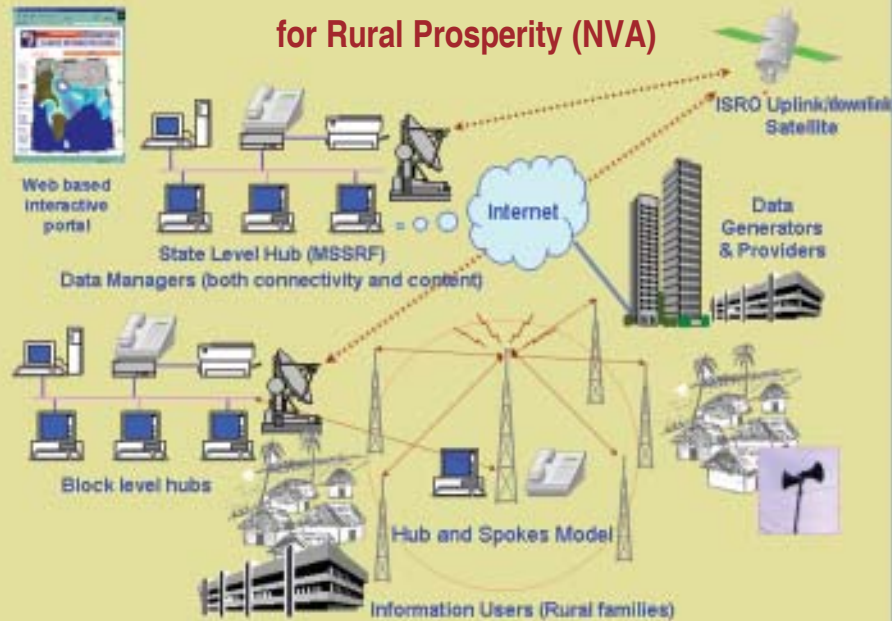


## Jamsetji TATA National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity (NVA)



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**M S Swaminathan Research Foundation**  
**Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy for**  
**Rural Prosperity (NVA)**

## **Introduction**

As momentum builds up around the globe for debating and directing the future of ICTs in society, a key concern is addressing the digital divide and reaching out to the poor and bringing rural areas and villages, especially in developing countries where most of the human population lives in its ambit. There are some notable success stories on this front. What has been their guiding vision and evolving infrastructure? How can these lessons be captured, exchanged and multiplied?

This publication highlights one such initiative, which has grown from the microlevel to a National Alliance. It talks of setting up of Village Knowledge Centres [VKCs], the trials and tribulations it faced, its human face, evolutionary path and future directions. It is a work in progress, still evolving and attempting to reach out further.

## **Genesis**

Technology has been an important factor widening the rich-poor divides both among and within nations since the onset of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. With explosive progress in many areas of technology, like information, space, bio- and nano-technology, this divide is increasing. The challenge is to enlist technology as an ally in the movement for economic, social and gender equity. **M S Swaminathan Research Foundation [MSSRF] chose the imparting of a pro-nature, pro-poor and pro-women orientation to technology development and dissemination as its main mandate when it started functioning in Chennai in 1989.**

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The Foundation launched a series of annual inter-disciplinary dialogues on technology enabled development from 1990 onwards, titled “New Technologies: Reaching the Unreached”. The first dialogue in this series was related to biotechnology. The recommendations made at this dialogue resulted in the launch of the Biovillages initiative.

## **Biovillage Programme**

Work started with testing the impact of modern biology on rural livelihood, largely thanks to the life-long interest of Prof. M S Swaminathan in bringing about a shift from unskilled to skilled work in rural India. Several ‘biovillages’ were set up with community participation in the villages of Pondicherry. On hindsight, this was an invaluable experience.

It is through the ‘biovillage’ project that the Foundation staff and the rural communities came to know each other well. The biovillage programme helps villagers use the available resources in a sustainable way as an additional source of income by using biological tools. Some of the biovillage activities are: fishing, mushroom cultivation, paper and board from banana waste, rain water harvesting, cultivation of pulses, ornamental fish growing, using water from the fishpond as manure for the coconut, hybrid seed production, trichograma (biopesticide), fodder and dairy. The main aim of these activities is to stop degradation of the existing resource base. Now the Biovillage programme has expanded to the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Orissa.

## **From a Small Beginning**

It took a while before ideas on what intelligent and innovative application of ICTs can do in rural development actually took off at the ground level. In January 1992 MSSRF held an **Interdisciplinary**

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**Dialogue on “Information Technology: Reaching the Unreached”, with the support of International Development Research Centre [IDRC], United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], Department of Space, Government of India, International Tropical Timber Organisation [ITTO] and Council for Advancement of People’s Action and Rural Technology [CAPART].** The dialogue output made it clear that the future of food security in the developing world especially South Asia is dependent less on resource intensive agriculture and more on knowledge intensity. In the coming years, agriculture will have to be developed as an effective instrument for creating more income, jobs and food and such a paradigm of sustainable agriculture will be both knowledge and skill intensive. The key step in the use of ICTs in sustainable agricultural and rural development is the value addition made to generic information to render it locale specific. It is on the latter that the rural families, particularly the marginal farmers and the asset-less can act on to improve productivity of labour and inputs.

The **1992 Dialogue on Information Technology** gave birth to the Information Village Research Project in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, with financial support from the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)**. Since information, to be of value to rural women and men, should be location and time specific, the term Knowledge Centre was used to stress the need for converting generic into location specific information and for training local women and men in adding value to information. Value-added information is appropriately referred to as knowledge and **“Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs)”** can generate opportunities for educated youth in villages to take to a career in knowledge management and dissemination. No one is excluded;

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everyone including men and women, educated and the illiterate, landed gentry and the landless labourers, adults and children all are welcome to the Village Knowledge Centres. Information on such aspects as crops, market information, education, health, employment, government entitlements, weather and fishing conditions is provided. Although a variety of technologies are used, our focus is on the people, their contexts and their needs. This project attempts to empower everyone with knowledge and opportunity by an inclusive use of local language and multimedia format. It is essentially a people's project and its objective is to help improve their lives through enhanced livelihood opportunities. In the early stages, the VKCs essentially performed the function of reaching relevant information to the people. Increasingly these Centres are also carrying queries and feedback from the village communities to scientists, policymakers and other experts. **Prof. Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences, USA**, has expressed the view that **these centres are a wonderful model of a bottom up approach that can link experts and the rural communities in a meaningful partnership.**

Both traditional and modern technologies are used to spread the information to the villages. Some of the VKCs are in coastal villages with 98% of the families involved in fishing. The information requirements in these villages are different and more focused on the safety of fishermen while at sea and on fish occurrence near the shore. These villages also receive information on wave heights 48 hours in advance, downloaded from a US Navy web site. The interpreted information is broadcast through a public address (PA) system for the benefit of fisher folk. The PA system is also used for announcing various government schemes related to fishermen on a regular basis, fish market details, employment news, availability of rice, kerosene, sugar etc. at the local fair price shops.

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This project won the **Motorola Dispatch Solution Gold Award (1999)** and **Stockholm Challenge Award (2001)**. Many journals have covered this project. **Scientific American selected this project (2004) for special mention when it chose Prof M S Swaminathan as one among 50 scientific leaders of the world who are making a difference.**

## **Lessons learnt**

The programme has been designed on the ***Antyodaya*** (i.e., unto the last) principle of Mahatma Gandhi, i.e., to ensure that the poorest person in the village gains from the technology and that technology does not further enlarge the rich-poor divide. Some of the lessons learnt along the way are:

- Connectivity, content and sustainability should receive concurrent attention.
- Constraints must be removed on the basis of a malady-remedy analysis; for example, wired and wireless technologies could be used where telephone connections are not adequate or satisfactory. Similarly, solar power can be harnessed where the regular supply of power is irregular. The approach should be based on the principle that there is an implementable solution for every problem.
- The information provided should be demand driven and should be relevant to the day-to-day life and work of rural women and men. Also, semi-literate women should be accorded priority in training to operate the centre, since this is an effective method of enhancing the self-esteem and social prestige of women living in poverty.
- Knowledge dissemination should be linked to access to the inputs



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needed to apply the knowledge for economic activities.

- The Rural Knowledge Centres should operate on the principle of social inclusion, thereby presenting a win-win situation for all.
- The programmes designed to empower rural families with new knowledge and skills should be designed on the *antyodaya* model, where empowerment starts with the poorest and most underprivileged women and men.
- The local population should have a sense of ownership of the e-Community Centre. It should be client managed and controlled, so that the information provided is demand and user driven.
- The local population should be willing to make contributions towards the expenses of the e-Community Centre, so that the long-term economic sustainability of the programme is ensured. Contributions in cash or kind generate a sense of ownership and pride and create an economic stake in the operation of the centre.

As on December 2004, twelve Village Knowledge Centres were in operation in Pondicherry. From the experience of seven years, useful insights were gained on how access to information and the use of ICTs can help in poverty eradication and empowerment of women. The bottom up project, unlike many telecentre projects, is an integrated development project in which ICTs are used wherever necessary in every aspect of development.

### **Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Property (NVA)**

The need was felt for a network linking experts and the grassroots level communities. This laid the foundation for a National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity [NVA]. For starting such an Academy on a financially sustainable basis, there was need for an adequate

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corpus. Further, since the scope of such a National Virtual Academy is the entire country having over 600,000 villages, it was felt that it should draw its inspiration from the life of a great achiever, who was able to overcome all obstacles through a firm belief in the “we shall overcome” philosophy. Jamsetji Nussarwanjee Tata, the visionary who laid the foundation, in pre-independent India, for India’s steel, hotel and textile industries as well as for advanced scientific research through the establishment of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, was an obvious role model. Jamsetji Tata captures the spirit behind the following lines from Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore’s poem, “It is a man’s true function to make the impossible into the possible by dint of his own efforts”.



‘a beacon light for successful generations of people coming afterwards to exhort and tell them-go thou and do likewise.’

