS's experience

Sri Gopal Mohanty

In 1993, an accidental coincidence occurred in the vast world's complex dynamic process that creates myriads of events, situations, and phenomena whether perceptible or not. For the world barring a counted few individuals, it was neither noticeable nor memorable by any account. But for those few individuals who almost did not know each other and were scattered in distant places, the coincidence accidentally brought for them a lifetime's bonding among each other. They all happened to be from Odisha, a State in India. It was nothing but a compelling collective inner urge they had and action they took that were concretized to have eventually a name - SEEDS, more elaborately as Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society.

The origin of SEEDS and its precursor is accidental. Odisha, formerly called Orissa has apparently been cursed to suffer from regular occurrences of cyclone, flood and drought. Somehow the people have been fatalistic to accept these natural disasters as part of their existence. However, the severe drought condition in Kalahandi and Balangir region of the State in 1993 suddenly caught the attention of the international media spreading the news of utter negligence of the Government in ameliorating the unspeakable sufferings of the victims, almost all of them being tribal people. Yes, such news could have a routine impact of indifference on the readers. Accidentally, not so this time on Priyadarshan Patra and a few graduate students like him in Austin. They decided to do something, no matter how modest the help might be. Their determination and zeal transformed to form what they called, Kalahandi Balangir Initiative (KBI). The foundation stone was laid for something with an unknown future and without any thought or knowledge that this initiative could form the embryo of SEEDS.

Coincidentally, that was the period when another graduate student Ashutosh Dutta from

Columbia University along with friends started ORNET, an internet communication network primarily to connect people from Odisha living in North America. ORNET without doubt took this Austin-grown initiative to every corner of North America. The space thus shrunk to gather new energy into this humanitarian initiative and quite a few joined to express their overwhelming solidarity for KBI.

Almost all members at that time except perhaps Lalu Mansinha, Mamata Misra and myself were students. It was decided that each member would contribute \$10/month for the Initiative. Then the obvious question was being asked: What can we do with this meagre resource? Meager or not, KBI moved to act in that region, not exactly in redressing the starvation problem but in helping the people of the region like selecting a school for its development. Its initial projects were to help the residential school in Thuamul, Kalahandi, run by Vanavasi Seva Prakalpa, a local NGO and another school by NGO Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, Jalespeta, Kandhamal. Dhanada Mishra, a student founding member took the lead to visit the places and negotiate the projects with the NGOs. Thus, the foundation was laid in and we reacted with joy.

At this point the accidental coincidence evolved to take a shape from this novice experience in KBI. The group realized that its intended objective which amounted to economic development eventually turned into educational development. More than that, for the group it became a win-win situation because through a small amount of monetary input in education the group could think of bringing sustainability in development. Soon KBI formally became SEEDS. And there ends its birth story.

Not surprisingly, SEEDS was nurtured and protected by its ardent members acting as most devoted guardians. They still do it. Except for

their devotion and commitment, they did not know exactly how to proceed. Yet they understood their objectives for economic and educational development should be:

- Sustainable (long-term, self-supporting, environmentally non-predatory)
- Equitable (fair and just)
- Decentralized (grass-root based, bottom-to-top approach)

In terms of sustainability, SEEDS for obvious reasons, thought of working with selected NGOs in supporting specific projects which are part of their long-term objectives.

At the beginning of this new journey, there was no clear goal. In the jungle of vast economic and social needs and endless number of NGOs, our approach was to identify through acquaintances a few trustworthy organizations to support which have a good track record. Initially, Lalu Mansinha (Lalu Babu) and Priyadarshan Patra (Darshan) were on-the-go. Their search led SEEDS to assist ASRA (Association for Social Reconstructive Activities) for health education and facilities in Naugan Block, Jagatsingpur and GJS (Gopinathpur Juba Sangha) in Khurda for their SHGs (Self Help Groups, women organizations). Our approach has always been that we would be personally monitoring our projects from its initiation to the end.

We may call this phase “**Inception Phase.**”

That was a period of rumination and experimentation until Odisha was hit hard in 1999 by a most disastrous super-cyclone. The coastal area was so devastated that many localities were difficult to recognize. The colossal tragedy while giving a rude shock to all of us also made a wake-up call to rise to the challenge with a spurt of energy for this occasion. We said: We have a moral duty to intervene. And we asked: How best can we respond?

A vigorous fundraising drive became our immediate focus which resulted in a substantial collection. We pooled our collection with CanOSA's collection in Canada. At the beginning, we spontaneously joined with organizations for relief work only for a short while. In the mean time we were searching for ideas on sustainable project for which Somdutt Behura and Lalu Mansinha from the group went to India. With the

help of Devdutt - Somdutt's brother – and Sudarsan Das from an Odisha based NGO, Unnnayan, an innovative concept - **Pani Panchayat** – was put forward and implemented for livelihood security in villages of Jagatsingpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack and Puri Districts. A Pani Panchayat -water council – is a cooperative organization formed by a group of farmers to own a motorized water pump and share water drawn for farming either from an existing or underground source for the steady supply of water. In addition, the women in the villages were helped to form SHGs for gaining experience in microfinance that was introduced in the country during that period. The entire project was highly successful in its outcome, primarily assuring its sustainability. For SEEDS this initiative became the guiding light and provided the confidence for the future.

However, there was a lacuna in its execution. SEEDS's intention was to provide revolving funds to Pani Panchayats - that is, the money given to finance the installation of a pump was a loan to be returned in installments so that it could be loaned to benefit another group of farmers in the same way. Unfortunately, the idea of revolving funds to expand the panchayats in the neighborhood failed since neither Panchayats voluntarily paid back the loan, nor SEEDS planned any mechanism for collection and redistribution.

Nevertheless, the super-cyclone triggered a flurry of activities by SEEDS (see the following table) which were not limited to any particular situation affected by it.

SEEDS also implemented projects by funds collected by other groups/organizations. From funds collected by CanOSA, two noteworthy projects were: (i) formation of Milk Panchayat in Remuna, Balasore District, a concept similar to Pani Panchayat for livelihood security and (ii) restoration of the residence building at Satyabhamapur Kanyashram in Kendrapada District (run by KGNMT - Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust) which was damaged by the super-cyclone. There was the third one in Nuapada District which was hit by severe drought condition soon after super-cyclone. With the help of Kalahandi Vikas Parishad, many ponds were dug as a water harvesting measure to provide livelihood security in future years.

District (Block/Place)	NGO	Project activity	Goal
Puri (Konarak)	Odissa Dance Academy	Cyclone repair	Art Education in Orissa
Cuttack (Dalijoda)	Aurobindo SriKshetra	Cyclone – school repair; pump for irrigation	Education in tribal area
Ganjam (Ganjam)	United Artists Association	Cyclone – school repair; provide better school environment	Improvement in education
Balangir (Baghbahali)	REACHD	Minor LI point; pani panchayat; SHG - microcredit	Livelihood security; income generation
Balangir (Kandhaich-hapar, Chauldia)	The Humanity	Land leveling, building check dams; food for work; composting	Livelihood security
Nuapada (several places)	KVP	Water harvesting, digging ponds	Livelihood security
Rayagada (Keu-taguda)	Utkal Khadi Mandal (Gopalbadi)	Supporting the school	Education in tribal area
Sambalpur (Jhan-karbahali)	BISWA	Bamboo plantation, land ownership and sustainability	Livelihood security for landless people
Gajapati (Mohana Block)	SACAL	Poultry farming and training - support SHG	Income generation
Mayurbhanj (Betnoti Block)	IMTS	Cyclone - support SHGs	Income generation
Jajpur (Jagatpur)	SRDO	Poultry farming, goatary, kitchen garden	Income generation
Khurda (Gopinathpur)	GJS	Support SHGs, mushroom farming	Income generation
Dhenkanal (Mahulapada)	Indira Social Welfare Organisation	Support SHGs, candle manufacturing	Income generation
Angul (Anugul)	Bajiraut Chhatrabas	Pump for garden water supply	Education for SC/ST children; income supplement
Khurda (Bhubaneswar)	Unnayan/ Dhanada Mishra	Ferro-cement boat for marginal or small-scale fisher-folks	Appropriate technology development
Ganjam (Kodala)	SAIMA	School for the mentally handicapped	Special Education and “integrating the voiceless”
Khurda (Bhubaneswar)	Utkal University, Vanivihar	Blind Students Project - Community donation for eye-sight restoration	Targeted help for the very disadvantaged but meritorious college students

This was the period when a maximum expansion of activities took place. It may be called, “**Expansion Phase**” which perhaps lasted for 7-8 years.

During this phase, the primary focus was on two items: livelihood security and income generation. However, with Dhanada Mishra’s initiative, a flood rescue scheme – an unusual one from the routine - was taken up to build ferro-cement boats with appropriate technology. It was also during this time that the operational structure of SEEDS took a defining shape, that it should be

- democratic, egalitarian and non-sectarian; and that it would
- receive, review, monitor projects; make site visits and stay in touch with NGOs and individuals even after the completion of projects; remain focused on sustainability and long-term impacts; network with other groups.

I entered the scene during the second phase and that too more frequently, primarily to make essential site visits. This was possible for me as I retired in 1997, although I also visited ASRA’s project sites in Naugan, Jagatsingpur and GJS’s project in Gopinathpur, Khurda earlier. For the first time I had opportunities to travel to many places, especially in Southern and Western Odisha. My contact directly with the beneficiaries, the villagers, the women, the tribal people and my exposure to exact situations, surroundings and challenges where SEEDS would be involved taught me a lot. My limitation as it would be for others was that I had to go through representatives of respective NGOs. Nonetheless, I had very enriching learning experience from those field trips.

The accidental coincidence gradually infused its own chemistry to give a watery type jello shape of bonding - not solid and not liquid either. Just after the period of tackling cyclone disaster through micro-irrigation and initial formation of SHGs for introducing micro-credit, perhaps it was an opportune time to reflect on: What then?

From sustainability point of view, two ideas were brought in: (i) work with a few NGOs/institutions through the initiative of SEEDS members and (ii) on a few projects that would

benefit a larger segment of the society and possibly could need a commitment for a relatively longer duration.

These new thoughts when transformed into action, has led to what may be called,” **Transformation Phase**”, following Expansion Phase.

For instance, SEEDS joined primarily with Vikas Educational Charitable Trust (VECT) which is spearheaded by Subhas Choudhury to provide scholarships for many years to students selected in RMTS (Rural Math Talent Search). Institute of Mathematics and Applications (IMA) under the leadership of Professor Swadhin Patnaik, conceived RMTS as a path breaking attempt to bring in the rural kids to the fore in Math before they wither away. The outcome has been phenomenal so much so that the project has been taken over recently by the Government of Odisha. SEEDS has also supervised scholarships offered by Foundation for Excellence (FFE) to bright but needy students. SEEDS member Sandip Dasverma having possessed a keen aptitude for educational development has most often been instrumental in initiating and guiding such projects.

Due to the need of time, SEEDS’s emphasis during the Expansion Phase was on economic development - livelihood security and income generation. Time came when the focus changed to educational development without abandoning the other one. Besides financial support to needy students, the current thought primarily due to Priyadarshan, is to set up library facilities, more specifically, installing e-library system for the benefit of rural communities. The project is in progress.

An attempt was made to popularize solar power in rural areas. The experiment started in three villages by selling lanterns charged by solar power at a cost price to be paid in monthly instalments. Once the original invested amount is refunded, that would be invested in another village. Somehow the experiment did not succeed to spread around.

Women can play a significant role in sustainable and wholesome development. They can act as agents of change and become instruments for progress. But first they need to be empowered.

Ranu Mahanti among us had a novel idea called 'helping women by women through nano-finance' and formed the NGO - Amara Biswas (Our Trust). Nano Finance is a system which provides the opportunity for the poorest of the poor women (unlike micro-finance) to have interest free loans of not more Rs 1000 to support their livelihood and emergency needs. The management of loans is based on mutual trust among women. SEEDS gave initial financial support to Amara Biswas and is always supportive of its activities.

A complimentary approach in empowering women is through Mahila Shanti Sena (MSS) in which women who are trained to be self-driven empowered through their inner conviction lead a peaceful movement in community building. Under SEEDS's initiative, it started in Odisha in 2005 and has remained active till today. I am supervising MSS.

Under the leadership of Satya Mohanty and Lalu Mansinha, SEEDS took an unusual direction in supporting the project initiated by Prasana Dash for revival and rejuvenation of 'Pala' and 'Rabana Chhaya', an aberration from its

traditional involvement in economic and educational development. Yet the project which essentially pertains to the preservation of Odisha's cultural heritage has an influence on cultural education and economic benefit for the performers from rural areas. At the end of five years there were more than 100 *Pala* groups of which 30 had women leader *gayikas* – a remarkable progress against the backdrop of *Pala* that was almost dying.

A new concept of introducing e-library in rural area is being experimented in Dalijoda Aurobindo SriKshtra where SEEDS had contributed substantially during super-cyclone. The primary objective is to focus on Dalijoda for its wholesome wellbeing through providing clean water, solar power, incentive for income generation, e-library and establishing MSS for women upliftment.

SEEDS is a choir and we are the singers. We are creating our own music and singing in harmony. While we enjoy singing, we believe our music is creating a joyous environment and a sense of beauty around us.

Sri Gopal Mohanty, Professor emeritus, McMaster University, Canada, is Chair of the SEEDS Board of Directors, the Vice President of Women's Peace Brigade International in Canada and the Chair of Gandhi Peace Festival, Hamilton, Canada.



"Love India, Clean India" – MSS Village Activity

Reflections on My Association With SEEDS

Mamata Misra

My role in Sustainable Economic Educational Development Society (SEEDS) had started as an observer rather than a participant, a spectator who stood on the side and clapped rather than playing a part. The observing started long before SEEDS came into existence. It started perhaps sometime in early 90s (I cannot recall the exact year) when Priyadarshan Patra (Darshan) had joined the University of Texas at Austin (UT) as a graduate student, and his concerns seemed wider than the usual concerns of graduate students my husband and I met. He was talking passionately about the condition of our state of Orissa and how he was working with a student group called India Progressive Action Group (IPAG) on campus to support small sustainable projects in rural Orissa. I knew of IPAG for a different reason. I had been to a couple of IPAG's independent film screenings on UT campus that focused on problems faced by women. The screenings were followed by moderated discussions.

Interestingly, beginnings of two distinct and separate organizations, SAHELI (now called Asian Family Support Services of Austin) and SEEDS, were being formed in the hearts and minds of some of the members of IPAG. SAHELI was born in 1992 when a couple of IPAG members found out while attending a conference of several progressive organizations held in Chicago that Indian battered women in Texas were calling a Chicago based South Asian women's shelter for help because there wasn't any such organization in Texas. SEEDS came into existence in 1993, when Darshan's vision of doing more sustainable development work in Orissa could no longer be contained within the scope of IPAG.

I got heavily involved with SAHELI, as it was a local organization, with tremendous needs. Having quit a career as a software developer, I had a lot of time and a big appetite for learning what do to in terms of providing the assistance needed to survivors of family violence: safety planning, housing, needs of children, legal help,

livelihood, emotional and financial support. There was also community education, volunteer training, fundraising, and organizational aspects of the work that needed to be done. All this kept me quite busy for about 12 years. My work on problems women faced locally connected me with other activists, in the US and other countries including India, who worked on similar or related problems. We formed networks when the Internet became widely available starting in the second half of the nineties, to learn from and inspire one another.

After finishing his Ph.D, Darshan left Austin and settled in Portland. With him, SEEDS moved and officially got incorporated in Oregon. My involvement in SEEDS remained limited because of its long-distance focus. It wasn't possible for me to monitor any SEEDS project or visit project sites during my short trips to India full of family obligations. I supported SEEDS by raising funds every now and then for long term rehabilitation projects of SEEDS after natural disasters such as cyclones and famines and writing/editing articles about SEEDS in the Journal of the Orissa Society of Americas (OSA) to raise awareness among Odias in the US. I didn't quite know how to be an effective participant in an organization without much local focus.

Through OSA conventions, and particularly the OSA Women's Forums, where I initially participated and later became an organizer for several years, I met Joyasree (Ranu) Mahanti of Michigan, who told me about Basundhara, a shelter for destitute women and children in Orissa, where Ranu served several months every year. As my children got older, I started visiting Orissa alone to spend time with aging parents and parents-in-law. Around late nineties, I visited Basundhara once, and participated in a gathering of women activists in Bhubaneswar area to understand the combined problem of sexual exploitation of young unmarried women, social taboo, and lack of sexual health and safety education that led to pregnancies in unwed

women and premature birth of babies in Orissa. That was eye opening to say the least.

I had heard that SEEDS had started supporting women's empowerment projects. The commonality between what I was doing locally through SAHEL to empower women and what was happening in Odisha to empower women attracted me to find out more. In 1999, at the OSA convention in Toronto, Canada, I met Sudarsan Das and Rashmi Mohanty of Unnayan, an organization in Bhubaneswar that empowered rural women through creation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and micro lending schemes. I was heartened to hear Rashmi speak eloquently and answer my questions about their approach to the problem. SEEDS had supported Unnayan's projects and had a trusted relationship with Unnayan. In one of my subsequent visits to Bhubaneswar, I visited Unnayan and learnt more about their work in detail. They proudly talked about their Baripada 'mudhi' (crispy puffed rice) project - how women had formed cooperatives in Baripada that had created business ownership for women who until then were making mudhi as low wage laborers for well to do families. Due to lack of capital to buy rice, they were not able to own their trade before, even though Baripada mudhi had a name in Orissa for its quality. Economic empowerment through the cooperative and group ownership had also been a huge confidence booster for the rural women.

As we entered the 21st century, there were more developments along this line. A rural women's movement called Mahila Shanti Sena (MSS) that had started in Bihar was spreading to other parts of India. MSS is a peace movement to empower women to build a peaceful and just society, where through residential workshops and peer-to-peer encouragement and support, women become aware of their collective strength and power to solve problems that affect their lives, such as violence, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, etc.; they also receive training in peaceful means, democracy, development, their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and in Gandhian tradition of engaging in constructive village service.

Dr. Sri Gopal Mohanty of Canada, who had been a core member of SEEDS, with others at the Center for Peace Studies, McMaster

University, had taken MSS to Orissa. With its experience in empowering and organizing rural women in Odisha through SHGs and cooperatives, Unnayan was providing the leadership training workshops of MSS in Odisha. In 2012, invited by Dr. Mohanty, I attended a daylong regional meeting of the Odisha MSS, where more than 100 rural women convened. In these meetings I was humbled by the simplicity, authenticity, courage, and discipline of the MSS women, speaking from their hearts, telling their stories of empowerment that would touch any heart. I felt their solidarity much like the solidarity I have felt in my work with women in the US.

Then Ranu Mahanti took the micro-finance idea to a deeper level. Noticing the limitations of microfinance schemes, she had started a Nano Finance scheme that SEEDS supported. Ranu eventually founded a separate non-profit called Aamara Biswas (see ourbiswasusa.org). Nano Finance is a system which provides the opportunity for the poorest of the poor women all over the world to have access to individual interest free loans of the equivalent of 20 USD to support their livelihoods, emergency needs, school fees for their children and health care for their family. Based on mutual trust, the community coordinators, chosen by women in the program from among themselves, manage the distribution and collection of the loans. Invited by Ranu Mahanti, I have attended a meeting of Amara Biswas, where again I heard directly from rural women in Odisha who have lifted themselves out of poverty with a \$20 interest free loan to start with, gained self-confidence, and have become leaders as group coordinators who are empowering other women. More recently, Amara Biswas has started a Sanitary Napkin project, to manufacture and sell at low cost, sanitary napkins to women who cannot afford to buy sanitary napkins sold in retail stores. Even though a small-scale operation, and not self-sustaining yet, it addresses what is a huge problem in India, women's basic health needs. I am happy that I have been able to support through SEEDS projects that empower women in Odisha.

Other SEEDS projects that I have supported to some extent have been through the Vikash Educational Charitable Trust (VECT) that

provides scholarships to poor, needy, and meritorious students from rural areas, who are unable to continue their education due to lack of money and guidance. Invited by Subhas Ch. Choudhury, a core member of SEEDS and chairman of VECT, I have been to an event in Bhubaneswar where I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with a few VECT scholarship recipients.

While SEEDS leaders and some of the project outcomes have inspired me, I have also worried about its future, its own sustainability and development. I have voiced this concern to my colleagues at SEEDS. For sustainability, an all-volunteer organization like SEEDS must have a constant flow of volunteers, and the capacity to engage new volunteers in some meaningful way. It also needs to have a wide base of members or

supporters. In SEEDS, pretty much the same leadership has continued from the beginning. Number of active volunteers has shrunk as original members have aged, retired, or moved on. More recently, a couple of new volunteers have joined, which brings some hope. But it is difficult to be active in SEEDS due to its lack of any local focus or well-defined roles for volunteers. It is not clear where SEEDS will be in the next 20 years. Would a group of new leaders come forward and lead it to its future? Would its current leaders be able to inspire new young volunteers like their younger selves from college campuses in the US or Odisha and keep them motivated? Or would SEEDS just fizzle out when its current leaders retire? While one can hope for the best, only time will tell.

Mamata Misra, a member of the Board, SEEDS, teaches Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) classes in person and online in Austin, Texas, USA.



A regional convention of the MSS women in Odisha in 2012

SEEDS as a Forum

Joyasree (Ranu) Mahanti

My first acquaintance with SEEDS was in one of the Orissa Society of America (OSA) conventions. I don't remember the exact year. It must be more than two decades. I always wanted to do something in Odisha but did not have any idea how and what exactly I wanted to do and how I to do it. It was encouraging to meet the members of the SEEDS. I realized we all had the same goal and dream. Most of the founding members of organization were young and pursuing their education with young families.

First time I requested SEEDS through Priyadarshan Patra, one of the founding members to support a Bamboo planting project while working in the interior villages of Sambalpur district in 2003. Though SEEDS did not have much funds at that time, they supported the project. I was thrilled to know that some people have the trust in my work, and it was possible to pursue one's dream.

In December 2007, I established Aamara Biswas organization to implement the Nano Finance concept. Again, I had requested SEEDS through Prof. Sri Gopal Mohanty to give a few thousand dollars to create a corpus fund for the sustainability of the organization. With SEEDS's and other's contribution Aamara Biswas started the corpus fund with 5 lakhs. It has increased with time and now the accrued interest supports the salaries of the coordinators and some other expenses of Aamara Biswas for six months.

I also met Mr. S. C. Choudhury, the Chairman of Vikash Educational Charitable Trust and the Secretary of SEEDS India Trust. He was a great help to me when I started Aamara Biswas. I did

not have much knowledge about how to manage a nonprofit organization. I have learnt many legal aspects of a nonprofit organization through his guidance.

Mamata Misra, another founding members of SEEDS continuously supports Aamara Biswas.

Prof. Satya Mohanty, another member of SEEDS, is the major promoter of the Nano Finance project in Khamara, Anugul district. Due to his interest and support, Aamara Biswas currently is working in 20 villages of the Anugul district and supporting nearly 3000 women. The project is expanding every year.

The success of Aamara Biswas and my dream for working for the most underprivileged women of Odisha was partially possible due to my acquaintance with the dedicated members of SEEDS and their trust in my work. I am extremely indebted for their help and contribution in different ways which I will never forget.

I realize with time we all choose different paths to help Odisha in many different ways. We share our dreams, exchange our ideas, learn from each other, and try our best make a dent in the society which helps the poorest of poor to get the basic needs which are their rights. Living in US and working in Odisha is not an easy task but it is possible.

Currently, there are many activities that are being undertaken by SEEDS with which I am not personally involved. Bhanu and I are fortunate to be the members of SEEDS and hope to continue our support for the coming years.

Joyasree (Ranu) Mahanti, Founder and President of Our Biswas, is a social activist for the empowerment of women of the world, living in Lansing, Michigan, USA.

The journey to revive Pala and role of SEEDS, USA

Prasanna Kumar Dash

The villagers in Odisha had developed many indigenous art forms for their entertainment. Pala, the ballad singing tradition of Odisha was a unique form of performing art, which once occupied the space in coastal Odisha as a cardinal source of entertainment. Pala had once appealed to the popular mind, as it had in it, the admixture of contrary matrix like music of classical form and folk lyrics and music, comedy and serious enacting of emotions, epic literature in Sanskrit and lucid metaphors in folk language, erudition with benighted comments, synthesis of Islamic and Sufi tradition with Hindu tradition. The form which had dominated the scene had to yield space to cinema and TV to the extent that it suffered near extinction.

As a child in a village, I fondly remembered the days when I travelled in the pitch-dark night to far off villages on my father's bicycle to watch pala. The past memory of pala and its charms prompted me to do something to revive pala and its traditions. The way to revive it as it was perceived by me, was to hold competitions in all districts of Odisha and to identify the prime components of pala and to judge performance in those components with judges from eminent Pala singers, researchers and professors. This necessitated holding the competitions at ground level and improving the quality of performance through expert comments and remarks by such veteran judges. It was decided to organize pala competition in four zones and to document it. Finally, the shows are to be recorded and telecast with expert comments on the performance.

Prof Satya P. Mohanty of Cornell University and my senior in college, mooted the idea of putting in place the "Cultural infrastructure" which can revive pala. He gave the idea that the traditional pala organizers, who organized weeklong Pala with different pala groups in their village pala *Mandaps*, should be encouraged to take leading role in this effort. He also advised that the classical Odishi music, namely *Chhanda*, *Champu*, *Astapadi* etc should also be popularized through pala, by organizing workshops for

the pala singers. He also suggested that pala should be presented with progressive literature like *Laxmi Purana*. His guidance was of immense value for me. He also introduced an Odia diaspora organization, SEEDS, USA, a voluntary organization to fund the pala programme for five years. The Society for Development of Rural Literature (SDRL), a non-profit, cultural society, which is running a rural public library, Prafulla Pathagar, for last 25 years in a village in Odisha and has published 32 books on history and culture of Odisha was roped in to execute the project.

