THE ORGANISATION

Myrae Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA) was founded in 1968 to assist the Government in resettling Tibetan Refugees. Myrae State has since become Karnataka. After the Tibetan program ended in the early 80s, up to 1983 (from where this profile starts), MYRADA moved out of resettlement and began to focus on the poor and marginalized in the rural areas. During this period MYRADA was searching for a Mission to guide its strategy. This search involved an analysis of the causes which kept poor people poor, intensive interaction with people in the villages and debate within the organization. All these resulted in the Mission, which emerged in 1987. The acronym MYRADA is now in common use and has become the organization’s logo.

Organisational Overview

The Coverage

MYRADA has been operating in 4 districts in the 1980s; currently manages projects in 18 backward and drought prone districts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. It works in collaboration with government, bilateral and multilateral programs in other states, by providing technical support and capacity building in the areas of mutual interest. In the last few years, there is a larger focus of work in the Northern Karnataka region. While MYRADA has direct field operations in these states, it also provides long term technical support to programs in other parts of the country such as Kerala, Bihar, Maharashtra, the North Eastern states, and abroad - such as Mayanmar, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, South Sudan, and Tanzania.

The Structure

MYRADA's organisational structure has evolved over the decades. From a central organization that managed all projects on its own, MYRADA now considers itself a group of institutions with a common vision and mission. It has formed several "MYRADA Promoted Institutions" (MPI) that are independently registered and can function on their own. Since they continue to share the Mission of MYRADA and have senior MYRADA staff on their Board, they have been allowed to include MYRADA in their names.

MYRADA’s organisational structure consists of a Board comprising eminent persons, an Executive Director and Program Officers based in the Head office and field. While the Head office role is that of a facilitator, the project team located in the district is actively involved in program implementation.

MYRADA is, and will endeavour to remain, a field based NGO. MYRADA calls itself an Actionist NGO involved in building poor people’s institutions through which they are able to lobby effectively and in a sustainable manner for their rights. MYRADA believes that the poor and marginalized have a right to build their own institutions, which must be respected and not mainstreamed by the official system.
INTERVENTIONS

Over the past 5 decades, Myrada’s interventions have spanned several sectors and multiple geographies. The figure below summarises the time line of how different interventions have built upon each other to a time when, today, the organisation is involved in an integrated approach to making a positive difference in the lives of poor and vulnerable people.

**MYSORE RESETTLEMENT & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Resettlement of Tibetans</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Watersheds</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Sangamitra</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Community</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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Significant interventions that Myrada has made in the years gone by and made a contribution to development theory, policy and practice include:

- Resettlement of bonded labourers and refugees which tapered off in the late 80s
- Identifying and fostering Self-help Affinity Groups
- Management of Micro watershed and waste lands where peoples’ institutions like Watershed area groups take the lead
- Supporting quality education and infrastructure in Government primary schools
- Capacity building and sharing what peoples institutions have achieved through 10 well equipped independent & autonomous training Centres all located in the project areas
- Promoting peoples institutions to foster community based response to malnutrition, anemia, primary health and HIV/AIDs
- Establishing partnerships between the private sector and peoples institutions in the manufacturing, marketing and agricultural sectors
- Promoting federations of CBDs like the Community Managed Resource Centres
- Networking at District level among NGOs, Banks & institutions involved in development & change
- Initiatives promoting participative management of water & waste in small towns and peri-urban areas
- Micro Finance with a social vision through Sangamitra
- Establishing second level institutions aimed at adding value to agri-based products
- Formation and strengthening of Village Forest Committees in Uttara Kannada.

**Some interventions are well established while others are still in the formative stage.**

Myrada’s processes and strategies have influenced changes in policy at national and donor level in several areas; the key ones being SAGs, Watershed management strategies, Community Managed Resource Centres, and systematic tracking of basic health issues.
OBJECTIVES

- To foster a process of ongoing change in favour of the poor and vulnerable in a way which can be sustained by them through building and managing appropriate and innovative local-level institutions based on their rights and rooted in values of justice, equity and mutual support.
- To recreate a self-sustaining and environmentally clean habitat and the institutions to sustain it based on a balanced perspective of the relationship between natural resources and the legitimate needs of people.
- To promote institutions, strategies and skills through which poor and vulnerable families are able to exercise their rights to develop their livelihood strategies and to secure the rights of women and children.
- To promote community-based responses for effective, appropriate and timely primary health care, nutrition and vocational skills education in a holistic and sustainable manner.
- To influence public policies in favour of the poor and vulnerable.
- To strengthen networks and linkages between and among formal and informal institutions that can foster and sustain the impact of development initiatives.

THE ANALYSIS

This mission emerged from Myrada’s experience in the early 80s that it was largely oppressive power relations in society and in the home that kept poor people poor and vulnerable, generating unequal gender relations in the process. Myrada realised that it is not enough to teach people to fish when they cannot reach the river due to hurdles created by caste, class, tradition and gender; these hurdles result in increasing dependency for livelihoods and loss of land, decreasing access to resources and an inability to accumulate capital. In the recent past, Myrada has also realised that, even if you enable people to reach the river, there is no guarantee that they will get access to fish, with fishing rights having been hijacked by powerful and vested interests.

The Mission also arose from Myrada’s experience between 1985 and 1987 especially with the Self Help Affinity Groups; this experience indicated that institutions of the poor—where they could set their own agenda regarding functions, strategy and the pace to achieve it—were the most appropriate instruments to change the oppressive power relations in society and in the home and to open access to resources in a decisive and non-violent manner.

Myrada’s analysis of the Socio-Economic-Political structure indicated that our country’s policies and administrative network have produced an (a) inner core system which comprises Government (including the public sector, industry, government staff and armed forces) together with the organised formal companies in the private sector that profess to abide by official norms and procedures.