The **Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity** was established in 2004, on the occasion of the death centenary of Jamsetji Tata supported by a generous endowment grant from the Tata Education Trust

The main aim of the NVA is to bring together the experts and grassroots level communities in two-way communication with the objective that knowledge should reach every home and hut. The state level hub located at MSSRF is the key knowledge resource that will create and maintain web sites and databases for the local hubs in close collaboration with national and international agencies. The state level hub links with block level or equivalent hubs in the state. The latter hubs serve a cluster of villages.

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In the local hubs (block level), interactive computer-based instructional modules will teach rural families, the best fishing and farming practices and livelihood opportunities. The hubs will also act as training locations for farming communities, school children, discussion place for both farmers and policy makers, counseling point for rural women, diagnosis centre for simple cataracts, refractive errors, etc. The local hubs will also gather and maintain data on soil and hydrology and will make them available to the public domain for analysis using appropriate models. From the local hubs the knowledge will be disseminated through VKCs. The local hub also acts as a rural electronic library.

What is being developed is, an information system that establishes lab-to-lab, lab-to-land, land-to-lab and land-to-land linkages:-

**Lab-to-lab:** This involves organizing a consortium of scientific institutions and data providers.

**Lab-to-land:** This involves symbiotic linkages between the providers of information and the users, so that the information disseminated is relevant to the life and work of the rural families.

**Land-to-lab:** There is considerable traditional knowledge and wisdom among rural and tribal families concerning sustainable management of natural resources, particularly water. Therefore, technical experts should not only learn from traditional knowledge and experience, but also take steps to conserve for posterity, the dying wisdom and the dying crops.

**Land-to-land:** There is much scope for lateral learning among rural families; such learning has high credibility because the knowledge coming from fellow farm women or men would have been subjected to an impact analysis from the point of view of its economic and social relevance to the population.

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Under the NVA, MSSRF is setting up a grid of Village Knowledge Centres in both Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry with the generous support of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Microsoft, Friends of MSSRF, Tokyo and OneWorld.

## **Guiding Principles**

MSSRF's experience in bridging the digital divide in rural India, has provided some basic guidelines such as the following for harnessing this powerful tool to cross social, gender, genetic and technological divides: the local population should have a sense of ownership of the Knowledge Centre by making contributions towards the expenses of the Knowledge Centres. This will also ensure the long-term economic sustainability of the programme. The Rural Knowledge Centres can be located either in Panchayat buildings or rural schools or Study Centres of Open Universities, so that there is social inclusion in access. These Rural / Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs) can be run by self-help groups (SHGs), after the members of the SHGs are thoroughly trained to become ICT-SHGs. The Centres will operate on the principle of social inclusion, thereby presenting a win-win situation for all.

## **Content**

Creation and updating of relevant content to suit local needs is a key factor in the programme. The information provided should be demand-driven and should be relevant to the day-to-day life and work of rural women and men. The NVA aims to (1) provide information and knowledge related to drought, climate management, augmentation of water availability and maximizing crop yield (more crop per drop), and livelihood opportunities,

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(2) build skills and capacities of the rural poor with a view to enhancing livelihood opportunities, and (3) empower vulnerable people to make better choices and have better control of their own development.

### **Major Focus Areas**

The major focus areas of a Village Knowledge Centres (VKC) are:

- E-governance: Information on entitlements and on methods of accessing the entitlements (e.g. bank credit, inputs, etc)
- E-education: Literacy and techniracy (i.e., technical skills)
- E-health: Disease prevention, detection and cure; nutrition with particular reference to maternal and infant (0-2 years) nutrition
- E-agriculture: Crops, livestock, fisheries (inland and marine), agro-forestry and forestry
- E-livelihoods: Opportunities for on-farm and non-farm employment, micro-enterprises supported by micro-credit, new skills and training in agro-processing and agri-business
- E-commerce: Producer-oriented marketing, quality management, matching production with demand
- E-environment: Conservation and enhancement of natural resources, with specific attention to land care, water conservation and sustainable use, conservation of flora and fauna and management of common property resources
- E-disaster management: Methods of managing drought, floods, cyclones and rare events like tsunami.

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## Learning from the Tsunami

The MSSRF Village Knowledge Centres played a major role immediately following the tsunami in December 2004 and in post-tsunami relief. The PA address system network in some of the villages with Knowledge Centres helped tsunami relief materials reach the communities in an effective way.

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India rightly pointed out that every major calamity provides also an opportunity for improving the way we live and work. The tsunami tragedy brought home the need for fostering safe and sustainable sea farming communities. Changes are needed in the design and location of the dwellings of fisher communities and in the methods adopted to take to them the right information at the right time and place. Even before they set out in *catamarans* on semi-mechanised boats in the high sea, they should have data on wavelengths at different distances from the shoreline and on the location of fish shoals. They also need information on matters relating to markets and prices for different varieties of fishes. Above all, they need early warning about impending coastal storms and tidal waves. Similarly, coastal farming families also need information on land and water management, cropping pattern, salinity control and markets. All this is possible today thanks to modern Information Communication Technology (ICT).

MSSRF is working with Tata Relief Committee, CIDA, IDRC, Microsoft, OneWorld to setup a coastal grid of VKCs in the tsunami affected areas. The main aim is to convert the tsunami tragedy into an opportunity for the information and knowledge empowerment of fisher and farming communities in areas of importance to their lives and livelihoods. This network of Coastal Knowledge Centres will help to change for the better, human security in all its dimensions in coastal areas.

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## **From a Small Beginning – To a Mass Movement: Mission 2007: Every Village a Knowledge Centre**

MSSRF organized a Policy Makers' workshop under the Village Knowledge Centres project on **October 8 and 9, 2003** with the support of IDRC and CIDA, to sensitize policy makers on critical issues in the use of ICTs to promote human development in rural areas. More than 60 participants took part, representing IDRC, Bhoruka Charitable Trust, Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd., NABARD, VOICES, ICRISAT, OneWorld, Governments of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, Central Government [Department of Telecommunications, NIC, Ministry of Information Technology], Academia [TNAU, IIT-Roorkee, Rajiv Gandhi College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Soil and Water Management Research Institute], ISRO, Ambuja Cement Foundation, Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), State Bank of India, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, WHO, Digital Partners, Azim Premji Foundation and hardware / software companies.

One of the main recommendations of the workshop was the need for a National Alliance for working towards **Every Village a Knowledge Centre** with a Mission mode approach:

There is a need for developing a master plan coupled with a business plan for extending the benefits of ICT to all the 600,000 villages in India by 2007, which marks the 60th anniversary of our independence. The master plan should help to link technology-knowledge-rural women and men in a symbiotic manner. The investment needs will have to be estimated and business plans prepared. A National Alliance for ICT for Poverty Eradication may be established for launching the Every Village a Knowledge Centre movement. Such an alliance should include the private sector, cooperatives, NGOs, R&D institutions, women's associations, mass media and appropriate government agencies.

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**A follow up workshop was organized jointly by MSSRF, OneWorld South Asia and NASSCOM Foundation on 9-10 July 2004 at New Delhi** with the generous support of IDRC, CIDA and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), to take this initiative forward.

The major outcomes of the workshop were:

- Mission 2007 was finalized to take the benefits of ICT to every village in India by 15 August 2007, which marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's independence.
- The Mission will be implemented on the principle of social inclusion, social relevance and gender equality. Transaction costs will be kept low and fostering the growth of an ICT-SHG movement will create a sense of ownership.
- The National Alliance for Mission 2007 representing a coalition of the concerned, will facilitate and accelerate the spread of the Village Knowledge Centre movement and will function, like the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), without a formal legal structure.
- The Alliance will have informal organizational structures at the national, state, district and local levels that will plan and implement the objectives of Mission 2007. The aim is to provide a platform for symbiotic partnership at each level.
- A Secretariat will be formed to facilitate and service the partners and other stakeholders. The Secretariat will convene periodic meetings and facilitate decision taking by the General Body and provide support services to the Steering Committee and the experts groups that will work towards achieving Mission 2007.



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- The constitution of a Steering Committee for Mission 2007 comprising governmental and civil society organizations and the media, private sector, professionals and academia, will be completed by 31 July 2004. This Committee will serve its term from 1 August 2004 until 15 August 2007. Organizations that are represented on the Steering Committee include: the Union Planning Commission, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, ISRO, NASSCOM, IGNOU, TRAI, NIC, AIR, NAAS, ICAR, Development Alternatives, IIT-Chennai, One World South Asia, ITC, ICRISAT and IDRC.
  - Five Task Forces were organized to assist the National Alliance and its Steering Committee to deal with the following topics:
    - Connectivity & Space Applications
    - Content in local languages and Application
    - Public Policy and Investment
    - Management of Knowledge Centres – ICT SHGs (Organization, Management, Evaluation, Monitoring and Training, Capacity Building and Election of NVA Fellows)
    - Resources (Human, Infrastructure and Financial)
  - A complementary structure to that of the national level structure will be formed at the state and district levels.
  - At the village level, on the basis of local dynamics a committee will be formed in consultation with the Gram Sabha for managing Knowledge Centres. This Committee will help to organize training, building capacity, peer-to-peer learning among the knowledge workers and the local entrepreneurs. These may be Panchayats, self-help groups, common interest groups, human networks and community-based organizations.

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- Alliance partners would help to connect 25,000 unconnected villages during 2004. Mission 2007 would undertake to facilitate this process and pool in resources from various sources to achieve this goal.
  - There are numerous ICT tools - Internet, Cable TV, Radio, Cellular phone, English Language and Vernacular Press. The National Alliance doesn't believe in the absolute superiority of any particular tool, rather in using an appropriate mix of these tools that would benefit the people the most.

## **Government of India Support**

The objective of Mission 2007 received endorsement in the budget speech of Shri P Chidambaram, Finance Minister, Government of India delivered on 28 February 2005 in the following words.