First competition was lined up in 2009, which had the schedule of bringing all pala groups to Prafulla Pathagar premises and make the selection of best three under the title, *Chhanda Bibhushan* – one who excels in classical Odissi singing like *Chhanda* or *Champu* etc; *Tatwa Bibhushan* – one who explains and analyses the epics with high intellectual calibre; *Laasya Bibhushan* – one who excels in acting. Eminent judges were selected from different fields like Prof. Rajat Kar, who is an authority on classical Odia literature on Upendra Bhanj, Dinakrushna, etc. Prof. Gourang Dash, who is an authority on Odia literature and himself a *Ravan Chhaya* performer (another folk performing art of Odisha), Dr. Kirtan Narayan Parhi, an eminent musicologist on Odishi Music, Prof. N. Panda, an eminent Pala Gayak and others.

Arrangement was made for almost 25 troupes at Prafulla Pathagar premises. Each group was asked to give performance for 30 minutes in 1st round, out of which only 8 troupes would qualify for semi-final in which they will also perform for 40 minutes and three groups would go to final, who would perform for 1 hr each. Each round of performance will be on a particular *rasa* out of 9 rasas, namely, Sringar rasa, Karuna rasa, Veera rasa, etc. This would continue over two days to select the final groups. The performance was supposed to start from 11 am.

Several protests were registered by the pala groups at this stage. The singers said that they can't perform during daytime as they are used to

sing during night and their voice will not be clear during day. Second opposition was that they normally perform for 2-3 hrs and they can't give performance within half an hour. They also protested without narrating the full story, they can't perform on a particular rasa. After a lot of persuasion, they agreed to perform. Second problem was the audience had some choice and if their choice didn't get selected, then they used to protest. However, this problem was tackled, and the procedure of selection was modified to allow the audience to give marks to each performer. But it was only given 20% weightage. The First-year selection of three main performers went up well and the procedure laid down in first year was followed in subsequent years.

Next year, as per advice of Prof. Satya Mohanty, it was decided to hold the competition in four zones, North, South, East and West. The competitions were organized at the traditional village pala mandaps, in association with erstwhile organizers of pala Mandaps, which was in decadent stage, due to non-performance during last many years. The four judges used to visit all these Mandaps during the period when pala competition was taking place and select the best three performers. The process of selection was done by them after considering 25% weightage to rating of the audience. This was continued for five years and 15 groups (3 groups in each year selection) were shortlisted in the final round of the competitions. More than 234 troupes had participated in these competitions.

In the meantime, after 2nd year and 3rd year competition, two workshops were organized to produce pala on two progressive epic literature, namely *Laxmi Purana* and *Kichak badha*. The fortnight long workshop was participated by more than 20 pala singers. The existing texts were rewritten in pala format by pt. Gourang Kanungo and under the guidance of eminent drama Director, Prof. S. Rout of National Theatre Academy, Hyderabad, pala was choreographed. The pala on these two topics were presented at six independent places of Bhubaneswar before the urban elites and the newly choreographed pala was highly appreciated by the audience.

The Grand Finale for selection of *Gayak Ratna* (Jewel of Singers) was planned to be held in the historic Ravenshaw University Assembly

Hall, in collaboration with Prafulla Pathagar, SEEDS, USA, Department of Culture, Government of Odisha and Ravenshaw University. The competition was planned over two days, to select one group as Gayak Ratna. As per suggestion of the judges, wild-Cat entry was allowed to six eminent veteran pala groups, who didn't participate in earlier competitions. Thus, the existing 15 final Panelists and six veteran groups participated in the process of selection of Gayak Ratna. After two days, the Gayak Ratna was conferred on one pala singer, by way of crowning him with a silver head gear.

Thus, my five years' journey for reviving pala was completed in 2014 and the entire proceeding was video recorded. Sixteen episodes were made out of the video recordings and was telecast in Doordarshan.

Impact study:

An impact study of the project was done by another NGO, e-Kutir. The Pala competition held in five years had wide impact both on quality of performance and livelihood of the performers. e-Kutir team as a process of impact study had contacted to find out the experience of the users on the basis of the following 4 questions:

1.Benefits; 2.Livelihood; 3.Impact on the next generation; 4.Suggestions.

100% users have expressed their satisfaction on the intangible benefits which they are getting like more number of people contacting for business and recognition though in terms of livelihood they do not depend necessarily on the performance. The income from the performance is more in terms of more engagement but not in terms of per day performance.

- I. Quality of Pala: Since competition was done all over the states, in four geographical regions, 234 troupes were identified during the competition in five years, who participated in the competition. Since the judges were eminent Pala singers and they analyze each performance, the troupes knew their areas of weakness and there was a competitive spirit, which improved the quality.
- II. Key focus identified and promoted: The competition was highlighted three key components of Pala, like singing Classical verse, acting and analysis of epics, the troupes tried

to excel in those three areas, which brought excellence.

- III. Public awareness generation: Public appreciated the core values of Pala and since the competitions were held in old Pala mandaps (Pala Pandals), which had stopped long back, after introduction of TV in villages, the niche audience were encouraged and inspired which created the impact on larger public.
- IV. New Demand for Pala: It is seen that the demand for Pala has gone up during last five years. The Pala troupes are not only getting more calls in a year, they are also getting higher remunerative price ranging from Rs 3000/- to Rs 8000/- per performance. They are getting calls not only across the regions in the state but also from other states.
- V. Livelihood: Immediately the 234 troupes having six performers in each troupe (1404 persons) have got source of income and their families consisting of six persons (8424 persons in 1404 families) have got livelihood.
- VI. Impact on literacy and culture: The public are made aware of traditional literature and epics through Pala and the analysis of epics by Gayaks promoted literature and culture in the state.
- VII. Documentation of Dying art form: The SDRL also did documentation of Pala and telecast through 48 episodes in local TV Channels like Doordarshan.

Suggestions:

75% of the correspondent opined the impact on the young people to join even the women interested to perform and all the interviewed expressed the desire for more marketing of the dying art. Urban promotion of Rural Art performance should be done for more recognition and business. Private sector encouragement is more required as per their suggestions vis a vis Government support as they do not see and tangible benefit from Government Intervention.

Therefore, SEEDS may consider extending sponsorship of pala competition and documentation for another five years to see that pala is self-sustaining and regains its popular appeal with its renewed charm and impact.

Prasana Kumar Dash, IRS, retired as Special Secretary, Government of India, set up a rural public library, Prafulla Pathagar, in a village in Jagatsinghpur district, founded Purvasha Folk and Tribal Art Museum in Barkul, Chilika, and has been involved in various other socio-cultural initiatives.



Pala Awardees

SEEDS into Saplings

The Sprouting 1993-94

Lalu Mansinha

This is the story of SEEDS (Sustainable Economic and Education Development Society), not the entire story, but just two episodes, how SEEDS was born in 1993, and SEEDS six years later, in 1999-2000. My involvement with SEEDS was most intense during these two periods.

By 1991 the wide acceptance of internet and email in society inspired the creation of ORNET, a network linking expatriate Odias in US and Canada. The nascent ORNET grew rapidly, allowing Odias to be in touch with each other across a huge continent. There were genuine discussions on several subjects of concern for Odias and for Odisha. One persistent thought in the minds of many NROs (Non-Resident Odia) and NRIs (Non-Resident Indian) was how to help India and Odisha stride forward.

I and my friend Sri Gopal Mohanty had been faculty members for a long time at two Canadian universities, Western (in London, ON) and McMaster (in Hamilton, ON), only 125km apart, he in Mathematics, I in Geophysics. While I buried my head in my studies of the Earth, in addition to his specialty of statistics theory, Srigopal Babu was thinking and worrying about Odia and Indian cultural issues and inequities. Of particular interest to SriGopal Mohanty was the long struggles for recognition and equality by the down-trodden, particularly of Indian women. In 1991 he adapted for the stage a drama *Abala*, based on the drama *Sabdalipi*, written by Manaranjan Das. The dialogue in *Abala* was primarily in English, but there were segments with Hindi, Bengali, Panjabi and French as well. Srigopal Babu set about producing *Abala*, with amateur actors from the local Indian community. Many were students, most with no previous stage experience. The drama was presented on stage in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada on September 21, 1991. The play is about the struggles of the women of India, spanning some 20 centuries, from the Mahabharata to modern times. It was a difficult drama to produce, but the stage presentation was stunning. I wrote and posted on

ORNET a rather longish review. Possibly the only person who read my review was Priyadarshan (Darshan) Patra, from whom I received this email (Box 1).

Box 1: The first contact with Priyadarshan Patra

Recd:920103 from darshan@cs.utexas.edu
(Priyadarshan Patra)
Dear Mansinhababu,

I am a Ph.D. student here at the university of Texas at Austin. I must congratulate you and others who put together that excellent drama "Abala" with a superb theme and candor (as I gleaned from your review).

Here I am part of a group of mostly-student activists with a progressive leaning. We are planning to organize a national conference of various progressive Indian-origin groups of north America to create a now non-existent network of grass-roots socio-economic activists serving to facilitate positive self-transformation of people of India and Indian origin here. We personally know only a handful and the advantages & opportunities of such networking is obvious. I am including at the end an announcement we are sending as far as our means lets us reach out to. The immediate reason for me to write to you is that the meeting is scheduled to be held (barring unforeseen problems) in Chicago during the coming Memorial Day weekend and our chief sponsor is India Development Service of Chicago. I thought (and my friends here agree) that it would be real nice to include a drama/play in our two-day program of activities and from your review "Abala" seemed to have the right creativity and progressive bent we are looking for.

I am wondering if a small group of artists that you know would like to join us at Chicago and stage a progressive-minded skit or play that is not much longer than an hour? We can put them up for 2 days in Chicago, we may not be able to pay them much as most of us are on shoe-string student budgets. I believe London, Ontario is perhaps not very far from Chicago. If you please, kindly send me any comments and possibilities you come up with. Also, a contact phone number would be convenient if you think you can participate.

Thank you for your time,
Priyadarsan Patra, Phone (512)474-7162

Box 2: Introduction to IPAG

"IPAG came to life officially in the Spring of 1989 in the wake of a rally we held protesting against insensitivity of Union Carbide towards the human disaster at Bhopal. The protest was in connection with a visit to UT, Austin by a high Union Carbide official to speak on "How to do business in India." Ever since, IPAG has been active on the University of Texas at Austin campus and the Austin community.

One of IPAG's aims is to raise awareness of the political and economic problems of development in India. IPAG is not affiliated with any political parties, and we interpret "politics" to mean the struggle by everyday people for peace and justice in their lives and their surroundings.

Our activities have included financial support of a rural development project in Orissa, which two of our members visited and spent a couple of days at. PGS is a rural and tribal development organization based at the remote Padwa block of Koraput district in Orissa about 70 miles northwest of Vishakapatnam. It currently has about 200 villages (50 village councils) under its banner and is geared to foster socio-economic wellbeing of the local residents who are predominantly tribals. The project is crucial to the economic survival of the community; its express purpose is waste-land reclamation and leveling, construction of a masonry dam and digging of an irrigation well (40 feet deep, 20 feet dia). We are still raising funds to provide a much needed motor pump for the said well."

Darshan refers to a "group of mostly-student activists with a progressive leaning". The students at Univ. of Texas at Austin had formed the India Progressive Action Group (IPAG). Quoting from the same email (Box 2).

That email is how I and Srigopal Babu 'met' and came to know Darshan. Flattering as it was,

Box 3: Sad headlines

India Today, February 15, 1993

ORISSA CHILDREN ON SALE FOR Rs.20

The agony of famine drives parents to sell their children for the price of a plate of chicken curry.

India Abroad, April 9, 1993

STARVATION KILLS 130 IN

DROUGHT RAVAGED ORISSA

Darshan's request for another stage presentation of *Abala* at the upcoming meeting at India Development Service of Chicago was just could not be honored. All the actors in *Abala* either had fulltime jobs or were students and would not be

able to spare a week to mount a performance in Chicago.

The economic news streaming from India in the early 1990s was not too good; but the really disturbing news was about drought, food shortages and hunger in western Odisha, from the Kalahandi, Bolangir and Koraput (KBK) districts. By early 1993 there were reports from KBK of deaths by starvation, hungry families selling off children, for money and to provide the children a chance to survive (Box 3).

The fact that people were dying of hunger in KBK at a time when the rest of the world was enjoying surplus foods from bumper harvests was particularly distressing. News of the KBK famine started a round of extensive discussions on ORNET. Darshan and other students led discussions, and a consensus arose to form an informal group to explore help to the people of KBK. The group was tentatively named the Kalahandi Bolangir Initiative (KBI), also known as the Kalahandi Bolangir Action Committee, (KBA or KBAActive), initially functioning under IPAG umbrella at University of Texas at Austin. The consensus was to collect funds from any and all willing to help the distressed people of KBK. The funds would be used to improve infrastructure, agriculture, education etc. Priyadarshan Patra and Himanshu Baral, announced the formation of KBI on ORNET (Box 4).

I wrote an article ***The Spectre of Starvation in Orissa in 1993 – a cry for help – a call for action***, published in July 1993 in the Souvenir of the Orissa Society of America. After suffering a disastrous famine in 1866-1868, when some 4 million Odias died of hunger, Odisha was once again facing the spectre of famine at the end of the 20th Century, when the rest of the world had a food surplus!!

There was an immediate positive reaction amongst the Odias and friends of Odisha in US and Canada. Some 40 people welcomed KBI with enthusiasm and pledged one-time donations and/or monthly contributions of \$5 to \$50/month. The premise of using funds collected in US/Canada for projects in India rests on the dollar to rupees exchange rate. In 1993 1 USD was equal to 31 INR. This meant that a small amount of funds collected in US/Canada will

have a much bigger bang for the buck in India, and can benefit hundreds, if not thousands of people in the KBK region.

Apart from personal pledges, those who volunteered to take on specific tasks in KBI became the 'core group.' In 1993 they were (from a mid-1993 email list): Umakanta Choudhury, Himanshu Baral, Jawahar Jain, Lalu Mansinha, Dhanada Mishra, Pritiraj Mohanty, Srigopal Mohanty, Smriti Panda, Abani Patra, Priyadarshan Patra, Srinivas Praharaj, Sikhanda Satpathy. Some 25 years later some on this 1993 list are still part of the group, now older, slower, and still proud of founding KBI (now SEEDS).

Most of us in the core group had never met face to face, but KBI brought us together. Email was the primary medium of discourse. Through email discussions, occasionally passionate and spirited, consensus was achieved on principles and procedures. Right from start there was agreement on 'no hierarchy' i.e. everyone participating in the discussions were equal and decisions were on the basis of consensus, not 'for or against' vote. Darshan, became the 'leader', without a formal title, as one amongst us who was 'more equal' amongst all equals (modifying a quotation from George Orwell).

Primarily techies, scientists, or engineers, with no experience in sociology or social service, the core group spent the first few months of discussions to set up the basic principles, which are still followed a quarter century later:

1. Every penny of donated funds must reach the project site. No overhead will be charged by KBI.
2. All costs for visiting project sites will be borne by KBI members. No travel or incidental expenses will be charged to donated funds.

3. Every project must have at least one KBI member fully involved, with one or more site visits. He/she must assess/ evaluate the proposal, and, if adopted by KBI, will periodically evaluate the progress.
4. The project must become self-sustaining after 4 years. No KBI funds will be allocated to the same project beyond 4 years.

Box 4: Announcement of Kalahandi Bolangir Initiative (KBI)

Date: Tue, 23 Mar 1993 16:36:34 -0500
From: darshan@cs.utexas.edu (Priyadarsan Patra)
To: Multiple recipients of list <ornet@cs.columbia.edu>
NAME: Our Kalahandi-Bolangir Initiative

LOWLIGHT: India Today (February 15, 93) reports: "If Kalahandi plumbed the lowest depths of human misery, it pales in comparison with the contiguous famine-ridden district of Bolangir in western Orissa, Rukh Meher, 60, of Bhalamunda, a nodescrpt village of about 50 huts of mainly unemployed farm labourers is willing to sell you her three grandchildren. She offers her eldest grandchild-- for Rs. 1,000. Getting no response, she slashes the price to Rs. 500 before finally coming down to Rs. 100, virtually begging at this point: 'Please take her, she is a nice child. If you don't take her, she will starve to death with me'..."

PURPOSE: To bring together persons with a sense of love & sympathy towards the land and the people of Orissa in an effort to alleviate human misery and destitution there via modest infrastructural & developmental aid.

PRESENT OBJECTIVE: To establish some grassroots, small-scale infrastructure in a proper place in Kalahandi or Bolangir district. Among alternatives being explored are (1) minor tubewell irrigation facilities, (2) land reclamation, (3) poultry/diary farm, (4) job training like tailoring or painting, (5) non-water-intensive cashcrop cultivation (5) soil & water conservation and self-sufficiency training.

UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION: Please direct contributions to the following address:
India Progressive Action Group (IPAG)
Box 321, Texas Union
The University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78713, USA

Discussions ensued on the most effective way to benefit the people of KBK with the donated funds. The total available funds dictated the type of projects that could be instituted. The total cash on hand with KBI was \$5400 in October 1993. We were constrained to think of

Box 5: Out of IPAG; so began SEEDS

From: darshan@cs.utexas.edu (Priyadarsan Patra)
Date: Thu, 17 Mar 1994 13:21:12 -0600
To: darshan@cs.utexas.edu,
rse090@t4d.carrier.utc.com, uc@mhcnet.att.com,
6001_354@uwovax.uwo.ca, dkmish-
ra@engin.umich.edu,
MOHANTY@mcmill.CIS.McMaster.CA, s-
pand@maroon.tc.umn.edu, jawahar@cerc.utexas.edu,
pritiraj@wam.umd.edu, sikhanda@mers0.me.utexas.edu, abani@cs.utexas.edu,
peea211@charon.chpc.utexas.edu
Subject: A name for our formal group

Howdy partners,
Mar 17, 1994

We are in the process of officially establishing the new group we have often talked about. Last night, Abani, Sikhanda & I chose a name for it:

ISEED: India Society for Economic and Educational Development

This morning I have a slight modification to reflect our philosophy a little more:

SEEDS: Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society

(We could add the word "India" at the front, but might make it too long, and it might also be unnecessary.)

Please let me know if you disapprove of the name SEEDS or if you have a better suggestion before we make it official.

Because of a serious difference of my opinion with many of the current controlling members of IPAG, I consider it wise to have KBI's own, independent control of funds and activities. So any future funds should be sent in the name of our new focused organization, instead of IPAG.

Darshan

project(s) limited to outlays of few thousands, rather than few tens of thousands. Only in 1999, for the relief effort after the Supercyclone, were we able to carry out imaginative and highly beneficial high impact projects, with higher fund outlays.

From the beginning direct disbursement of food or cash was not even considered. It was decided to focus on projects to improve the quality of life in the KBK region, specifically on agriculture, education, and on any other

imaginative ideas on improving the lives of the rural poor. To implement the projects, we had to find local NGOs known to be honest and effective, with a positive track record, and who already had ideas about improving the lives of the poor, and were awaiting for funding. A search was instituted through friends and relatives for suitable NGO(s) in the KBK region. Discreet background checks were made.

Finally, the Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA), an NGO from Sundargarh, was selected. The project area was in the Lanjigarh block of M. Rampur tahasil in Kalahandi. We invited proposals from VKA. The project was for the establishment of 18 *multipurpose, one-teacher* schools, 2 in each of 9 grama panchayats of Lanjigarh. We discussed and improved their proposal by insisting that VKA set up a plant nursery in each gram panchayat, in addition to the schools. The students and the villagers in the schools should take care of the plant nurseries and be taught the benefits to the community of reforestation. Environment-friendly agro-techniques and development of means of earning through cooperative selling of produce/saplings should be properly emphasized. We established guidelines for its funding, execution, monitoring and reporting. Dhanada Mishra, then a student at Univ. of Michigan volunteered to visit the project area and meet VKA personnel.

On June 12, 1994 on we experienced a tragedy. Dr. Srinivas Praharaj, one of the most enthusiastic workers in the SEEDS core group was killed in a car accident in the US. Dr. Praharaj had a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Maryland. He was 32 years old. His sudden demise, just one year after the sprouting of KBI/SEEDS left an unfilled gap for a long time.

After about a year KBI moved out of the IPAG umbrella and became a separate entity with a new name. Abani, Sikhanda and Darshan came up with the name SEEDS on March 17, 1994 (Box 5).

The Lanjigarh project with VKA was the first project for the infant KBI. In subsequent years others joined hands with us as part of SEEDS, but also many faded away. Our best assets were

that we all had the belief in a common set of core principles to benefit the lowest rungs of society in Odisha. Even as we felt proud of SEEDS projects, I and others were frustrated by the constraint imposed by the amount of funds

available. I felt that with just a factor of 10 increase in funding level would have allowed SEEDS to provide a significant increase in benefits to a larger segment of the KBK population.

Further Reading:

Lalu Mansinha, "The Specter of Starvation in Orissa in 1993 a cry for help—a call for action," Souvenir of the Odisha Society of America 1993 pp 34-38. <http://www.odishasociety.org/media/souvenirs/Souvenir1993.pdf>

Priyadarshan Patra, "A Report on Our Kalahandi Project," Souvenir of the Odisha Society of America 1994 pp 146-147. <http://www.odishasociety.org/media/souvenirs/Souvenir1994.pdf>

SEEDS Webpages: <https://www.seedsnet.org/>; <https://www.seedsnet.org/seeds1/html/view.cgi-home.html-.html/>

Lalu Mansinha is an emeritus Professor in the Department of Earth Sciences at Western University, Canada. In addition to being a founding member of SEEDS, he also ran Kala Manjari, a presenter of Indian classical music and dance performances in southern Ontario, and the annual Festival of India in London, Canada.



SEEDS wing at Odisha Art Center, Barkul

WOMEN LEADERSHIP: The Narishakti Experience

Biswajit Padhi

Khariar in Nuapada district has been in the eye of the storm for many reasons. The place has a rich cultural history but has inherited a feudal society. Though the erstwhile Zamindar had set up a school way back in 1944, the literacy rate is very low. As per the census 2011, the literacy rate of Nuapada district is 57% & women literacy stands at a mere 44% officially but would be much less in reality. That equity is not there in the society is not the concern but what is worrying is that equity is never a topic of debate or discussion.

SRUSTI started working in Nuapada since 1995 when the area was more infamous for starvation deaths, child sale & poverty. The team at SRUSTI was all sons of the soil but with expertise in different fields. The biggest challenge was to provide livelihood to people in a sustainable way. Resources were not scarce, but underutilized or ill utilized. Skill was primitive, sometime affecting income. Industry was not there, nor visible in near future. Livelihood options were limited. Agriculture was mostly rainfed & since the district gets most of its rainfall in thirty to thirty-five days, draughts were frequent as protective irrigation was also not there. Forests provided the livelihood in the Rabi season. Government work, which were few & far in between were many a times the icing on the cake. In such a challenging situation, Team SRUSTI had very little options.

In the early 2000, Team SRUSTI started working with forest dwellers living in forest fringe villages. It got a support from the local DFO Mr P.K. Mallick to promote Joint Forest Management. Colonial attitude of the forest department had alienated it from the forest dwellers. The first task was to bring harmony with the forest officials so that together they could work & take benefit from the forests. Numerous interactions made the team wiser. Mahua trees were seldom cut in the forests because a person guarding it had an assured annual income of @ rupees 2000 by selling Mahua flowers & fruits. Khariar forest division being a predominant Teak wood

promoting division, the minor forest produce was less which is why it needed good management to benefit the community the maximum. The thrust of the initiative was to generate sustainable income from the forests so that people start depending on the forests & once they depend on it, they will start protecting it.

Value addition of NTFP (NonTimber Forest Produce) was the best possible option as it needed no immediate capital investment except the stock & needed no machinery. Women were initiated into the SHG concept & then trained on local value addition of NTFP. Good drying techniques, Siali leaf stitching, making Pachan Amla from Amla were some of the value addition methods which helped them earn a livelihood. This also enhanced the price of the forest produce which benefitted the primary collectors. There was more activity in the village now as women could do this while attending to their household chores. Many of them went to fairs to market their products which also enhanced their exposure to the outer world. Having implanted the seeds of entrepreneurship, Team SRUSTI took them in the path of self-sustenance.

With the initial momentum, the area saw women taking up other employment avenues. Luckily for the movement, OXFAM GB supported the Narishakti Mahasangha, a federation with a corpus fund. The Mahasangha started lending the funds to its member groups who in turn lent it to their members. Institutional credit is very low in this part of Odisha & with a corpus, the women had a newfound freedom. Around the same time the watershed committee also started lending money to groups in the same area, though with a higher rate of interest. However, the Narishakti group members could bargain a deal with them to reduce the rate of interest. With easy finances, many members set up daily need stores & even took to poultry. Around the same time, SRUSTI was able to manage a grant from AAMARA BISWAS and SEEDS. The fund was used to aid women in distress. Though in the initial days, many used them for consumption & thus escape

the moneylender's exorbitant rate of interest, later some of them used the same to buy & sell products, mostly paddy, forest produce etc. to make a small profit. The intervention was able to help group members establish themselves in the society. Suddenly, women sat with men in village meetings & gave opinions which were accepted.