This core controls the levers of power as also the doors to enter it like quotas etc. There is a circle surrounding the core, which we call the (b) grey circle because it is fuzzy; this grey circle is created by the core sector because of the barriers it places in the way of those trying to enter the core, like red tape which restricts access to power centres, entitlements, information, education of choice, like corruption due to shortages and control of energy, public services and resources. The grey sector does not pay taxes; it does its best to avoid payment for the use of public resources. But, on the other hand, it is efficient, recycles waste and provides employment to millions and there is evidence that it has coped quite well with recession.

There is another circle—(c) the outer circle, which comprises those left behind; these are the poor, vulnerable and excluded. Myrada is involved primarily with this last group.

OUR BELIEFS

Our beliefs are the product of constant analysis and reflection on feedback and experiences of the poor and vulnerable as a result of various poverty mitigation interventions. The burden of change must not borne by the poor as a result of our ideology, administrative needs, program design and the pressure for quick results.

- a. We believe that the poor and marginalised have a right to form their own institutions which need to be respected and not made to conform to official requirements. Striving to "mainstream" the poor can also be disempowering if they have to fit into the pattern of the officials’/donors’ terms and conditions. Myrada lobbies with the official system to recognise these alternate institutions. Myrada believes that these institutions of the poor, when provided with adequate institutional capacity building, can overcome the hurdles created by caste, class, bureaucracy and tradition by neutralising oppressive power relations and opening new doors and opportunities to access resources. The basic "needs approach" without a direct focus on promoting institutional empowerment of the poor is inadequate for sustained growth of the individual/poor family; it does not factor power and market forces into the equation which the poor cannot counter individually.

- b. Myrada believes that it needs to constantly dig deeper to reach the poor & vulnerable. Asserting that we are working with the poor over a period of time in one area---especially if the intervention is effective---results in working with the emerging enterprising poor. Efforts are required to reach out to those who are left out of any system no matter how inclusive it may claim to be.

- c. We believe that our interventions should build on people’s strengths not on their needs to which they will respond at their time and pace. To start on the basis of needs is to re-enforce existing relations of dependency. Their strengths are based on the relations of mutual trust and support or affinity/social capital, which is still strong in rural areas. This affinity always existed before Myrada entered. It is like a diamond in the sand, which we happened to kick. We can only take credit for stopping it up and polish it. Other strengths lie in the willingness of the poor to save once they realise that their savings are safe and can be quickly accessed, to invest time and energy to build institutions through which they manage finance and natural resources, open access to the market, provide services and influence governance in health and education systems.

- d. We believe in investing in children, not in isolation, but together with the mother and in the context of the family by promoting supportive gender relations and sustainable livelihoods strategies through the dynamics of an affinity group and a healthy surrounding environment. Our approach to female sex workers and MSMs is holistic. It does not reduce them to one dimension—namely sex work. As one sex worker said: “Yes, we are sex workers but we are women first.”

- e. We believe that gender equity is about empowering women and their institutions to foster a process of exposing oppressive power in existing relations between men & women, boys & girls, in order to challenge them at their pace and build more supportive relations at home and in society. All our reports and evaluations incorporate gender disaggregated data.

- f. We believe in inclusion. The SAGs, Soukhya Groups self-select their members on the basis of affinity, which is built on relations of trust, and mutual support or what is called traditional social capital. Myrada finds that in villages, which have several religions,
casts and dalls, the SAGs comprise members from all groups. Institutional capacity building and group dynamics helps the weaker members to build confidence and skills and to mobilise the support of all to change traditional practices which are exclusive and oppressive. However it is important that the members of the SAGs are all poor/ marginalised for this strategy to be effective. The official policy to extend different subsidies for various groups has often resulted in officials forcing a mixed group which tends to fragment into castes and creeds, economic status etc.

g. We believe that the livelihoods of poor cannot be promoted by market forces & the private sector only; on the contrary they could easily be undermined. Institutions of the poor need to exercise a degree of control over market linkages & intermediary institutions. To intervene effectively in these areas, the poor need to be supported by Government investment in appropriate infrastructure including roads (particularly rural roads), transport, storage & marketing facilities and by NGOs to promote appropriate institutions.

h. We believe that the poor and the marginalised need a safety net to ensure food security and the minimum health care and education. Government needs to take the lead and invest in these sectors, but management and implementation has to involve people’s institutions and not left to the existing delivery system only. However we also believe that it is more effective to subsidise the support services rather than the asset provided to the poor under programs like SGSY.

i. We believe that primary and secondary education and technical institutions providing basic skills training should be privatised or at least placed under a private-public partnership management model. Micro Finance Institutions with a social mission should be provided adequate space to function independently. Others who maximise profit should also be required to cope with the risks involved.

j. We believe that the livelihood strategy we propose should take into account the close relationship between the removal of poverty and the concern for the environment which provides the livelihood base of the poor and which has been a traditional feature of India’s past. Myrada will continue to support the over-all policy to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

OUR LEARNINGS
Experience has taught us that -

Empowerment does not automatically follow from the adoption of participatory processes; the processes have to be anchored in appropriate institutional frameworks, whether they are self-help affinity groups, watershed associations, informal marketing groups or private limited companies. Institutions give members the experience of participating in governance. What starts small can grow in influence with the right facilitation to promote institutional growth.

Institution building is not easy but the journey, though challenging, is fulfilling. However, to encounter success, institutions have to be structurally appropriate to the functions they are expected to perform. A watershed association has to be constructed differently from a school improvement committee; milk co-operative is heterogeneous because it needs the large producer to make the route viable for the small one; but is not appropriate to manage savings and credit which requires homogeneous groups of the poorest to function.