### ***“A Knowledge Centre in Every Village***

***The National Commission on Farmers has recommended the establishment of Rural Knowledge Centres all over the country using modern information and communication technology (ICT). Mission 2007 is a national initiative launched by an alliance comprising nearly 80 organizations including civil society organizations. Their goal is to set up a Knowledge Centre in every village by the 60th anniversary of Independence Day. Government supports the goal, and I am glad to announce that Government has decided to join the alliance and route its support through NABARD. I propose to allow NABARD to provide Rs.100 crore out of RIDF”***

Following this, **NABARD organized a one-day workshop** on support to Village Knowledge Centres **under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) at Mumbai on 4 April 2005**. Representatives from M S Swaminathan Research Foundation,

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NASSCOM Foundation, Microsoft, National Commission on Farmers, Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Ltd., ITC, representatives from the governments of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttaranchal, Orissa, West Bengal, Kerala, and NABARD officials participated. The existing e-governance plans, connectivity, content, appropriate staffing arrangements, formation of state chapters of Mission 2007 were discussed. Some of the important suggestions are listed below:

- To assess the existence of e-governance plan at the National Level and at the level of State under reference
- To identify the convergence between the two and the status of the State Governments achievement in composite terms
- To identify the preferred technology and connectivity model of the State Government for being implemented under Mission 2007 together with the structural arrangements therefore
- To firm up the knowledge and information content scenario to be offered to the rural clientele through the VKCs
- To suggest an appropriate staffing arrangement together with a phased plan for appropriate capacity building and training
- To prepare an implementable action plan for operationalizing the Village Knowledge Centres in the State concerned together with a plan for identifying the location of such centres with funding arrangements under RIDF

## **Fellows of the NVA**

It is important that the Knowledge Centre in each of 600,000 villages is owned and run by local community members thereby creating a stake in ownership and management. Rural women and men are

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rich in grassroots wisdom based on experience of working with nature and natural resources. Their strength lies in the saying “one ounce of practice is worth tons of theory”. They know the problems of rural communities and also their solutions. If rural transformation is to take place, the contributions of grassroots academicians is essential. Whether semi-literate or literate, rural families are able to master new technologies, provided the pedagogic methodology is learning by doing. This method of leapfrogging in acquisition of new skills was termed by Prof M S Swaminathan in 1972 as “techniracy”.

In recent years, the rapid maturity of self-help groups in many parts of India, and the evolution of distance education from postal tuition to IT-mediated learning provides unprecedented opportunities to extend information support to the rural families. SHGs have been linked to the Village Knowledge Centre successfully in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry for micro-enterprise training and marketing of products, while in Maharashtra, considerable progress has been achieved in linking rural IT initiatives to non-formal, non-degree learning.

There is need to select one million Fellows of the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity (NVA) by 15<sup>th</sup> August 2007 – the sixtieth anniversary of our independence, through a peer review process. At least one woman and one man can be selected from each village as Fellow. The Fellows will be nominated by grassroots organizations working in rural areas all over the country, and will be selected on the basis of their leadership qualities, their communication skills and their wish to serve the community. The Fellows will need to make a commitment to this cause for at least five years and will serve as the torchbearers of the Knowledge Revolution in rural India. Several agencies have agreed to support the training of this cadre. These rural academicians affiliated to Panchayati Raj Institutions, will be the information providers for the

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local community and will help to reach the unreached and voice the voiceless.

## **Guidelines for Selection of Fellows**

The Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity has developed guidelines for election of rural women and men as Fellows of the Academy.

What the rural families, particularly women, need is social prestige and recognition. They take to new technologies like fish to water provided they are helped to do so through appropriate training and capacity building opportunities. It is important to identify and elect suitable rural women and men as Fellows of the National Virtual Academy (NVA), so that they become role models in their respective villages.

The selection of NVA Fellows has to be done on the basis of a Peer Review Process and not on the basis of patronage. Also, the principle of social inclusion should be adopted in the selection process. It is in recognition of the SOCIAL COMMITMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO 'PUBLIC GOOD'.

MISSION 2007 will arrange for capacity building training to the fellows through partner institutions spread all over India. In partnership with academia, research institutions, government departments, Panchayat Raj institutions, civil society organizations, banks, private companies and industry associations Mission 2007 plans to set up rural ICT Knowledge Centres all over India. The Fellows will become Master Trainers spearheading the Knowledge Revolution through rural India.

The NVA aims to connect frontier technology with resource poor rural women and men and enable them to become masters of their own destiny. It will help to create large numbers of Knowledge

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Managers in our villages, many of whom will be women. In this manner, bridging the digital divide can also become a powerful instrument for bridging the gender divide.

## **Conclusion**

Mission 2007: Every Village a Knowledge Centre is in tune with Mahatma Gandhi's "*Antyodaya*" pathway (i.e. starting with poorest of the poor and reaching the unreached) and Ruskin's 'Unto the last'.

The ultimate goal is to develop a user-controlled, owned and managed network, which will help to reach the unreached and include the excluded in terms of information, knowledge and skill empowerment.

The NVA is an important arm of Mission 2007 to train the one million army of knowledge workers (NVA fellows) who will be the torchbearers of the movement to realize Mission 2007: Every Village a Knowledge Centre.

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# NVA Fellows









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## Ms G Anitha



35 year old Anitha of Mypadu village in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh is an active member of PEN India and is doing yeoman service for the good of the people in the village. She has done PGDCA and is practising computer applications and extending ICT related initiatives of PEN India under PENCIL project of making rural people have computer literacy.

Anitha has organized a women's organisation called Aruna Mahila Mandali and organised skill development programs for 200 women in tailoring, embroidery etc with the help of DRDA. She is working for technological empowerment of the grassroots population under the IITE's Integrated Resources Management and Empowerment (IRME) program. She using ICT tools for rural, especially coastal zone development and has established her credentials for the last three years in helping the poor rural people.

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## Ms Bandi Vara Lakshmi



23 years old Bandi Vara Lakshmi from Gopavaram in Cuddapah District of Andhra Pradesh has studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> Class. She used to do farming, working for hardly 20 to 25 days in a month.

She took up occupation as animator for SHG groups strengthening and formation from 2002 to 2004, organized campaign meetings for SHG members with training and awareness for poverty alleviation, organized cleanliness campaigns in her village with the help of SHG group members and worked for strengthening the SHGs in Madakalavaripalli village.

Vara Lakshmi is a very good leader and she has good communication skills. She worked with nearly 35 SHG groups and has organized more than 300 members into SHGs in her own village. She took the lead in confronting a corrupt Bank Manager in an SHG Bank linked to poorest of the poor (PoP). The community has benefited through her active work. After September 2004, she has become Community News Reporter in Mahodayam Community News Magazine published by Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Programme (APRPRP). She proved herself as a good communicator and elected as a Editor of Mahodayam Magazine by the Editorial Committee.



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## Mr S K Fakruddin



25 year old Fakruddin of Indukurpet mandal in Nellore Dt.,Andhra Pradesh is a graduate in computer sciences . He works primarily as a social activist of PEN India and is motivated towards developing opportunities for unemployed people in rural areas. As a committed PEN Member he is providing free faculty services through various institutions in Nellore District as per the PENCIL theme and has provided around 4500 students with computer education.

To popularise ICT for knowledge and development he recently initiated a district level unit namely Nellore District ICT Action Committee for which he is the secretary, with the intent of creating knowledge centres in villages under the aegis of PEN India.



## Mr G Harsha Vardhan

Harsha Vardhan from Mypadu village, Nellore Dt. Andhra Pradesh is a 25 year old B.Com graduate with computer qualifications. He works with facilitating ICT in rural areas as per PEN formulae and is initiated into PENCIL programs of PEN INDIA.

Harsha Vardhan is trying to organise ICT oriented functions in coastal areas. He has given computer training to students and also engages himself in social activities such as addressing HIV/AIDS, helping old people etc. He has undergone training in social mobilisation and has an inclination to work for the poor and down trodden people.



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## **Ms S Jehera Begum**

45, year old S. Jehera Begum a graduate living at Vengal Rao Nagar in Nellore District is known in every household of five villages as the one who is committed to public good and help for the poor women. She established her women's organisation namely "Janaki Mahila Mandali" in the year 1985 and is in the forefront for the emancipation of women suffering on account of oppressive life situations.

Now an active Member of PEN India she has undergone training towards facilitating different projects and programs sponsored by Government. To her credit she formed 60 self-help groups with 750 members and is running a tailoring and embroidery unit, a child development centre and an orphanage. She is very active in rural development initiatives and has organized training programmes for aqua farmers in the coastal belt and is at the door step of farmers who want any assistance in raising crops or getting support from various sources. She organized help for tsunami affected people.

With the help of her son who knows computer science, Jehera Begum took initiatives in ICT tools and started providing computer training to the rural people and is planning for the establishment of rural knowledge centres. Her hard work and enthusiasm to serve the most disadvantaged sections has carved a place for her in the community and she can be emulated by others as a role model.

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## Ms T Manjula Devi



Manjula Devi aged 35 of Tandur village in Ranga Reddy District of Andhra Pradesh is a dedicated worker engaged in the betterment of rural areas. She has studied up to intermediate and spends much of her time to secure the rights of people. She has organised around 600 women into Livelihood and Ecological Security Groups - self help groups initiated with the twin objectives of acquiring livelihood security and ecological security for all. She is doing effective work in helping the community to solve their day to day problems. She has spearheaded an initiative to familiarize farmers with organic manure and environmentally friendly pesticides.

With the help of the mandal office Manjula Devi helped women to get various assistance to improve their living conditions. She took many steps to solve the drinking water problems of the locals, get pattas for the homeless and help abandoned children get admission in school. She has shown keen interest in encouraging groups for income generation activities and milch animal rearing.

Manjula Devi has taken steps to learn computer operations and is keen to introduce ICT tools to the extent required for communications and feed back for sustainable rural prosperity initiatives. She works for public good and is trying to develop her abilities towards serving the community around her.