The best part of the initiative was that Narishakti Mahasangha was able to take lease of a village pond for Pisciculture. The collective strength of the women was thoroughly tested during the process as they not only entered a male bastion but also a business which was earlier managed by professionals. That they could take independent decision to run the

business was the sign that they had matured by then. It was then that Mahila Santi Sena activities were introduced in partnership with SEEDS. The response was good. Domestic violence due to liquor was largely addressed by this intervention. Narishakti Mahasangha has the distinction of razing a country liquor vend shop to ground when their appeal to the district administration to cancel its license failed to enthuse the administration. Women leaders of the Mahasangha were arrested but that only emboldened them to work against liquor menace in the society. But it needs sustained effort & some hand holding support so that women could lead from the front.

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Primary/ Middle school at Galadhai village.

My Association with SEEDS

Subhas Choudhury

I was introduced to the SEEDS by Sri Sandip Kumar Dasvarma in 2004 while we were trying to locate the help for setting of Computer Centers in the schools in Odisha. We are trying to bring in thin client computers for fixing in the schools, which would cost about 100\$ a piece. Darshan was trying to fill in technical inputs. I was also getting separately, some computers free as gift from abroad as well as from Indian firms who were upgrading their systems and discarding older ones. I gave to many schools. It continued for some time.

In between started the more endearing work of Rural Mathematics Talent Search, initiated by Dr. Swadhin Pattnaik in his messianic zeal. He was organizing classes twice a year for students across the State in Bhubaneswar. I was asked to help in passing on assistance to the students of the two zones: West zone and Coastal zone. In 2005 and 2006 we had distributed assistance of Rs.1500/- each for 90 students, who had attended the camp. Swadhin babu immensely depended on the moral support of Sandip babu, as any NRI support always enhances the confidence of we natives. This scheme with encouragement of students and subsequent persistence of Swadhin babu has evolved into a Government scheme, and now every year hundreds of students are appearing for the Mathematic Talent Search Examinations. I am not in touch with the process now, but some students must be benefited.

During this time, other SEEDS Programs of Utkal Navjeeban Mandal, Anjali school Schemes and spelling and vocabulary competitions were organized in 2006.

Baji Rout Chhatrabas was another endearing association. Mrs. Krishna Mohanty would remain in a corner of my heart always. SEEDS was also involved in repair and maintenance of this Chhatrabas for some time. I visited the place twice.

Mahila Shanti Sena has also been an interesting experience, where I found a group of the society have been enabled to be more resourceful, productive, and confident to contribute to the society. I attended the camp in the campus of

Human Development Foundation (HDF) at Trisulia. All the luminary of SEEDS attended also.

Meanwhile, SEEDS had been struggling to find a niche to operate in Odisha, most of the effort being spearheaded by Priyadarsan. His library project at Berhampur has finally come up. Dhanada and I have registered a Trust for SEEDS at Bhubaneswar. We are awaiting suitable local volunteers to carry it forward more energetically. We have not received FCRA permission yet.

I feel very happy that a project we stated, was taken over by the Government of Odisha in a very large way. It provided cycles to rural students in 2004 and 2005. Girls are not very comfortable with riding cycles. Providing cycles to lady agricultural laborers started in Madurai by the then District Magistrate so that they could go to nearby villages to work and earn more wages. Sandip babu wanted to teach cycling to as many girl students as possible to enhance their confidence and employability. We distributed cycles in Nailo school and surrounding villages and organized cycling competitions among girls. It was surprising to know that very few girls knew cycling then.

Sometimes thereafter, I met Sri Surendra Naik, the then Education Minister of Odisha & requested him to give cycles to Middle School students and create schools only in cycling distance that will enhance the quality of the school and teaching, reduce the need for too many schools at walking distance. It was not accepted then. First the Government of Bihar adopted it, and later Government of Odisha adopted the first part, of distributing cycles to all, they did not implement the other part of reducing the number of schools to make them better functional units. Dr. Minati Ray from Cuttack an associate of Sandip Babu, was the woman face of the project and actively participated in the distributions including the cycling competitions in Yasobanta high school campus. The event was a great success and talk of the villages as a very new thing in Odisha.

There are many other activities that are being undertaken by SEEDS. I did not have the opportunity to associate myself closely with them.

Subhas Chandra Choudhury, Chair of SEEDS India Trust, an Indirect Taxes Consultant is the Founder and Chairman of Vikash Educational Charitable Trust, and a Director of Sadhav Shipping Ltd. He lives in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

Bajirout Hostel

Krishna Mohanty*

Upon repeated insistence of our daughter, Kasturi (Jhunu,) Bibhuti babu and I arrived at New York on the 1st of July 2002. It was my first visit to the western world. On the way, we stopped in England for two weeks. We got the opportunity to visit many new places and witness many new things in America. I had heard many things about USA, and had some ideas about it gathered from books. My interest in learning about new societies and places was fulfilled to some extent. One of those was to visit an Amish village. Jhunu contacted our old friend, Anadi bhai, and arranged the visit. She took us to Washington DC in the weekend. After taking us around Washington DC for sightseeing, she dropped us at Anandi Bhai's place. Anadi Bhai and his American wife accompanied us on the Amish village visit. We came across an annual souvenir of the Odisha Society of Americas in their house. It contained an article by a professor of McMaster University in Toronto, Canada, which touched me very much. I thought, the author would be a contemporary of Bibhuti babu. After I returned to Jhunu's place, I wrote a letter to him and provided Jhunu's telephone number to contact. After about a week of mailing the letter, he called me. From the discussion, I learned that his wife, Shanti was my cousin. Shanti's father, Dr. Subala Chandra Das was my paternal uncle. He was the chief physician of Anugul hospital during my childhood. He and my cousin used to visit Bajirout Chhatrabas regularly to meet Nu'Ma. We also used to visit their house occasionally. Finally, I got introduced to Shanti and Professor SriGopal Mohanty. However, we couldn't meet them in person.

We got an opportunity to meet them during their visit to Odisha in the following year, when they accepted our invitation to visit Bajirout Chhatrabas. They learned about the difficulties and issues faced by the institution. One of the issues we faced was that the garden-well used to dry-up in the summer months creating severe water shortage for the garden. He told us about an organization called SEEDS in USA, in which he was an active member. On his advice, I wrote

a letter to SEEDS requesting help to solve the water-shortage issue. SEEDS is an organization that seeks to help projects in developing countries. Upon reviewing our application, it asked us to consider and focus on sustainability aspect of the project that it could fund. For this water-project, we proposed a budget for deep-tube well, a 2HP submersible pump, associated pipes, etc. Since we didn't have Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) authorization from the Government of India to receive foreign funds, the funding had to be received through a sympathetic Non-Governmental Organization, Unnayan. As a result, we received Rs. 97,000 out of Rs.100,000 after paying for allowed fees.

We installed a deep tube well equipped with a submersible pump and related arrangements. This facility provided water for not only agriculture, but also for toilets for children and the water tank in the guest house on campus. We could cultivate winter vegetables as well as summer vegetables with ease with this water supply arrangement. We employed a farmworker to cultivate the garden year-round with availability of this water facility. A residential quarter was built for him in addition to a pump-house.

Consequently, noticeable agricultural improvement ensued, and season-appropriate vegetables were cultivated throughout the year. We used to send a synopsis of our garden along with photographs to SEEDS. We could send this communication for three years only. At that time, we decided to do organic farming. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides cause damage to the agricultural land and the contaminated produce result in various ailment upon consumption. As we started using organic fertilizer in place of chemical fertilizers, our vegetable production decreased initially. Since our cowshed was shut down at the time, we had to purchase cow-dung based fertilizer from outside. We named our new farmland after our first headmaster, Late Shri Rishi Behera. Sri Gopal Mohanty visited our farmland with his family, and advised us to become self-sufficient.

Since the founders of Bajirout Hostel believed in Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy, from the very beginning we included various vocational education in the curriculum. Gandhiji deeply believed that agriculture, thread-making, weaving, carpentry, etc., deeply benefited education, since such trade-based learning brought coordination between hand, brain, and the heart. This so called "nai talim" or basic education methodology was used in the curriculum developed by Hindustani Tamil Sangham, Sewagram, Wardha, and was followed in many places in India. Odisha had the head quarters of basic education coordinator at Anugul. The primary school at Khilari was converted into an upper primary school and was attached to the Bajirout Hostel. Later, the vocational education was not taught in primary schools due to lack of support from the educational and political leaders in Odisha. Our school also met with similar consequences. However, since Bajirout Hostel is a voluntary organization, an effort is made to teach such trades to the students so that they can become self-sufficient when they return to their respective villages. Respect for each and every type of work is emphasized. One can earn a living by engaging in agriculture, carpentry, weaving, etc., even without a job. Now-a-days, educated students are commonly found to stay home jobless rather than getting engaged in farming. While such mentality is contagiously spreading, Bajirout Hostel is striving to provide vocational education to its students so that they can become independent. In this critical time, SEEDS's help to irrigate our farmland resulted in increased enthusiasm among the students to work towards increasing production in our farmland. Everyone on campus benefited from

the availability of water. A cowshed was also started. As a result, cow-dung based fertilizer was used in the cultivation. Bajirout Hostel is obliged to SEEDS for this support. We are grateful to Sri Gopal Mohanty for establishing our connection with SEEDS, and request him to guide us in the future. Thank you SEEDS!

Note:

Bajirout Hostel was started by the freedom fighter couple, Malati and Nabakrushna Chowdhury to provide educational and other opportunities to the children of activists and fighters of the provincial movement. The institution was named to commemorate the freedom fighter, Bajirout, who became a martyr at the age of 12. Bajirout Hostel assumed the responsibility of education of tribal and backward class children after independence of India. Malati Devi studied at Shanti Niketan established by the famous poet Rabindranath Tagore. She had joined the freedom struggle having been inspired by Gandhiji. Therefore, Bajirout Hostel's education is influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranth's educational philosophy. One hundred children in need of care and protection as per the Government of Odisha's Children Welfare Department were accepted. This scheme was meticulously followed for the next 25 years. After 2014, due to excessive interference from the Government, and due to lack of coordination for the scheduled tribe and scheduled caste children with the said scheme, we stopped accepting children from this scheme. The current students receive Government scholarship from class six through class ten. Our goal is to teach them some trade and enhance their expertise to make them self-sufficient. We feel, such education is essential at current times.

Krishna Mohanty who is from a family of social workers, freedom fighters and nation builders, is a social worker influenced by the thoughts of Gandhi and Tagore, lives in Bajiraut Chhatrabas, Angul and has devoted her life for the cause of the tribal and poor children of Orissa, India.

** Original Odia article translated by Sikhanda Satapathy*

A worthy endeavor

Sikhanda Satapathy

You give a poor a fish, he lives for a day. You teach him how to catch one, he lives for a long time. That summarizes the value of single most important tool for sustenance – education. The value of education has been ingrained in my mind since my childhood. My father, having been born in a not very well-to-do family and having lost his father early in his childhood, never received any formal education, yet completed PhD and D.Litt on his own, served as a College Professor, an Institute Director and received Presidential Award! Lack of resource never stopped his laser-sharp focus on education, which alone helped him dig out of the depth of certain poverty. This aspect was never lost on me growing up with an insatiable desire for learning and knowledge. I was following this passion in graduate school when I met a group of enthusiasts that lit a fire in me to extend this passion to benefit the community.

In the annual convention of the Odisha Society of the Americas in Troy, MI, in the summer of 1993, I met a group of students discussing the horrendous situation in KBK area. One among them was Darshan Patra, who was passionately discussing how we needed to do something. I joined these enthusiasts a couple more times in the convention and returned feeling very happy that in this distant land, young students were planning to get organized to help Odisha. The KBK discussion continued in Ornet. As luck would have it, I ended up joining University of Texas - Austin in the fall of 1993 to pursue my doctoral degree, and met Darshan bhai and my college-buddy, Abani, there again. Darshan bhai was involved in other Indian social organizations but wanted to start a new one focused on KBK issue. Several discussions followed, ending up with us registering a student organization, SEEDS.

The three pillars of sustainability, education and economic development that SEEDS identified at the very beginning were extremely

powerful. Many of SEEDS' activities have been geared towards this ideal. Take for example the Bajirout Hostel that bought into Gandhiji's *nai talim* educational philosophy to integrate vocational education for students. This seems to be the best way to uplift rural India, which for some reason has been lost on the political leaders and decision makers! A simple help of a water pump enabled this great institution to sustainably enhance its organic farming education for students. Following super-cyclone, SEEDS undertook an ambitious project to catalyze sustainable growth through collaborative irrigation. Elements of microfinance was also built into it. When I visited some of the project villages in 2001, it was obvious to me that it was a visionary scheme strongly appreciated by beneficiaries. Then there is the example of Rural Math Talent Search effort that produced countless contributing members of the society. I was very impressed by the dedication of Swadhin babu to this development-through-education philosophy when I witnessed the enthusiasm in a summer camp during a visit to Institute of Mathematics and Applications (IMA.) There are many other such efforts such as MSS, Micro-finance, digital library, etc. These efforts, however small they may seem on the face of it, made a significant contribution to the society.

The question certainly remains, how successful SEEDS' efforts have been towards sustainability? Sometimes, sustainability has been difficult without a strong ground-level support structure. However, one thing is for sure that SEEDS has tirelessly focused on education – not necessarily the formal kind – rather on how to teach the needy to catch a fish, not just doling out the fish! That in itself is a great attribute for sustainable development. The seeds were planted well and sprouted to varying degrees of success. Now is the time to take it to the next level with newer ideas and warmer blood. Long live the idea of sustainable development through education!

Sikhanda Satapathy has been associated with SEEDS since its inception and currently works as the Chief of Soldier Protection Sciences Branch at the Army Research Laboratory.

Future of RMTS and its active Alumni:

Sandip K. Dasverma

Future of RMTS:

We at SEEDS were involved in Rural Math Talent Search (RMTS) in a critical stage in the 1st decade of the 21st century. What we did is now history and recent evaluation of the effort has unearthed very positive results of it, on Odisha and its science education. Of about two thousand RMTS alumni, those trained in RMTS camps & Institute of Mathematics and Applications (IMA), about 5% are now Math PhDs (from Universities in both India & abroad). Through IMA many got trained for finance, banking and insurance industry.

The idea of RMTS was to unearth the rural talents, who are born and would have wilted away without fulfilling their potential. My friend Dr. Swadheen Pattanayak theorized that Odisha is 90% rural, so selecting mathematical talents for Math Olympiad, etc., all from the urban areas only - meant we were losing 90% of talents. Under his cajoling I agreed to provide scholarship to 30 of them in the name of my father, Late Kamala Pada Das. This was later expanded, step by step, to 200 scholarships through significant SEEDS' support due to initiatives of Dr. Lalu Mansingh & Dr. Sri Gopal Mohanty. And the rest, as they say, is history. Their support led to significant expansion of RMTS. This made the spreading of awareness, collection of scholarship money in North America and disbursement in India both possible and successful, way beyond my personal means. SEEDS affiliate in India, Subhas C. Choudhury (my Cyber brother) & Vikas Charitable Trust lent a significant hand in Orissa. I have written earlier about this in SEEDSnet, which is given below in the appendix for easy reference.

For selection of students into RMTS, we conducted an exam in class 5 so as to differentiate logical minds from the rest. The program ran from 2003 to 2012 and starting with a modest 30 scholarships, it ramped up step by step to 200 scholarships per year. Subsequently it was taken over by the Government of Odisha. It was

replaced by a hugely ambitious & high-budget program named after legendary Pathani Samanta, the Astronomy genius of Odisha. It is called Pathani Samanta Medha Brutti; the test PMST (Pathani Samanta Mathematics Scholarship Test,) is now done in two stages – stage one for students in class VI & stage two for students in class IX. Read more in reference 2 about the program.

PSMB (Pathani Samanta Medha Brutti,) is not completely rural-focused. It gives 3140 scholarships @10 per Community Development Block of Odisha. The rest 860 scholarships (of 4000) go to small towns & three cities of Odisha. It is currently conducted by the Board of Secondary Education of Odisha in January of each year. It is an internet-based test. There are two sets of scholarships for class VI & class IX students. The scholarships are in the amount of Rs. 200 (Rs 300 for class IX students) per month, are awarded every month but disbursed every six months by the Board of Secondary Education of Odisha. They additionally select 10 students from each small town & 15 from three big Cities of Orissa each. This results in a total of 4000 scholarships each as stated above. Though the scholarships are awarded regularly, the camps which were an important part of RMTS's philosophy of catching them young, have gotten to be discontinued. To restart, IMA offered to train the teachers. One batch of 50 teachers were deputed to be trained about 3 to 4 years back. But it too has gotten discontinued. When Aditya Padhi was the Chief Secretary, Dr. Priyadarshan Patra got permission for 500 teachers to be deputed to IMA to be trained as trainers. It was to be in 10 batches of 50 each. That also got stalled. This is going to be revived by next summer or latest when COVID gets under control

We have taken two initiatives, which we believe will be the future of RMTS camps. Two things have recently happened:

1. During Dr. Swadheen Pattanayak's 80th Birthday (2020 November 30 and December

- 1, Zoom Meeting - his students and admirers have decided to raise funds for a Foundation (now tentatively named: ANKA Foundation.) This foundation is presently targeted to raise Rs. 10 crores, and from the interest (about 50 to 60 lakhs per year) the annual Math Camps will be held at six regional locations every year. More details are still being worked out and will be provided in Ref 7.
2. A Network of RMTS & IMA alumni is being formed, and we are trying to reach each of the 314 blocks by locating an alumnus of RMTS. The target date for this is coming March 31st. Once we have a coordinator in all of the 314 blocks, we will ask them to connect to the PSMT winners of the year and connect with them thrice a year and encourage them and guide them about the possibilities of a career in science and technology - whose language is mathematics. They will spot talent among those PMST camps and facilitate their passage to the six regional camps that will be held every year privately financed by the Anka Foundation, referred above. The locations of regional centers have been suggested to be in:
 - Cuttack/BBSR
 - Rourkela
 - Sambalpur
 - Dhenkanal or Boudh / Kandhamal
 - Koraput
 - Berhampur
3. We are preparing a database of RMTS/ IMA alumni, Swadhin Pattanaik mentees, 100s of whom are well placed in life and want to take charge of a block each. We already have active WhatsApp groups in which we are holding regular Zoom meetings and trying to connect at least two mentors in each block. In the last one year and a half we have had about 10 or so Zoom meetings. The networking is taking place and a cadre of second-generation enthusiasts is being formed.
4. One success story among many is that of Himalaya Senapati getting selected in the Astronomy Olympiad XII and earned a silver Medal. Today, Himalaya is Dr. Himalay Senapati, a freshly minted PhD in Math from Chennai Mathematical Institute and is one of

those actively helping in mobilizing the RMTS alumni. (See Ref 8)

Future seems potent and bright for Rural MathTalents of Odisha.

Benefits/ Achievements:

To give an idea as to what the RMTS and the Institute of Mathematics have achieved, please see below - what these children trained for Olympiad and RMTS camps of Odisha have achieved:

1. Himalaya Senapati (RMTS) is doing PhD in Chennai Mathematical Institute.
2. Hemanta Mandal (RMTS) is doing PhD in Chennai.
3. Sumyashant Nayak (Regional Olympiad) got medal at the Astronomical Olympiad; did his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania doing postdoc.
4. Anup Dixit (Regional Olympiad) did PhD at the University of Toronto, now doing post-doctoral work at the Queen's University at Kingston.
5. Isan Patri (Regional Olympiad) did his PhD from the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai; did his postdoc at A&M University, Texas; is now a faculty there in Mat Science.
6. Abhilas Mishra (Regional Olympiad) did master's degree at Oxford through Rhodes scholarship and PhD in Physics at the California Institute of Technology (CALTECH), Pasadena.

Of the children of other colleges of Odisha trained through the interactive training camps, see what some of them did:

1. Santosh Pattanayak from DD College, did his PhD from the Chennai Mathematical Institute, Postdoctoral fellowship from the Fields Institute, Canada, is a faculty at the IIT, Kanpur.
2. Sasmita Patnaik, Regional Institute of Education, did PhD at Cincinnati, is a faculty at IIT, Kanpur.
3. Sushomita Mohanto, did PhD at IIT kharagpur, and is now a faculty in a college in Odisha.
4. Sudhir Pujahari, Sonepur, did PhD from the Harish Chandra Institute.

Of the Undergraduate students of the Institute of Mathematics & Applications, the list of Children who did their PhD or doing their PD, the list is

quite long. There is a long list of about 87 students who have done PhD in India or abroad (Ref 9.)

A Note from Prof. Swadhin Pattanayak:

“Under RMTS program, some 200 (it initially started with only 100 children) children were selected annually for training in summer. But that amounted to only a week of interaction with each child of each batch until they crossed class IX. This was in view of the High School Certificate Examination the children had to face. In spite of this, some 5% of the children could go out to become researchers, doctors, engineers and the like, is not too bad an outcome of an effort like the RMTS.

What could now be done is a constant monitoring of the progress of each of the child. Now that remote monitoring is possible, we may

think of this as an aid to our effort to encourage the child to blossom and unfold his or her potential.

Now with Pathani Samanta Ganita Medha Brutti winners running to tens of thousands, the task is daunting. Here we need at least 1000 mentors. This would mean about three mentors in each block. It looks quite challenging, but we may start with one or two in each block.

We may think in terms of producing good literature in Odia in line with what people like Terry Chew in Singapore are doing. There was a similar effort in Hungary starting from 1897. Many East European countries were doing this. the books they produced are available. Some of us could adapt them in Odia. These will have permanent value.”

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- Ref 1. My article in SEEDSNet in 2011(See in Appendix, below)
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Appendix: (Article by the author that originally appeared in 2011 in seedsnet.org)

Rural Math Talent Search

Sandip K. Dasverma

Rural Math Talent Search (RMTS) is meant to identify and support promising youngsters to grow in rural areas of Orissa. RMTS was started in 2003 by me with 30 scholarships in the name of my deceased father, Late Kamala Pada Das. My good friend Dr. Swadhinananda Pattanayak of IMA (Institute of Mathematics & Applications) has administered RMTS since inception. In 2010 we completed the 8th year of its operation. Full credit goes to IMA and its staff.

Approximately 200 students have been selected via RMTS since 2006, after initially picking 30, 102 and 165, respectively, for years

2003, 2004 and 2005. So, the total students selected and trained have reached nearly 1300 now. See <http://seedsnet.org/DOLA/rmts/public>. This year, the first phase of the RMTS exam is scheduled for October 2011. Notification has already gone out for this 9th edition of this talent search test.

I joined SEEDS (Sustainable Economic and Educational development Society) in 2005. SEEDS has ever since supported RMTS via NRO sponsored scholarships and other material support. It is one of the more visibly successful

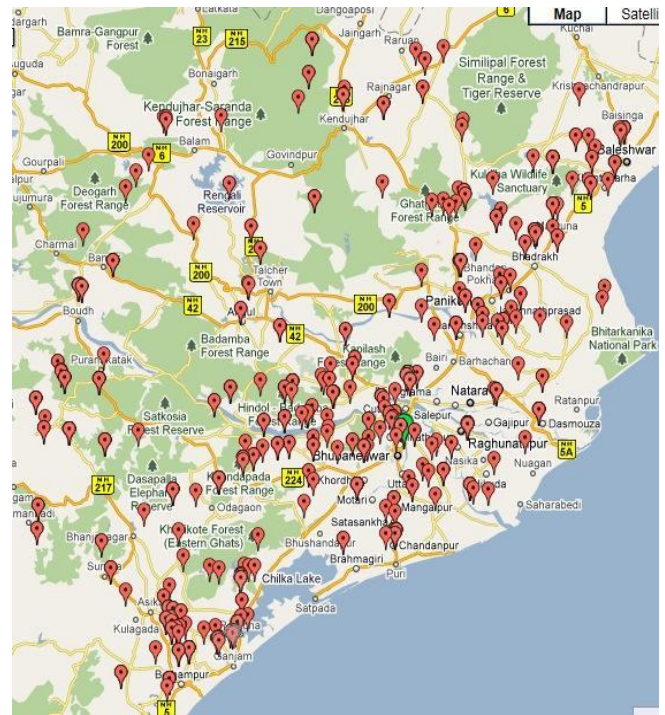
SEEDS projects, Dr. Priyadarsan Patra, past SEEDS Chairman, has developed its database and visualization system, and continues to maintain it. The idea behind the system is to energize the bases, know our progress and gaps in the geographical diversification efforts, and figuratively connect the RMTS alumni and donors together. Below is a geographical map of the students who have been supported with scholarships and trained since 2003. Figure 1 below is a geographical map of the students (each balloon represents location of a student) who have been supported with scholarships and trained since 2003.

Since 2007 we are conducting two examinations: one preliminary and one final. In 2007 one of our scholars, Himalaya Senapati, was selected to represent India for Astronomy Olympiad at Semiz, Ukraine (and won a Silver Medal). Others are also doing well. Last year the first batch graduated past 10+2 stage and many are now in various well-known institutes of India. The student participation had gone up to 20 thousand and more a year, but has now come down to ten thousand for various reasons.

The local administration at Bhubaneswar for disbursing scholarship money is done by the SEEDS partner, Vikas Charitable Trust under leadership of Sri Subhas C. Choudhury. Since 2010 Abhilash Mishra, alumni of a sister program of math Olympiad and a Rhodes Scholar is supporting it with corporate funds. The most heartening development has been that alumni of the programs coming back to mentor and teach new scholars.

