

A Report on Auro Mira Service Society's Kechla Project 2007-2008

Model Garden:-

- i) **Plantation and Demonstration:** - Kechla is a tribal area where the tribals are unaware of the advantage of plants and vegetation. The tribals are primarily hunters, food gatherers and wood-cutters even to date. To earn a little money for meeting their daily requirements, they cut the trees given to them by nature and sell the wood in the market. This has had several harmful effects on the environment such as:
- (a) Massive soil erosion,
 - (b) Washing away of the top soil,
 - (c) Wild animals foraging into the villages and
 - (d) A drop in ground water level.

We have continued with our efforts in creating a model farm and orchard as a demonstration project and in motivating the villagers by example to follow suit. In 2007 we planted the following trees by involving the villagers on our land: 400 silver oaks, 200 teaks, 500 bamboos, 150 Litchi and 400 Jatropa. Two hundred silver oaks were given to the villagers for their own land. We also provided cow dung and bio-fertilizer to the villagers who had planted trees in the previous years with our support.

Throughout the year we grow green vegetables in our field for our kitchen and also for bartering with the villagers. The villagers in exchange give Ragi, Paddy and Suan. The number of villagers planting their own vegetables is growing rapidly and we provide seeds wherever required. Some of the vegetables grown by us this year were: cabbage, cauliflower, Ginger, Turmeric, Chilli, Pumpkin, Radish, Aubergine, Broccoli, Bitter Gourd, Bottle Gourd, Carrot and Beans.





- ii) **Use of Bio Fertilizer:** - We motivate and teach the villagers and tribals to make and use bio fertilizer on their land. We teach them how to make it and we also use it ourselves for cultivation on our land. Instead of going to the market, they now get it directly. The ratio of the Bio fertilizer is: for 1 Kg. Cow dung + $\frac{1}{2}$ litre urine of cow + 50 gm Jaggery + 10 litres clean water. Mix it and then put it in a clay pot for 72 hours. After that add 100 litres of water and apply within 72 hours.

Furthermore, we are also using vermi compost and in the future plan to make it ourselves.

- iii) **Natural Pesticides:** - Though sometimes we purchase herbal pesticides from the market, we mostly apply our own formula and use neem cake and powder of neem leaves.



- iv) **Drip Irrigation:** - For watering our crops, we are using drip irrigation. We take small clay pots having a very tiny hole at the base; we fill it with water and put it just near the root of the plants. Slowly the water goes to the plant without being wasted. As we involve the villagers in all such activities, there is a possibility that in future, they too will use this training.

Rural Development:

- 1) **Education:** - Auro-Mira Service Society has selected and recommended to Sri Aurobindo Education Society, forty-seven children for education in schools with boarding and lodging facilities. These children have been sponsored and are getting education at the following four schools in Orissa:
 - (a) Kotpad in Koraput district,
 - (b) Indrabati in Nabarangpur district,
 - (c) B. Maliguda in Nabarangpur district
 - (d) Barijholra in Rayagada district.

The inmates of the Kechla Ashram are also running a play school for the children of nearby villages. The children come everyday for 2 to 3 hours and are served snacks and some times even fruits are provided. At present we have 25 children who come.



Health and Nutrition:-

Why do we have a Nutrition Programme?

India has one of the highest incidences of malnutrition in the developing world and it is caused by a combination of lack of awareness, poverty and non-availability of adequate and balanced diet.

Malnutrition retards physical and cognitive development of infants and reduces work capacity among adults. This translates into reduced earning leading to further poverty. The problem of malnutrition being invisible is passed on from one generation to another.

A girl child born in a rural family is more likely to be born with low birth weight (less than 2.5 kg). She is at a far higher risk of dying in early infancy. Even if she survives, it is more difficult for her to make up for lost growth. She will be more prone to a number of development deficits. Furthermore, an undernourished diet would lead to a malnourished adolescent who would be anaemic and with irreversible cognitive and physical damage. Often she is married-off early which leads to early child bearing and multiple pregnancies. Since the mother is malnourished and anaemic it has an unfavourable effect on the foetus, which results from Intra-uterine Growth Retardation, which results in low birth weight. This is a vicious cycle of malnutrition and ill health.