## **Ms Mulamalla Sushmavardhan Reddy**

31 year –old Mulamalla Sushmavardhan Reddy holds a B.Com. degree from Govt. Degree College for Women Mahabubnagar, Andhra Pradesh, and diplomas in PGDCA and DCA . For the past three years she has been associated with ICRISAT, Patancheru in its activities at Aadarsha Mahila Sahakara Samaikya Ltd, Moosapet, Addakal (Mdl), Mahabubnagar, collecting and providing useful data pertaining to agriculture. Using her software skills, she downloads daily weather forecast data from the Yahoo Weather Website, visualizes drought-related CDs to farmers and records their feedback and collects market rates from sandies from 3 villages every week. She also collects other agricultural data such as on diseases of crops and livestock, conducts needs analysis and distance education.



## **Ms Mummadi Reddy Sujatha**

Mummadi Reddy Sujatha comes from a small village called Gurappareddipalli in the Cuddapah District of Andhra Pradesh. The 30 year old Sujatha studied up to 12<sup>th</sup> Class (+ 2). She has been involved with community activities since 1999-2000.

She worked as a tailoring teacher for poor women in a small NGO from 2000-2001. After that she worked as a Mandal Resource Person (MRP) for Poorest of the Poor (PoP) survey work in Porumamilla Mandal of Cuddapah District for nearly one year, identifying PoP families in that area. During 2002-2004 she worked as SHG animator in her own village, strengthening the old DWCRA (Development of Women and Child Rural Area) groups and formation of new SHG groups in APRPRP Project.

Sujatha is a good communicator with grassroot women. She formed nearly 25 new SHG groups in 2 Panchayat areas and organized more than 500 members into SHGs. She solved many problems with her own ability or with the help of the women community.

In September 2004, she was selected as a Community News Reporter for Mahodayam News Magazine from Porumamilla Mandal area. She proved herself as a good communicator and collected many success stories from the community and was elected as Editorial Board member of Mahodayam News Magazine.

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## Ms Pemmasani Komala



Born to an agricultural family in an interior village in Kaverirajapuram of Tiruvallur District, 41 year old Pemmasani Komala is an epitome of women's power in Tirupathi and surrounding rural Mandals, who transformed the lives of the most neglected and discriminated rural women, uplifting them with hopes of a dignified life.

Service to humanity irrespective of caste and creed enabled her to move among the families of dalits living in Uppangi Harijanwada, challenging the high caste feelings of her family members, and helped address many needs of the poor families, such as drinking water, roads to the colony, houses to the poorest of the poor, ration cards, old age pension and children's education. She was a pioneer in educating the poor woman for small family norms and she was with them in getting health facilities. She could fetch with her SSLC studies a job as an Anganwadi teacher in the ICDS centre run by an NGO in 1994 and also got involved in NFE schools for many years. In 2001 she joined PEN India and established Livelihood and Ecological Security Groups (LES Groups), a self help group aiming for holistic development at the grass root levels and involved in creating environmental awareness. She guided the households in water harvesting and conservation techniques and encouraged them to adopt organic farming and promoted floriculture and horticulture in rural areas. She organised skill development and income generation programs like tailoring and embroidery for poor women and is also continuing her efforts for making the rural women literate.

Pemmasani Komala was given the NTR award for her dedicated services to the local community, and CEE Ahmedabad selected her community organisations for Model Eco System Management programs because of their environmental initiatives. She has taken

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special interest to enable ICT enabled developments and she organised free computer classes and internet operations for rural women in adjacent Mandals under the PENCIL Project of PEN and is keen to facilitate knowledge to rural people for better farming and solutions of their day to day problems through the 'every village a knowledge centre' theme.



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## Mr S A Raooof



48 year old S.A.Raooof is a community worker for the last 10 years and is striving hard for improving the living conditions of rural poor especially the agriculturists and the fishermen in the coastal Mandal of Indukurpet in Nellore District. With a basic degree in arts he took to social service since 1990 and established the Polymer Education Society in Indukurpet village initially with an aim to develop the area and help the poor and needy.

He took an active interest in PEN India philosophy of networking with grassroot organizations and groups and spearheaded many projects in health, environment, education etc. through net working. Raooof could harness a number of programs from Government of India and established a women's hostel, two old age homes, and a technical training centre for computer, TV and radio mechanisms. He has formed a District Association of computer and other information technologist and opened up an institute for training to facilitate rural connectivity and development, and is well honoured in PEN India circles.

Raooof was also in the forefront for facilitating relief to tsunami affected people of Indukurpet Mandal and co-ordinated both government and non-governmental efforts and assisted the coastal fishermen to get nets, boats etc. to start a new life. He is a role model, working very hard towards the betterment of rural people.

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## Mr M Renukaraman



M. Renukaraman belongs to Gollapalli in Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh, and has studied upto Intermediate. He has learnt folk remedies from his father Vaidyam Muneppa, which he has been practicing for the last 10 years. A young and active health worker with an unquestionable spirit of service, he has been assisting in documentation and training of villagers and especially women village resource persons in the planning and implementation of Home Herbal Garden programme.

Renukaraman has been involved with community activities since 1994. He is a Progressive Farmer and has facilitated Home Herbal Garden programme at Kuppam Mandal and helped promote around 50 home herbal gardens. He organised village level training programmes on home remedies in 8 villages in and around Paipalayam, coordinated by the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions based in Bangalore.

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## Ms T Sapna



Sapna, 23 a postgraduate in commerce was very interested in community related activities even during her studies. She used to help sick and poor and co-ordinate assistance towards their relief.

She is associated with PEN India and was instrumental in organising rural women into self-help groups namely Livelihood and Ecological Security Groups and assisted them in skill development activities. She sought assistance from the training officers of IITE and arranged IRME (Integrated Resource Management and Empowerment) programs for the skill development of rural women in mushroom cultivation, agricultural practices, livestock rearing, cottage industries, also tailoring and embroidery. She helped in getting bank assistance for starting various income generation programs for the poor and neglected sections.

Sapna has sufficient knowledge in computer operations and has encouraged women to undergo training in computer operations. She is keen to introduce ICT enabled service for dissemination of information to the grass root level people. She is a promising Social Activist with the zeal to work and transform the community.

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## Mr Shesha Rao Rathod



Shesha Rao Rathod is a native of Adilabad's tribal belt. His village got a road connection only last year. In childhood he and his family had to walk 8 kilometres to the nearest bus stop. His parents even today live in that village.

Shesha completed his elementary school in the Government school in the village. Later he got a scholarship to go to the residential High School in Utnoor, which is the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) Headquarters in the District. He went on to complete his degree and an MBA from Kagaznagar. Shesha then joined the AP Government's anti poverty program, called Velugu as a community coordinator. He mobilized over 3000 women in Jainur Mandal, organized them into Self Help Groups, Village Organizations and a Mandal level Mahila Samakhya. He successfully introduced soya marketing through these collectives. Later, he left and joined the Centre for Collective Development (CCD). He says he felt stifled in the red tape in the Government project. He left a prize job and privileges including a jeep and financial powers to head the NGO at the District level.

Shesha has good understanding of rural development, social mobilization and agriculture marketing and finance. However, it is his commitment to development of the people that stand out. His passion extends much beyond his Lambada community and extends to other tribal groups there including the Gonds, Andhs and the so called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) called Kollam. He has motivated and built an excellent team in this area and his work and results are outstanding.

In his own words "I belong to this place and I will live here and eventually die here. There is no need to go to big cities and so on. Where can we get such an opportunity to do satisfying work?"

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## Mr P N Shivaraj



Hailing from Paipalayam Village, Chittoor District. Andhra Pradesh, 38 year-old P.N. Shivaraj is a graduate and committed development worker with unmatched sense of conviction for the development of rural poor and especially for sustainable development of small and marginal farmers.

Involved with community activities since 1991, Shivraj worked initially as a team member in a local NGO, namely CORE, Kuppam as an animator and cluster coordinator and then since 1993, is working as Founder Secretary of an NGO, Jana Abyudaya Seva Samithi, a registered society he established. He has worked as Programme Coordinator of various programmes supported by local State Government Agencies in the areas of agriculture development, agricultural technology management, watershed programme and HIV/ AIDS awareness programme. He has also served on the PHC Advisory Committee of Paipalayam and Mallanoor and contributed to solving local problems through people's organisation namely Loksatta, as a President for the Kuppam constituency.

His latest work has been in the area of environment protection as community organiser for Vana Samrakshana Samithis under AP Community Forest Management programme, and since April 2004 onwards, as a Programme Coordinator for establishment of home herbal gardens under a programme implemented by Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions.

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## Mr Vanga Ram Reddy



Vanga Ram Reddy is a 36 year old farmer hailing from Koutla-B village, Adilabad district, and has studied upto SSC. He hails from a family which is respected by villagers for their social involvement and concern for others and has been working with community activities since 2001. By nature he is participative and a good initiator. These attributes acquired inherently and the desire to do something good to the village has put him in the forefront for taking the lead for doing substantial work in the formation of MACTS (Mutually Aided Cooperative Credit and Thrifts Society) and taking its performance to the new heights in this backward district.

Koutla-B village is known for commercial crops such as cotton and chillies and also known for good yields among other progressive villages in the district. However , the farmers used heavy dosages of pesticide indiscriminately to control the insect pests in cotton, at an average of 18-20 spray applications during the crop season, which is a costly investment accounting to Rs. 4000-6000/- per acre on pest management only. Though farmers are fairly aware of IPM and other crop management programs, due to lack of collectiveness among the farming community and with internal competition encouraged by the pesticide dealers and distributors they couldn't implement any one of these to reduce the cost of cultivation.

Mr. Ram Reddy had played a key role in motivating the farmers to come forward and implement the IPM package at least one acre of each farmer. Despite high pressure from the local distributors and others he never succumbed to the situations but kept his commitment high for the cause. Mr. Ram Reddy's continuous efforts in making MACTS an all-important success has paved the way to other villagers in the district where the impact is very visible.

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To day Mr. Ram Reddy is an accepted role model for all farmers in the area to gear up their techniques and learn more in the process of obtaining sustainability in their agriculture. He supported the initiative taken by BASIX to bring all the MACTS in to one form to negotiate better with the suppliers and buyers. He is the founder president of the MACTS and still continuing in the position as the members again elected him unanimously. He travelled widely after taking charge as the MACTS President to see different crops features and new innovations in the field of agriculture field as part of learning and also disseminating to others.