Detailed information about the program, the exams, the training camps, students and the historical results may be found at our website rmts.seedsnet.org. This Web presence for RMTS (http://www.seedsnet.org/rmts1/RMTS/contact_u

[s.html](#)) was originally designed and donated by Shree Prasanta Sahoo of NJ, and it has been hosted and further developed by SEEDS since



***Future-1:** The success of the program has drawn Government attention. Government of Odisha, has sanctioned Rs. 40 crores to expand this program to all 314 blocks of Odisha and fund about 10 scholarships per block, i.e., 3140 scholarships. They are also planning to start a similar program for 100 towns of Odisha and donate one thousand scholarships for it. This is nearly a 20-fold expansion of our original plan. We are apprehensively awaiting the outcome of this large Government support. If it takes over and the program succeeds, our dream will be fructified, and a job will be done. The question is: Will it be?

**This is how future looked in 2011, when this article was published in SEEDSNet. Future as it looks today is the subject of this article*

2008.

Sandip Dasverma lives in California. He has been associated with many organizational activities including being a member of Odisha Society of America's (OSA) Executive Committee, founder of Regional Drama Festival of OSA, a founder President of NITRourkela Overseas Alumni Association, and received the OSA Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das Award in 2008.

SEEDS – A Personal Journey

Abani K. Patra

When I came to the USA, I was young in many ways. I had led a sheltered life in the “free” confines of the gilded cage my father’s Babudom put around me and then an even more sheltered life inside an elite engineering college. The reality of the harsh life that most of my compatriots led was something glimpsed at through the lives of those who served us but never personally experienced. There were the omnipresent reminders of the acute poverty that surrounded us but it somehow never really registered. It was part of the landscape, just like the rancorous crows and the sweet sounding koel that coexisted, it all seemed to be part of how things are supposed to be. I heard Indira Gandhi’s rhetoric of socialism as I grew up in the 1970’s but even that had no real impact as it came from people that seemed to be quite at the heart of this elite class that were all very well-appointed and well-manicured. The casual cruelty of a deeply exploitative social arrangement built on a well evolved class and caste hierarchy was occasionally disturbing but rarely troubled deeply. The luxuries that the destitution of the masses and resulting servitude provided us privileged ones was far too comfortable. Somewhere in there was also an implicit belief that the poor were poor not merely as an accident of birth but somehow as befitting their divinely ordained status.

In my new country, an all-encompassing focus on graduate work and the joys of a new nation and culture to discover, never gave a chance to go beyond. Soon, however the objectivity of distance started providing a discordant note every time I came home. While, the US has many evils, a minimum degree of “equality” seemed to be available for all including those that back home were condemned to servile status. The exploitative nature of the middle class babu existence was becoming uncomfortable!

Perhaps that guilt or perhaps the passion of youth to accomplish change left me ripe for suggestion when the famous (or rather infamous)

KBK hunger and supercyclone happened. The energy of some around me like Darshan, Somdutt, Srigopal Babu, Lalu Babu was infectious and my active participation in the SEEDS experience was on. Much has happened since – PhD, professorships, new programs, American government Babudom -- but this part of my life – a few phone calls, a few hours spent raising money or evaluating good ideas for spending that sparse capital in the company of that same invariant set of inveterate do-gooders has stayed invariant and unsullied. Amazingly, for an Odia/Indian organization we have stayed largely whole, though waxing and waning like some moon on steroids. Some have reduced engagement for more immediate priorities – family, OSA and even politics but as they say – they checked out but never left this dharmshala!

It is better to give than to receive -- that seemed like such a piece of well-meaning excreta when I first heard it but at 54 having taken much and given a little I must say that few truer words have rarely been spoken. One thing I noticed most SEEDSIANS do is every time they go to Odisha they will make a trip to a “project” site. My initial thoughts again – this must be poverty porn. You go there as the great “white” benefactor and some people fawn over you for the meager resources you bring. Soon I realized that there was much, much more to it. I am sure all have many stories but the anecdotes that have stuck in my mind – the fierce dignity with which a few women in a village not to be named here – organized to set aside a jointly cultivated plot of land to make sure that the children of the village that were off to study had in the high school a few miles away at least enough to eat and even when many others in the village had none. It is easy for me to give an insignificant fraction of my disposable income – but watching that giving humbled me! Some day when I meet my maker, I will hope he gives me a little discount for the little time I have spent on SEEDS in the hope it made that of others a little better.

Abani Patra, a SEEDS Board member, is the Stern family Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at Tufts University in Medford, MA., USA.

SEEDS, CanOSA, Unnayan and the 1999 Supercyclone

Lalu Mansinha

On October 17, 1999, a destructive cyclone hit Ganjam district and other parts of southern Odisha. This major storm caused a lot of damage to crops, trees and houses. An estimated 1000 people lost their lives. There were discussions on SEEDSnet, and it was decided to send relief help to the worst hit areas — Gopalpur, Chhatrapur and other areas of Ganjam. Unfortunately, even as we were discussing the relief, a far stronger cyclone hit Odisha, making landfall only 200km away, around Paradip. This second cyclone was so powerful and destructive that it was dubbed a 'Supercyclone'. The Supercyclone galvanized expatriate Odias, and Indians into an instant frenzy of relief efforts.

In 1999 the relief effort by government and private agencies were agonizingly slow in delivering post-cyclone relief. There was no disaster preparedness. Day after day TV news footage showed the horrors of total destruction in several coastal villages — disturbing images of hungry, starving people, waiting for food and water. We felt we had to do something, anything, to help.

Present day Odisha (in 2020) is very different. The lessons of 1999 had been learnt. The Govt. of Odisha efficiently evacuated about a million people from the path cyclone Fani (2019). Post-cyclone relief operations were organized rapidly. The events described in this article are of a Odisha of 20 years ago when the society and government were caught unprepared for a calamity like the Supercyclone.

Several million people needed help immediately, and also long-term rehabilitation. In that Odisha of 20 years ago, the SEEDS-CanOSA post-supercyclone relief effort, tiny as it was, made a difference to the lives of an estimated 5000 people. They were able to harvest bumper crops. Within 5 months they went from receiving handouts from agencies to helping to produce food for their own families as well as the rest of the village. Through marketing of the surplus, they became economically independent, and regained their dignity.

This is that story.

The Supercyclone

On October 29, 1999 a devastating cyclone, TC05B, later named the Supercyclone, hit coastal districts of Odisha. This was the most destructive cyclone to hit Odisha in the 20th century. With wind gusts of 300kph (185 mph), torrential rains, and very high storm surges, the cyclone made landfall between Puri and Kendrapada, went inland for about 50km, stalled for two days, and then drifted back into the ocean and faded away. The stall of the cyclone just 50km inshore resulted in coastal regions being pummeled by high winds and heavy rains for almost 36 hours. The destruction was almost total in Ersema and Kujung Blocks of Jagatsinghpur district. There was significant damage in 12 coastal districts; the worst affected districts were Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Puri, Kendrapara and Balasore.

The high storm surge (5-6m, 16-20ft)) caused ocean water to overflow or damage some 20,000 coastal protective embankments. The sea water inundated villages and agricultural land upto 35km inland. The intrushing wall of water washed away entire villages. Thousands drowned (unofficial estimate of about 20,000). Some 1.6 million homes were damaged or destroyed, and a million cattle drowned. The salinated land became unfit for cultivation for three years afterwards, until the rains had washed the salt away.

Entire dwellings, with all belongings, were blown or washed away. With all food stocks gone, there was an immediate food shortage in the affected areas. People became desperately hungry and famished. Since all access roads were blocked by numerous fallen trees, help from outside was delayed for days, even weeks. The winter crop in the coastal districts was destroyed completely. The vegetation cover in the entire coastal belt got ripped as millions of trees were felled down by the ferocious wind.

The blocked roads prevented delivery of relief food, water, temporary shelter, medical help,

cremation of bodies and disposal of dead animals. So many people had drowned in the coastal villages that there was no one to move the bodies and perform the last rites. Decomposition occurred rapidly in the tropical heat and humidity. There were nightmarish scenes of desperate and starving people, hungry for days, running around decomposing bodies to grab the air dropped food, and eating it right there.

Fundraising in Canada (CanOSA) and US (SEEDS)

From the first news reports we realized that this was no ordinary storm, no ordinary cyclone. Within a day or so appeals went out (Box 1). The overriding feeling was that a major disaster had befallen Odisha, and we must do something, anything, to help. There were intense discussions on fundraising, collecting, shipping medical and relief supplies. The email networks that interconnected all of us expatriate Odias, played

Box 1

Date: Mon, 01 Nov 1999 12:57:42 -0500
To: CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca
From: Lalu Mansinha <lalu@uwo.ca>
Subject: Cyclone Relief

Friends: A disaster of unimaginable magnitude has hit Orissa.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. We have to organise relief efforts. A million or more people have lost all their belongings, their houses have been washed away, stocks of food destroyed. There is no shelter, no food, no nothing. Countless thousands have perished. My village in Parikud was hit by a cyclone in 1942. We need money, medicine, clothing and above all, commitment.

If you know a physician or Drug Company representative, please ask for donations of medicines. There is particular danger of cholera and typhoid epidemics.

A list off the top of my head:
Vaccines for cholera and typhoid
Antibiotics of all types
Malaria pills
Bags of electrolytes for treatment of severe diarrhea

For the present, I am the contact person. But by tonight, we should have several coordinators who can collect the medical supplies and arrange to deliver them for taking to Orissa.

If you are going to Orissa shortly, and you can take medicines as personal baggage please contact me at 519-661-3145(Office), 519-433-0854(Home)).

Mira Panda has already started initiatives on fundraising. If you have inventive ideas, please let us know.

Lalu Mansinha

a crucial role in the fundraising and subsequent relief efforts.

In both Canada and US individuals and groups spontaneously started fund raising, and sending the funds onto the devastated regions of Odisha through different channels; funds were contributed to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, the Odisha Chief Ministers Relief Fund; or through international relief agencies such as Oxfam, CARE or Red-Cross.

Founded in 1993, SEEDS had been actively collecting funds and running many small community development projects in needy regions of western Odisha. Within days of the Supercyclone fund raising was started by SEEDS members in the US. I and Sri Gopal Mohanty were the only SEEDS members in Canada and were active participants in all of SEEDS' discussions and activities.

In the US and Canada, donations to *registered* charities are tax-deductible. Donors are more generous if the donation is tax deductible. In the US the Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA) is a registered charity and authorized to issue tax receipts for received donations. In 1999 SEEDS was not yet a registered charity in the US or Canada. All funds collected by SEEDS were channeled through OSA.

The Canada Chapter of OSA (CanOSA) was not registered with Revenue Canada, and not authorized to issue tax receipts for donations. I requested Sumitra Padhi to find a friendly and sympathetic charity registered in Canada which would be willing to issue tax receipts for the funds collected by Odias in Canada for cyclone relief. Within a day or two, through her contacts Sumitra found SEWA Canada. We are grateful to SEWA Canada for their hassle-free cooperation and helpfulness.

In Canada, there had been a previous fund-raising effort, around 1970. Odisha was ravaged by heavy rains and widespread flooding occurred in 1970. In response Odias in the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal area got together to raise funds for Odisha flood relief. A few hundred dollars were raised and sent to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Mindful of the small amount raised in the 1970, the initial target for fundraising for Supercyclone victims was set by Sushmita

Behera (President CanOSA) at \$1,000 on Nov 1, 1999. This \$1000 goal was exceeded as soon as the fundraising was announced. The target was then revised upwards to what was thought to be an unattainable figure, \$10,000. This target was exceeded in four days, on Nov 5, with a total pledge of \$12,500.

By Nov 11 we had pledges totaling \$15,000. Sometime during the second week of November Sumitra Padhi told me that several donors had suggested that since we had succeeded in raising such a 'large amount' (\$15,000), it will be good if someone from amongst us should travel to the cyclone hit areas, and ensure proper usage of funds for the relief. I volunteered, but immediately faced strong opposition from my family. Seeing nightly news footage of devastated villages, corpses and dead animals lying around, and threats of epidemics, they sensed danger and urged me not to go. But I felt a bond, as my own ancestral roots are in a coastal village, Nandala, very similar to the cyclone devastated villages. After much discussions and reassurances to my family, I left for Odisha on November 29. I was given a bankdraft at Toronto airport for \$15,000, the amount actually collected by the date by CanOSA, and another \$2000 from Vaishno Devi Temple, and \$1080 from Hindu Samaj of Hamilton. (For the record, not a penny of any relief funds was used for any form of personal or travel expenses).

The feeling was that \$15,000 was about the maximum CanOSA could achieve for cyclone relief. None of us foresaw the 8-fold jump in donations when people came to know that someone from Canada would oversee the disbursement of relief. Dr. Rabi Kanungo of Montreal, Dr. Niranjana Misra of Sudbury and Dr. Prakash Patnaik of Ottawa collected impressive amounts in each city. Through Sri Gopal Mohanty, and Pratap Patnaik, Vishnu Mandir of Toronto donated \$22,000 for the construction of a two-story residence to replace the cyclone destroyed hostel, at the Kanyashram at Satyabhamapur, run by the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust (KGNMT).

SEEDS fundraising efforts in Houston and other major cities in the US was hugely successful. Joe Shrestha and ICC, Rajashree Purohit, Prasad Subramaniam, and many others

helped. Special acknowledgements are due to Gopal Mohapatra, Priyadarshan Patra, Somdutt Behura, Purna Mohanty, Chitta Baral and Himanshu Baral for their efforts on fund raising.

It is a measure of humanity that so many people, with no links to Odisha, gave so generously at the time of need.

By a stroke of luck, well before the supercyclone, Somdutt Behura, of SEEDS-Houston, had decided to visit Odisha for two months, December, 1999 to January, 2000. He volunteered to oversee the proper use of SEEDS relief funds in the cyclone-stricken villages. Even though we had never met before, we 'knew' each other from SEEDS discussions. It was natural that we work together. With the prior approval of CanOSA and SEEDS, we pooled together the relief funds collected in US and Canada.

Relief Projects

By the time Somdutt and I reached Bhubaneswar in early December, some 5 weeks had passed, and government and private aid organizations had been effective in meeting immediate survival necessities such as food, water, healthcare etc. in the cyclone devastated areas. There was no need for us to distribute cash or handouts. We then focused on selection of projects that would help the people to get back on their feet quickly, without having to depend on aid. Our goal was to help them regain economic independence and personal dignity. Somdutt and I looked for suitable relief projects.

Both Somdutt and I have roots in coastal Odisha villages. My village of Nandala, at the south end of Chilika Lake, was devastated in the 1942 Bengal cyclone, blown away by the wind, and then washed away by inflooding sea and lake water. Also, my grandfather, Banamali Behura, was from village Bilipada, near Jagatsinghpur. Both my uncle (*Mamu*) Sri Durgamadhab Behura, and my mother were born and raised in Bilipada. Somdutt's village of Kadhanga, near Jagatsinghpur, was in the path of the Supercyclone, and his parental home suffered significant damage.

We were fortunate in our search for relief projects and in assembling an expert team. Sometime in early 1999, Sri Gopal Mohanty had come to know of Unnayan, an NGO in Odisha,

run by Sudarsan Das and Rashmi Mohanty, and invited them to work with SEEDS. In April 1999 we at SEEDS received a proposal from Sudarsan. SEEDS in US/Canada and Unnayan in Odisha had very similar philosophies and principles.

Through Sudarsan Das, Rashmi Mohanty and Devdutt Behura, several wonderful likeminded persons, with expertise on, and familiarity with, coastal Odisha villages, came forward and joined us with enthusiasm. Sudarsan Das was at that time at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT). Prabhu Lenka, Deba Lenka and Devdutt Behura, brother of Somdutt, from the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) and Pradipta Nayak (Unnayan), Basanta Swain, Ramesh Chowdhury and others became part of our 'Team.' My sister Nivedita occasionally participated in the discussions.

The team first met at my sister's place in Chandrasekharapur, Bhubaneswar, on December 11, to brainstorm on selection of project(s). The discussions centered on how to enable and rehabilitate people to become economically independent, as rapidly as possible. We met several times thereafter, until the team decided on the project(s). Many project ideas were discussed. Pros and cons of various projects, such as raising chicken, eggs, goats; handicrafts, to make and sell small items, such as *badi*, *mudhi*, *pankha*, *jhadu*, *sapa* etc. were discussed. At one point my mother Hemalata Mansinha joined in our discussions and interjected that whatever we do, we must not turn the people into beggars. The team was in full and complete agreement with my mother's sentiments.

After considerable discussion the team decided that the best use for relief funds would be to help farmers restart farming by setting up irrigation cooperatives with pumped water, and better seedstock. In India ordinarily rice is planted during the rainy season, and the land yields just one harvest a year. In the fertile delta areas of Odisha, however, three rice harvests per year are possible, with the right seedstock, and provided there is available water for irrigation.

We adopted a plan to organize groups of 10 to 20 farmers with contiguous lands, into

cooperative societies. For each cooperative we would set up the system for pumping ground water for irrigation — a drilled borewell, a diesel pump and distribution pipes that would provide water to the contiguous lands around the pump. If the land was next to a river, then a borewell would not be necessary. The river water would be pumped up.

Later, in the village Thailo the people themselves suggested another project. They said, there was an embankment (*Ghai Bandha*) that protects the village from the nearby small river. But it was not high enough. In the rainy season the low-lying fields were flooded with too much water, and no rice could grow. If the embankment could be raised by 3 feet, a large tract of land could become productive. If their embankment was a few feet higher, their crop would have been protected during the Supercyclone flooding. The team discussed and came up with idea of a 'food for work' idea. The villagers would provide the labor and we would provide the support — expert engineering advice, the needed tools and materials, and food for everyone during the construction.

The third major project that we undertook was a directed donation from Vishnu Mandir of Toronto for construction of a two-story girls hostel in the Kanyashram run by the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust at Satyabhamapur, to replace the one destroyed by the supercyclone. Dr. Budhendraauth Doobay, and others of Vishnu Mandir donated \$22,000. for the hostel. Dr. Doobay visited the Kanyashram for the opening ceremony of the Hostel.

There were several other community measures to help in the rural development of the cyclone devastated region (Box 2). We distributed blankets and relief supplies to a harijan village that was off the main road and so hidden away that it had not been visited by any relief truck.

We had not forgotten the victims of the preceding cyclone of October 17. Inbetween the relief work for supercyclone-hit region, help was delivered to a region in Ganjam district hit by the October 17 cyclone.

Visits to the Devastated Villages

We started daily trips to the cyclone devastated region to talk to the villagers, assess their needs and expectations. The plan was to be in the hard-hit region from 9am to 7pm or so. To allow for travel time, the minivan (made available to us at no cost by KIIT) started picking up people at 5:00am in Bhubaneswar; the last person was dropped off on return home at 10:30pm or later. We kept this grueling schedule for a week or so, until the initial site selections for the Pani Panchayats and the Gheri Bandhas were done.

My 87 years old *mamu* (maternal uncle) Durga Madhab Behura, had retired as Director of Agriculture, Odisha in the late 1960s. He knew all about agriculture and farming in Odisha, and, since he grew up in the Jagatsinghpur region, he was familiar with all the villages and knew all the old families of the cyclone hit area. When he found out about our daily trips to the cyclone hit villages, he insisted on joining us. He was with us on several trips beginning to end, from 6am to 10pm, with no sign of getting tired. In fact, he was the only one who did not doze off during the long trips there and back.

There had been lot of old trees lining the road. During the cyclone most of the trees fell, blocking the roads. The fallen trees had been cut to clear the road. In many places we appeared to be driving through a canyon of wood stumps. Apart from the downed trees, the destructive power of the winds was visible on the roadside by the telephone and powerline poles, solid steel old rail tracks, not just bent, but bent into corkscrew shapes.

The cyclone damage became more visible as we came into the distressed region. In Ersema block the villages appeared as if it was hit by many bombs. Most of the roofs and many of the mud walls were sheared away by the wind. Amidst the earth tones of the villages, there was a clashing bright blue color of the polythene tarps draped on what were left of the roofs. The region looked barren. The few trees that were still standing looked like pillars, naked, bereft of all branches. Every single leaf has been shorn off. But on a few of the tree stumps there was sign of life reviving. In just six weeks there was a

reawakening of life on the dead looking tree stumps - few spots of sprouting bright green leaves. This was the symbol of hope that life would continue.

In each village we visited we invited the villagers for a public meeting. Sudarsan, Somdutt and Devdutt explained to the people the concept of Pani Panchayat, the setting up of the cooperatives made up of farmers who would look after the pumps., monitor the payments into the revolving funds. Each meeting took at least an hour. At every village gathering I tried to impress upon them that the help we were providing was not *sarkari* money. The help was being provided with money that was earned by persons in US and Canada with their own sweat and labor.

I particularly remember a village meeting at dusk, after dark. As all homes had been destroyed, the only suitable place was several *satranji* and *sapa*, spread out on the village street, with one or two kerosene lanterns for light. The team talked about the pump irrigation system, the cooperative society, the monthly payments into revolving bank account. We also talked about the necessity of discussions amongst the members of the cooperative and voting on issues on maintenance of the pump system, and on money matters. Then an old farmer turned to me and said – ‘You people have come from outside, and talk of cooperative society, of voting, bank account, monthly repayment etc. I have not heard these words before and we have no idea what they mean’. Then it struck us — all members of the Pani Panchayats had to be given training on how to cooperate, how to conduct meetings, how to open a bank account etc., in addition to the technical training, and most important of all, how to apply community pressure when a cooperative member failed to pay his monthly contribution. Later, Unnayan conducted a workshop with representatives of all of the Pani Panchayats.

In Thailo, the high school was built by the teachers and villagers some 9 years back, in 1990, with their own labor and sweat. It was now a pile of rubble. We were very pleasantly impressed by the spirit of the teachers and students in that they had erected poles and polythene tarp to make three classrooms. The school was functioning. The students sat on the

dirt and had no desk. The teachers had no blackboard, but still the school went on. The primary school was also pulverized.

Pani Panchayat

This task of setting up functioning cooperatives, named *Pani Panchayat*, that would manage the lift irrigation system, was definitely not simple. We planned to arrange to drill the borewell, provide the diesel pump and distribution pipes, and provide the high yield rice seedstock and the fertilizers. Groups of farmers, with contiguous lands, and who would be able to

Box 2: List of Relief Projects Completed

A list: Numbers in parentheses indicate number of lift points. In Orissa state there are 30 districts. Each district is divided into 'Blocks'. Each Block contains several villages.

Balikuda Block
Village: Thailo (3); Kurunia (3); Talakusuma(1)
Tirtol Block
Village Kadhanga (2)
Erasama Block
Villages: Pokhoripoda (2 River lifts)
Niali Block
Villages: Juanga (2); Galadhari (1)
Kakatpur Block
Village Tikarpada (2 River lift)

Embankment Enhancement
Sanabila Ghai Bandha in Thailo, 3.5km long; Dendua Gheri Bandha, 3km long; and Pokhariapada Ghai Bandha 6.5km long.
Special Aid
Village Udupur -- Goatery

Rama Devi Kanyashram
Build new 2 storey girl's hostel.

work with each other, had to be identified. The group of farmers would have to agree to a collective responsibility in purchase of expendables, such as fuel, and to repair and maintain the borehole, diesel pump, and distribution pipes, as needed. The most crucial part of the task was to find the farmers, with contiguous lands, who would have the honesty and social skills to cooperate and work with each other for years to come.

Each group of farmers that would enjoy the irrigation would have to agree to several conditions individually and jointly. (1) They would promise to declare the land on which the pump

and distribution pipes were sited to be community property of the cooperative society; (2) We (CanOSA & SEEDS) would pay for the installation costs, the seedstock, and for operating costs until after the first harvest in May 2000; (3) The initial cost was to be considered as loan to the cooperative society; (4) Each member farmer would pay into a revolving account belonging to the cooperative society an amount sufficient to cover operating costs, and replacement costs; (5) After the initial setup cost was fully repaid into the revolving account, the funds would be used to start up another Pani Panchayat in the same or a nearby village.

The lift irrigation system, with proper maintenance, would continue to provide food and additional cash income through extra harvests for years to come. And, within a few years the members of each Pani Panchayat, would have repaid the 'loan'. Our grand idea was that as soon as each cooperative bank account had built up a deposit equal to the initial expenditure, it would be used to set up another Pani Panchayat to benefit another group of farmers. We saw major benefits to individual member farmers belonging to local cooperative societies. Our vision was that the farming cooperatives concept would self-reproduce and spread throughout rural Odisha, bringing improved agricultural productivity and increased personal wealth into the villages.

We were in mid-December, 1999. The planting time for winter rice for the next crop was in January. If we could provide borewell or river lift irrigation systems in two weeks, then the farmers could plant rice and harvest a crop by May 2000.

Pani Panchayats with borewells were organized in villages Juanga and Galadari, in Niali block; in village Tikarpada in Kakatpur block; in villages Thailo, Kurunia, and Dendua in Balikuda block; in village Kadhanga in Katara block; in village Talakusuma in Garadapur block; in village Pokhariapada in Ershema block. Summer paddy (Dalua, Lalata) was planted in approximately 120 acres. Another 5 acres of land was utilized for vegetables, such as hot pepper and saru, mostly in Thailo and Kadhanga.

Raising the *Ghai Bandhas*

Three embankments were raised in height and strengthened, providing protection from flooding by river and ocean water to large tracts of farmland. The work involved a total of 14km of dykes/embankments. In each case several villages, with possibly thousand families benefited. The protection afforded by the embankments would last for generations. This was possibly the most ambitious and far-reaching post-supercyclone relief project undertaken by any government or private relief organization. The three embankments are Sanabila Ghai Bandha in Thailo, 3.5km long; Dendua Gheri Bandha, 3km long; and Pokhariapada Ghai Bandha 6.5km long.

