

ATMASHAKTI
ANNUAL REPORT
2013-14

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Dawn of the financial year 2013- 14 came with lot of challenges which poured in from the previous year. The whole year saw lot many activities happening on MGNREGA, Food Security, Capacity Building, Launch of a book written by our Managing Trustee Mr. Koko Singh on Delhi & Agra- a travel guide and Disaster Management - Phaliln.

MILLION SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN

By the time we concluded our state rally on 20th March 2013; two important developments had taken place

- The National Food Security Bill draft was finalized and found to be short on all fronts, particularly norms for exclusion, state wise allocations and most importantly inclusion of dal, sugar, cooking oil, and iodised salt which would help provide some nutritional security. The only response we had got from the State govt. was a reduction in the issue price of rice from Rs.2/- per kg to Re.1/-.
- Our neighbouring state Chhattisgarh introduced an act which is a mirror image of what we were advocating.

In view of this we had to make a strategic shift to a State campaign and decided to launch a 'Campaign for a million signatures for food and nutritional security'. This commenced in April'13 and was designed to culminate in 'rath rallies' at the block and district level from the last week of June till mid July, ending with a state 'Peoples Rath Rally' on July 20th. (This is the time when the annual Lord Jaganath rath yatra is held in Puri)

This required considerable ground level mobilization and after intense work spread over three months we were able to obtain signatures from the villages we work in. Our groups also roped in support from NGO's in 13 other districts that collected 40,000 signatures taking the total to 8.76 lakhs.

Team was able to reach out and incentivize the people and organize 26 block level rallies and 5 district rallies. All told a little over 16,000 villagers participated in these rallies with women recording an impressive 45%. The community contribution works out to Rs.40.10 lakhs while we have contributed under Rs.50000!! All these rallies had a locally designed rath and our memorandum was submitted to the respective block and district level officials. The entire team deserves kudos for accomplishing this during peak summer with temperatures soaring to 47 Celsius and then during the monsoon and agricultural season.

July 20th was the final day in Bhubaneswar amazingly around 1800 people (35% women), turned up. We had organized a mini truck to serve as the main 'rath' and ten autos were the symbols of the ten districts we work in. All were decorated in different colours with five flags fluttering as they moved. Each of the people's organizations had their own banners and flags and there were three groups of cultural performers from western and southern Odisha. People came out of their shops and stopped their vehicles to try and figure out what was happening and leaflets were distributed to explain our cause. The print as well as visual media were present and the rally received good coverage in three English papers as well as eight Odiya papers. In addition Etv and Otv provided good visual coverage. As is to be expected the CM did not give us time of day, but the people's voice is beginning to be heard. The memorandum and signatures were

received by the state minister for food and civil supplies a couple of days after the rally. We will wait for the government response over the next couple of weeks and then see what we can do when the state assembly meets for its monsoon session in the third week of August.

A conservative estimate of the people's contribution for this rally is Rs 13 lakhs, bringing the total in the last 4 months to around Rs.63 lakhs.



DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Cyclone Phailin struck the Odisha coast in the third week of October and its impact combined with two severe depressions in rapid succession led to severe flooding in large swathes of the state, but with maximum intensity in Ganjam district, famous for its beach at Gopalpur and being the cashew nut capital of the state.

We decided to intervene with an effort to rehabilitate some of the worst affected families. As per the well thought strategy we helped the poorest of poor through 'food for work' and 'seeds for cultivation'. We have reached 2892 Household in 52 villages in Ganjam District. Whereas we distributed Vegetable, and ground nut seeds so that people can immediately restore their livelihood.

Atmashakti has raised fund from their respective donors and spent them on rehabilitation work in Odisha. As per the strategy team decided to distribute the seeds for cultivation; however farmers had to pay back the same quantity of seeds after cultivation of their respective crops. In the case of vegetable seeds farmers had to pay back the cash amount, equals to the seeds given to them. While in 'food for work', the farmers had to construct or build their houses, in return we gave them 10 kg of Rice and 1 kg of Dal. Though it was free of cost, however as per the strategy we have distributed Rice and Dal in four installments, so that we can monitor whosoever is not working should not be given or eligible for next installment of food supply. We have decided to collect the fund in the form of seed from the beneficiaries, so that we would have continued with such funds as an 'emergency fund' in natural disaster or any other emergency.