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## Mr T Vijay Bhaskar

A resident of Kuppam in Chittoor Dt, Andhra Pradesh , 32 year old T. Vijay Bhaskar's has an M.Sc degree. His objective has always been to impart quality education to needy students in rural areas, to use ICT in the field of education as a powerful tool to enhance teaching and student learning beyond the classroom, and exploring local resources and traditional technologies for effective use for the benefit of the rural masses.

He has been involved during the past 10 years in (a) Educational training for underprivileged in rural areas, (b) Help in market interface with poor artisans, (c) Market networking of products produced by Ponduru weavers, (d) Development and implementation of hand made paper technology for tribal regions, to bring down the cost of paper, by using environmentally–friendly the local fiber materials like banana, used gunny bags and local shrubs (e) Marketing network for traditional vegetable dyed lac toys and (f) Development of web interfaces for some popular sports web pages.

At present he is working with the HP AIF- DE Project Kuppam: DE (Digital Equalizer) is one of the flagship programs of AIF a philanthropic organization working with an objective to accelerate social and economic change in India. The main aim of DE is to provide opportunities for underprivileged children in India to enhance their learning through the use of Digital technology. AIF in partnership with HP, is working with the Govt of AP in 10 Government schools in Kuppam area. Vijay Bhaskar is also involved with the Vidya Vahini project Kuppam, a central government pilot education project aimed to integrate technology in to classroom teaching and with the World Bank sponsored AP 1000 Schools Project

In all the above activities, Vijay Bhaskar is a very effective team



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member, who will enthuse and motivate his team, even while performing his assigned task. He has a special liking to work for the poor and is a prime motivator in spearheading projects that would directly benefit underprivileged people. He is able to establish a very quick rapport with the common man, identify their needs and organize his own skills as well as his contacts, to conceptualize schemes that will be beneficial in enhancing the standard of living of the poor.



## **Mr Anwar Hussain Chowdhury**

Anwar is based at Balipara, Tezpur, Assam. A gentleman at heart, and humble by nature, he has the ability to strike an instant rapport with all age groups in his village. However, he has inner fire and does not lack business acumen due to this soft nature. With minimal guidance from Drishtee staff, he is able to create and follow a path of least resistance towards profitability.

Anwar is not only running the Drishtee kiosk but also educating the locals on various issues such as education and literacy, sanitation, use of ICT etc. He feels that if the children are educated on these issues they can bring about a change in the surroundings.

He's the elder brother of two, and is a respected face due to his teaching profile at the nearby school. His punctuality and unconditional co-operation is to be appreciated and this is perhaps the reason why, out of respect and gratitude, he is referred as 'Anwar ji'.



## Mr Arun Bora

Arun Bora hails from a family of cultivators belonging to Boralimora in the district of Sonitpur (Assam). He is well educated (B.Sc., B Ed) with a vision and ambition to do something new and unique for the development of society.

About a year and a half back, while handling his brother's PCO and stationery shop business, Arun decided to join Drishtee family with a zeal to do something for his own village. He wanted to get some experience and exposure that would be beneficial in setting something more solid than his existing business. But today Arun Bora is a different and changed man - he wants to continue the Drishtee Business not only because he is doing good to society but also because he is earning money to support both his own livelihood as well as his family.

Due to the raising awareness of computers and its usage, more and more people are coming to the kiosk to avail its services. Many women are also coming to learn computer from him. The kiosk other than its service has also become a place for people to interact and share ideas on various issues. Arun is a respected figure in his panchayat because of the work he is doing and contributing positively to the society.



## Mr Saurabh Das

Saurabh Das is 24 years of age from Village Kawaimari, of Sonitpur (Assam). He is completing his graduation side by side with his kiosk business with Drishtree. A former LIC agent, he says he has become more responsible and mature after joining Drishtee. He runs computer courses and delivers e-governance services through his centre.

This young man also has a flair for research and has conducted some surveys on behalf of Drishtee in the surrounding Gram Panchayats. According to the Drishtee training team he was a fast learner who wanted to learn and try new things in his village.

Saurabh has been promoting e-governance and its usage to the villagers which has benefited the villagers in more than one way. People are able to save on cost and time of travelling to the district administration. They are also happy that their work is getting done faster and at no extra effort. He is aspiring to be a successful business man and wants to be a well known person in his locality.



Chhattisgarh

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## **Mr Chandra Shekhar Binjwar**

24-year-old Chandrasekhar is from Bharni in Bilaspur district and has studied up to PGDCA. He was giving computer education in AISCIP, which is a local computer institute and along with it working as a part time LIC agent. After joining Drishtee in 2004, He has organised many awareness campaigns for computer education and other services provided through Drishtee network.

Though Chandrasekhar is handicapped he has zeal to work hard for the self improvement. His father works in NTPC and always wants his son to do something for the betterment of Bharni where the total populace is around 5000-7000. So after completion of PG in arts and PGDCA he started the Drishtee kiosk for the fulfillment of his and his father's dream.

In Chandrashekhar's words, 'I feel empowered now, having changed from a helpless man to someone who works for the society and is in charge of his life.' The grampanchayat has benefited through his developmental work. He has motivated other person to undergo various training programs and join organization like Drishtee where they can realize their dreams.

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## Ms Asha Sharma



Delhi

Asha has been working in the slum communities in the peri-urban areas surrounding the Indian capital for the last 14 years on health and sexuality issues. Overcoming strong opposition from the communities, many of which are inhabited by snake charmers and immigrants, she has successfully made women and girls aware of their health needs and sexual rights and about HIV/AIDS.

In her latest endeavour in association with OWSA, Asha has worked on a project that has used a traditional ICT – a phone line - to open communication between a slum community and a government hospital. Through this phone line, people have demanded from the hospital authorities, their rights and services due to them from the government hospital.

The result has been tremendous. There was once no water supply in the hospital and families of pregnant women, who had to go for delivery there, had to carry two buckets of water with them. Now thanks to the phone line and the demands made by the people, water supply was restored in the hospital.

Asha wants to share some of her perspectives based on years of her experience of working in the communities to policy makers.



## **Mr Aashaben Amrutbhai Parmar**

Aashaben is 33 and lives in Molipur village in District Mahesana. She has studied upto B.A. and joined SEWA in 2001. She is now a Spearhead Team Leader and has organized training for members and for the community for their capacity building. Her leadership skills resulted in women taking up savings SHGs very seriously, thereby taking SEWA's unique benefits to the grassroots. She is receptive to new technology and has undergone some basic trainings.

Ashaben has conducted Gram Sabhas in villages and organized agriculture related training for farmers. She helped provide identity cards to farmers and conducted surveys for identifying and arranging quality seeds for them. She has coordinated with IFFCO and also marketed agricultural produce directly.

With IFFCO Ashaben organized training programs for artificial insemination and other animal husbandry methods. Thus, she inspires other village women to be like her and develop themselves. She has motivated several women to step out of their homes and manage their lives better.



## **Mr Amrutaben Bhikhabhai Sabhi**

Amrutaben is 22 and comes from Malavan village in Dist. Surendranagar. She has studied upto 11<sup>th</sup> Std and joined SEWA in 2001. She is now an ICT user and SHG group member. She is involved in Jeevika activity, providing health training and selling medicine from village to village, and has organized saving groups and health groups in the villages.

*'I studied on my own, before I joined SEWA. Now I am a health spearhead team leader, I take care of all normal ailments in my community and am known as 'Doctor Didi', which fills me with pride. I wish to gain even more knowledge and serve my community'.*

Amrutben has taken the lead in nursing and treating the sick in her village and surrounding villages. She also teaches the basics of literacy to the women. She faced many hurdles in her health training but has overcome them all, with grit and courage. She motivates other women to be literate and understand the role of science and technology in their life.





## Mr Anishaben Shahu

Anishaben Shahu of Kanodar in Palanpur, Gujarat is 28 years old and has passed out of school. She came across the advertisement of n-logue and its services and the concept decided to undertake basic computer training and start a Chiraag center in her village. Anisha's claim to fame is that she's the first woman kiosk operator to have set up business in Gujarat. The presence of her kiosk in a small inconspicuous 5,000-strong village in north Gujarat proves that technology is not the urban man's prerogative only.

Married at 18 and a mother at 24, Anisha began her career as a teacher. The school timings being inconvenient, she quit the job to become a private tutor. The services provided by her kiosk are education, e-governance, agriculture, health, browsing, e-mail, voice mail, video mail, chat and video conferencing. She familiarizes her customers with the computer, explains its functions and teaches them applications like e-mailing, browsing etc. she already has six batches of two students each that come to her to learn the various nuances of a computer.

Most people who come to her center are college students who don't have any access to a computer. On Fridays and Sundays, the kiosk does brisk business, courtesy such customers who flock to the centre to chat with their relatives abroad. She is the only woman KO in this area, so women feel a lot more comfortable coming to her kiosk.



## **Ms Arunabhen Parmar**

Arunabhen gave up school to work as a screen printer, when she was barely 10, to financially help her parents bring up her six siblings. Through sheer grit and determination, she managed to resume her studies. She joined India's largest women's trade union network, SEWA, in Ahmedabad. While there, she learnt to wield the camera and become a video producer to empower and to give expression to the needs and concerns of women in rural and peri-urban areas.

Today, Arunabhen wields the heavy umatic camera with confidence and travels extensively across the tough terrain of rural India to capture the travails and hopes of village women. Her teammates comprise of women like her who once worked as vegetable sellers, street vendors or as casual labour.

Arunabhen feels that all can use ICTs and not just the educated. Therefore, all she feels should have access to ICTs to improve their lives.



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## **Ms Atchhiben Dalaji Malek**

Atchhiben is 38 years and lives in Bamroli village in Dist. Patan. She has studied up to 5<sup>th</sup> std and was a labourer before joining SEWA in 1994. She is involved in village development work under the Jeevika Programme, and organizes women in the village. She provides information related to SEWA and organizes training for them. With her village development work she wants the community to become an ideal village.