Money is an important determinant of power and a necessary means of sustenance. Individuals as well as institutions must have their own capital base to sustain. At some point, all development effort must also aim at the creation of wealth in the hands of people and their institutions over which they, and only they, have ownership and control.

Systems and procedures are important for the health of institutions and cannot be passed over, no matter how difficult to institutionalise they may be. In that sense, there is no difference between MYRADA and its self-help affinity groups - what is good for one is also good for the other; what one can do, the other can also do; if one is regarded as a professionally managed institution, the other can also be so.

There is no use to criticise without demonstrating a tried, tested and workable alternative. To highlight what is wrong is easy, to find solutions is difficult. It is of critical importance to also ensure that the suggested alternative has worked on some scale and is not just limited to one or two good examples. Policy change is more easily introduced if the relevant government institution is involved in promoting the workable alternative.

Staff commitment cannot be demanded, it has to be developed. There are no set ways to achieve this but creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect is a good starting point. Investing in the capacity building and growth of staff is also a demonstration of faith. A fact, transparent and clearly documented personnel policy is also critical to sustain staff commitment.

Sharing and Learning
Myrada believes that one of the major sources of learning is to share. In support of this belief, it ensures that the independent and autonomous CIDORRIIs annually host staff from NGOs, bankers, Government officials and management institutions in their projects. They are mainly trainers and managers who are involved in similar poverty alleviation programs in other parts of the country and abroad, they are conducted in the field where the people involved are the lead trainers. The CIDORRIIs require that each batch should consist of 10-15 members from the same institution since this creates a critical mass that can take the initiative to introduce change. Myrada promoted CIDORRIIs do not have a pre-planned training schedule, which is open to participants from several Institutions. They respond to requests from a single institution and tailor the exposure to the participants’ requirements. They follow up these exposures if requested.

In an effort to influence the design and implementation of programs promoted by Government, Myrada actively partners Government with the objective of making people’s institutions a third and equal partner. Myrada’s experience indicates that this approach does improve the efficiency of the delivery system and reduces corruption; it also supports those officials in the system who want to make a change and lays the basis for policy change.
Myra’s understanding of a poor people’s institution is based on its experience with the Cooperative Societies, SAGs, Watershed Area Groups, Milk Societies and Soutsikya Groups. The features that define a people’s institution, which has proved to be sustainable, are the following:

- The group self-selects its members on the basis of affinity which exists before Myra entered; this differs from groups whose members are selected by criteria set by outsiders.
- The members are linked by internal bonds; Myra calls it affinity - which is a bond of relations of trust and mutual support arising from various factors; this affinity exists before the involvement comes in and must be spotted; this is the strength of the group on the which the intervenor builds; these bonds form the basis for agreements, rules, regulations and sanctions.
- If mitigating poverty is the objective then the members must be within the same income/expenditure bracket.
- The group must invest its time and resources in the function that it opts to take up before asking for external support; there must be a desire to form and manage the group; this investment must be going on and not just an initial entry point activity.
- Functions opted for must be decided by the group and decisions relating to implementation must be taken within the group which carries all risks. Transactions need to be frequent to generate ownership, discussion and the ability to arrive at a consensus. For example in the credit of the group, the group decides on the purpose, size of loans etc., not the Bank or MFI. Similarly with a watershed group all decisions must be taken by the group. The dynamics generated by discussion and decision-making build confidence and skills, which are empowering.

These features alone do not make the group an institution. Investment in time and money is required to build its institutional capacity. Myra has developed a training module as a base, others are added depending on the focus/function of the group. Training costs money, which Government is not willing to provide readily, and which NGOs/MIIs do not think is their responsibility. It costs Rs 6000 - Rs 10000 to build the institutional capacity of each group.

Finally, the reason why Myra which at first promoted both men’s and women’s SAGS, invited to women’s SAGS was that its studies indicated that when men’s income increase they tend to spend it on themselves whereas women use their income for the family. After several years, however, Myra again began promoting men’s SAGS when we realised that gender issues require that they be presented and addressed by both groups.

THE STRATEGY

What is Myra’s strategy to support the left behind to enter the grey & core systems? Myra’s strategy starts at the bottom. It seeks to promote people’s institutions which are appropriate to the resource to be managed and to build their institutional capacity to cope with the risk and diversity they experience and to take the lead in lobbying to change oppressive power relations in the home and in society. In following these strategies, Myra endeavours to change faulty designs of programs and to improve implementation and in the process of this experience, Myra endeavours to change policy.

The Strategic Role of Poor People’s Institutions to change/neutralise oppressive power relations. In order for those in the outer circle (the left behind) to move into the grey circle, Myra believes that the poor need their own institutions and their federations which they can build with some support from those NGOs who are open to identifying the strengths of the poor and building on them (instead of merely focusing on their needs) and devising their own strategies to meet them. Examples of these peoples groups are Self Help Affinity Groups (SAGs), Watershed Management groups (Area and User groups), Soutsikya Groups (Sex workers), small and marginal dryland farmer producers and marketing groups which are largely informal in the first stage and Federations and Community Managed Resource Centres’ farmers producer organisations in the second and third stages.