LAUNCH OF BOOK ON DELHI & AGRA – A travel guide by our Managing Trustee Mr. Koko Singh

As a part of our fund raising campaign we linked up the sale of the book through an online campaign in which the donor has to make an online donation of Rs. 299 towards Atmashakti and will be given a soft copy of the book as token of appreciation. Friends and well wishers came forwarded and supported our campaign



FOOD SECURITY

With the passing of the National Food Security Bill in August, it was expected that the Odisha government would introduce its own bill. However there was a deafening silence till mid-December despite the fact that the central subsidy would increase by Rs. 65 crore per month and the coverage in rural areas would increase to 83% of the population. We initiated a mass drive between Sept and Nov' 13 wherein

- 1) Using a simple 'exclusion' criterion we identified the families wrongly excluded from the current subsidized PDS. Of the 5000 villages we were able to reach we found close to 160,000 families who have been 'left out'. Village wise petitions were signed by these families as also by those already covered demanding inclusion as well as providing dal, sugar and cooking oil at a subsidized price to provide some element of nutritional security as well.
- 2) From the last week of Nov' 13 block rallies were held in 46 of the 47 blocks we are working in as also in 6 of the 10 district headquarters. A total of 36000 men and women sacrificed their time and participated in these rallies, meeting the travel, food and other costs entirely on their own.
- 3) On December 10th a march was held in Bhubaneswar where around 3500 people came from the ten districts as also from three others and at the end of the rally which

stretched for more than a kilometre presented the memorandum with the block wise lists to the Minister for Food and Civil Supplies. Some assurances were received but the government failed to introduce a bill in the assembly which was in session.

The only tangible achievement is that the government has initiated a discussion on the exclusion criterion to be followed and the proposals are very close to what we have been proposing.



EMPLOYMENT UNDER NREGA

The twelve months ending March'14 were quite eventful. Till the middle of the year we held high hopes since it appeared that the state govt. had realized some of its follies of the previous two years and had reversed bad, anti-people policy such as:

- A) Denying work to those who do not have bank accounts.
- B) Accepting one bank/postal account and not stressing on individual accounts
- C) Not issuing new job cards to single adults who still live with their parents
- D) Insisting on multiple job applications (C1 forms filled) for 100 days of work (in many cases the job seeker had to apply 7 times!)
- E) Insisting on personal appearance of each job seeker at the Panchayat (Gram Panchayat) office

In addition some other positive developments were:

- 1) Better availability of the job application (C1) form at the panchayat/block level
- 2) Introduction of the 'Rozgar Diwas' (Work Day), wherein all panchayat offices have to be open two days in the month
- 3) Streamlining of the e-muster roll and e-payment system so that delays for bank account holders were greatly reduced
- 4) Incorporation of 'Peoples Plans' in the palli/gram sabha annual plans, as opposed to plans made in the block without peoples participation

The MGNREGA related work was split into two phases:

In the **first phase**, between end July and mid October, there was a sustained drive to fill in the gaps between those who wanted work, but did not have job cards. In this effort cooperation from Panchayat level functionaries was available and by adding around 15000 job cards we were able to close the gap so only around 5% were left out.

The other effort was to try and convert as many postal account holders to opening accounts in banks as there has been a gradual but steady increase in the outreach of the formal banking system. We were not able to achieve the level of success we had in the job card drive as the banks are not interested in opening 'zero balance accounts'.

Achievements

- 1) Able to reach out to over 525,000 families who want work under MGNREGA
- 2) We were able to sort out almost all payment related issues
- 3) The extent of corruption in MGNREGA related works is less than 10% in our area of operation
- 4) The work obtained provided wages of Rs.164 crores to the most marginalized families; with 55% of them being Adivasis (Tribals) and 17% Dalits (scheduled castes).
- 5) The total value of works executed exceeds Rs. 270 crores, while our total expenses on running the program are just under Rs.2 crores
- 6) Women accounted for just under 30% of the total person days worked
- 7) An analysis of the type of work done shows that just over 50% of the money spent was on non road construction activities. Besides this the works undertaken are all towards creation of 'productive assets' such as field canals, water harvesting structures, check dams, contour bunding, creation of individual farm ponds, plantations and land development. In our area of operation the following is a brief account of the types of works (only some of the categories) undertaken and the assets created-

Type of assets	Number of assets created 2013-14
Road Connectivity	4320
Water Conservation and Water Harvesting (Check Dams/Farm Ponds/Irrigation Well/Construction of Stop wall)	5041
Renovation of traditional water bodies (Excavation of ponds/ Irrigation Well/ Drinking Well)	748
Drought Proofing (Mango Plantation/ Maintenance of	3896

Cashew Plantation)	
Irrigation Facilities to SC/ST/IAY/LR (Excavation/construction of farm ponds)	1370
Land Development	3511
Flood Control (Canal/Nallahs/Flood Protection Wall)	44
Rural Sanitation	106