The embankments are basically high ridges to keep flood waters out. For strength and stability, they are wider at the base, narrow at the top. For an increase in height of the embankment, the base has also to be widened. The first step in strengthening an embankment was consultation with engineers with expertise on this type of embankment. Additional earth had to be piled and compacted along the side, from base to the top. This could be done with manual labor, with simple tools.

We insisted that in addition to the men, the women of the villages must also actively participate. Since raising of the embankment may adversely affect the farmland of nearby villages, they (Thailo people) had to get agreement of all the nearby villages. Hundreds of village men and women from the nearby villages, donated their labor. Each was given 3 kg rice and Rs.10 per person-day. As with the Pani-Panchayats, the embankment heightening will bring benefits to the villages for generations.

Epilogue

Our single biggest failure has been not to have followed up on the Pani Panchayats. Our vision was that each Pani Panchayat would fund the startup of another, through monthly deposits of the “startup loan”, which we had provided. Had we been able to do that, we would have hundreds of Pani Panchayats by now across rural Odisha. That has not happened.

Written some 20 years after the events, this article fails to convey the feelings that all of us

felt at that time. To convey that feel of immediacy, a few selected emails are compiled in the Appendix of this article.

I had long felt that I had a debt to repay to Odisha and India for nurturing and educating me. I had a sense of exhilaration, in finally being able to repay my debt to Odisha in helping in a very concrete manner the people who had lost so much.

I left a wounded Odisha on Dec 25, 1999. Somdutt stayed on until January 28, 2000. On Somdutt's return to Houston, Sudarsan Das took over managing the SEEDS-CanOSA projects. Even though he had a fulltime position at KIIT, he agreed to follow-up the ongoing projects, and initiate and manage the construction of the hostel in Satyabhamapur.

Apart from the relief efforts described in this article, many other deserving projects were suggested by volunteers working in villages, discussed, vetted and funded through 2000, until the funds got exhausted. We funded a Milk Panchayat in Remuna, Balasore and helped repair the Dalijoda Srikhetra Ashram. There were far more worthwhile projects than available funds. One of our major disappointments has been that even after such successful projects, bringing such benefits to this and future generations, we did not see a corresponding enthusiastic funding support from the community of donors.

With the drying up of funds, we and the corps of volunteers at the grassroots level lost interest and enthusiasm. Beyond the Kanyashram hostel, CanOSA did not sponsor any other project. Somdutt Behura lost interest in SEEDS projects altogether. Those of us who remained with SEEDS went back to the pre-1999 practice of supporting a few small projects with funds subscribed to amongst ourselves.

Acknowledgement

Although I have used the word ‘we’ liberally in this account, most of the work was by Unnayan and by local volunteers, experts and field workers, who had joined hands with us. Let us thank once again Sudarshan Das, Rashmi Mohanty, Somdutt Behura, Devdutt Behura, Prabhu Lenka, Pradipta Naik, Devraj Lenka, Basanta Swain, Ramesh Chowdhury and many

others. There is no doubt at all that alone by myself, I would not have been able to accomplish even a tenth of what we did.

My experience in village level relief work would not have been possible without the spontaneous and spirited fund raising by Sumitra Padhi, Hara Padhi, Sri Gopal Mohanty, Sabita Panigrahi, Gagan Panigrahi, Pratap Panaik, Sushmita Behera (President of CanOSA in 1999), and many others.

Readings

Sudarsan Das, Prabhu Lenka, Debdutt Behura, Deba Lenka, Rashmi Mohanty, Pradipta Nayak, Lalu Mansinha and Somdutt Behura, "Working With Hope: CanOSA, SEEDS and Unnayan," *Journal of the Odisha Society of America*, July 2000, pp 176-178.

Lalu Mansinha, "The Cyclone Relief Effort in Canada," *Journal of the Odisha Society of America*, July 2000, pg 179.

Appendix: Dispatches from a ravaged Land

Emails to SEEDS, CanOSA and ORNET about our relief effort for the 1999 Supercyclone

Written some 20 years after the events, the text in the main article fails to convey the excitement, and the enthusiasm of the participants in the fund raising and the relief effort in the ravaged land. To convey that feel of immediacy, a few selected emails posted on ORNET and SEEDSnet in late 1999 and 2000 are compiled in this article, Part II.

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- A19. 2000 May 29 *Somdutt Behura* Re:From Orissa! Urgent
- A20. 2000 Nov 14 *Prabhu Lenka/ Devdutt Behura* Cyclone rehabilitation
- A21. 2000 Dec 11 *Sri Gopal Mohanty and Rashmi Mohanty* Reports from Village Thailo

This article would not have been started, and would not have been finished after starting, had it not been for the persistent and insistent pushing by Sri Gopal Mohanty.

Finally, I apologize for errors of omission and commission; after a 20-year interval, and advancing years, memory is getting thin.

A1. 1999 Dec 11 *Lalu Mansinha* Report to Community #1

From: "Lalu Mansinha" <laluman@hotmail.com>

To: seeds@cs.columbia.edu, CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

Cc: ornet@cs.columbia.edu

Subject: Report on Relief Work

Date: Sat, 11 Dec 1999 04:35:44 GMT

Report to the Community: #1

Friends:

A meeting was held in Bhubaneswar to discuss SEEDS relief projects. The meeting was held at my sister's house in Chandrasekharpur. Present were Prabhu Lenka (of Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology), Debdut Behura (OUAT), Sudarsan Das (Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology), Pradipta Roy(KIIT), myself, Somdut, and occasional inputs from my sister Nivedita Scudder.

A lot of topics were discussed. The big question was how soon we can help an affected village to regain independence. At one point my mother Hemalata Mansinha interjected that whatever we do, we must not turn the people into beggars. One solution, that promises rehabilitation in 5 months is to provide irrigation.

In the fertile delta areas, farmers can get three rice harvests per year, provided there is irrigation. The planting time for rice for the next crop is in January. If we can provide irrigation system in two weeks, then every family within the irrigation range can plant rice and harvest a crop by May 2000. At that point he has food, income, dignity. The irrigation system will continue to provide economic returns through extra harvests for years to come.

Without the lift irrigation: no work, no income, no food for years to come. It is certain that the able bodied men will leave to work as labourers and factory workers elsewhere in India, with disastrous social consequences. Last week was Aids Week in India. The newspapers are publicising the fact that the Aids epidemic is starting in India, with the largest number of potential Aids patients. Aids is spreading through migrant workers. Aids and other diseases is a spectre in cyclone areas.

Once we decided on lift irrigation, we found that Sudarsan from KIIT has had experience. He quickly estimated, and later confirmed, that with his sources and suppliers and contractors, we can place one river lift irrigation system at a cost of Rs56,000. For a tubewell lift system the cost is Rs71,000. We have informally spoken with contractors. The two week time frame, prior to Jan 1, 2000 start of the sowing season, is doable, IF WE MOVE FAST.

Our plan is to emplace 12-15 lift irrigation pumps from SEEDS funds and 3-4 from CanOSA funds. The total number people that would benefit is substantial, but an exact count has to wait until all the agreements are signed.

The irrigation system consists of a tubewell, to be drilled and lined, a diesel powered pump, a small pump house, distribution pipes for water. Each group of farmers that will enjoy the irrigation will have to organise and satisfy several conditions individually and jointly. (1) They promise to declare the land on which the pump is sited to be community property; (2) The entire system is considered a loan to the group (3) We will pay for the installation costs, and for operating costs until May 2000; (4) Each farmer will pay into a revolving account an amount to cover operating costs, service costs, and the replacement cost.

Sudarsan, who is an experienced community worker, and also heads the Center for Social Development at KIIT, estimates that we have more than 70% chance of success, i.e. the cooperative organisation that we put together will survive and the irrigation system will continue to function. Of the 19 pumps we plan to emplace, perhaps 15 will survive. The reason for this high rate of success is that the benefits of private cooperatives is now well known in the rural farming community. The reason for the potential failures is apathy, greed among individual villagers.

We have confidence on our cost per irrigation site. We have found out that other NGOs, such as Abhijan cost this project at Rs90,000. Compare this with our projected costs of Rs. 56,000 and Rs70,000.

Then first two pumps are to be located at the village of Pokharipada. Today a team with Sudarsan, Somdut, Devdut, Pradipta and Niranjana Tripathy of San Jose, will be scouting for further villages and sites. We will be looking at villages that have not been assigned to other NGOs. To our knowledge only 1/3 of the villages have been assigned as yet.

The incursion of sea water makes soil salinity a problem. The villagers told us that the heavy rains that came with the cyclone has washed away much of the salt. At Pokharipada the farmers are confident that they can flush out the salt with water from the pump. In any case, Prabhu Lenka and Devdut will analyse the soils at OUAT facilities..

At each village that we site a pump, we will look at the school house and repair or rebuild it. One headmaster said that his students badly need Grade X text books to prepare for the provincewide school leaving exams in March. All the textbooks and classnotes have been blown or washed away. We have promised to take the headmaster to the nearest town and purchase the books.

We are considering simple brick and concrete structures, to be made locally with local labour, that will withstand the next cyclone. We are looking at the costs, and I will report in a later email. There was panic in Orissa on Dec 8,9,10. We had a scare when a large storm was tracked, possibly coming towards Orissa. It is now headed towards Tamilnadu.

Lalu Mansinha in Bhubaneswar

A2. 1999 Dec 12 Somdutt Behura Report on relief work

From: "Somdutt Behura" <somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com>

To: laluman@hotmail.com, seeds@cs.columbia.edu, CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

Cc: ornet@cs.columbia.edu

Subject: Re: Report on Relief Work

Date: Sun, 12 Dec 1999 22:54:50 CST

I want to add few points to Lalu babu's. The 10,000-12,000 cost that has added up to my earlier estimate was because in the meeting everybody felt that we must provide a fund to operate the pump for 4 months and buy the quality (pest resistance high yield) seeds (we are agreeing on "Lalat"). This includes diesel and maintenance cost.

Pokhadiapada does not have salination problem. However, we are taking extra precautionary measures to test the soil in every places where we may decide to provide a LI point. My brother has taken the arduous task (please be rest assured, completely from our own family source of fund) of collecting the soil and bring back to BBSR. He should be here today, and soil test completed by tomorrow.

One more correction to Lalu babu's mail. Sudarshan of Unnayan has just suggested two private contractors for digging the well. However, I have already found a cheaper alternative. We will have another meeting today at lalu babu's place where we will decided who digs what, and under what mode of operations. As I have decided to personally monitor the progress, the cost should further go down. For example, we have allowed Rs. 12,000 for the pump house in our estimate. However, yesterday I found by talking to a person, who has actually built one, that the cost should be between Rs. 5000-Rs.7000.

I had a lengthy discussion with Adhikar. I had asked them why such highly affected areas as Pokhariapada, Panchapali and surrounding villages have not been covered by any NGO. I discovered that only 11 out of 21 Grama Panchayat have been covered by NGOs (I think ODM) in Ershema area. Pokhadiapada does not figure in their list. Then I asked them why they are not taking up long term rehab program. They said that they have already started in Bagadia (Kujanga), Dhinkia (Ershema) and few other villages. However, they are targeting kitchen garden only in those areas where irrigation is available. I asked them why not provide the villagers with LI points in other areas where irrigation is not available. Adhikar feels that providing LI point is a great solution. However, because of high cost of such project it is shying away from such projects. I asked them what was there cost estimate. They claimed it was anywhere between Rs. 80,000-Rs. 100,000. Clearly, there is a high overhead cost associated in their plan.

Last but not the least, I need money as soon as possible. Gopal, please move some fund to SEEDS ASAP. We can't waste time.

Devesh is here. He has now joined us, and would be visiting all these places.

I have to go now. More later today.

somdutt

A3. 1999 Dec 19 Lalu Mansinha Report to CanOSA

From: "Lalu Mansinha" <laluman@hotmail.com>

To: canOSA@julian.uwo.ca

Subject: Report from lalu

Date: Sun, 19 Dec 1999 13:21:30 GMT

Dear Sushmita, Sabita:

The following is a rambling report. Please read, discuss, consult around and send me a quick response, by Dec 22 at the latest, and let me know how much additional funds can be committed by CanOSA. I can then discuss possible additional projects with our core group here. Somdutt Behura is planning to stay until January 22. After he leaves Unnayan (Sudarsan Das, Pradeep Roy, Rajesh Verma) and Devdutt Behura (OUAT) will continue the projects, with support of KIIT. If CanOSA has preference for specific projects, please let me know. While all email comments that can help are welcome, because of email difficulties, I will be looking out for one specific email from Sushmita and Sabita.
Lalu Mansinha in Bhubaneswar

Friends:

I just had time to glance through the emails of Srigopal Mohanty (SGM) and Niranjana Misra (NM) before the modem connection cutoff. I will respond to both as well as I can, from memory.

1. Technical difficulties for email: I am using the computer facilities of the travel agency located about a block from where I am staying. So I can use it only when the travel agency is not using their phone modem. The second reality is the power has been out several days in a row from 9 to 5 because of repair to high voltage lines. So I am averaging about 5 minutes per day, if that, of actual connection to hotmail, my email server. So I am unable to keep you all informed of day to day progress here, nor have I been able to read and answer emails.

2. Niranjana Babu raised some technical questions on the Lift Irrigation as a civil engineer. Let me reassure everyone that we are asking for advice from very many people. As to feasibility, water salinity, cost estimate, we have had several meetings with Ramesh Chandra Chowdhury of the Orissa Agro-Industries Corp (OAIC). He has extensive experience of siting Lift Irrigation pumps in Balikuda-Ersema area. On his recommendation we (actually Somdutt) contacted yesterday the branch

office of OAIC in Jagatsinghpur. The local BM (Branch Manager) of OAIC has the information on aquifer depths and salinity for all the villages in the area. Mr. Chowdhury was with us for the whole day on Dec 16 when we went Thaila, Kurunia and Kadhanga. We have been asking around for best prices for drilling and lining the bore holes, both private gangs (yes, that's what they call them) and OAIC gangs. Both groups have been alerted to start work with about a day's notice. Time is short. The seeds have to be planted 1st week of January for an April harvest. Our irrigation schemes must be in place by 1st week of January. The destitute farmers will be independent after the first harvest. The pumps we are acquiring will be either Kirloskar or Usha, 5HP, diesel (not electric), and can irrigate 10 acres of rice land or 15 acres of vegetable.

This plan has been endorsed by just about everyone we have spoken to. I particularly value my uncle Durga Madhab Behura's comments. He has had a lifetime of expertise in this area, including 30 years of community work after retirement. He, working for Cuttack Rotary, and has transformed one village, with irrigation, new fast growing trees, new fish farms, improved crops, vocational training for girls, a vet hospital. I had visited this village 3 years back. My uncle wants Somdutt and me to see this village again.

Other genuine endorsements of our scheme have come from experienced NGOs and agri workers. Sudarsan Das and Devdutt Behura have tremendous drive and local expertise. Both are part of the team. We have had many concerns about the 5HP pumps. One is theft. But NM asks about a Govt. ordered shut down of the Lift Irrigation scheme. We have not involved the Govt. of Orissa in our planning primarily because of shortage of time and fear of bureaucratic interference. But we have taken advice from Govt. experts such as Ramesh Chowdhury. In execution Lift point is no different from that of a private party buying and installing a pump. No authorisation is needed.

Each Pani Panchayat is told that if this first project is a success in their village, we will site other projects that will transform the village. If the Pani Panchayat does not function properly, we will come and remove the pump and give it to another village. As I said in my last email, we are looking at schools too. Sudarsan has the plans for cheap, strong concrete and brick housing. If it works, we may use the design to rebuild school houses.

3. SriGopalBabu raises points of funding. Each Lift point including a 5HP Diesel Motor, 4 months of operation, seeds, fertiliser etc., will cost approximately Rs45,000.

I brought with me cheques for Rs.316,250., CS1080., C\$2,000. I have given the cheques to Kalinga Hospital. Encashing the cheques takes time. I will be enquiring on Monday Dec 20, as to the status of the account. At Rs29=1C-dollar, the two dollar cheques become equal to Rs89,320. The total is Rs316,250 + Rs89,320 = Rs405,570. Of this Rs100,000 is being allocated to Kalinga Hospital for their medical camps in the cyclone areas. I have spoken to a doctor who has been on most of KH medical camps. She was very enthusiastic and felt quite strongly about the good work they have done. The total expenses of the Kalinga Hospital team to early December was Rs750,000. This amount does not include the salaries of the doctors or staff.

4. ASRA has requested Rs. 50,000 for the top part of the tubewell. They intend to place 40-50 tube wells in the villages, one tubewell per 4/5 families. ASRA has already purchased the bottom pipes. The villagers are going to provide labour. I have agreed to this.

5. Balance of Rs250,000. Allows 4 Lift points and 1 work-for-food project. I described in my last email about two embankment projects, one at Thaila, and the other at Pokhoripada.

We are being given extraordinary and enthusiastic support by Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and Unnayan. I have spoken to Sudarsan Das about Unnayan handling future remittances of funds from CanOSA. Unnayan is a registered NGO.

What we can do with additional funds:

- Install additional Lift Points.
- Set up Micro credit banks. Sudarsan has had great success in Keonjhar area.
- Repair schools: Certainly the Champeswar High School and the Primary school in Thaila deserves consideration.
- Build houses, shelters through food-for-work. Sudarsan has the design for a strong, inexpensive low cost housing. Somdutt is planning to build one in his own backyard (at his own cost) to test it out. If all works out, this will serve as a model for homes and shelters.
- Ambulance: ASRA has requested an ambulance to transport patients from their clinic at Kujanga. Cost 5 lakhs. Discount of Rs50,000 if CanOSA or SEEDS orders directly to factory and pays in dollars.
- Orphanage: After my last email on SOS Bhubaneswar, I have not had time to look into orphanages. Several organisations are helping.
- Schools: Yesterday (Dec 18) Akhila Bharatiya Vidyarti Parishad (ABVP) that it will help out 40,000 students in the 712 High Schools in the cyclone areas with free text books and study material. SEEDS-CanOSA will not duplicate aid from other agencies.

A4. 1999 Dec 23 *Lalu Mansinha* The Killing Fields: Junagiri and Ersama

From: "Lalu Mansinha" <lalumana@hotmail.com>

To: canOSA@julian.uwo.ca

Cc: seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Date: Thu, 23 Dec 1999 14:10:36 GMT

Finally we reach village Junagiri, in Erasama Block. We are in front of what remains of the home of a wealthy joint family - the remnants of a rice mill, a brick and concrete pillar lying on the side, the outlines of a mud wall. There are other signs that there was a living entity, with adults and children -- a fragment of a sari stuck on the bush, a tattered dress of a child, a rusted lantern, a rusted part of a tin suitcase. This was a joint family of 18 - all of them gone, wiped out shortly after 9am on Friday October 29, 1999.

From where I stand, in what is left of Junagiri, the countryside is flat to the horizon, except for the occasional island of trees, indicating ground higher by a few feet. On one side, due south east, there is a hazy line of casurina trees that mark the horizon. The sea, the Bay of Bengal, is just beyond, 10km away. As I looked over the fields, and talked to the survivors, I could almost see the wall of water coming from the sea on that fateful morning in October. It was as black as before a storm, a frightening dark sky. Others spoke of high winds, but not stormy, a drizzle, but not heavy rain. They talked of the wind changing direction, causing more damage.

I have difficulty in grasping the reality of a 7m high storm surge moving rapidly across the flat landscape, sweeping, destroying, killing. The height of the tidal surge is marked on the trees by straws and debris. It is higher than my head. I imagine myself on that day, drowning here, grasping a branch in a last desperate struggle, but being swept inland.

We talked to Sukumar Mondal, age 35. It was a stormy day, windy, some rain. On that Friday he listened to 9am radio news from Delhi: warnings of the cyclone aiming for Paradip; winds of 260km/hr, tidal waves of 7m. A quick calculation showed that this was higher than his house. Worried, he told his adult daughter of the forecast; she did not believe it. After speaking to his daughter Mr. Mondal stepped outside, and saw the high water already lapping at his doorsteps. He found two men, strangers, who told him that they had been swept in from the nearby village. Now thoroughly alarmed, Mr. Mondal called out to all his family members to gather at the highest point around the home. Just as everyone gathered, the tidal wave came, almost sweeping them away. They clung onto tree branches. Only one person was not there. Sukumar's brother, who was by himself a few meters away. Sukumar went to bring him. In the subsequent effort, both the brothers were being swept away. Sukumar's daughter, sitting on a tree branch, holding onto a toddler with one hand, grabbed Sukumar's hair as his head bobbed by. She kept a tight grip and saved him. His brother slipped from his grasp, never to be seen again.

I revisit the TV images, the bodies of animals and people lying helter-skelter across the fields, the Ananda Margi volunteers in uniform piling up the wood and cremating. As I remember the image, I look around and see near me a charred spot, with coal and ash, clearly a cremation spot. There lies a skull, the bones. Someone was cremated at this spot, no one knew who she was. There were no family members to weep for him. There was no relative to light the funeral pyre. The living were too stunned to grieve for the dead. It was a lonely death. We had heard of the overpowering stench of death. We smell the same and look around, and see two dead cattle, desiccated after seven weeks in the Sun, and the smell, not so pervading as before, but still there. I see a dead dog, perhaps belonging to the child who used to live here?

What is most startling is that the survivors tell their story to us with no expression or emotion. In this stark landscape of death, the living have no hope. We talked to a young woman, Durga Das only 17 years old. She is the sole survivor of a 14 member family. She lost her husband of one and half years, her baby, everyone. As she says this, her eyes are dry. There is no emotion on her face. She is not dressed in white or plain saree, as Hindu widows are, but in a bright coloured saree of modern design.

Surely one of the most depressing feelings is for the living to have failed the dead. Tens of thousands of unidentified bodies have been cremated; other tens of thousands have been washed out to sea. So while there is a certainty that the young husband of Durga Das is dead, until the body is found, until the last rites are performed and his body is cremated, he is not really dead, and she is not really a widow. She is doomed to wait for him to return.

There is no expression on her face, nor on any of the survivors. Perhaps it is the struggle of surviving in the desolation without everyone. The inflow of sea water has rendered all land useless for cultivation for years to come. All the ponds are now saline. The only source of fresh water is one single artesian well 1260' deep. The water flows out under its own pressure, but is hot to the touch. While not saline to taste, that water has some chemicals; the artesian water is unfit for irrigation. Plants do not thrive in it.

The statistics are startling, sad. Of the 1300 cattle only 2 survived. Of the 600 pre cyclone population, 197 are dead or missing.

With the saline soil and no fresh water, and no cultivation, the villagers have no source of food and no source of livelihood. Somdutt has been imploring, with a lot of emotion, for us to find a solution for the people. We think of and discard vegetable farming. We think of poultry and turn to an expert with decades of experience. He said it might work, but poultry is very risky, because of several diseases that can wipe out every single chicken within days. The villagers have no experience with poultry at all, no ability to survive total destruction of chickens. Poultry farming is out.

We consider brick making. This whole region will experience an unprecedented building boom, with all the reconstruction plans coming up. So make bricks. The idea catches on, is praised, discussed. Right in the crowd there was a brickmaker. He dashed the idea. The salted soil is also unsuited for bricks.

Somdutt Behura is almost in despair. He, among all of us, feels for the people the most. He repeats over and over 'We have to do something. We cannot just leave these people to die. If they are going to starve to death, why did they survive?'. I have no answer. My life in Canada, with a plenty of everything, appears here as if from another life, from another planet. In this killing field, even hope is missing.

A5. 1999 Dec 26 *Lalu Mansinha* Eureka! The First Borehole; Water at 100feet

From: "Lalu Mansinha" <laluman@hotmail.com>

To: CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

Cc: seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Date: Sun, 26 Dec 1999 06:30:59 GMT

Subject: Eureka! The First Borehole; Water at 100feet

We are in the middle of a field, within sight of Village Juanga and Village Galadhari, near Niali. On a flimsy looking bamboo and string scaffold sits a man holding on to a vertical 2inch pipe, which is being pushed in and out of the ground by a simple lever system pushed by another man, much like an oversized tubewell handpump. Each time the pipe is pushed into the ground, water gushes out. We have hit water at 100' depth.

The drill gang consists of five men. The equipment looks primitive, but is highly effective. With bamboo and twine and a few metal tools, the gang is highly mobile. In this region of bad interconnecting tracks, a drill Gang can reach places where a drill truck cannot.

A gang needs a week to fully complete a borehole ready to be hooked up to the diesel pump. There are several days of work left for this drill Gang. The borehole has to be enlarged to 7 inch, a 4inch pipe has to be emplaced and the hole packed with gravel. A small concrete plate will be laid on the ground. The diesel pump will be placed on it, connected to the borehole, and water will flow. But when we arrive, there is a crisis. The gang uses a thick fluid of cow dung and water as the drilling fluid. The villagers have failed to deliver the cow dung and water. We urge the villagers to promptly supply the gang.