Myra’s experience also indicates that these groups require investment by NGOs in their institutional capacity building (ICB). Myra has produced a Training Manual for ICB comprising 24 modules which can be adapted to different groups and situations. This ICB helps the group’s members to interact with one another to decide on the problems and solutions, on finance and natural resource management if they have opted for it, and on other issues which concern their lives and livelihoods. The dynamics of this interaction generate power, skills to negotiate and resolve conflict in time to build confidence to change relations at home and in society at their own pace. This ICB must be provided before they are offered training in livelihood skills which later can add value to traditional occupations or skills for on and off farm activities. ICB helps them set their own agenda and strategy to take the first step to lift them out of poverty through a livelihood strategy in which the whole family is involved. These institutions support the whole family in a holistic manner; they help to reduce risk and enhance security and the confidence to lobby for a change in oppressive power relations. Myra’s experience indicates that these institutions are the most appropriate to address gender issues related to equal distribution of resources between men and women, boys and girls, as well as issues related to oppression, harassment in the home and outside.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONS

Building institutions of the poor is yet to be recognised as a critical part of the strategy to eradicate poverty since the role played by ‘power relations’ in keeping people poor and vulnerable has hardly been factored into development strategy by most donors. Myra’s experience shows that it is difficult to manage because it is easily politicised and tends to attract the most ruthless for new heroes and heroines and a quick solution. These fears largely arise because of experiences with NGOs who took the initiative, set their own agenda and pace for change in power relations, only to realise that their intervention was short lived and usually left the poor worse off than before. Speed and greed have led many well intended plans and programs. Private donors prefer the option of direct provision of services to that of genuine empowerment though they may use the word frequently. Government programs have little place for promoting people’s initiative unless they are included in the design, and even when they are, there is a constant battle to ensure their independent functioning. Many programs supported by NABARD and by some Bilateral and Multilateral agencies (where space for people’s initiative is provided) is able to emerge and grow. The priority of donors and government has been largely on delivery of goods and services; people’s institutions are considered the last link in the delivery chain.

CURRENT WORK OF MYRA

Myra’s work has largely been divided into 5 domains:


The underlying principle of all our work is “Building and strengthening local peoples’ institutions” and responses in a cost effective and sustainable manner.

LIVELIHOODS

Livelihood is defined as a set of activities, involving securing water, food, fodder, medicine, shelter, clothing and the capacity to acquire above necessities working either individually or as a group by using endowments (both human and material) for meeting the requirements of the self and his/her household on a sustainable basis with dignity.

Over years of working with the poor in rural communities, Myra has realised that the group approach is more sustainable and relevant for the poor women. The affinity within the group members fosters a sense of trust and united power that endorses any investment in a livelihood strategy for them and their families. Therefore, building local institutions has become the backbone of most interventions in Myra and its promoted institutions (Non-profits) in improving livelihoods of the poor and marginalised. While a large focus on livelihoods has been economic stability in the family, there has been significant work on other social aspects of development which finally impact on livelihoods.

The SAG movement, pioneered in the early ’80s by Myra with support from NABARD has come a long way today. This started with self-selected poor women in groups called Credit Management Groups (CMGs) where the stress was on managing savings and credit. SHGIs originated from a conflict with the powerful, a conflict that was managed by poor people. By 2002 when SHGIs had become a Government driven program as a result of which they were promoted overnight and members selected on the basis of criteria set by Govt. and funds were transferred to them without any institutional capacity building; Myra changed the name of groups, which led to selected members on the basis of affinity, which started with regular weekly savings - and which were exposed to institutional capacity building to Self Help Affinity groups or SAGs.

SAGs are civil society institutions of the poor. But to play their role as agents of change, both to support sustained livelihoods and to deal with unequal power relations, they need to become organisationally and financially sustainable. To achieve this, training in institutional capacity building (ICB) is required. Myra brought out a Training Manual in the early 90s with 24 modules—which could be compressed into 14: which the SAGs must be exposed to over a period of 1-2 years. Savings start from the beginning and are made weekly at meetings to create a savings habit. Loans from savings are given after 4-6 months; loans from banks are taken after 9-12 months.

The SAGs began to provide the social space for the poor to grow in confidence, management skills and to build their own resources primarily through regular weekly savings (amount decided by each group). It is the management of savings and later of credit that is important – as it teaches people skills, not so much the provision of credit. As the SAGs grow in confidence, they take on new roles; for example, they emerge as the source for urgent loans thus reducing the power of the large farmers who provided these traditionally. They link up with outside markets and technical support institutions, they bypass local social traditions which marginalised them in the past (for example they organised their own festivals), they exerted pressure to change biased gender relations in the home. They then federated into Community Managed Resource Centres (CMRCs) comprising 100-120 SAGs which play a major role in influencing the local Gram Panchayats to install and maintain sanitation and drinking water systems as well as maintain proper accounts.

LIVELIHOODS

Livelihood Opportunities
Which are the institutions formed by Myrada?

They can be placed into three categories.

Category 1: Participative Institutions of the poor at the base

All of these institutions promote livelihood strategies & activities as well as empowerment, which we define as "disciplining to attain dignity, self-esteem, confidence to speak, to take decisions, to take risks and to lobby for change and against any form of oppression". Some of them focus on grassroots development work; improving the management of water and quality of soil; promoting sanitation & environmental management; some of them have recently been pro-active in promoting action against domestic violence, early marriage and female foeticide.

Category 2: Middle level representative Peoples Institutions

These are largely federations of the category 1 type of institutions. Examples included the community-managed resource centres, Soukhy Samudhaya Samskriti (SSS).

Category 3: Technical and supportive institutions for Category 1 & 2

Institutions managed by people who are not rich but which are totally dedicated to support the poor by providing financial services, training in institutional building and livelihood skills and in providing technical support such as CDSORs, SIFMETTE etc.

How are these institutions linked to Myrada?

Category 1
Myrada Staff are not members of the Governing Boards and do not have any position in these groups (except in MASS in response to a request from the members).

Category 2
Myrada project staff hold 2 positions (out of 11) on the Board of Management of each CMRC and one (out of 21) in each Soukhy Ookuta. The others are elected from the SAGs and Soukhy groups respectively.

Category 3
The all the above institutions have a senior member of Myrada’s management as head or chief and from this Chairperson and 2-4 senior staff on the Governing Boards. The Directorates of these Institutions (except Sambhargcha) are staff of Myrada who are deputed or who have resigned after working with Myrada for over 25 years and been appointed on new contract.