*'At present I am involved in training activity as Spearhead team member. I took several trainings from SEWA like capacity building training membership training, kadam training, disaster preparedness training, savings, technical Training (TV, VCR, Fax, Phone, Video Shooting, photography) and computer trainings. I also learnt how to maintain and write accounts and I feel satisfied to teach these skills to others around me.'*

Atchhiben was trained in disaster preparedness and made others aware also. She uses video replay techniques to create awareness about significant matters related to health, childcare, etc in her community. She has learnt the basic uses of computers and prepares her reports on it. Thus, she is working for the development of her community and motivating more women to come forward.



## **Ms Bhavanaben Bharatbhai Jadav**

24 year old Bhavanaben is from Nandol in Ahmedabad district and has studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> std. She used to do farming labour work hardly getting 10 to 15 days work in month, with no other occupation to survive. After joining SEWA in 2004, she is now Agriculture Spearhead Team Leader and member of the SHG Trade group .She organised agriculture campaign meeting for members, organised farmers groups and provided farmers with training and awareness, and seeds for better crops.

Bhavanaben is a very good leader and she has good communication skills. She has organised more than 500 members into SHGs. In her own village she took the lead in solving drinking water problems. She also organized cleanliness campaigns in her village, with the help of Panchayat, along with other village development work..

*'I feel empowered now, having changed from a helpless woman to someone who works for the community and is in charge of her life. I have adopted a child and thanks to the support of SEWA, my family has accepted this decision of mine easily. I am happy today.'*

The community has benefited through her active work. She has motivated other women to undergo various training programs, offered guidance and need-based information to the farmers. She conducted a survey of the diseases plaguing crops in her region and accordingly, arranged for pesticides. She has undergone computer training and prepares her daily reports on the office computer.



## **Ms Bijalben Janakbhai Pandya**

Bijalben (21 years) from Kharaghoda, in Dist. Surendranagar has studies upto third year B.Com. She was a labourer and salt worker before she joined SEWA in 2001.

*'I have taken computer and crafts training. This helped me get income and some security. I now want to teach others and motivate more women to learn the new ways of working.'*

She successfully completed data entry of MIS transactions related to insurance processing and helped in decentralizing insurance processing for the first time in SEWA and trained others also. Bijalben has helped create awareness about ICT at the grassroots and inspired the youth and women to learn these modern technology tools. She urges women in her community to be literate and work for a living, to be self-reliant. She is now teaching computer operations to other women.



## **Ms Deenaben Ganeshbhai Rohit**

Deenaben is 25 and comes from Gana village in Anand Dt. She studied up to BA and joined SEWA in 1999. She is involved in Life School activity and as Spearhead team member, gives education to members who are between 18 to 35 years old. She focuses on education which will be useful in their practical life. She herself has undergone each and every kind of SEWA's training to share knowledge with others. Through this adult education for her community Deenaben wishes to make them understand that there is no bar to learning

*'I strongly believe that the only wealth is education which no one can take away from you. In fact it increases when we share it with someone. So I feel very happy to teach other women in my area and bring about awareness and empowerment of the women.'*

*I use the computer in my day- to- day work like preparing a list of school's members and assessment of their learning, keeping savings records of members, keeping expenses etc. I can use phone and fax also, very easily. I believe in imparting skills which are practical and can be used in life comfortably.'*



## **Ms Gauriben Yogeshkumar Parmar**

Gauriben comes from village Dabha in Sabarkantha district. She is 22 and has studied upto 12<sup>th</sup> Std. She joined SEWA in 2003, and is a Savings spearhead team leader, collecting savings from village-to-village and provided loans to the needy members. She has been responsible for provided timely loans that helped women to be financially self- sufficient. Gauriben is also Research spearhead team leader, collecting member information, coding, and preparing reports. She helps solve problems of her village and her community through providing the needed information.

*'At present I am involved in Savings & Research activity as team member. I took several trainings from SEWA like savings, MIS Software Data Entry, District Management System (DMS) Data Entry, and Computer Training. I conducted awareness meetings from village to village and developed women's groups who in turn did the same'.*

Gauriben is a researcher who does survey work in villages. She finds out the information or knowledge needed in the community and asks SEWA for assistance. Her work is much appreciated in the community as she has provided timely information on crops, health and so on. She motivates others to do similar work and use the information in an effective fashion.



## **Ms Heenaben Shaileshbhai Trivedi**

Hailing from village Kharaghoda (Navagam), Dist. Surendranagar, Heenaben is 39 and has studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> Std. A housewife before joining SEWA in 2002, she has undergone savings group formation training, health training and disaster management for the district. She recently learnt to use fax, TV and VCR comprehensively, as well as computer basics. Now she is involved in Jeevika Activity, maintaining villagers' fund accounts, collecting funds from village to village, and doing development work in the village. She has provided literacy skills to 50 to 60 women in CLC.

Heenaben has taught the women to read and write. It was challenging to get the women to learn the 3Rs but Heenaben persevered. Thus, she has motivated her community to be literate and learn technology skills for the betterment of their future. She has organized many awareness campaigns related to health, savings and membership.





## **Ms Hemaben Chandrakantbhai Purohit**

Hemaben comes from village Dabha in Sabarkantha district. She is 28 and has studied upto 10<sup>th</sup> Std. The wife of a daily wage labourer, she joined SEWA in 1996, and is a Savings spearhead team leader, collecting saving from village-to-village and provided loans to the needy members. She has been responsible for provided timely loans that helped women to be financially self- sufficient. She helps solve problems of her village and her community through providing the needed information.

*'At present I am involved in savings activity as spearhead team member. I took several trainings from SEWA like Savings, MIS Software Data Entry and Computer Training. After taking the training I did awareness meetings in village to village and taught more women through the same.'*

Hemaben has managed the savings SHG very effectively and is now the owner and manager of the activity. She helps others achieve the same too. She finds the work challenging but satisfying. She has used video replays and multimedia to spread the message of savings. She also uses the computer in her daily work.



## Ms Ilaben Sevakbhai Mahida

36 year old Ilaben comes from village Nadiyad in district Kheda. She has passed 9<sup>th</sup> Std and was a bidi worker before joining SEWA in 1998. She is now a spearhead team member conducting awareness programmes on the importance of water to human life and how to use water without any waste. Having taken drip irrigation training, she arranges training for others in the community for them to acquire knowledge of drip irrigation to utilise water without waste.

*'At present I am doing public meetings for the awareness of water usage in my village as well as in schools. I also know to repair hand pump, so this way I become helpful to my community. I am also using computer in my activity and make others understand how this technology is helping me in my regular work.'*

Ilaben wishes to build the capacity of other members with the sharing of her knowledge and experiences and to make them aware that how waste of water can spread diseases.



## **Ms Janakben Kiransingh Mahida**

32 year old Janakben from village Mogar in District Anand has passed 9<sup>th</sup> Std. She was a landless labourer and housewife before she joined SEWA in 2003 . She is now involved in SHG savings activities and is CLC in-charge at Mogar village and spearhead team member. She collects savings from SEWA members and maintains the whole channel of savings and loan.

*'I took computer training from SEWA team and I am giving computer training to other women members of SEWA as well as doing data entry in the software prepared by SEWA team. I am also giving details of other activities run by SEWA to village members. I wanted to learn more and more new technology and make my self helpful to my community.'*

Janakben builds other members' capacity with the sharing of her knowledge and experiences, and make others aware of how a woman can change her own life and be beneficial to society.



## **Ms Jomiben Jayarambhai Ayar**

43 year old Jomiben has studied upto 7<sup>th</sup> Std and is from Madhutra village in Dist. Patan.

Working as a salt worker before joining SEWA in 1987, she involved herself in craft activity and is now a Master crafts woman of appliqué work. She has travelled to various exhibitions to show her skills and understand the demand for traditional skills Her efforts have reduced migration for work.

Jomiben is on the craft spearhead team , a JSM Member , executive committee member and federation president. She is also with Trade (Craft ) SHG groups, VDC Committee and DWCRA groups.

*'I feel so proud of being a women now. I have travelled to foreign countries like USA and France. Today I am known by own name in my community. I am completely interested in upgrading the livelihood of my fellow women by doing even better crafts , thus generating more and better quality pieces of work and income security for them.'*

Jomiben is a master in her crafts specialty of appliqué work and has won much recognition for this. She has helped other women in her community take up crafts work for livelihood security. She is deeply involved in getting orders and generating demand for their work and is a shareholder of the SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre. She is a strong pillar of the crafts work in her district.



## **Ms Juliyaben Madhavbhai Khristi**

45 year –old Juliyaben is from village Bharoda in Anand district and has passed 7<sup>th</sup> Std. Before joining SEWA in 1997 she was a housewife occasionally taking small jobs. She underwent training in many areas such as TOT, computer, drip irrigation and agriculture related topics, and is now agriculture activity spearhead team member, and involved in savings and insurance activity.

*'I have educated my daughter who is a nurse today. I have helped create awareness about savings, good farming practices, etc in my community. It has been a challenging task for me but I never gave up. I am satisfied with my work and look forward to doing similar activities in the future also.'*

Juliyaben has been giving agriculture related training to farmers in the village, getting identity cards for them, and trying to buy appropriate fertilizers for their crops. She sets an example for others to fight against all hardship of life and make others aware that different kinds of training and exposure will change any one's life.



## **Ms Jyotsanaben Kanubhai Solanki**

25 year old Jyotsanaben comes from Makhiyav in Ahmedabad district and has

studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> Std. Before joining SEWA in 2000 she was a farm worker and housewife. She is now an active ICT user, and involved in agriculture activity and trade groups. She helped farmers join in agriculture campaigns, created awareness regarding agriculture and solved the problem with them. She provided appropriate information related to farm and farming to the members and also provided certified seed and pesticides.