An under nourished person is more prone to infections as infections increase the energy demand of the body which if not fulfilled results in further malnutrition. Malnutrition further lowers the immunity and makes the child more susceptible to infection.

The Tribals of Koraput district comprise a major percentage of its total population. Due to inadequate food intake during childhood, they suffer from a number of deficiencies. As a result, most of them do not attain minimum health standards, which in turn lead to numerous malnutrition deaths. Therefore, AURO-MIRA SERVICE SOCIETY has decided to start this programme in village KECHLA of Koraput district. The program is funded by Association Ushagram, Switzerland.

Self help groups (SHGs) have already been formed to produce energy rich food based on inexpensive and indigenous raw material such as Wheat, Jow, Ragi and peanuts. These are the specific

requirements of the three critical groups of infants, adolescent girls and adults. These SHGs will supplement the family income which in turn will help in improving the nutritional status as well as the quality of life of the rural community. Some proportion of the produce will be utilized for consumption and the rest of the produce will be marketed in rural areas.

The rural marketing agency is being identified and the final strategy is being charted out. This campaign will be supported extensively by both conventional and non-conventional media. Training will also be imparted to volunteers and SHG members who will take a lead in distribution and marketing of the energy food so as to provide income generation. The units will be managed by the AMSS only for the first year after which the SHGs can decide the ownership.

This programme is the first of its kind in which a dual strategy for combating malnutrition has been adopted, income generation as well as improvement of the nutritional status.

WHAT WE HOPE TO DO:

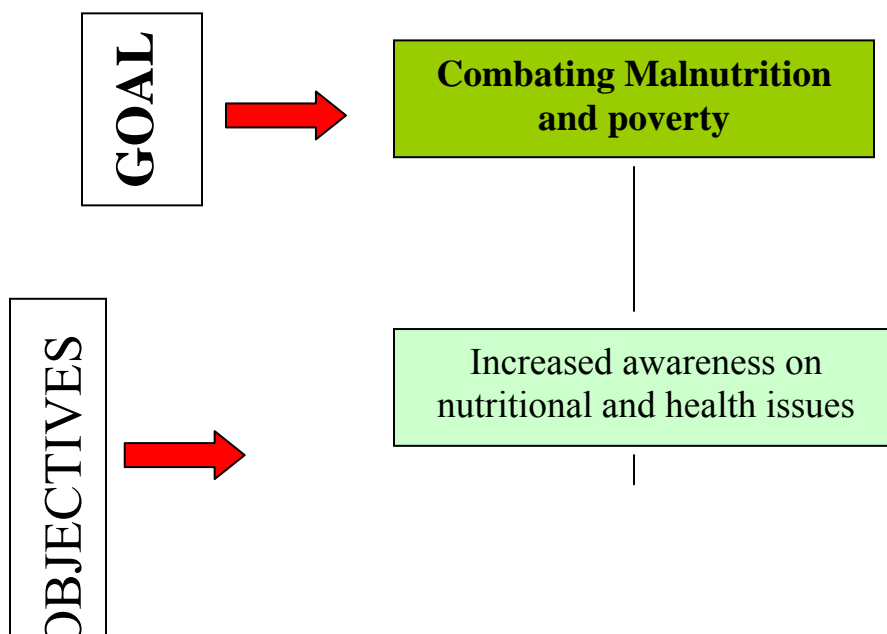
- Determine the malnutrition status of the area and establish the major factors leading to malnutrition.
- Identify and train volunteers from the communities in various aspects of malnutrition and its management.
- Build awareness amongst the communities about issues related to nutrition and the intergenerational life cycle approach facilitate behavioural changes.
- Start an income generation activity by setting up units for production of high quality nutritional foods for distribution to the vulnerable groups.
- Strengthen the women SHGs and peoples' organizations of local communities to address these issues and to ensure the sustainability of the project.