Inter-Organisational Links
While the organisational links with Myrada have been mentioned above, these institutions also support one another both organisationally and financially. As far as financial support is concerned, most of these Institutions are committed to raise resources required to support staff & establishment; those which have not reached this stage are being supported by others in the group like Myrada, MMYAPS and Sambhargcha.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

This is another area in which Myrada has invested a lot of its energy and focus. The focus was on involving communities in the watershed projects, reducing risk to farmers through integrated farm development strategies and providing increased livelihood in the area of inputs - seed banks, vermicomposting, soil testing etc.

Around 1985, realizing that a major investment in drylands was required to ensure food security of the poor, Myrada began exploring the strategy of microbial water management in Gulbarga District in collaboration with the then DVC of CSIR (under the guidance of Dr. R. P. Varma) and the Government of Karnataka. Myrada’s focus was to foster appropriate people’s institutions which would take on the responsibility of planning, budgeting and implementing approaches to micro-watershed management. Myrada has been a leader in these efforts.

One of the lessons learned from this project was that micro-watershed management work needed to be seen as a local health intervention and that it could not depend on outside agencies for funds or expertise.

When Myrada realized that the farmers faced a dilemma as most watershed projects required a “community contribution” up front as part of the project design, Myrada introduced the concept of converting part of the grants into loans which would be managed by local people and the associated management associations”. This removed the burden on the farmer and led to a significant improvement in the quality of implementation, reduction in costs and even diversification of cropping patterns.

Today Myrada has covered over 9,966 hectares in all its project areas. In the last decade, most of the projects involve Myrada assisting government sponsored projects - (IWM, NABARD, DIPAP programs etc) Where government is not involved, Myrada still has the space to experiment. With the HUP (Kenduske Unlever Fund, Ministry of Agriculture) and the rural development program that covers 5 districts, JFC, MIFC supported project in AP and the Azem, Premji Foundation (AP) project in Kolar, Myrada has been able to set up monitoring dashboard indicators that enable the team and the community institutions monitor the progress and plan appropriately.

EDUCATION

In the past, Myrada has had large programs focused on improving infrastructure in primary school education and supporting the SSA program to strengthen the management functions of teachers. This program (strengthening the school management process) has been a strong point of all education related programs in keeping with Myrada’s philosophy of building local level institutions. For the past three years, Myrada has actively promoted vocational education through its CMRCs. Partnerships with the EU supported program, Godrej and Boyce, Usha Silicon International and others have allowed the SAQIs to identify potential youth and provide them with training which, in turn, has linked these candidates to short and long term courses. Some of the common skills that have a high demand include carpentry, welding, plumbing, masonry, computer, tailoring for the short term courses and nursing a course for the long term courses. Over the past 5 years, MPls have trained over 11,000 persons. Myrada has renewed its interest in promoting quality of pre-school and school based education in its Raichur based project supported by Save The Children. Myrada is also continuing to focus on vocational education in its project areas in the future too.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Training, Capacity Building and networking has been a critical part of Myrada’s approach to improve its interventions and to spread its proven strategies to other parts of the country and abroad without having to plant its flag in these areas. Myrada provides training to its partners through its projects and through well equipped Centres for Institutional Development and Organisational Reform and Research (CIDSORs) located in the project areas.
How did Myrada approach training?

There were some key decisions that Myrada took:

a) Training is done not by Myrada but by CIDDORs registered as independent societies.

b) The CIDDORs refused to set up an annual calendar of training that could be advertised to attract applications. (This was because such an approach resulted in individuals from several organisations attending the course. On their return, they did not have enough support to make a change in the organisation.) The requesting organisation was always asked to send a team for training—this would be a measure of their commitment to the topic for training.

c) The trainings are always based on the premise "ONLY TRAIN IN WHAT YOU DO", since our strengths were in the field and sharing people’s experience has the greater impact on trainees. While there are classroom sessions, the main thrust of learning is through field visits and discussions with the community.

d) Myrada responds to requests that come to us. Two questions are always asked and answered before starting a program—what area is the training required in; and what level of participants are expected for the training. Based on the answers, Myrada determines which CIDDOR would be most appropriate to link them to for the training.

A very important area of capacity building is the learning through case studies. Each CIDDOR writes case studies based on its experiences which portray success stories and failures which are also a very significant learning for people.

PROGRAMMES ABROAD

MYRADA has been actively involved in promoting the SAG and watershed strategies in other countries, notably in Cambodia, Myanmar and Indonesia in the past, and African counties of Sierra Leone, Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan in the present. Our staff visits these countries to train local people in implementing poverty alleviation strategies like the self-help affinity group approach and to assist in strategic planning. These projects have been successfully modified to suit local conditions as well as design training materials in local languages. MYRADA has arranged visits of these teams to India to interact with various development actors like NGOs, Government functionaries, bankers and CBOs and to understand ways in which collaboration can be built for development in their own countries. In the East African program, there is an exchange of persons where young staff from Myrada and their counterparts from the African countries spend about 11 months in the partner institution to learn and share successful experiences.

OUR STAFF

In the 90s, MYRADA had 699 staff. The number declined to 326 in 2003 and now is around 250. A lot of the programs are now being implemented by Myrada promoted institutions (MPIs). Besides, MYRADA’s interventions have become more strategic in recent years; this requires fewer but experienced staff who constantly upgrade and expand their skills. These are over 200 volunteers trained in health care, animal husbandry, forestry, literacy and other relevant areas who provide services in project areas. 98% of MYRADA’s staff come from the rural areas; they are graduates or post graduates. MYRADA has invested a lot of time and money in training staff during the past years. MYRADA looks for and develops the following qualities in its staff: commitment, professionalism, innovativeness and the ability to work in a participatory manner. Commitment is defined as the willingness to work in MYRADA though more lucrative offers for alternate employment are open.