*'I joined SEWA as spearhead team leader. I conducted surveys in villages and took interest in their development. I am happy to work in agriculture, thus facilitating the development of my area.'*

Jyotsnaben has organized many meetings and campaigns related to agriculture. She has supplied need-based equipment and information to the farmers. The women in her community are inspired by her and she takes active interest in their growth and development. She is now using computers in her daily work.



## **Ms Jashiben Jethabhai Parmar**

Hailing from Simej in Ahmedabad district, .46 year old Jashiben has studied upto 10<sup>th</sup> Std. Earlier a housewife and farm worker, after joining SEWA in 2001, she is now an active ICT user and involved in insurance, membership & nursery activities and is part of the SHGs for trade.

*I joined in SEWA as Aagewan. I changed after working for community development and even my husband is appreciative. I conduct various training programs for the women in my village.'*

Jashiben is able to draw women to participate in village meetings. She gives information to the members explaining about the importance of SHGs and insurance schemes and motivates others by talking about her journey from a helpless, depressed woman to being confident and working with pride. She organized 40 women into SHGs last year and got 400 women to take up insurance policies. She provided 10000 plants to members for nursery plantation. She is also getting accustomed to using technology in her work.



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## **Ms Kokilaben Amrutbhai Makwana**

35 year old Kokilaben belongs to Pishavada village in Ahmedabad district. An agricultural worker studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> Std, she joined SEWA in 2004. She is now agriculture spearhead team leader and belongs to trade group, other SHG groups and serves on the village development committee.

*'I built my capacity after joining SEWA. At present I am involved in Agriculture Spearhead team member. I took several trainings from SEWA like Agriculture, SEWA movement. I did awareness meetings from village to village and developed more women through the same.'*

*In the initial stages, Kokilaben participated in member's education training and understood what SEWA is. She also underwent agriculture training when her community faced continued problems in crop failure due to disease. She also informed and actively facilitated farmers to obtain the "Trico Gram" card. Kokilaben created 7 farmer groups, conducted seeds surveys, provided 100 farmers cards, developed agriculture groups in Pisavada village, and provided pesticide that helped decrease the level of crop disease.*

*She has taken part in SATCOM programs and developed four Khedut Mandals in Pisa Wada village. She is also involved in preparing compost pits and starting a cleanliness campaign in village Kishori Mandal apart from nursery and insurance assistance. She helps other members to get employment through these activities. She is slowly becoming computer literate too.*





## **Ms Kokilaben Rajanikant Solanki**

33 year old Kokilaben is from Bileshwarpura in District Mahesana. She is a graduate with D.P.C.S. and joined SEWA in 2002. She is now a spearhead team leader involved in trade group and savings activity. She creates more and more saving accounts for members and provides saving related guidance to them. She also organizes loans for needy persons and gets recovery from them (Rs. 30000/- has been loaned to members and recovered). She has provided insurance to members and now she is a Balawadi organizer.

Kokilaben involves maximum members through savings groups and ensures significant contribution. She provides information regarding savings, insurance and its help to the members. She also discusses SEWA's integrated approach with her community and village women. She has undergone computer training and has then taught others in her group. She uses the skill in her routine work too.



## **Ms Krishnaben Mohanbhai Chavada**

25 year old Krishnaben has passed 9<sup>th</sup> Std and comes from village Jotana in Mehsana district. She joined SEWA in 1999 and now as insurance spearhead team member she has been instrumental in getting more women to take up insurance policies and providing them training on benefits and organizing meetings at the village level. She is able to manage the complete insurance activity at the district level effectively.

Actively involved in gram sabhas, Krishnaben conducts meetings for conflict resolution and has also educated the community on water savings techniques and its benefits. She works enthusiastically in the insurance activity . For this, she organizes various campaigns, village committee meetings and coordinates with different agencies. Consequently, more than 4000 women have taken up insurance polices in this district last year. She is hardworking, empathetic and open to new ways of doing things.



## **Ms Laxmiben Naranbhai Desai**

A resident of Vadnagar village in Dist. Patan, Laxmiben is 35 and has studied upto 9<sup>th</sup> Std. Before joining SEWA in 1992, she worked as contract labourer. She is now president of a milk cooperative providing training and awareness and giving income security through milk collection, and also member of trade groups (Milk Cooperative) and other SHG groups.

*'I handle the milk cooperative, which is totally managed by us women. At present I am involved in Jeevanshala an adult literacy program of SEWA as Spearhead team member and in computer training. I undertook several trainings from SEWA like membership training, savings, technical training (milk fat testing, TV, VCR, Fax, Phone, Computers) and sewing.'*

Laxmiben never lost her courage in spite of all hurdles. She is involved in many activities like milk cooperative, giving adult literacy training to the community, and childcare services. She was actively involved in organizing and distributing sewing machines in her community. She runs childcare centers in her area and has motivated women to come out of their houses and take up community affairs.



## **Ms Leelaben Kantilal Solanki**

43 year old Leelaben lives in Ganeshpura village in Mahesana district and has passed 6<sup>th</sup> Std. A landless labourer, she joined SEWA in 1986 and underwent food processing and market orientation training and also ICT training. She is now a Spearhead Team Leader and executive committee member, conducting meetings with the community regarding SEWA's activity and its advantages for the members. She organized savings groups, manages all accounts and continuous coordination with local government bodies efficiently. She also provided certified seed to the farmers at low rates, arranging for pesticides, and worked closely in coordination with IFFCO for crop disease reduction.

*'I participated in various training programs which have benefited my community and me. I took a loan for animal husbandry also, which supplements my income. I talk to my fellow women all the time and urge them to be self reliant.'*

Leelaben has organized many groups and explained the integrated approach of SEWA effectively. She has a solution-oriented approach and is ever willing to solve the community's problems, to the best of her abilities.

In spite of being older and semi literate, she is very open to technology and is ever willing to learn new tools. She recently underwent video replay training, computer basics and so on.



## **Ms Leelaben Manajibhai Rathod**

29 year old Leelaben of Susvav, in Dist. Surendranagar was a housewife doing bit of craftwork and farm work before she joined SEWA in 2001. Having participated in several training courses at SEWA like insurance training, membership training, savings training, computer training, etc. she feels confident and would like to train others also.

Leelaben has organized women into SHGs. She learnt to handle accounts and then learnt the nuances of insurance also. She has motivated others to learn more and be open to new ways of doing things. She learnt computer well and using computer to enter data entry in MIS. She took membership from village-to-village and organized groups for savings. Her house to house visits to collect insurance premium from members enhanced their awareness regarding insurance.



## **Ms Madhuben Harjivanbhai Makwana**

37 year –old Madhuben Harjivanbhai Makwana who has studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> Std joined SEWA in 2003. She had worked earlier on farms as a labourer and tried working at other small jobs, but was unable to support the needs of her family and children. After undergoing many training programs in SEWA she not only earns her livelihood but also empowers other women in taking up community welfare programmes. As the savings spearhead team leader she collects the savings and submits to the Head office, and as an SHG group member, she organized 400 members in the past year. She created awareness in her community on insurance and got 100 women to take up insurance policies.

*Madhuben says 'I organized many women into SHGs and always motivate more and more to join in. I undertook training on membership, water campaign and SEWA movement. I have built and developed myself through these training, thereby preparing and motivating others to do the same.'*

She is active, dynamic and a good influence in her village , utilizing her training to the fullest for supporting her community.



## **Ms Mayaben Mahendrakumar Patel**

26 year old Matyaben comes from village Navapura in District Mahesana, and has studied up to 9<sup>th</sup> Std. Before joining SEWA in 2000 she was a farm worker . She is now an ICT user and is involved in training activities. She provided membership training to members, organizes training for forming savings groups in villages and helps in SATCOM training. She has undergone Aagewan, Chalaval, Kadam , SATCOM & video replay training. She has also provided water conservation training to members.

Mayaben is methodical and has developed a comprehensive database of all trainees, aagewans, etc. She is result oriented and does not leave any task half-done. She has motivated women to join in trade groups for increasing their income and becoming more secure. Under her guidance and keen supervision, many members of SEWA have become team leaders and committee members. She makes use of word processing software for developing her reports and other work.



## **Ms Meenaben Vishnubhai Rathava**

A resident of village Pavi Jetpur in Vadodara district, 25 year old Meenaben has studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> Std. She was a labourer living under very poor conditions without enough money for survival and was not able to send her children to school. After joining SEWA in 2001, she involved herself in savings activities and became a Spearhead Team Leader.

She conducting meeting with village people and provided information related to savings and linked them to the savings groups. She organises women to this activity and also connects them under the Santa project. She gives awareness regarding insurance to women and also helps to provide income security to the community.

*'I stepped out of my house, on my own, after joining SEWA. I go door-to-door to educate women about savings and insurance. I am also involved in Gokul Gram programs. I enjoy working like this, benefiting the community and myself.'*

Meenaben was selected for Academy training at Ahmedabad. She teaches well and is popular in training programs. She has also created awareness about income security and insurance programs at the community level. She is now learning to use computers in her daily work.





## **Ms Meetaben Kantilal Solanki**

Meetaben Kantilal Solanki is 26 and has passed 12<sup>th</sup> Std . A housewife living in Ganeshpura village in District Mahesana, she joined SEWA in 1999 and worked for membership training to provide appropriate training for capacity building. Involved in the Gokul Gram program, she conducts Gram Sabhas on regular basis, and her frequent coordination with the Sarpanch has resulted in a faster pace of development in her village.

Meetaben has been pivotal in organizing and conducting training programmes based on the needs of the community. She regularly meets local self-government agencies and works closely with them, providing reports and progress of schemes. Though not highly educated, she is able to confidently manage all types of accounts and liaison with senior government officials. Meetaben is an inspiration and a dynamic person working for the progress of her community.



## **Ms Nirmalaben Jayantibhai Parmar**

Hailing from village Ravdapura in District Anand, Nirmalaben is 42 and has passed 10 Std. She joined SEWA in 1993, before which she was a landless labourer. She involved herself in training, savings and insurance activity , is a spearhead team member and on the board of directors for the savings activity. She tries to make more and more members join in savings and insurance and gives training to Aagewans for leadership, membership, kadam and SEWA movement.