I enquire about the cow dung. The aquifer at depth is a layer of grit and coarse sand. A drill hole causes the sand to inwardly collapse into the hole, blocking it. The cowdung mix binds the sand and keeps the hole open. This is the first borehole in this our Orissa Cyclone Relief Project. This should be a cause for celebration, but we have no time to pause. We have a deadline of first week of January to get water flowing at all of our lift points. So there are many drill gangs working for our project. We walk over to the next bore hole, half a kilometer away. It is half complete. The next hole site is in village Galadhari. Work is yet to start. The farmers have selected a site. We suggest a shift, to maximise irrigated area, and benefit as many farmers as possible. The suggested shift starts an argument among the farmers, deteriorating into a shouting match, accusations. We tell them that without unity and cooperation, we will site the lift point at another village. This calms them down. One farmer is truculent and threatening. I take him aside and ask him why he really objects to the lift point. He said he does not object really. He has a lift point closeby, purchased with a Rs30,000 loan. He sells the water and repays the loan. "What will happen to my loan if you give water free to my regular clients. I am you are supplying farmers with water, but please site the pump downslope and away from my Lift point". We follow his suggestion, site the pump. The crisis was defused. We call a hurried village meeting. We gather, but the key villager is missing. After much commotion he was found. He had gone to get freshly made heap of 'chhena' for each one on our team. I decline, citing stomach upset. Others relish the chhena, saying it is the best chhena ever tasted. We had to rush back because I was presenting an invited paper at the International Conference on Information Technology, CIT-99, at Swosthi hotel. My paper was on image processing. At the beginning of the paper I spend a minute describing the relief project and gave the good news of water at 100'...

A6. 1999 Dec 27 *Lalu Mansinha* Overview of Rehabilitation Projects

Date: Mon, 27 Dec 1999 15:10:09 -0500

To: seeds@cs.columbia.edu, CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

From: Lalu Mansinha <lalu@uwo.ca>

Subject: Overview of SEEDS-CanOSA Rehabilitation Projects (to Dec 25, 99)

Cc: ornet@cs.columbia.edu

This is December 25, and I start on the return journey to Canada. When I left Canada on Nov 29, I was very doubtful as to the potential of success at longterm rehabilitation by an outsider such as myself.

Today my mood is cheerful. I am very happy with what our team has accomplished so far, with the enthusiastic participation by Somdutt Behura, Sudarsan Das, Devdutt Behura, Pradipta Nayak, Prabhu Lenka, Ramesh Chowdhury, Basant Swain and others.

The rapidity with which the projects have progressed surprises me. Dec 4 Somdutt arrived in Bhubaneswar, Dec 8 I arrived, and our team had a series of meetings, morning and evening. We thrash out ideas for fast rehabilitation of cyclone victims, ultimately settling on Lift Irrigation with diesel pumps. By mid -December we set a target date of December 31, 99 for the water to start flowing.

Dec 22 the first borehole hits water. I am confident that by the first week of January all our Lift Points will be operational. The farmers can seed the fields. The first rice harvest will be in April, 2000. With that, our team would have succeeded in putting some 500 cyclone victim farm families back on their feet. By October, 2000 the number would be approx 1000 families, thanks to the two Food for Work Embankment Enhancement Projects

In my current mood of good feeling, I think that our projects must be the fastest rehabilitation among all NGOs and govt run rehabilitation plans.

Somdutt will be staying on until January 22 and the Cyclone Rehabilitation Project will continue. After Somdutt leaves, Sudarsan Das will continue to head the project.

A7. 1999 Dec 27 Gopal Mohapatra This is what we need to do!!

Date: Mon, 27 Dec 1999 15:22:27 -0700

To: Lalu Mansinha <lalu@uwo.ca>, seeds@cs.columbia.edu, CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

From: Gopal Mohapatra <gkm@aiol.com>

Subject: This is what we need to do!!

Cc: ornet@cs.columbia.edu

Dear Ornetters:

Lalu Babu's mail from Orissa made me write this e-mail to Ornet. Although I have been a member of Ornet since 1992-93, I have taken myself off Ornet several times because of my inability to handle the sheer volume of postings and discussions on how to improve Orissa and what we "Should" do. But today after getting Lalu Babu's mail, I could not resist the temptation of writing a note to Ornet before the next century moves in.

Lalu Babu's e-mail describes how within a small time frame we managed to get the Lift Irrigation project off the ground and are taking it into a completion by mid-January. Members from SEEDS, Can-OSA and OSA have worked hard in Orissa to get the job done so that the villagers start sowing the seeds on time.

Their hard work was complimented by members here in abroad by raising funds to meet the expenditure in a short period of time. And that is how we work in SEEDS: Constructive suggestion/criticism, to-the-point discussion, respect for others and little ego. An Indian gentleman (from Karnatak) who helped us raising funds in Houston for the project wrote a note

" Here is money for one more pump. I AM CHANGING MY NATIONALITY TO ORIYA ".

Friends and folks keep telling us "Good work, Keep it up". Frankly, we do not need that encouragement. If we were not self-motivated to do it, we would not have done it. What we need is your involvement and help, just like what the gentleman did. We would feel honored, proud and glad if someone told us "I like what you are doing, tell me how can I get involved or help you". Because in the long run, it is a help to those who need it very much. And when we tell you about what we are doing, it is not to show-off but to pass on information to you and help you decide if you would like to get involved and share with us the pleasure of serving the humanity.

During my interaction with elders, I have been told "You cannot change Orissa by digging a well or adopting a student. You should do something big...this..that".

Well, here we are now...we did projects in past in the magnitudes of \$3k or \$4k and now we are doing one in the range of \$20k and one day we may be in \$100k or \$1m. But that would certainly need your involvement and support.

As per my understanding, Ornet forum was created to provide a platform for constructive interaction, information exchange, and working towards helping Orissa. We have honored that to a very minimum extent and have spent a lot of time on arguing/debating and exchanging insults. Debating is healthy to some extent, but on Ornet, most of the times it has taken a personal angle and thus has proved fatal. Well, now that another century is knocking at the door, it is perhaps a moment when we should take a pause and think about some of our priorities.

Wishing you all a very happy new year/century.

Regards,

Gopal Mohapatra

A8. 1999 Dec 27 Somdutt Behura Proposal

From: "Somdutt Behura" <somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com>

To: seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Cc: somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com

Subject: Proposal

Date: Mon, 27 Dec 1999 20:30:09 CST

Dear friends,

This proposal is the first draft, and many changes have been incorporated, both in the proposal and the agreement. The agreement was written by me, and was ably translated into Oriya by Sudarsan. The attachment that I included in my last mail relates to my version of the agreement, and has gone through some changes. The proposal was prepared by Sudarsan.

For last two days I was visiting the Juang tribes of Keonjhar. I will relate my exciting experience among the Junag tribes.

somdutt

COMMUNITY MICRO-LIFT IRRIGATION PROJECT: A MODEL PROPOSAL

Provision of irrigation facility is the most effective way to improve farmers' relationship with their land. Such facility has potential to transform agricultural economy of a village from subsistence mode to a surplus one. Therefore, community managed micro lift irrigation can be a core activity in the process of reconstruction of cyclone ravaged villages. This model project is designed keeping three specific objectives in mind. Firstly, to enable the farmers to grow paddy crop which can make good the loss of kharif crop in the cyclone. Secondly, to save the paddy crop in the years monsoon rains are not sufficient. Thirdly, to enable farmers to take an additional rabi crop.

Description of the Project

Two types of lift irrigation systems will be made under the project depending upon the source of water. In case of presence of a perennial or a semi perennial stream in the village devices suitable for river lift will be used. These are diesel pump (10 hp), discharge PVC pipes (110mm), outlets etc. A pump house will be constructed for the pumpset. Discharge pipes will be buried 3 feet under the soil to protect it. Lift water will be available from a number of outlets, site for which will be fixed by villagers themselves by consensus. In villages where there is no surface water source, groundwater will be tapped for irrigation purposes. So, in addition to pumpset and discharge pipe, PVC pipe (36m and 4inch dia) will be used to draw water from underground.

Salient Features of the Project

Salient features of a model project conceived by UNNAYAN are as follows:-

1. Community Managed: Lift irrigation infrastructure will be designed, owned and managed by the community. For this purpose, beneficiaries will be organised into a water users' association called Pani Panchayat. This association will be involved in all stages of the project like site selection, purchase, implementation and management of the infrastructure. A 5-6 member executive body selected by Pani Panchayat will look after day to day management of the infrastructure.
2. Pump Operators Training: Two persons from the village will be chosen by Pani Panchayat for pump operators training. After receiving the training, operators will be responsible for operating the pump as and when required. They will also be able to take care of minor repairs in the pump.
3. Coupon system: An hourly rate of Rs 40/- will be charged from the user. For this, pre-paid printed coupons will be used to pay for water charges so that the operator can not make 'credit sale'.
4. Maintenance: Minor maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure will be attended by the pump operator who will be trained in it. Further, a maintenance fund will be maintained by Pani Panchayat. Hourly rate of Rs 40/- includes fuel cost and maintenance cost.
5. Revolving fund for agriculture: A revolving fund will be created to help the induction of more profitable cropping pattern in the village. This revolving fund will have to be returned back to Pani Panchayat after harvest of first crop.
6. Saving and Credit: Thrift activity will be started by all members of Pani Panchayat. Amount to be saved every month, interest charged on credit taken from the thrift fund and other norms of will be decided by members themselves. They will also open a bank account and subsequently the group will be linked to the bank. It will provide members with credit to be used for both farm and non farm purposes.

Sustainability

Following provisions in the project ensures the sustainability of the project:-

- o Design, implementation and management of the project infrastructure will be done by Pani Panchayat. This will create a sense of ownership among the villagers.
- o Water charges will be levied by Pani Panchayat. Out of this charge a part will go to the maintenance fund to be maintained by Pani Panchayat.
- o Two persons selected by Pani Panchayats will be given pump operators training. This will ensure proper upkeep of the pumpset.
- o Saving and credit activity will be started by Pani Panchayat to provide farm and non farm credit support to the members on sustainable basis.

Model Budget for a river lift irrigation project

S.I. No Description Expenditure (in Rs)

1. 10 hp diesel pump 25,000
 2. Discharge pipe 7000
 3. Pump house 12,000
 4. Gravel 1000
 5. Ag. Revolving fund 10000
 6. Pump Operators' Training 500
- Total 55,500

Model Budget for a groundwater lift irrigation project

S.I. No Description Expenditure

1. 10 hp diesel pump 25,000
 2. Discharge pipe 7000
 3. Pump house 12,000
 4. Gravel 1000
 5. Drilling (8 inch dia) 4000
 6. PVC pipe 36 metre @ Rs 250/- per metre 9000
 7. Ag. Revolving fund 10000
 8. Pump operators training 500
- Total 70,500

Sudarsan Das

A9. 1999 Dec 31 *Lalu Mansinha* RE: This is what we need to do!!

Date: Fri, 31 Dec 1999 12:37:42 -0500

To: Gopal Mohapatra <gkm@aiol.com>, seeds@cs.columbia.edu, CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

From: *Lalu Mansinha* <lalu@uwo.ca>

Subject: Re: This is what we need to do!!

Cc: ornet@cs.columbia.edu

I can only echo the sentiments expressed by Gopal. We from SEEDS have demonstrated that we can execute speedily and efficiently mid-size projects \$10k to \$30k.

There have been much discussion on accountability and transparency. We from SEEDS have been repeating these statements for years:

1. No overhead is charged on funds donated to SEEDS, i.e. \$1000 donated, means \$1000 reaches the target project.
2. SEEDS members who are residents of Canada, US, Australia etc. do not charge a penny to any personal travel expenses or per diem. Somdutt and I did not draw upon the donated funds for any of our expenses. The \$1000 remains for project use.

The end result is that SEEDS/CanOSA projects are being executed at a bargain. Donated \$1000 reaches the project site as \$1000.

Consider other agencies like Red Cross, CARE etc. All charge overhead. I also heard in Orissa (someone please confirm or refute) that of \$1,000,000 announced by CARE or other large agencies, only about \$300,000 reaches the project. The remainder is taken up by transportation, travel, boarding and lodging etc. etc. for their own employees on the project.

The upshot of all this is that we at SEEDS use all donated funds for the purpose intended. So please get involved. Give often and generously for SEEDS projects in Orissa.

For the ongoing Cyclone Rehab Projects, we are lucky to have Sudarsan Das and Rashmi Das working with us. Sudarsan is putting in substantial efforts towards this project, and would not accept requests from Somdutt and me to be reimbursed expenses or charge overhead. I also want to acknowledge the generous support from the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology. They have repeatedly provided transportation to travel to the villages. But beyond all this, I and Somdutt can count Sudarsan Das, Achyut Samanta and Prashant Misra as our friends. It has been a very fun two weeks in December, even as we were seriously trying to work for Cyclone Rehab.
Lalu Mansinha

A10. 2000 Jan 03 *Lalu Mansinha* Pani Panchayat at Irrigation Points

Date: Mon, 03 Jan 2000 13:02:47 -0500

To: ornet@cs.columbia.edu, seeds@cs.columbia.edu, CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

From: *Lalu Mansinha* <lalu@uwo.ca>

Subject: Pani Panchayat at SEEDS Irrigation Points

I have had a query from Anadi Babu, and others may have similar questions as to the Lift Irrigation by SEEDS. Anadi Babu Question 1: "I am impressed with the irrigation projects SEEDS has taken up through diesel pumps. It should be multiplied many more times. However, the problem is : How do you provide the benefit of the pump - the use and ownership - to the community . Does SEEDS give the pump to one person as a gift or does it help develop some sort of cooperative for the use and ownership? "

SHORT ANSWER TO Q1: Each Lift Irrigation System ownership and operation is with a local cooperative committee name 'Pani Panchayat', with one condition. If the system is not operated in the proper spirit of cooperation, we will take the pump away and place it elsewhere. The number of Lift Systems that we could construct was limited by the amount of funds available from SEEDS and CanOSA. At every village we had groups requesting more LI systems. If we had more money, we could have setup more systems.

Anadi Babu Question 2: "Irrigation project is a strong and effective project to eradicate poverty from the rural areas . Have you explored the bore -well project ? I know it is way more expensive than the diesel pumps . I am wondering if you have had a chance to talk to some body about it . If you have any idea - approximate would do - about the bore well please let me know ." **SHORT ANSWER TO Q2:** All except two, of our diesel pumps pump water out of shallow bore holes. The bore holes are drilled manually, and have a max depth of 150'. With truck mounted drill rigs one can go much deeper. Deeper bore holes are an absolute necessity in Erasama, Astarang and other coastal areas where the subsurface water is saline. Deeper wells are necessary for sweet water. In fact in Junagiri, in Erasama block, there was such a deep well, 1260', and it was artesian.

The problem with all water bearing layers, called aquifers, is the recharge of water. If water is pumped out in excess of the recharge rate, then the wells will run dry sooner or later. Excessive pumping also causes land subsidence, causing flooding. Deeper wells are more likely to have recharge problems. Shallow aquifers, at 100' depth, are more likely to be recharged from nearby rivers.

Our funding levels from SEEDS and CanOSA was too small for us to explore Deep bore hole projects to any depth.

LONG ANSWER to QUESTION 1: Please read with patience. Although our mandate from SEEDS, CanOSA and OSA was relief for cyclone victims, we found out that the core districts were over saturated with direct handouts by misguided

philanthropy. Each village had received excess of everything. Eight weeks after the cyclone, unneeded direct supplies were still rolling in, still being distributed.

To us this encouraged a begging mentality in which population gets the idea that things are for free and one does not need to work, or even lift a finger, to receive food, clothing, blankets etc. In initial discussions, we all (Sudarsan, Somdutt, Devdutt, I, and others who cared to join us) that we will not 'give' anything unless we saw a definite need.

So we explored for ways and means that would put the farmers back on their feet quickly. Lift Irrigation with diesel pumps appeared the best solution after we looked at feasibility, availability of borewell 'gangs', and cost.

Each 5HP pump can irrigate only 10 acres. Since the average land holding is only 1 acre, at the very least a properly sited pump can help 10 farmers. However, because land holdings are fragmented, the number of farmers per pump is usually higher, up to 20.

The slope of the land at the pump site is critical. A long gentle slope allows the flow of water over a large area, with the help of channels.

Right from the beginning, the idea has been to set up cooperatives. Each Lift Point will be run by a Pani Panchayat, to operate the pumps and the entire Lift Irrigation process. The villages were chosen both on basis of need and also where personal acquaintance of the villageers indicated that a Pani Panchayat had a good chance of success.

[Pani means water. Panch, is the same word as Punch, meaning five. Punch-ab = Panjab = Five Rivers. the word Punch, that you drink, originated in British India as a mix of five ingredients. Panchayat means a ruling committee of five persons.]

Each village has been visited several times. The Lift Irrigation system and the Pani Panchayat was discussed. Finally, all farmers who benefit from a specific Lift point had to sign a 'legal' document (on legal stamp paper) agreeing to join the Pani Panchayat and abide by the rules of operation.

Somdutt drafted the agreement in English. It was translated into Oriya by Sudarsan and then printed out on Stamped paper.

Each farmer is repeatedly told that the pump is not from govt. money, it is not free, it is from our sweat and labour, and that we would be happy only if the pump system is properly operated and used.

The cost of the borewell, pump and money for the first four months of operation, including seeds, should be considered as a repayable loan. The loan would be paid back, not to us, but to the Pani Panchayat. Starting after the first harvest in April 2000, each farmer must make a monthly payment to a Revolving Bank Account. The total amount to be paid back would be the total cost of the Lift System. We left the monthly amount to be determined by each Pani Panchayat. We told them that as soon as the Pani Panchayat had accumulated enough funds, they can set up another Lift System.

The Revolving Bank Account will also work as a source for loan for the poorer farmers for buying of seeds, fertiliser etc.

In one village one old man told us that they have no experience in running a Pani Panchayat and will need help. As a result Sudarsan came up with the idea of organising a one or two day conference in Bhubaneswar of two members of each Pani Panchayat where there would be lessons in how to conduct Pani Panchayat meetings, how to keep records of borrowings and repayments, and what to do if one or more persons fail to repay on time.

At least in one Pani Panchayat there was so much enthusiasm for our scheme that the farmers have taken up a fund raising among themselves, to be put into the Revolving Bank Account as soon as we got around to starting one in the local bank.

If all this sounds like micro-credit scheme, it is. I consider the future social benefits of having successfully run Pani Panchayats as having the greatest impact on the village community. We went to the cyclone area with the aim of providing short term relief as needed, but we ended up with a real long term project with long lasting consequence.

What is the chance that a Pani Panchayat will work? Setting up a cooperative scheme in a community that has no history of successful cooperation is chancy at best. We estimate that there will be at least a 30% failure rate, i.e. the Pani Panchayat ends up in two or more groups fighting with each other.

To guard against this, we have dangled carrots. We tell each Pani Panchayat that if they are successful, we will come back with more projects, for agriculture, cattle raising, schools, scholarships etc. If they fail, we will come back and take away the pump and place it somewhere more deserving.

Initially, each Pani Panchayat will be given basic training, and then visited once a month. Hopefully all this will work.

Lalu Mansinha

A11. 2000 Jan 06 Somdutt Behura Status

From: "Somdutt Behura" <somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com>

To: seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Cc: somdutt_seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Subject: Status

Date: Thu, 06 Jan 2000 19:54:38 CST

Dear all,

With a sense of frustration, and elation I write this mail. Despite my best effort, and benefitting villagers' enthusiasm we are running late on the implementation of the projects. We have missed our deadline of December 31. However, good news

is that 3 wells in Balikuda (one more still pending), and 3 in Juang, Galadari have their boring complete. The pumps are being delivered today. These borewells have been already tested, and running great. Normally Agro industries tests the tubewells using their own pump. Once everything is tested ok, we put our own pump.

We are running late in Kadhanga and Talakusuma. I don't know whom to blame. Probably none. Agro industries have sent their teams in time. But these digging teams never reached the villages. Finally, we took a hard decision. With consultation with Agro we decided to give it to private parties. Agro has agreed to provide their testing team to assist this private effort.

The river lift at Pokhadiapada should be complete today. The pumps have been supplied day before yesterday. I don't have status of the Kakatpur river lift point as yet.

The embankment project has suffered a major setback. It did not go according to our intended plan. We had decided earlier that we will procure 300 quintals of rice from the government at a subsidized rate, and provide 3kgs. of rice and Rs.10 per manday in our food for work program to complete this embankment. However, government has not yet agreed to provide us with the rice. Without government support in procuring rice, the cost of the project would go up two to three fold (government rate of rice is Rs. 4, while market Rs. 8 to Rs. 12 per Kg.). Now we are going through the painful process of moving the government machinery to accept our proposal.

Darshan bhai,

Everyday scores of villagers are coming to me to provide them with their life-line of survival- the water. I am returning them, as I don't know if I have enough money to finish the current project. I will let you know in a day or two which other villages can be included. I know for sure that Sundarda near Juang needs at least one, and can be easily monitored. Bandal near Kadhanga needs at least one, and can also be monitored efficiently. There is a request from Astaranga (where I really wanted to provide a few).

Gopal,

You need to move either \$10,000 from ICC or \$10,000 from own source ASAP without further delay.

All,

I must tell you that we have been able to put together a very dedicated team with help from Unnayana. Sometime a few pay for this dedication. My brother is now stationed in Balikuda area, and has not returned home for last couple of days. This brings a lot of resentment at home and family. Yet we must have to act.

As I have said before, to keep the cost of operation less, I bought a bike that allowed me and my brother to travel far flung places. But this brings certain amount of life risk and pain as well. Rasulgadh chaka, Jaydev Vihar chaka, and Acharya Vihar Chaka in BBSR and OMP chaka in Cuttack are virtual death traps. You drive bike with your life in hand. Sometime it becomes painful. Yesterday, my brother had a punctured tyre in the remote corner. When I spoke to him last, he is somehow managing by putting cycle tyre patch on a bike tyre. These are great experiences. Yet I must say that everyday my family goes through the trauma of losing somebody in the process. It is not a very pleasant experience over all. In the face of rampant selfishness, one pays heavily for being unselfish.

Somdutt

A12. 2000 Jan 07 Somdutt Behura RE: Unnayan Proposal

From: "Somdutt Behura" <somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com>

To: dpatra@yahoo.com, gsk_98@yahoo.com, psubrama@gmu.edu

Cc: seeds@cs.columbia.edu, laluman@hotmail.com, somdutt_seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Subject: Re: Unnayan proposal

Date: Fri, 07 Jan 2000 21:17:57 CST

Looks like Lalu babu's earlier status report has not been properly communicated to AID. In fact Juanga and Galadari (Niali block) are the first villages that have their boring dug and tested in time. This is under the efficient management of two agricultural scientists, Dr. Prabhu Lenka (Associate Professor, OUAT), and Mr. Debraj Lenka. They have also agreed to monitor two other villages in the surrounding area that we are adopting for more LI points. They are Sundarda and Tihudi.

Thailo and Kurunia (in Balikuda block) have their three boring dug, and one pending. This is managed by my brother and scientist, Dr. Debdutt Behura. Thailo and Kurunia are his research villages adopted by International Rice Research Institute, Philippines.

Talakusuma and Kadhanga, where digging is under progress, are also under Debdutt Behura, as these villages fall on the same route within a diameter of 20KM. Additionally, Pradipta Nayak from Unnayana is managing the structural aspect of Pani Panchayat (by the way the document that I have earlier sent has the details of these projects).

Pradipta Nayak is in full charge of river lift project in Tikarpada (Kakatpur Block).

Basant Swain is in full charge of river lift project in Pokhadiapada (in Ershema block).

Rashmi Mohanty, Sudarsan Das, Mrs. Nibedita Scudder from Unnayana, and myself from SEEDS are in overall charge of executing the projects.

List of LI and river lift points:

- 1) Pokhadiapada: Two 5HP pumps for river lift. The structure for distribution of water already exists in this village. We are also undertaking a river embankment project over 4KM stretch in this village. (This project is equivalent of two LI points as this allows the farmers to irrigate around 20-30 acres).
 - 2) Thailo and Kurunia: Total LI points-> 4. We are also undertaking a river embankment project over 3KM stretch in this village.
 - 3) Kadhanga: Total LI points-> 2.
 - 4) Talakusuma: Total LI points-> 1
 - 5) Tikarpada: Two 5HP pumps for river lift. (This project is equivalent of two LI points as this allows the farmers to irrigate around 20-30 acres).
 - 6) Juanga and Galadari: Total LI points-> 3.
- Total effective points: 14.

Please read through the mail to get answer to each point raised by AID. I will answer them just below the point posed.

- 1) It looks like 3 villages (with 5 borewell LI points) have been surveyed and covered so far: Thaila, Kurunia and Kadhanga. How far has the survey for the other 14 LI points come along? ...and indeed, what is the basis for the number 19 (10 borewell + 9 river)?

READ MY COMMENTS ABOVE. The basis for more LI points emerges from the fact that more villages are coming forward with frantic request for LI points. As I don't have commitment for funds I am not promising anybody.

As an associated point: It looks like Somdutt has direct contacts with these 3 villages...in terms of contractors, implementation, etc. What about the other villages; does Unnayan, or Somdutt (or anyone else on the team) have direct contacts? As I'm sure you realize, it is very important (at least for the first harvesting season or two) to have some good overseeing/networking mechanism between all these villages. It would be good if you could address this point.

PLEASE READ MY COMMENTS BEFORE.

If you think that the villagers by themselves are capable of managing the setup and the revolving fund without any overseeing from SEEDS or Unnayan, please mention this. Inasmuch as the goal is to make them self-reliant, it would certainly be good if everything can be done with minimum supervision from elsewhere.

We constitute a Pani Panchayat for each LI points constituting of all villagers that would benefit directly from the project. We are building a mechanism for financial discipline and effective management, directly under Unnayana's supervision. Pradipta Nayak is our paid Unnayana member for overseeing this task, and so far he has done remarkable job. If you need the details of Pani Panchayat please read the agreement document attached.