All matters related to accounts and personnel are computerised in every project and at the Head Office. Statutory auditors conduct financial audits once a year, and there are regular compliance audits of major projects. All MPIs of MYRADA projects are audited regularly.

Establishment of Small Orchard and Beans intercropping for sustainable livelihoods of tribal farmers

Tribals share a special bond with the forests they dwell in. The forests of Tamil Nadu are home to various tribal communities and primitive tribal groups. Our village of interest, Beijialari in Erode district, is a Sholiga dominated area where tribal farmers mainly engage in agricultural activity for almost 6-7 months of the year. Ragi and maize are the major kharif crops. Initially, the tribals used to cultivate ragi as the main crop along with lab lab and mustard as intercrops.

Myrada KVK came up with the idea of establishing orchards in a bid to improve the quality of life of the tribals in the region. The climatic conditions along with other related factors such as soil type, rainfall, water availability and market potential were considered before zeroing in on amla, mango and citrus.

Myrada KVK initiated the establishment of participant groups in the village and through discussion with the participant group, it was decided to set up a revolving fund to help farmers take an initial loan of Rs. 1500 per acre for the purchase of seeds and return the loan along with a small service charge after selling their crop. This system was developed because the income from orchards can materialize only after a few years and till then it is essential to provide the farmer with sustained income in order to keep his interest alive.

After a thorough study of the economics and the climatic conditions of the region, beans was chosen as it was best suited in full areas with yields of 1500 – 2000 kg/acre in 90 days.

In the first batch of 25 farmers of Bejialari village it was found that on an average, farmers were able to harvest around 1800 – 2100 kg per acre.

The highest yield from a single plot of ragi was that of farmer Maniam. The yield from his one acre plot was found to be 2480 kg, fetching the farmer a gross income of Rs. 55,830/-. After deducting the input cost, the net income of this particular farmer was found to be Rs. 48,480/-. The average net income was Rs. 35,000/-.

OTHER BENEFITS

- Reduced or No Migration: Stable Income: After the implementation of this Project, tribal farmers do not venture out after the Kharif harvest. They have taken up cultivation of beans between April and June, which usually, was not the case.

- Participation of the women-folk: The women have evinced great interest in tending to their farms and taking care of the entire process right from sowing till the vegetable crop is harvested. As a consequence the orchard has also been saved as the farmers tend to take care of the trees along with the beans crop.

- Reduced Interference from wild animals: Wild animals are also kept at bay as the villagers maintain tight vigil when the beans crops are in the field.

Busyed by the pilot Myrada KVK encouraged 5 CMRLs to promote beans cultivation in their respective areas through support to farmers such as seeds/transport to market/sales etc.

As on April 2014 3800 tons of beans were produced by 700 farmers at an average net income of Rs. 80,000 per acre over 4 crop cycle in a year.
THE FUTURE

MYRADA has learnt over the past 46 years of its life that rural development is a slow and steady endeavour, to be taken up with intelligent preparatory groundwork and to be pursued diligently and ceaselessly. The main or central focus of such interventions has to be identified and then retained during the intervention stage. Myrada correctly identified rural poor families, and especially the women members of such families, for a focused attention on the development front in the major domains selected by us for our interventions. In most cases this approach proved itself to be appropriate to the particular situations in which our interventions were carried out — as evidenced by the large proportion of successes which we can legitimately claim with the knowledge of hindsight.

The current situation is quite different from what the rural households faced in the 1980's and the 90's. Absolute poverty of the type encountered so frequently and tangibly in those days has declined sharply. The medium of Internet, World Wide Web, computers, T.V. and mobile phones have all opened a window for the rural world which did not exist then. Access to better services and an increased awareness of opportunities — both available and desired — has impacted on the way the rural family presently looks at its immediate environment and the way it assesses other stakeholders in its pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. The major visible changes in the rural context are likely to accelerate faster and faster as urbanisation and industrialisation proceed towards their full potential in the near future.

The demographic dividend (a potentially huge payoff which India expects to reap in the coming decades) is yet to make an impact on rural livelihood opportunities. Openings to skills training and vocations, which are in demand, in the immediate neighbourhood of the school dropout rural youth, are currently few in numbers. Unless this situation is addressed adequately, the demographic dividend is likely to turn into a drag.

There are scenarios which predict a reverse migration from the cities and towns back to rural India whereby a large number of semi educated, semiskilled and underemployed workforce, which cannot meet the employment demands of the modern city, may have to fall back on agriculture and allied activities — which may not be easy to do. Myrada pondered over a few key issues to assess the situation collectively in the process of redefining its vision for the year 2020.

Points to Ponder Over

Are our programmes responding to the needs of all the unorganised / vulnerable communities in our present working area?

Are our programmes capable of reaching out to the vulnerable groups in the peri urban / urban communities?

Are we in a position to extend our work areas to different states / untouched areas in our current presence?

Myrada's reading of the situation

Our analysis recognizes the following broad scenario developing currently

- Increasing urbanisation
- Over 92% of workforce continues to be in the unorganised sector
- Land ownership increasingly squelched
- 12 million people are expected to return to farm based occupations in a reverse migration from the cities.

Demographic dividend expected from an increasingly younger population will require several important conditions to be met before fructifying. In the coming 5 years we need to accept projects and programmes to support recent migrants to urban and peri urban areas make a successful transition from farm based to other types of livelihoods. Facilitating vocational education programmes with new government/CSR funding is a possible way to expand both geographically and in terms of skills diversification. Further, in order to address the likely reverse migration of unemployed youth from urban / cities / towns back to rural areas, vocational skill sets based on agriculture / horticulture and value addition need to be propagated, especially amongst the youth who belong to the rural families we have worked with in the past and who may suffer for want of appropriate skill sets, both in the city as well as in the village.