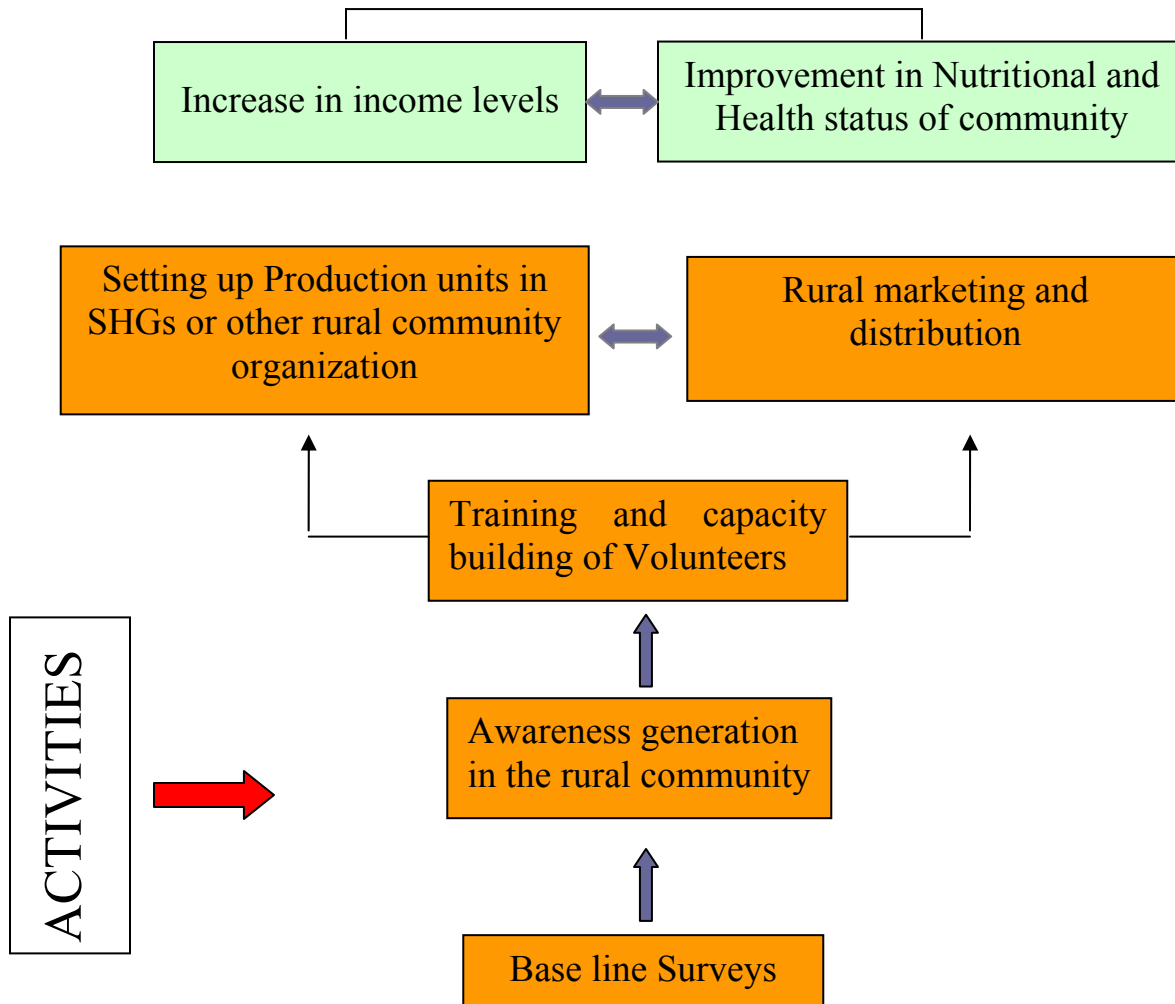
Adopted Area:

Village KECHLA which is the combination of four hamlets named by

1. Ratamatiguda
2. Janiguda
3. Sonambaguda
4. Lediguda

And also the village GIRLAGUDA. Both these villages are under Koraput block of Koraput district.