2. Revolving fund: It is not very clear what this fund will be used for and who will be managing it, etc.

As the cyclone loss is total, people don't have enough cash to operate the LI points. So, we are providing Rs. 15,000 per LI points for necessary inputs to make sure that farming succeeds. This will cover diesel cost (by the way electricity is not available because of severe damage to the installation, and because of privatization the villagers may remain in darkness for unknown periods), seeds, fertilizers, pesticide, and maintenance cost for 8-10 acres. After the harvest, this money will be immediately returned to the Pani Panchayat, so that there is always a buffer for next cultivation.

a) What is the approximate number of beneficiaries per LI point, and what is the expected income/profit from the first harvest per family?

In the range of 15-20 families. As irrigation is not available, the income during this period is almost non-existent. So there is a remarkable change. HOWEVER, I AM ENGAGING A FEW PROFESSIONALS TO DO THE IMPACT STUDY FOR US. I HOPE TO CARRY THE REPORT WITH ME.

b) As we understand it, the setup cost + operating cost for one harvest season comes up to Rs. 56K/71K. This amount will be paid by SEEDS/AID/Unnayan. Is this correct?

YES. However, because these are sort of micro-credit projects, the fund is provided as an interest free (because the cyclone effect is severe and far reaching) loan to be repaid back to the Pani Panchayat and Unnayana for further development in the same village. This is our own twist to micro-credit.

c) The operating, service and replacement cost (if the pump breaks down, presumably) beyond May 2000 will be borne by the people. Is this correct? If so, how much does this amount come to per family (just a rough estimate)?

This is decided by Pani Panchayat. It is heartening to learn that all our Pani Panchayats have set up membership fees and certain fix amount to be raised monthly from the members. All our Panchayats have already raised between Rs. 900 and Rs. 1200 for this purpose.

d) Is the revolving fund the first step towards an SHG/microcredit format? All this needs some amount of management and coordination (on a per pump or per village basis). Who will be taking care of this aspect? This essentially means that around 19 SHGs will be set up. If there is indeed a good background for this, it will be an excellent step towards self-reliance. As mentioned, the people in these areas are fairly good entrepreneurs by nature (Bete leaf cultivators and the like)...so perhaps the chances of success for such cooperative efforts are fairly high.

YES! Unnayana is in overall charge. Additionally we are building a team of private individuals. However, my progress has been very tardy.

e) Along the same lines: there is mention of several village meetings; would it be possible to give some idea about how these were initiated and conceived? For the 3 villages mentioned, I suppose Somdutt knows people there, so it must have been quite natural; how about the other villages? I'm sure that the people must be very eager to take the initiative in times like this, but it would be good to know.

I knew only about Kadhanga. Others were suggested by Unnayana and few other private members from their own experience and extensive personal visits when tragedy fell on Orissa. I personally made visit to these places on 6th and 7th of December. Dr. Lalu Mansingh and I then set on a meeting along with others on December 8. We planned our strategy. We took another round of visit again with Dr. Lalu Mansingh and Dr. Durga Madhab Behura, a legendary figure in the agricultural sector. We adopted our villages based on our judgement and experience through direct contact with the people.

3. All the money requested is for pumps/operating costs. How about the costs of seeds and agricultural implements?

Partial answer has already been provided above. Regarding implements we are relying on village resources. If these projects become successful then we are promising them to provide such implements as power tiller, power thresher etc.. So villages have an additional motivation for making this project successful. AND THIS IS WORKING.

4. The usual question about utilizing govt. money/resources; the govt. is certainly sluggish in getting its act together, but are there efforts underway to tap them? One day or another, it looks like money for purchasing seeds and rehabilitating farming communities will come by from the govt., and if no attempts are made to use them, it'd probably just line someone's pockets. This is just to get some idea about the peoples' plans, and their level of awareness about govt. funds.

We have chosen those villages where government support is almost non-existence or extremely tardy. Here is a comment from the collector of Jagatsinghpur, Mr. Nitin Chandra, who is in overall command of government development work in this area.

"Dear Somdutt, you are the first organization to come forward with such excellent proposal from the non-government sector. LI points are most needed in these villages. There are 53 NGOs working in this area, but non is doing LI points. So government has to take over this charge. However, being in government will take its own time. On top of it our plans do not cover the villages you have adopted. Please go forward with your plans, and I will extend all support for a hindrance-free implementation of your projects."

Unfortunately, however, this young, enthusiastic collector was replaced within two days of my meeting him, with one widely known to be one of the most corrupt civil servants in the state, in a pre-election reshuffling.

I hope I have covered all your points. Please let me know if I can be of any further help. My replies will be sporadic though.

Regards,
Somdutt

A13. 2000 Jan 26 Pravu Lenka/ Devdutt Behura Pani Panchayat at Juanga & Galadhari

Date: Wed, 26 Jan 2000 19:09:31 +0530

From: Debdutt Behura <behurad@cal3.vsnl.net.in>

To: lalu@uwo.ca

Subject: message from Pravu Ch. Lenka

Respected Lalatenduji

I convey my regards to you. Your organisation 'SEED' has given smile in the face of cyclone affected villages particularly to the villagers of Juanga and Galadhari. The lift irrigation project has been completed. The villagers have formed pani-panchayat and contributed Rs. 100 towards their membership. They have already raised paddy seedlings to plant it in last week of January which will sustain them towards food security.

The nearby villagers are interested to take up the project in their villages. Your cooperation and assistance is needed. You have inspired us to take up the project work in villages. A private girls high school at village Galadhari has been

completely damaged. They need financial assistance for construction of school building. Somdutt has visited school and taken photographs. Somdutt has widely travelled and contacted various people in the cyclone affected areas. he has worked dawn to dusk to create confidence among the people.

Your inspiration, assistance and encouragement will create smile and hope in the life of cyclone affected people.

With regards,
Yours sincerely,
Pravu Charan Lenka

A14. 2000 Feb 09 Pravu Lenka/ Devdutt Behura Report on Villages Juanga and Galadhari

Date: Wed, 09 Feb 2000 17:11:19 +0530
From: Devdutt Behura <behurad@cal3.vsnl.net.in>
To: Lalu Mansinha lalu@uwo.ca
Subject: Report on Villages Juanga and Galadhari
Respected Lalu Baboo,

Best regards to you. The people of Juanga and Galadhari have raised Dalua(summer) paddyseedlings which are now ready for transplanting. 20 acres of land will be covered. They are utilising the revolving fund i.e., Rs. 5000/- towards diesel. 56 farm families will get their food for the coming season. Another L.I. point will be ready at village Sunderda within 15 days. We are rendering technical knowhow to the people. We are planning to make a socio economic study of the cyclone affected people. The villagers of Galadhari and Juanga are aspirant to get some financial assistance for construction of the schools. In the cyclone affected area people are unable to construct the house so far. The assistance by SEEDS is well acknowledged.

Yours sincerely
Pravu Lenka

A15. 2000 Mar 29 Sudarsan Das Sanabila Gheribandha

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 2000 14:18:07 +0530 (IST)
From: <sudarsan@kiit.ac.in>
To: Lalu Mansinha <lalu@uwo.ca>
Subject: Sanabila Gheribandha
Lalu Babu,

You will be happy to know that the construction of Sanabila Gheribandha is going to be completed very soon. Say by 30th March. There is very good response and participation from the people. We expected that around 100 workers would be participating in the food for work prog. Our expectation came true and at some point of time more than 100 people also participated in the work. That's why we are almost going to complete the work before the schedule time.

Pokhria pada people are approaching us regularly for their food for work programme. We have asked them to wait. After completion of Sanabila Gheribandha can we undertake that work? Please let us know.
Sudarsan

A16. 2000 Apr 28 Gopal Mohapatra My trip to Thailo Village

Date: Fri, 28 Apr 2000 15:47:50 -0700
To: seeds@cs.columbia.edu
From: Gopal Mohapatra <gkm@aiol.com>
Subject: My trip: Thailo Village

Dear members,

I got back from Orissa last Sunday. I was in Orissa from 10th to 20th April. Although I could not do much, I visited two sites (for more than half a day each), met with people and came back with some positive impression. Here is the one to Thailo village.

1. We went to village Thailo on an afternoon. On our way, I could see the intensity of devastation (trees on both sides of the road gone, coconut trees either gone or bent, houses destroyed to their knees). We passed through Somdutt's village: quite a bit of devastation, his grand parental house having taken a massive hit. In Thailo, however, what I saw was impressive. The Bandha (3 km long) had been built in 18 days by the villagers through the food-for-work program we funded, with a total cost of about 90000 rupees (correct me, if I am wrong). The bandha needs to settle down a little before it tests the wrath of another flood. It's level is a little higher than that of the road; so with time it will settle down a little and still be able to check the flood waters. One villager mentioned about a kind of plant they would like to plant to prevent soil erosion from the bandha. The villagers would like an extension of the bandha on the other side of the road (about 1.5 km long) to protect that part from water invasion.

Next, I saw the twelve acre land irrigated by the sole LI point we drilled in January under Somdutt's supervision. As I understood, it was the most difficult LI point but proved to be most productive. It was a pleasure and great satisfaction to see the dalua crop (different varieties of seed being used) in that big twelve acre patch of land under that late afternoon-evening sun. Those of you who visited the area right after cyclone would appreciate it much better than I did.

Finally, we went inside Thailo village. It was getting dark. Most of these houses in this village were destroyed. Those roofless mud walls stood there like ghosts and kept haunting us. We found our way through the narrow roads between the dilapidated houses and finally reached an open area where village girls (below 22) were making plastic wrapped packages for nursery plants. Their aim is fortyfive thousand plants.

The morale of the villagers was high and they seemed to be united. I was impressed with the determination of the young women of the village. Although our help is insignificant compared to their loss, they appreciated it. The devastating cyclone's memories are still in their mind, but they have worked hard to get things back to square again. While leaving the village I was thinking if the government could pass on some of the mammoth grants they received, to these people, the villagers would surely turn the ghostly appearance of the village to a very lively one.

Regards,
Gopal Mohapatra

A17. 2000 Apr 30 Somdutt Behura Tikarpada

From: "Somdutt Behura" <somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com>

To: seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Subject: Tikarpada

Date: Sun, 30 Apr 2000 06:59:46 CDT

I must narrate a story from Tikarpada (which now seems to be one of our successful projects). The heart and soul of Tikarpada project was and is Pradipta Nayak (like me he has some public relation problem though), a sincere and highly motivated social worker. Earlier Pradipta had told us that (and we had investigated) river lift project would be suffice to irrigate close to 40 acres land in this area, from a nearby river. Just a few days before I was about to leave Orissa, he came back to us saying the whole river had salinated because of high tide, and that the river water could not be used for irrigation. We had not budgeted full scale LI points in this area. Pradipta had assured us that government would complete the bundha on the river before the high tide, but as always government had failed (I had made the collector or assistant collector to this effect, I don't remember which one). But it was Pradipta's job to get this work done through the government.

So in the meeting I had blasted poor Pradipta for not anticipating this problem until the very last moment. We all decided that a decision on this would be taken only after Sudarsan made a trip to the area. For all purpose we were on the verge of cancelling this project. I left Orissa in two days. Immediately after reaching here I got a mail from Sudarsan requesting that this project should be undertaken, and that the river lift should be converted into two LI points. I did not have a choice but agree (thanks to AID's timely help). Pradipta took the responsibility. To our utter surprise Pradipta got the two LI points done in just 7 days (as against our sometime more than 15 days by Orissa Agro), at a cost much less than all other LI points. From his experiment we learnt that had we bought the pumps and material directly from the market (we had asked Orissa Agro to provide everything) we could have saved couple of thousands more on each LI point.

Quodos to Pradipta, I now heard from my brother that Tikarpada was having a bumper harvest as well.
Somdutt

A18. 2000 Apr 30 Somdutt Behura With Little Anguish

From: "Somdutt Behura" <Somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com>

To: seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Subject: With little anguish

Date: Sun, 30 Apr 2000 06:37:53 CDT

Dear all,

While I am getting very good news from different Pani Panchayats, we may have hit a failure in Pokhadiapada in Ershema. I am talking about just the LI point there where we just funded two diesel pumps for their river lift project. I had earlier told Sudarsan that if it was failing ask the villagers to return the pumps as per our legal agreement. Sudarsan still insists we wait a while. Pokhadiapada had promised to cultivate at least 20 acres (they had hoped it were more). But latest information is that they did only five. According to my brother this failure is mostly due to village politics. The Bundha project is however doing good (because benefits are not limited to one village I suppose).

Here is some great news though. In all our LI points (except the above), the farmers are expecting a bumper harvest. The cost of rice has started falling because of this bumper production (the rice is going to be good in all irrigated place all through the coastal belt). Here is the conservative estimate from different LI points:

Village Production

Thailo,
Kurunia,
Dendua 600-800 bags
Juanga 500 bags
Kadhanga 400-500 bags
Tikarpada 400-500 bags

This estimate is only on rice production. Each bag is 75 kgs. (I think, I may be wrong), and is going to cost Rs. 400 per bag (at present the price is Rs. 490 per bag, but my brother thinks that it will fall to Rs. 400).

Now observe the scale of economics. The different LI points is going to generate Rs. 2,000,00 to Rs. 3,200,00. According to my brother's estimate 50% is profit. So profit is going to range between Rs. 1,000,00 to Rs. 1,600,00. In the first four months of its operation itself most Pani Panchayats have already generated enough money to pay off their entire loan (if they take little hardship). However, greater news is that each of the families will have enough for the whole year to eat plus some surplus. I will request Unnayan to collect just the nominal loan recovery this time (like recouping the revolving fund and recovering a little toward the cost of LI points this time). With this economy of scale I think we are pretty much in right direction. Bhai, was telling me that this does not include any earning that may come through vegetable cultivation (where the profit is still higher). In general villagers are very happy.

I still remember, the village Panchayat (who is not in any Pani Panchayat) in Thailo once remarking, "If the son (Lalu babu) of a legendary Oriya Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh could come to our village all the way from Canada just for our development, why not can we assure ourselves a greater commitment (to work for a better tomorrow)." I think this commitment is at work.

I will elaborate some plans that we had envisaged, but never got chance to explain in SEEDS. Dr. Prabhu Lenka, Deba Lenka, and my brother had thought to convert some or all villages under our Pani Panchayat to become to seed villages. A seed village is one where quality foundation seeds are sown by buying the seeds directly from different government sources, under the agreement that government would buy back some of the produce as their foundation seeds for future cultivation (at higher than market price). That is how I landed in Keonjhar to buy quality seeds from a government firm in Keonjhar with the help of Deba bhai (of course there were other reasons for my visit too). At that time quality seeds were not available in Cuttack area.

We could use foundation seeds in Pokhadiapada in Ershema, Kadhanga in Katara, and Tikarpada in Kakatpur, Juang in Niali, and very little in Thailo, Kurunia and Dendua in Balikuda. Fortunately, Junaga, and Kadhanga have been converted into seed villages (in Cuttack district). As Tikarpada is in Puri district, it has still not been converted (not being able to influence the government official as yet).

When you are in seed village you are selling your rice at least Rs. 2 above the market rate.

As many of our donors are from Ornet list, will it be too much publicity if we posted our report in Ornet as well?
Somdutt

PS: Dhanda, I am still not being able to say anything on the Khurda project in the absence of a clear micro-credit direction. I would like to know the kind of micro-credit projects the group is envisaging.

A19. 2000 May 29 Somdutt Behura Re:From Orissa! Urgent

From: "Somdutt Behura" <somdutt_seeds@hotmail.com>

To: dkmishra@one.net.au, seeds@cs.columbia.edu

Subject: Re:From Orissa! Urgent

Date: Mon, 29 May 2000 01:26:06 CDT

Dear all,

This is with a sense of urgency that I am writing this note for immediate action. As all of you know that Unnayan has already taken a nursery project. Prasad had visited this site, and what I hear he was extremely impressed by the hard work and dedication put forward by a group of women self-help group in Thailo. I also made a short visit to the village with internationally renowned agro-economist Dr. Suship Pandey, working with IRI, Philippines which has a research project undergoing in the same village. He was so impressed by our work that he personally congratulated SEEDS and wanted to join SEEDS. He also visited the nursery site and was highly impressed.

But this project is running under little problem because of market condition. The girls in the group are visiting the local market every "Hata" day, but are unable to sell their saplings (which is of very high quality). At this point they are trying to sell "Sajana" (high yield kind), and Papaya. Sajana needs to be sold as soon as possible, as the saplings have become very big. Although there is a great demand for these saplings no villagers want to pay for it. They are claiming that many organizations have promised them free. So the SHG does not qualify for selling the saplings for a price. So, Unnayan and I agree on a mechanism. That SEEDS buy back the saplings from the SHG and distribute it free with the villagers (which needs these plants anyway). The SHG and Unnayan are responsible for harvest half of the produce and sell it, and thereby return the money back.

Other saplings of Sisu and other cash trees can be sold easily. Unnayan is very confident about it.

I have also asked a NGO (who is getting money just to plant trees in the villages) to buy few of ours Sajana and papaya saplings. However, time is very crucial. These girls have put incredible amount of time and hardwork, and we have to see that they are successful. Please have your opinion as soon as possible, may be by tomorrow, so that Unnayan can distribute the saplings.

Lalu babu,

The small patch of land where Thailo villagers use to produce vegetables (that you had seen), and where we installed a small LI point, is now full of high quality chilly. Chilly at present is carrying a very high price tag, and Thailo villagers are more than happy, and congratulated all our effort. They have now requested for agriculture implements on loan basis.

Somdutt

A20. 2000 Nov 14 Pravu Lenka/ Devdutt Behura Cyclone rehabilitation

Date: Tue, 14 Nov 2000 11:57:42 +0530

From: Debdutt Behura <behurad@cal3.vsnl.net.in>

To: lalu@uwo.ca

Subject: Cyclone rehabilitation

Respected Lalu Baboo

Best regards. The financial help of SEEDS and CANOSA is well recognised in the cyclone affected villages of coastal area. Our panipanchayats enabled the farming community to sustain their foods. The food for work programme at Thailo(Gheri Bandha) acts as a mini watershed to conserve water and overcame the drought situation during rainy season, 2000. UNNAYAN has saved the people and provided moral support through financial help and moral encouragement. By the time one year has passed and people are trying to sustain in the cyclone affected areas.

This year Orissa faced drought situation. In all the panipanchayats, farmers could save their crop through the lift irrigation points.

The endeavour of SEEDS and CANOSA are well acknowledged by the farmers.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Pravu Charan Lenka

A21. 2000 Dec 11 Sri Gopal Mohanty and Rashmi Mohanty Reports from Village Thailo

Date: Mon, 11 Dec 2000 14:17:44 -0500

To: ornet@cs.columbia.edu, seeds@cs.columbia.edu, CanOSA@julian.uwo.ca

From: Lalu Mansinha mansinha@julian.uwo.ca

Subject: Reports from Village Thailo

Friends:

One year ago I was part of a small group, representing CanOSA and SEEDS, that visited Village Thailo, in the heart of cyclone devastated area.

One year later another small party representing CanOSA and SEEDS, visited Village Thailo last week. Dr. Sri Gopal Mohanty (McMaster University) and Dr. Priyadarshan Patra (Intel) were in the small group. With them were Rashmi Mohanty, and Sudarsan Das of Unnayan. I copy below parts of the emails from Rashmi and Sri Gopal Babu.

After reading these two emails, my world became more beautiful. I hope you have the same feeling of exhilaration as I have.

Lalu Mansinha

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Extracts from an email from Rashmi Mohanty:

About the field visit, myself, Darsan bhai, Srigopal babu and Shanti appa had been to Thailo village on 6th December 2000. Had been to the pani panchayat and reviewed all their documents and procedures. Pradipta reminded me that on the same day in the previous year, you, Somdatt, Sudarsan and Pradipta had been to the same village for cyclone rehabilitation work.

Over 200 women of 15 SHGs and 100 men (of pani panchayats and youth volunteers) from different villages of Balikuda Block came together in the meeting organised by us. It appeared as the annual fuction of our intervention in the village, even though there we had no intention to organise this function. It was an excellent meeting in which participants shared their concerns and difficulties freely. We were overjoyed by the response. Srigopal babu said that it was a great achievement. We felt as if we are able to fulfill your expectation from us.

Village pond in Thialo was unclened for a long time and people were taking no initiative to clean it. On our motivation, girls of the village took up the cleaning of this pond. In Jagatsinghpur district, where no work can be done without money being paid, it was heateining to see the pond being cleaned without any payment made to the girls who dit it.

yours faithfully,

Rashmi

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From a email from SriGopal Mohanty

Dear Lalu Babu,

This is my second attempt to read and reply my mail. It is slow but this time I have succeeded. Please keep us informed.

Darshan, Rashmi, Shanti and I along with Bijoy Patra who is a freelance social worker and who has some years of experience working in the field, went to Thailo on December 6. We inspected our project including two embankments and the LI pump. The rice crop near the embankments looked a bumper one. Around the pump the farmers have put vegetables. Each one of us munched one fresh cucumber picked up from the field.

The exciting experience was our participation in a meeting of 15 SHGs (Self-Help Groups) formed by the initiative of Unnayan. About 230 women members came from nearby villages on their foot and stayed all along even though the very

next day was the last MANA BASA which would demand extensive preparation done exclusively by women folk in villages. A representative of each group addressed the gathering- extremely impressive. Most of them stayed till the end of the meeting. It started at around 11:30 and was over by 3:30. The lunch was provided. A beginning is made. I cannot forget the scene of many round faces marked with a red dot on the forehead sitting in front of me. Each looked like a candle and each was keen to open the door to a new world.

Then there was the village pond covered with weeds. There were girl volunteers who started to clean the pond. It was remarkable.

Regards,
Gopal

Lalu Mansinha is an emeritus Professor in the Department of Earth Sciences at Western University, Canada. In addition to being a founding member of SEEDS, he also ran Kala Manjari, a presenter of Indian classical music and dance performances in southern Ontario, and the annual Festival of India in London, Canada.



Krishna Mohanty addressing MSS Convention, 2013



Solar Lamps as Sustainable Energy Source

SEEDS Projects over the years

Gopal Mohapatra

SEEDS Footprint (1993 – 2020)

A humble journey starting from Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput (KBK) Initiative in 1993

The journey started in 1993 when a sizeable part of western Odisha was reeling under a severe drought. A few volunteers organized an effort to provide food, shelter and became part of the large scale rehabilitation programme in the region. Since then, SEEDS has been involved in fiftyseven unique projects, some continuing for years. These projects are centered around education, economy, health, culture, awareness and relief/rehabilitation. Below is a snapshot of the journey thus far.

1993 - 2000

Formative Years – Western Odisha focused; Super cyclone makes an impact

- KBK Project (Drought assistance) Lanjigarh, Kalahandi (1993 - 1996)
- Assistance to residential school in Thuamul, Kalahandi, run by Vanavasi Seva Prakalpa and another school run by Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, Jalaspeta, Kandhamal (1993 - 1996)
- Adopt A Student Project, Dalijoda (1997-99)
- School building construction – super cyclone, Dalijoda (2000-02)
- ▲ ASRA health education project, Jagatsinghpur (1998)
- ◆ Deep Tube well project, Dalijoda (1997-98)
- ◆ Milk Panchayat Project, Balasore district (1999-2000)
- ◆ Pani Panchayat Project in villages of Jagatsinghpur – super cyclone (1999-2000)

■ Educational ● Relief/Rehab ▲ Health/Awareness ◆ Economic

During the formative years (1993-2000), most projects were geared towards natural disaster related rehabilitation efforts. Projects in KBK area were drought related. The deep tubewell project at Dalijoda was done to provide potable water throughout the year. More than thirty poor students were provided assistance for a period of three years. Supercyclone hit Odisha in 1999 and caused immense destruction to lives and infrastructure. A two-story building was constructed at Dalijoda school with SEEDS financial help. A lift irrigation project (pani panchayat) and a cow-milk project in the coastal districts were other major projects done during this time.

During the 2001-2005 period, many economic activity oriented projects were executed in various parts of Odisha including Kalahandi, Balangir, Ganjam, Rayagada, Sambalpur, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur and Dhenkanal. Projects included poultry farming, mushroom farming, bamboo plantation, water harvesting, food-for-work programs like land-leveling, composting, check-dam building.

During the period 2006-2010, focus shifted to education and preservation of cultural art forms. Providing scholarships to poor deserving students to pursue their studies, seeking out math talents from rural areas, generating awareness among women in backward areas on health, sanitation, and safety through MSS (Mahila Shanti Sena) project, empowering women economically in villages

2001-2005 More of Economic Activity Oriented Projects			
Place (district)	NGO	Project activity	Goals
(Jagatsingpur, Kendrapada, Puri, Cuttack)	Unnayan	Intervention after super cyclone, promote self-reliance via Self-Help Groups (SHG)	Formation of pani panchayats and introduction of microcredit and sustainability
Ganjam block (Ganjam)	United Artists Association	repair cyclone-devastated school, provide better environment for education	Primary education, cyclone repair
Baghbahali (Balangir)	REACHD	Minor Lift irrigation point (LI) point, pani panayat, income generation	Livelihood security SHG, microcredit
Kandhaichhapar, Chau (Bolangir)	The Humanity	Land leveling, food for work, building check-dams, composting	Livelihood security, sustainable farming
(Nuapada)	Kalahandi Vikas Parishad	Water harvesting, ponds	Livelihood security, natural resource preservation
Keutaguda (Rayagada)	Kasturba Gandhi National Trust	Supporting schools	Education in tribal area
Jhankarbahali (Sambalpur)	BISWA	Bamboo plantation, sustainability and micro-entrepreneurship	Livelihood security, cooperative cultivation
Mohana Block (Gajapati)	SACAL	Poultry farming training, SHG	Income generation, selfhelp, confidence building
Jagatpur (Jajpur)	SRDO	Poultry farming, goat rearing, kitchen garden	Income generation
Khurda area (Khurda)	GJS	SHGs, mushroom farming	Income generation
Mahulapada (Dhenkanal)	Indira Social Welfare Org.	Candle manufacturing, SHG, empowerment of women	Income generation
Angul (Angul)	Bajiraut Chhatrabas	Deep bore-well and hand pump	Education: Earn and Learn
Kodala (Ganjam)	SAIMA	School for the mentally handicapped	Special Education and "integrating the voiceless"
Utkal University, Vanibihar (Khurda)	Blind Students Project	Community donation for eye-sight restorations for the very poor college students	Targeted help for the very disadvantaged but meritorious college students
Bhubaneswar (Khurda)	Unnayan	fermo-cement boats for fishermen	Technology Development

through nano-finance projects were some of the high-impact projects carried out during this period. SEEDS also supported efforts to preserve and promote some dying artforms such as Gotipua dance and Pala.