Points to Ponder Over

Are we ready to undertake programs which significantly add value to what our rural producers can deliver to the marketplace?

Myrada's reading of the situation

Our analysis recognises that:

- Individual small farmers cannot hope to produce sufficient surplus to be able to sell it on his own.
- Farmers small or big, receive only 25% of the value created on their produce because they do not play a significant role post-harvest.
- Few farmers convince their next generation that agriculture is a paying proposition - young enthusiastic farmers are a dwindling species. Young farmers who actually purchase or lease additional lands to take up farming are rare. The trend is to sell your land in the village and migrate to the city/town hoping for a better but undefined alternative.
- All farmers we work with are now completely aware of the systemic exploitation they are susceptible to as long as they remain disaggregated and small. What they seek are directions to help them overcome their problems when they are facing the market place without adequate organisation, training and mentoring. Myrada's role will be to motivate, train and handhold the farmers to form strong Farmers Implementation Groups (FIGS) with the objective of making themselves self reliant after a few cycles of market driven selling operations.
- Value addition in post - harvest phase both for the individual farmer and for the farmer's interest groups has to be attempted with the consent and participation of the farmers themselves. Myrada's engagement with the process would be broad, deep and of long duration. The local context of the FIGS would determine the precise nature of such engagement in different projects. Going by our past experience, this may take between 2-3 seasonal cycles of production and Myrada's task will be to repeatedly expose the FIG to the realities of the market place and the best way to address such realities. Myrada staff who are assigned this task of handholding will need to be attuned to this role which involves interaction with the market place. Already, several of our staff working on development with CMRCs have gained experience in networking with banks, government department officials, GP members etc. on behalf of CMRCs. However, the skill set which is needed to manoeuvre the FIGS through the unfamiliar terrain of APMCs / traders / accountants / customers etc. and interactions with them for a win-win scenario, has to be provided to all our staff in order to prepare them adequately to play such a role.

In the domains of education and health care, there are several shockers facing us:

- Only about 25% of 8th class students can actually carry out addition and subtraction or read a 4th class text book without faltering.

Myrada's efforts in the past included creation of infrastructure for primary level education in villages. These efforts were focused entirely on government schools, even if the money sometimes came from private sources both domestic and foreign. The quality of education imparted to the students in Government schools is a function of several factors, none of which is under the control or the influence or even the knowledge of well meaning donors and implementers. The two major factors identified are the quality of human resource, i.e. the school teachers and the quality of human resource, i.e. the school teachers and the quality of human resource, i.e. the school teachers and the quality of human resource, i.e. the school teachers and the quality of human resource, i.e. the school teachers and the quality of human resource. The curriculum. It is abundantly clear now that private sector education providers have easily scored over the government system on both these counts as a result of which, at least in the urban / peri urban areas, even poor families are unwilling to send their children to government schools even though these are free, and can claim to have other facilities such as toilets, playground, drinking water, etc. The education policy of several state governments insisting on education in the mother tongue may have many followers but majority of the poor want to send their own children to English medium schools. Our experience of this trend is confirmed by evidence of SAG women borrowing books for their children from state institutions over most of our geographic diversities.

Myrada will encourage the CMRCs to provide rural children with opportunities for holistic development through formation and nurturing of children’s clubs to promote sports, games, quiz competitions, soft skills and life skills. Our project on child development in Raichur promises to act like a beacon in this respect. Another area that Myrada will continue its efforts will be in the empowerment of SSMCs to play their designated role effectively. The SSMC and the CMRC network will also be motivated to ensure an inclusive primary level education for the disabled children within their localities.

Myrada will continue to actively partner in skills training and vocational education of rural youth in all its projects and its own technical training centre at Horur.
Points to Ponder Over

With fast dwindling common Property Resources in rural India (less than 15%) decreasing forest cover (less than 19%), increasing proportion of degraded land, and pollution levels, should our efforts in NRM be recalibrated?

Myrada’s reading of the situation

Our analysis recognizes:

- Notwithstanding empirical data to the contrary, both government and private sector donors look at NRM activities of soil and water conservation as “Gobale within a year” category. The unstated but dominant perspective for these entities is: Can we claim a success in our next Annual Report?
- Increasing outlay on INMP and allocation of implementation responsibility to dedicated field departments by the Governments has narrowed the opportunities available to Myrada to design and implement an end to end project with the focus on the local community being enabled to manage the process.
- Myrada cannot rest on its laurels nor expect to undertake large scale government driven watershed level projects for soil and water conservation as was done over the past 3 decades and more. The emphasis has to shift to small scale but intensive projects for SRL, Integrated Farm Development (IFD), organic farming, rainwater harvesting etc.

Our analysis suggests that:

- Malnutrition is still an issue due to a complex set of factors. Though an underlying poverty and subsequent food gap are the most significant primary reasons, there are several others including ignorance of balanced diet, lack of access to nutrients, poor tracking of those with malnutrition etc. Myrada will continue its efforts to promote nutrition security right from improved food production to distribution/utilization.
- Malnutrition in children and pregnant women continues to be a source of concern and Myrada’s attempts in this domain need to be further enhanced in the area of awareness generation, production and distribution of micronutrients, and monitoring of progress in respect of each child/pregnant woman. Our present partnership with domestic international agencies and donors as well as department of women and children welfare will have to be strengthened.
- The other areas of focus in the coming years would include environmental sanitation including toilet construction and utilization, safe drinking water, community based rehabilitation including livelihoods for the rural disabled, and continuing with our past efforts in addressing anemia in pregnant women, adolescent girls and children.

Myrada has begun the process of facilitating farmers to form appropriate institutions such as farmer groups / federations / companies to help them earn a little more than before through intelligent and coordinated post-harvest activities including sorting, grading, aggregation, transportation, storage and marketing their surplus agricultural produce.