BASE LINE SURVEY:

Without any particular group, we took total families of the above said two villages. So as per our survey report there are 119 families.

- Ratamatiguda – 27 families
- Janiguda - 11 families
- Sonambaguda 12 families
- Lediguda 41 families
- Girlaguda 28 families

AWARENESS PROGRAMME:

To start with, awareness on nutritious food was started by



AMSS. At first, the plan was to organize the programme at Giralaguda. But due to rain all the women and children were invited to the Project Office of the AMSS, Kechla.

- a) **Sanitation:** - Normally the people in rural areas never use toilets and urinals and remain barefoot. That's why the majority of children suffer from worm infections. AMSS has been continuing an anti-worm campaign. Supply of footwear, free of cost, is one of the measures being implemented since the last three years and the number of children now using footwear has gone up considerably.
- b) **Drinking Water:** - The people of Kechla use the reservoir water for drinking. AMSS has dug bore wells with funds donated by Association Ushagram, Switzerland in each village and provided safe drinking water. Every year before the beginning of the rain AMSS shoulders the responsibility of carrying out repair work. Association Ushagram has donated more funds for bore wells in other villages as well but as the condition of road is not very good, we have as yet not got a truck willing to venture there.
- c) **Cleanliness:** - Our message to the rural areas is "BE CLEAN & KEEP CLEAN". AMSS urges villagers and tribals to remain clean themselves and also to keep their surroundings clean. Sometimes the inmates of the Kechla Ashram too join the villagers in cleaning the village roads.
- d) **Medicine:** - We give priority to Naturopathy and the Indian system of medicine though we also have some allopathic medicine for first aid. The dispensary is open 24 hours to everybody near our Ashram. Over 650 patients were treated in 2007-08.
- e) **Health Camp:-** Every year AMSS organizes a Mobile Health Camp at Kechla. Last year it was held from 31st December 2007 to 4th Jan. 2008. The resource persons were Dr. Ishwaran & Dr. Debnath . Both are from New Delhi and they conducted the camps with their supporting group of people. In these four days of the camp, the villages covered were (i) Kechla, (ii) Gira Guda, (iii) Semila, (iv) Narjiput, (v) Pada Chhenda, (vi) Bhitar Chhenda, (vii) Gulerput, (viii) Pondi (ix) Putkaranga. The numbers of patients treated were over a thousand.



ii) **Communication:** - From the beginning AMSS has also been giving priority to the transportation and communication of the people.

(a) A Motor Launch helps in crossing the reservoir whenever necessary and the Self Help Group takes responsibility for it. This motor launch was funded by Association Ushagram, Switzerland.

(b) Every year AMSS carries out an operation for road repairs near the villages before the rains set in.

iii) **Income Generation Programme:-** AMSS always wants to see the rural people as Healthy and Worthy and that is why it has started a training programme since last year for income generation of these people. *Jagabandhu Muduli & Bagu Muduli, two young boys have been sent to the Bee keeping training center. This year, winter onwards, they (Jagabandhu & Baguli) are going to start their Project. Association Ushagram in Switzerland will provide the funds.*

We are also trying to persuade SHGs to collect the forest produce for marketing at the nearest market and here too, all infrastructural help will come from AMSS.

5. **Other Activities:** Over and above all the existing programmes, we are also organizing other following activities :

i) **Teacher Training Camp:** Every year we organize a Teacher Training Camp. Last year it was organized in the Month of June. The no. of participants was fifty and they came from the Integral Schools of various districts of Orissa. The Resource Persons were *Mr. Prakash, Mr. Srinath, Ms Sangeeta & Ms Shibani* from MIRMBIKA & THE HERITAGE schools in New Delhi. It took place from June 2 to June 8, 2007.

ii) **Youth Camp:** - Last year, there was a youth camp organized at Kechla. There were 45 participants from Bombay. The Resource Persons were *Dr. Nirankar Aggarwal and Mr. Jayanto* from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch; *Mr. Amit, Mr. Harish, Mr. Kesar* from Sriram School, New Delhi and *Mrs Nisha* from The Mother's International School

New Delhi. The Activities were Shramdan, Yoga, Meditation, Spiritual Discourse and Discussion, Games, Swimming, Rappelling, River Crossing, Trekking etc. It was held from December 25 to 30, 2007.