2006 - 2010

Focus on Education and dying Artform preservation

- Foundation For Education (FFE) Scholarship (2007)
- Rural Math Talent Search (2007 -2010)
- Dalijoda School support (2008)
- VIKAS Education (e.g., scholarships/fellowships) Projects (2009 -2010)

▲ Mahila Shanti Sena (MSS) Project-Unnayan (2007-2010)

◆ Solar Lantern Project @ Nuapada, Tambakhuri & Gajapati (2009-2010)

◆ Micro / Nano finance (2009)

✚ Gotipua dance project @ Konarka Dance Academy (2007-2010)

✚ Cultural Art (dying art forms like Pala) Preservation project (2009 -2010)

● Flood Relief & Rehabilitation (2007 -2009)

■ Educational ● Relief/Rehab ▲ Health/Awareness ◆ Economic ✚ Cultural

2011 - 2015

Focus on Education Continues, Relief/Rehab picks up again

- VIKAS Education Projects (2011-15)
- Kasturba Gandhi school Project (2015)
- Mass computing project (e.g., @Baji Rout Chhatrabas) (2014)
- ISED Conference (201112)
- West Bengal Deaf School Project (2015)
- Rural Math Talent Search (2011)
- Dalijoda School Rooms (201314)

● Japan Earthquake Relief (2011)

● Phailin Relief effort (201314)

● Hudhud Relief effort (2014)

◆ Aamara Biswas (201415)

◆ Green Light Planet & Rooftop Solar Project (201112 / 201516)

▲ Mahila Shanti Sena Project-Unnayan (2011-15)

✚ Cultural Art Preservation project (201115)

✚ Chilika Museum Art Gallery (2015)

■ Educational

● Relief/Rehab

◆ Economic

✚ Cultural

▲ Health/Awareness

During 2011-2015 period, focus on education continued while natural disaster related relief/rehabilitation effort picked up steam again. In addition to providing scholarships, a mass computing project was carried out to bring computer literacy to resident students in Baji Rout hostel, Anugul. Two cyclones Phailin and Hudhud hit Odisha back to back in 2013-14. Japan was hit by an earthquake. SEEDS raised funds for these natural disasters to help with relief and rehabilitation effort. Two environment-friendly projects green light Planet and roof-top solar panel projects were carried out. SEEDS funded an art gallery in the newly constructed museum near lake Chilika to promote art and culture of state of Odisha. Funds were provided to nano-finance projects carried out by Amara Biswas organization.

Education remained the focus area during last five years including construction of a library facility in Remuna high school and a multi purpose hall construction (under progress) at Mukhura school.

SEEDS contributed to the Women sanitary napkins project carried out by Amara Biswas organization. A solar fence project was funded to protect the Dalijoda school/Ashram campus from intruding elephant destroying the crops, vegetables and flower garden. In 2019, coastal Odisha was hit by a powerful cyclone FANI. Funds were provided to build temporary shelters, clean the ponds in villages, and plant coconut saplings. The world was hit by covid19 in 2020 and came to a halt. Migrant laborers walked hundreds of miles from work place to their villages. Free meals and shelter were provided to migrant laborers returning to their villages. SEEDS provided funds to build masks and distribute them free of cost to poor people in rural area.

2016 - 2020

Education remains the key area, Relief/Rehab continues

▲ Mahila Shanti Sena Project-Unnayan (2016-17)

▲ Aamara Biswas – Sanitary Napkins Project (2016)

■ VIKAS Education Projects– Scholarships (2016-2020)

■ Remuna High School Library (2018-19)

■ Berhampur Library Project

■ Dalijoda E-library project (2018)

■ Mukhura UP School Multi-purpose Hall (approved)

● Fani Disaster Rehab Project (2019)

● Covid 19 Relief effort (2020)

◆ Dalijoda Solar Fence (2018-19)

◆ Coconut plantation project (2020)

■ Educational

● Relief/Rehab

◆ Economic

▲ Health / Awareness

1993 - 2020

Educational and Economic Activity Oriented Projects remain the focus

■ Educational : 22

▲ Economic: 19

● Relief/Rehab: 9

◆ Health/Awareness : 4

✚ Cultural : 3

• 57 unique projects during 27 years

• 72% of the projects are educational and economic activity oriented along the core philosophy of SEEDS

SEEDS continues its journey with focus on educational and economic development oriented projects, seventytwo percent of the SEEDS project portfolio being in these two sectors. Natural disaster related relief and rehabilitation projects have We hope that the readers will feel encouraged, motivated and energized to participate in these kind of projects to help the people who need it most.

Gopal Mohapatra Treasurer of Board, SEEDS, is a geophysicist living in Houston, Texas, USA, working at the Hess Corporation as a technical advisor.

Down Memory Lane: SEEDS Newsletter of 1995

A News-Letter of Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society (SEEDS)



ANKUR

SEEDS is a non-profit, non-sectarian, voluntary organization (IRS registered EIN is 74-2723080).

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1, Spring 1995

Half of seventeen is not odd!

Priyadarsan Patra

University of Texas at Austin

"Centuries ago when camels were a fortune, a Bedouin patriarch bequeathed all seventeen of his camels to his three sons. On his death bed, he willed that his eldest son get half of this property, the middle get a third, and the youngest get one ninth of the lot." My childhood story-teller continued, "Shortly after the funeral rites, the three restless, dim-witted sons started apportioning the camel herd as per the will. A crowd gathered as the summarily frustrated brothers contemplated hacking a camel." The story-teller then paused to ask me the reason for and the solution to their frustration. But, of course, you all know how a wise passer-by, on seeing a frantic crowd blocking his way, gets off and lends his camel. Now, the brothers could obtain their fractions and return happily with 9, 6, and 2 camels, respectively. The rider resumed his journey back on his camel..

Now perhaps I understand more the import of the story: the passer-by simply provided a catalyst or a "seed" needed to solve the vexing problem for the three brothers (and cleared the road to his destination as well!). There is plausible argument that we have a similar world situation in human progress & development

today. Perhaps we all are faced with "three brothers willed to receive 1/2, 1/3, and 1/12 of 23 bequeathed camels". And, we have the opportunity to lend our camel so the three brothers get 12 (= half of 23+1), 8, and 2 camels respectively. We even have the prospect of getting back two camels! -- a sound proposition, won't you say? ...Thanks to your help, SEEDS strives to provide the proverbial "loaner camel" to some of the neediest. We look forward to your active participation, more than donation, to keep the SEEDS spirit alive! Our new 'activist' friends and supporters, welcome aboard!

Many things have happened since Ankur's first publication last Fall. We would like to say good-bye to our dear friend and colleague Engr. Dhanada Mishra who -- congratulations! -- completed his doctorate and is returning to India. He proposes to soon start a SEEDS "branch on the field" in Orissa in his spare time. He will also put together some creative, honest people including some whom a couple of us have already known and met during our visits to India. More power to Dhanada as he becomes our "eyes and ears" there! Also, my personal thanks to my colleagues trying to reduce my burden, especially with the treasurer's job, etc.

This issue of ANKUR contains interesting accounts of our colleagues, who recently returned from

India, and about the various development projects we are undertaking or considering. Finally, note that SEEDS is accessible on Internet at <http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/darshan/SEEDS/>. In future, we will try to send our newsletters to you electronically, if possible and agreeable to you, for efficiency.

Trip to Orissa: a report

Lalu Mansinha

University of Western Ontario, Canada

One of the aims of the trip to Orissa in December 1994 was to visit the SEEDS project in Kalahandi. Originally I was hoping that Priyadarsan Patra, I and Dr. Mike Powell would be able to travel together. However each one had different travel plans and it was not possible to coordinate the travel. As it turned out, Mike and I did not get to Kalahandi. I would like to report to you about (1) Two meetings with Mr. Bharat Agarwal of ABVKA; (2) A visit

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to a Rotary Village Corps project at Andheisahi- Gopinathpur and Satyabhamapur, near Cuttack; (3) Meeting with Mr. S.K. Mohanty of ASRA, the Association for Social Reconstructive Activities of Pithapur, Cuttack.

1. I met Mr. Bharat Agarwal and a local community worker, Mr. Binoi Bhuyan in Cuttack. We had a wide ranging discussions, lasting over an hour. We fixed up details of the visit with Mike Powell for December 31. Mr. Agarwal said he will come to Swosti Hotel in Bhubaneswar on December 30 evening to meet Mike and me., and then travel with us next morning. He was going to make all arrangements for food and lodging on the way, even though I told him that through my contacts I could make arrangements myself. He was extremely solicitous about our meals, enquiring about special requirements etc..

As it turned out, we had to cancel the trip. However Mr. Agarwal did come and meet Mike Powell me on December 30. I had particularly wanted Mike Powell and Bharat Agarwal to meet, basically to educate him (Mike) on our Kalahandi project. When the Flyash project gets funded, the project would pay all costs in transporting the fertiliser to the forestation site, and would bear the cost of planting. However, for the seedlings to thrive, it is very important that the local villagers look after and guard the seedlings until trees could be harvested for their common benefit. After talking to Mr. Agarwal I felt that our ongoing SEEDS project has already started the creation of a community spirit in the 100 or so villages in our project area. Thus my expectation is that the seedlings will be looked after. As I write this (in January 1995), my expectation is that large scale funding will be forthcoming from Canada. We should know in a few months.

2. Rotary Project in Andheisahi - Gopinathpur -Satyabhamapur This is a service project of the Rotary Village Corps., run by the Cuttack Mid-Town Rotary Club (There are three different Rotary Clubs in Cuttack). I came to

know of this project from my uncle, Mr. Durgamadhhab Behura. Mr. Behura retired as Director of Agriculture, Orissa, 27 years ago. Today at 84 he is mentally and physically active and is a prime mover in the Rotary project. Rupee for rupee this must be one of the most cost effective community projects in Orissa, probably in India. Every rupee donated to the project is actually spent in the village. The Rotary Club absorbs all administrative costs and provides ideas, expertise and the cost. Rotary also persuades local officials to provide certain facilities like, road, school, electricity and so on. For construction, planting etc. the villagers provide the labour.

The three villages are located about 45 minutes away by car from Cuttack city. Mr. Behura, Mike Powell and I spent the better part of a day at the village. We visited only one village, because of shortage of time. Ours was a surprise visit; yet we saw activity around us. We talked to whoever was around in the village. So what we saw is real, not a well rehearsed show. We saw trees planted and flourishing; we saw a pre-school with kids singing away; we saw a pond with fish stock. The fish will provide good cash return when sold in the local market. We saw piles of straw for fodder and roofing. We talked to villagers that happened to be around. They were full of praise for the project and wanted more. It was impressive.

To provide drinking water, they have sunk 12 hand operated tubewells. We saw several in use. To provide irrigation they have sunk one large diameter diesel powered tubewell. The villagers have built a pump house and irrigation channels of brick and concrete. The bricks are locally made. We saw one brick pile oven which had just been fired. We were told that the new bricks are for the veterinary hospital.

The success in agriculture has been dramatic. With improved stock and instructions in usage of compost and fertilisers, the paddy yield has been doubled. New quality seedlings has led to a variety of high yield vegetables for

family use and marketing. The villagers have been given advice on what trees to plant in the backyard. We saw a small garden patch with mango, banana, papaya, bamboo, chakunda trees, all flourishing and now about 40- 50ft tall. The whole idea is that each family, with a small plot of land can be self sufficient in basic needs such as fuel, fodder and fruits and vegetables. With Rotary funding the villagers started building a high school.. Each year they have added one new room to the school. They have already reached Class 7 and are planning to go to Standard 12 (+2). The salaries of the teachers are being met >from Rotary and government funds. We saw the school, but on that day there were no classes.

The villagers have also built an one room pre-school. I saw about 20 happy kindergarten level children, singing away. I had a brief chat with the lady teacher. The same school house is used for vocational instructions such as tailoring, for health information such as birth control. What remains to be done here? The villagers told me that they badly need a 'veterinary hospital'. All the hospital is a two tiny rooms with a roof. The foundation has been dug, some stones and bricks are lying around. The project has run out of funds. Estimated cost for completion is Rs100,000. =US\$3000. The villagers said that the single irrigation pump does not reach all the land and they need a second tubewell and pump. Estimated cost Rs150,000. = US\$5000.

Mike Powell was sufficiently impressed that he would be willing to provided for afforestation project for this area. We talked to the villagers and they would be willing to look after the trees once planted. My question to SEEDS: Can we help this ongoing, successful community project? Certainly we will be given credit for the help they receive. Certainly we can bask in the existing success, while contributing a small amount.

3. Association for Social Reconstructive Activities (ASRA), Cuttack. I had a visit from Mr. S.K. Mohanty, Sec-

retary General. I have a copy of their 93-94 annual report. Mr. Mohanty told me of their old age home in the Jagatsinghpur-Balikuda area. With children moving away for jobs elsewhere, many old people are now destitute and helpless. This group runs an oldage home, with 25 inmates. I heard a number of touching accounts of ill, starving and abandoned old men and women being brought into the oldage home. With longer life span, and with children moving away from the villages, care of the elderly is now a major social concern.

ASRA has set up a family welfare center at Baharana, with 1 lady doctor and 25 Health Workers, covering 41 target villages. I first heard of ASRA when I was describing the Kalahandi project to my brother-in-law, Mr. Lalit Mohan Nanda. He said he belongs to ASRA and arranged the meeting with Mr. Mohanty. I would have liked to visit the various ASRA projects, but there was not enough time.

My Recommendations: In the past we, who live in comfort in North America, hid behind the excuse that we do not have any trustworthy organisation to send money to. We now see that there are many good, active organisations that need our support.. I recommend that we continue our support of those groups who already have major projects underway. We avoid all groups that siphon off significant amounts of the donated funds for personal profit (I met a few of these types also). So (1) We continue the funding of AVBKA project in Kalahandi (2) We should support specific parts of the Rotary Village Corps. Project. (3) Explore the possibility of support for ASRA projects. ■

Excerpts from "Appropriate methods of water conservation" by T.J. Mathew.

During recent years, more and more importance is given to conservation and environmental protection. India's top soil losses are staggering. Indian Council of Agricultural Research estimates

losses at nearly five billion metric tonnes annually, and predicts that the situation will still worsen since few farmers practise soil conservation. The People's Republic of China also has similar problems. Each year the country loses about four billion metric tonnes of top soil through erosion. According to the World Watch institute in the U. S., the global crop-land losses now exceed new soil formation by 25.4 billion metric tonnes per year. USA has 14,000 experts from the Agricultural Department's Soil Conservation Service (SCS). During the last 50 years SCS has spent US \$20 billion trying to end the problem, but the soil is still flowing away or washing away into creeks, rivers and drinking water supplies. The loss of soil in the agriculturally sophisticated country exceeds tolerable levels on 44% of the cropland.

Wind, earth and water are the primary energy sources of the world. It is the solar energy, conserved through billions of years, that we are now enjoying as fossil fuel. But, the energy crisis of the 1970s jolted America into greater awareness for alternative energy development. We have yet to realise that, it is the solar energy that is the only source of our past and future energy. It is the sun that converts our water into vapour and makes it fall back on the land surface. It is this water combined with the photosynthetic conversion of the solar energy that enables the vegetation to grow and survive on the earth surface. It is again the sun that helps to generate oxygen and helps the survival of the entire life on this world.

In ancient times, when the balance of nature was not so much destroyed by man, there was reasonable natural conservation of water by the porous soil all over the world. But with the heavy and indiscriminate deforestation, construction of buildings, roads etc., this natural percolation of water has been upset. This has resulted in the lowering of the local water tables, and disappearance of the perennial springs that once kept our rivers ever flowing. The uncontrolled flow of water is also resulting in severe floods like the recent one in Godavari in South India.

...Based on my successful experience in conserving water, I am inclined to share the following methods which are quite simple, appropriate and inexpensive to manage.

CONTOUR TRENCHING: This is a system where unskilled labour can be used. In areas with a slope and where the soil texture is suitable this is the simplest, easiest and cheapest system possible. But this may not be suitable for the entire earth surface. In this system, trenches along the contours, spaced according to the slope of the land, intensity of rainfall, crop etc. are made. The trenches are usually 2 or 2 1/2 feet wide deep and of convenient length from 8 to 12 feet. The soil is deposited along the lower side of the trenches. As and when these trenches get filled up, the soil is again removed and the trenches are revived.

CONTOUR PITS: In areas where there are already established trees, whose roots may be seriously damaged by such trenches, the next alternative is pits. The pits may be of any size of 3 to 4 feet cube, and the root damages are minimised. The pits may be located as and when they are feasible. These are more efficient than trenches. In this system the benefits are multifarious. In addition to localised conservation of water, these help the accumulation of the fallen leaves which in turn, with the moisture in them retained for longer periods than on exposed land, encourage the root development of the nearby vegetation. This gives vigour to vegetation, even during the dry months, for longer period, as already observed in field trials.

DEEP BLASTING OF HARD SURFACE STRATA LIKE LATERITE: Due to continuous soil erosion, there are extensive areas where the entire top soil has been eroded exposing the hard laterite substrata. In such areas, drill 11' holes to a depth of 8 to 10 feet and blast with suitable explosives to create a crushing effect in the substrata and with a suitable amount of common salt applied into the blast holes, the laterite will disintegrate faster. If some good soil is put into the top part of the blast holes, and hardy trees like cashew planted, then

the area can be made productive immediately. The crushed, deep blast holes will also be able to retain more rain water...

BENEFITS: The benefits of localised water conservation are unlimited. I am trying to present a few of them here... Flood Control: Floods are caused by the fast run off of the rain water from higher levels.... It is impossible to control the flow of the water, except at the point of precipitation itself. Raising the Ground-water Table; Greater and easier Availability of Fresh Water; Regeneration of Vegetation... [are other benefits].

Though thousands of trees have been planted along road side, today we see only the planting pits and no trees after one summer. This must be the case with most of our highly publicized tree planting projects. Without water, it is impossible for a tree to survive. At the same time it is equally impossible to provide irrigation to all these areas where even human beings are in need of water.

(T.J. Mathew is convenor, Society for Water and Environment Conservation, Areeplachy, Kerala. Article adapted from *Development Network* -- Ed.)

YOUR VIEWS

This section will contain letters from you. You are requested to give us your views, opinions and advice regarding any aspect of the SEEDS activities and on this news letter. You may also email it to darshan@cs.utexas.edu --Ed.

Hi! My name is D.T. and I am a 3rd year medical student at Emory U. in Atlanta. I would like to spend a

year beginning in August and work in India. I am interested in community health and firmly believe in small-scale grass-roots development projects. I found your organization SEEDS while surfing the WWW and thought you might be able to help me set something up. Do any of the projects you fund take volunteers with a lot of energy and a commitment to social justice? I am not fluent in languages other than English... Any information, ideas or suggestions will be greatly appreciated. Thanks. ---D.T.

LIST OF NEW MEMBERS

SEEDS thanks the following **new** members for having made direct financial and moral contributions to the efforts of this young organization.

Purna Mishra, Rajesh R. Mishra, Kula Misra, Ranjeev Misra, Debasis Mohanty, Neelamadhaba Mohapatro, Gopal Mohapatra., Prakash K. Muduli, Kartikeyan Obla, Nabin Panda, Pradipta Panigrahi, Rabin-dranath Patnaik, Surjit Sahoo, Sashi & Namita Satapathy, A Group of well-wishers from Canada.

Other News

Over three wonderful days in last December, colleague Umakanta Choudhury and I visited a dispensary at Katingia, a students' hostel at Raikia, Biswanathpur and surrounding areas of Lanjigarh, a "satsanga" center at Harlanga, a "kanya ashram" at Jalespata, and a homeo/allo-pathy dispensary at Kurtamgarh -- all run by Vanabasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) in Kalahandi and Phul-

bani areas of Orissa. We went to 3 of the 14 one-teacher schools, sponsored by SEEDS, that had started functioning since first week of December. Their names are Kuburi, Matkera, and Nagihari villages populated by tribals. I hope to write a more detailed report later.

On another front: In July 1994 SEEDS had sponsored training of some volunteers from Orissa in "sustainable development" at the Bhagavatula Charitable Trust. Unfortunately, we have not yet received any report from the trainees or the trainer since then, despite our earlier agreement. ---Ed.

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Down Memory Lane: SEEDS Brochure of 2001

Supported Projects

**Project (Description), Town or District
Currently Being Funded by SEEDS:**

(Legend: SHG Self-help group, FFW Food-for-work)
AASP (Ashram School), Dalijoda
Abhiyan (SHGs), Purushottampur
ASRA (school and Hospital), Jagatsingpur
Gopinath Jub Sangh (SHGs, Microcredit), Balipatana
Humanities (SHGs, water harvesting), Bolangir
IMTS (SHGs, FFW), Mayurbhanja
Kalahandi Vikas Parishad (ponds, FFW), Kalahandi
Kasturba G.S.N.A Girls School (Education), Rayagda
Ramadevi Kanyashram (Education), Satyabhamapur
REACHD (FFW, MILP), Bolangir
SRDO (SHGs, Microcredit), Jajpur
Unnayan (Pani Panchayat, Cyclone rehab.), several
cyclone-affected areas

Some new or pending proposals:

BVP (Schools repair), Ganjam
CARE (Self Help Groups, Agriculture), Kandhamal
SACAL (Tribal Development), Gajapati
SAIMA (School for Mentally challenged), Gajapati.

Volunteers for India's Development & Empowerment (VIDE)

VIDE (<http://www.indiadev.net/>) is an autonomous chapter of SEEDS formed in 2001 in the wake of Gujarat earthquake. It undertakes projects in Orissa, A. P., W.B. and Gujarat.

Support Us

- ☐ I am enclosing a donation for \$ _____
☐ I want to volunteer. My volunteer interests are _____

- ☐ I would like to be informed about your activities. Please send me your newsletter.

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Email - dkmishra@synflux.com.au

- SEEDS -

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and Educational
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Inc.**



**A Tax-Exempt Non-Profit
Organization in US**

<http://www.seedsnet.org/>

Join our mailing list by sending an email to
majordomo@cs.columbia.edu
with the text 'join seeds'

Mission

Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society (SEEDS) aims to seek, evaluate and support sustainable, equitable, and decentralized grassroots development projects in the developing world, particularly in the state of Orissa in India.

Philosophy and Aspiration

- To promote educational and economic progress and development
- To help communities to help themselves and take responsibility for sustaining the economic development
- To take a stand against social evils and injustices
- To grow into a movement of "participatory consciousness for sustainable & equitable development" among non-resident Indians and Oriyas

Objectives

- To make non-resident Indians aware of obstacles to development and the importance of sustainable, equitable grassroots development in the developing world.
- To raise funds to catalytically support sustainable development projects.
- To recruit volunteers to evaluate and monitor projects through field visits.
- To collaborate/network with organizations with similar mission.

History

- 1993** An effort informally called Kalahandi-Bolangir Initiative started in the wake of shocking news of inhuman misery and deprivation in the famine-affected region of Orissa.
- 1994** The effort was organized into an independent group formally named as "Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society" (SEEDS), reflecting its broader focus and philosophy.
- 1995** The group moved from Austin, Texas to Portland, Oregon. Its membership and volunteer strength continued to increase and it adopted a number of projects in Orissa.
- 1998** The group was officially incorporated as a non-profit tax-exempt charitable organization in the state of Oregon.
- 1998** The founder of SEEDS received the Young Oriya award by Orissa Society of Americas in recognition of the work of this group.
- 1999** The devastation caused by the Orissa super cyclone caused a significant expansion of work done by this group.
- 2000** Initiated volunteer base in Orissa
- 2002** SEEDS currently monitors and supports 20 development projects in Orissa.

Structure

SEEDS is an all-volunteer organization with volunteers in many countries, such as Australia, Canada, India, and the USA. Its operation is democratic, egalitarian, and non-sectarian. Its structure consists of a large membership for general discussions, a smaller core group for detailed and project-specific discussions, and a Board of Directors for formal acceptance of major decisions.

Volunteer Opportunities

- Professional skills for project evaluation
- Professional skills for organizational operation
- Field visits to project sites and interviewing project managers and project beneficiaries
- Fundraising, grant writing
- Writing, making presentations

SEEDS at a Glance

Founded	1993
Number of volunteers	~20
Donor members	~100
Number of salaried employees	0
Projects supported	20
Geographical areas of projects	4 Indian States
Annual visits to each project	2
Funds raised as of 2001	\$150,000



SEEDS Silver Jubilee Souvenir



Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society
Sowing seeds of change since 1993