These efforts will be further intensified as well as extended to other districts where Myrada’s past association with the farmers and their families focused mainly on water and soil conservation efforts under the Integrated Watershed Management Projects (which typically covered 1500-2000 farmers in a micro watershed over a period of 5-6 years and enabled the entire community including farmers as well as landless people to work together through watershed committees to plan and execute programme activities at their own pace.)

The quality of human resource available to Myrada has so far been exceptionally suitable for MYRADA’s goals and method of operations in so far as commitment to the cause is concerned. A very large number of Myrada staff continue to work with the organization because it gives them satisfaction, and not because it provides with a well-paid employment. However, while commitment and passion are evidently abundant, competence and professionalism needed to design, undertake, monitor, describe and learn from projects implemented requires constant and frequent upgrading. The ability to communicate effectively with the rural community and the patience to listen to what the people are saying has to be matched with the ability to collect analyse, and report to local stakeholders, donor agencies and to the outside world in general. This is applicable at all levels of the organisation beginning with programme officers at the Head Office, CEOs of MIPs, Field Programme Officer, Project Officers, and Subject Matter Specialists and so on. In other words all Myrada staff will need regular capacity building so that they can be, in addition to being the “doers”, effective spokespersons.

In addition to finding young blood with the right attitude to rural development and the potential to evolve into a development professional of the highest standards. The South South Exchange Project funded by FK Norway is underway for the last 2 years and provides another excellent opportunity for the younger staff of Myrada to develop their professional skills. Myrada is expected to send, over the next 6 years, two staff each year to East Africa for a one year field level attachment during which they are expected to help local NGOs in setting up self help groups of women on the lines of Myrada promoted SAGs, to understand and practise the concept of credit plus activities such as health care, vocational education and livelihoods. This is expected to eventually lead to the formation of equivalents of our federations and CAMRCs in those countries.

Myrada has recently reinforced the practice of sharing the minutes of the monthly field level staff meetings with the Head Office. Head office staff are encouraged to actively participate in these meetings to discuss not merely the progress report of on-going programmes but also on matters of relevance to the local communities and the domains identified by us to work within. A periodical assessment of such matters across all field offices is carried out at the Head Office. Of particular interest in such meetings are the inputs provided by our CIDDRS. These institutions are now expected to search their immediate horizons and to undertake small and clearly formulated case studies which reflect/highlight the underlying reality in the community and will be of great significance in making the CIDDRS immediately relevant to various stakeholders such as Government departments, PRIs, corporates, donor agencies in terms of understanding the ground truths and tailoring an appropriate intervention. A continuous upgrading of skills at CIDDRS level is also necessary to enable them to develop and present project proposals independently to donors directly and not as an adjunct to Myrada or as the implementing arm of Myrada in the area of training. More MIPs will be encouraged in the coming days to seek and find appropriate donors and then to negotiate a partnership with willing donors to carry forward the training tasks.
### Housing & Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Current Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses built</td>
<td>23811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses repaired</td>
<td>7877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community halls constructed</td>
<td>997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anganwadi/ community buildings</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small weirs/ check dams</td>
<td>2592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community warehouses</td>
<td>3463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village drinking water system</td>
<td>4698</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual toilets/bathrooms</td>
<td>45859</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eco toilets</td>
<td>2769</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bus shelters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cloth washing slab</td>
<td>330</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage constructions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead tanks</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground level tanks</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle shed</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot bridges</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community kitchen</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil distillation units</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of drainage box</td>
<td>134</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual sanitary line connection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drainage soak pit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Backyard Poultry</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slatted floor goat rearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ragi processing unit</td>
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### Village Development Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Current Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rain water harvesting systems in schools</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen gardens in schools</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Current Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of villages covered under health &amp; env. sanitation</td>
<td>1297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of villages covered under primary education</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of villages covered under vocational education/ skills training</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads repaired (villages)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot paths built (villages)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar street lights (villages)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grain storage units</td>
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### Natural Resource Management

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Current Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watershed area treated (in hectares)</td>
<td>199616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saplings planted</td>
<td>14319164</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm ponds (excluding watershed area)</td>
<td>477</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vermicompost units</td>
<td>4656</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub surface dams</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanks desilted</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells dug/drilled</td>
<td>816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic farming cultivated (in acres)</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic cotton cultivation (in acres)</td>
<td>1380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof water harvesting structures</td>
<td>2382</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gokatte</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compost pit</td>
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<td>Kalyani</td>
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<td>Well deepening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shallow well</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bore well/open wells recharged</td>
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### Education/ Child Development

<table>
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<th>Activity</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of sponsored children</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of children covered under various programs</td>
<td>255720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolrooms constructed/ repaired</td>
<td>1646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anganwadi buildings</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drinking water systems in schools</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets in schools</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vision 2020**

**LIVELIHOODS**
- Institution building - urban/rural
- Second level institutions
- IGP
- Animal husbandry
- Improved agricultural practices
- Insurance

**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**
- Integrated farm development + organic farming
- Soil and water conservation
- Micro-irrigation: rain water harvesting
- Agro-forestry and bio-diversity
- Alternate energy: solar/wind/biofuel
- Integrated pest / nutrition management

**HEALTH**
- Nutrition
- Geriatric programs
- Female infanticide
- Life skills
- Women’s health
- Safe drinking water
- Environmental sanitation: toilets, drains, garbage
- Disabled persons’ programs

**EDUCATION**
- Vocational education
- Career guidance
- Legal literacy
- Children’s clubs

**CAPACITY BUILDING**
- Build or identify local district level expertise in all domain activities
- Field-based research
- Documentation
- Network / resource directory
- Staff capacity building
- Foster / mentor MPI’s
- Social issues - domestic violence, gender issues