6. Visitors at Kechla Ashram:

- i) 7th April 2007 the teachers' group of Sri Aurobindo Integral School, B. Maliguda.
- ii) 16th April 2007 the teachers from Sri Aurobindo Integral School, Khalikot
- iii) 20th May 2007 E. TV team from Koraput
- iv) 12th July 2007 to 23rd July Mr. Roman From Switzerland
- v) 12th July 2007 to 30th Sept. 2007 Mr. Anand From Bihar
- vi) 7th August to 13th August Ms. Kari Bohr from Switzerland.
- vii) 15th November 2007 Mr. Suman Sharma & family from Pondicherry.
- viii) 2nd December 2007. Mr. R.N.Panda (S.D.J.M) , Koraput.
- ix) 22nd December 2007 Mr. Giridhar Gomango (M.P) Koraput.
- x) 17th to 20th February 2008 Ms. Kari Bohr from Switzerland
- xi) 14th March to 29th Mach 2008 Ms. Anna Maria from Holland.

7. Our Future Plan:-

- i) Residential School for children of the village — construction going on.
- ii) Full irrigation system for the plants.
- iii) Development of Dairy and Poultry with villagers.
- iv) Common toilet for the villagers.
- v) Telephone (Mobile phone) for the villagers.
- vi) T.V. Room in the village for old people.

8. Inspirations:-

- i) Visiting Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Kechla is really rewarding. It falls in my parliamentary constituency and the interior area surrounded by water is very peaceful. I visualize a bright future for this area and its people with the blessings of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Maa.

-Dr. Giridhar Gomango
Hon'ble M.P, Koraput

- ii) I Really Love this place and the people here. I pray that God helps them in every way.

- Mr. Nagraj Dora
P.S to Dr. Giridhar Gomang

- iii) It is really a peaceful place and I am greatly impressed by it. Hospitality is excellent. All the members are affectionate. I extend my best wishes for it's development in future.

-Rabi Narayan Panda
S.D.J.M, Koraput

- iv) The feeling of satisfaction was really fantastic. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is beyond all expectation in a region like Kechla. After visiting the Ashram, I felt

glory to know about the thought and philosophy of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. I did not visit a picnic spot in Kechla but the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo.

-Pradeep Kumar Dora,
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Koraput

- v) The calmness of the place impressed me. Initiatives may be taken to improve the social life of the local tribal people.
- Amarendra Sarangi
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Koraput
- vi) My long wish to visit Kechla was fulfilled today by the grace of the Divine Mother. I strongly feel that a new world is under construction and is going to be established here. Kechla is a place of peace and harmony where I believe everyone can receive something higher. Wish to visit again in near future.
- Tarini Charan Pati
NALCO, Damanjodi, Koraput
- vii) Mother's work is done here in true spirit amidst nature. Mother's presence is felt in the air, mountains, river and soil
- Basant Kumar Pattnaik
Dist. Probation Officer, Cuttack
- viii) Spell bound at the magnificent sight. Remembered the Mother's words, "Nothing is impossible. The word impossible has no meaning for my children".
- Sujata Pati
Sri Aurobindo Integral School, Damanjodi, Koraput
- ix) Really I got the inner peace at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Kechla.
- Prabina Behera
Koraput.
- x) When I crossed the water from Pondi towards Kechla, I felt that I am journeying from Madras to Pondicherry. Really the place is very peaceful. The inmates are hard working.
- Surendra Kumar Das
Koraput.