*'After taking computer training today I am able to do all my work using computers, though I was scared of learning it in the first place! I have helped create awareness on savings and insurance in my village and surrounding areas. I enjoy doing this work and motivating fellow women to step out and be self-reliant. I now work with Gram Panchayat and take a keen interest in village development activities.'*

At present Nirmalaben is handling around 1200 members in insurance and handling 6 savings groups in the village. She is also handling two Life schools in the village and wishes to make the community understand and adopt the idea of SEWA's integrated approach. Conducting capacity building meetings, she wants to make her community members aware of their own identity with confidence.



## **Ms Nirmalaben Jekabhai Parmar**

Hailing from Village Anand in Anand Dt., Nirmalaben is 39 and has passed 10<sup>th</sup> Std. Widowed at a young age she joined SEWA in 2000. She took training of TOT , computer and photography and is involved in the Life School for adult education for the community. She has made a list of illiterate members and given them primary education and tried to make many more women members join SEWA.

*'I am giving education to mothers and daughters at one place. I am trying to get more and more members in SEWA and make them understand the other services of SEWA through meetings. I also try to provide loan from SEWA Bank to members who are keeping their money in SEWA Bank , this way I am trying to make more and more members benefit through SEWA Bank.'*



## **Ms Niruben Vikramsingh Chauhan**

Niruben is 24 and comes from Mogar village in Anand district. She has passed 7<sup>th</sup> Std and was a landless laborer and housewife before she joined SEWA in 1998.

*'I took computer training from SEWA team, at present I am handling CLC center of SEWA in Mogar. I am giving computer training to other women members of SEWA as well as doing data entry in the software prepared by SEWA team .I am also giving details of other activities run by SEWA to Village members.'*

Niruben is savings activity and CLC in-charge at Mogar village and spearhead team member for saving collection from SEWA members and maintaining the whole channel of savings and loans. She has been designated as master trainer for computer training to other women in the surrounding areas. She has built other members capacity with the sharing of knowledge and experiences and made others aware how a woman can change her own life and bring benefits to the community. Having attended a conference on Information Technology in Goa, Niruben wants to learn more and more new technologies apart from computers and make herself more helpful to her community. She wishes to create more awareness about IT and savings in her area.



## **Ms Nitaben Amrutbhai Chaudhari**

Nitaben was 6 months old when her mother died and had to stay at her uncle's house till she completed 10<sup>th</sup> std.. After that she went to her father's village for further study, and completed her B.R.S. in Vidyapith, Nardipur. She joined SEWA in 2004, and now 23 years old, she is agriculture campaign spearhead team member contributing to land surveys, and is part of the Trade group, SHG groups and Village Development Committee. She organized 400 women into SHG membership, made 90 women take up insurance policies last year, and was involved in imparting literacy skills to the women in her village.

*'I built my capacity and became confident after joining as an Agriculture Campaign Spearhead team member and undergoing various training programs like water management, education, insurance, computers, etc. I feel proud to have helped my community in water conservation programs and the fact that my being a woman has not come in the way of my work'.*

Nitaben has contributed to her village's development through active awareness and door-to-door dialogues with women. She motivated rural women to pick up literacy skills, cultivate a habit of saving and thus organized SHGs for savings. In addition, she is actively working in improving agriculture methods and generating awareness amongst the farmers.



## **Ms Paluben Manajibhai Jadav**

Paluben is 40 years old and comes from Rajagadha in Surendranagar district Gujarat . She has studied upto 7<sup>th</sup> Std. And was a housewife and laborer digging pits till she joined SEWA in 2001.

She joined SHG groups and became Insurance Spearhead Team Leader. She collects insurance premium from door-to-door, thus imparting knowledge and information to the women. She achieved the highest number of insured women in a district, single handedly. Last year it was 600 women. She also goes to farms to collect premium and so the community has benefited from this security.

Paluben undertook insurance training and since then has never looked back. She guides others and provides them with relevant and needed information. Her mentorship has resulted in more members joining in this activity. She was chosen to represent her district at the national level insurance workshop. She was actively involved in MIS data entry related to insurance and shared her domain knowledge with others, so that their work would be correct.

*'I first worked in savings group and then realized the importance of insurance. I demonstrated how insurance can prove beneficial to women in times of distress or need. I was selected as Insurance team leader.'*



## **Ms Pinaben Jivanbhai Rathava**

Aged 26 Pinaben is from Mesar in Gujarat. She studied up to 12<sup>th</sup> std and was a farm worker and housewife till she joined SEWA in 2000. She conducts meetings with women and provides information related to savings and has helped form 25 SHGs.

She provides information in her community for development work, taking forward the integrated approach of SEWA.

Pinaben has developed into a confident woman, working for village development, with the Gram Panchayat She works extensively with the tribal community and motivates the women to overcome their fears and work together for their upliftment. She uses computers for preparing reports and statements of accounts and has undergone other technical training like video replay, photography, etc.

*'I could not even say my name before joining SEWA. I have participated in several trainings like plumbing, membership, etc. After that I began to form SHGs. I also provide information on topics like health, insurance, agriculture, nursery, water management, etc. I feel empowered working for the development of the community.'*



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## **Ms Poonamben Dalpatbhai Vaghela**

Aged 42, Poonamben is from Valad in Gandhinagar District, Gujarat and has studied up to 8<sup>th</sup> Std. Widowed at the time when her daughter was 5 years and her son was just 2, she worked as a labourer and earned 50 Rs. per month, and also had to do farm work to earn Rs. 25 per day. After joining SEWA in 2003, Poonamben has received extensive training in mid-wifery and is much in demand in her area. She conducts one training program every month related to health issues. She also helps in organizing women into SHGs, she is a Trade Group Leader, and serves on the Village Development Committee. Having received training on the SEWA movement and insurance schemes, she persuaded 200 women to take up insurance policies in the past year, and organized farmer groups and 600 members. She is now learning the use of computers.

*'I received training in mid-wifery and other health issues pertaining to women and children. This motivated me to work for my community and spread awareness about health and hygiene in my village. I am also an agriculture worker. I feel confident and want to work even harder –it is hard to imagine that I was too scared to venture out of my house, not so long ago!'*





## **Ms Pushpaben Fakirbhai Suthar**

A resident of Por village in Dist. Gandhinagar, Pushpaben aged 48 has studied upto 7<sup>th</sup> Std. On joining SEWA in 1990, she underwent training programs like literacy skills, computer training, water campaign, SEWA movement, etc., and having a special interest in the area of women's health she took up the responsibility of midwives spearhead team leader. She explains about health issues to other women in her community and helps train more midwives in her area. Women are more open to sharing their health problems and actively seek solutions and remedies,

Pushpaben has been involved in water campaigns, creating awareness about water conservation and organizing groups for this. People are more aware and take up water saving methods seriously. She is also S.G.S.Y. executive committee member, and belongs to trade group, SHG groups and village development committee.

Pushpaben never gives up, she is ready to explain to the minutest detail for getting acceptance from the community and fighting myths related to health and hygiene. She is enthusiastic about water conservation as well, and has organized many meetings and groups on this issue. As a result, her village has benefited and they are more open and eager to solve such problems jointly.



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## **Ms Pushpaben Jayantibhai Parmar**

30 year old Pushpaben has passed 6<sup>th</sup> Std and comes from Village Sokhada in District Kheda. When she joined SEWA in 2001 she was a housewife and landless labourer.

She took computer training as well as training of Kadam, leadership, SEWA movement etc and uses SATCOM and video replay for making services very effective. She gives details on "Trade Assembly" to the village member to make them understand that why should they be members of this assembly and what are the benefits.

*'After join SEWA, I always attend all kinds of meetings held by SEWA and every time I learn some thing new from the meeting. Today I know the value of water. Earth gives us water and we never save it, in fact we always waste it. Now after attending the meeting I am saving water in different ways. We are doing plantation for saving wasted water.'*

With the help of trade assembly she is giving knowledge on different small-scale trades like vegetable vendors. What are the reasons affecting this trade? How to get seeds and fertilizers for vegetable farming? Which kind of disease can occur in vegetable farming and what are the remedies they can use?

Pushpaben also takes help from consultants on different subjects. She wants to learn more and pass on this knowledge to other women in her community and encourage them also to come forward and be the masters of their own life.



## **Ms Ramilaben Arvindbhai Parmar**

Aged 28 Ramilaben comes from Limdapura village in Anand district of Gujarat and has passed 10<sup>th</sup> Std. Before she joined SEWA in 1998 she was a housewife. At SEWA she became involved in nursery activities, joined SHGs and underwent ICT training. She is a Spearhead team member, and her work includes plantation, selling of ready plants, maintenance of prepared plants, seed collection and development work for wastelands. Through this she was able to build her capacity to make others understand the significance of plantations and nursery activity.

*'I was not eager to work with plants, in the initial stages. Gradually, I understood the importance of this activity and how I could motivate others in my community to nurture plants. Now, I work with the Sarpanch and others in the Panchayat and am fully involved in village development work. After two years of nursery work, I got the opportunity to undertake computer training from SEWA, I liked to learn new technology at this age. In future I will definitely learn more of new technology. I have become a more responsible person after joining SEWA and have even built a small house with my savings.'*



## **Ms Ramilaben Ashokbhai Gohel**

Ramilaben from Lotiya Bhagod village in District Anand, is 25 and has passed 10<sup>th</sup> Std. Before joining SEWA in 2000, she was a landless laborer occupied in animal husbandry.

*'I have taken computer training, hand pump repairing training, photography training, phone and mobile usage training. I am able to use technology competently, for which I feel proud of myself. I have participated in many programs and events of my district and community and helped raise awareness levels on water conservation and maintenance of water related equipments.'*

*'As a Water Campaign Spearhead team member, Ramilaben has been conducting awareness programmes on the importance of water in human life, and how water utilization can be maximised by the community with out wastage. She has learnt hand pump repairing and goes to different villages where their hand pump is not working to repair it and save water, and has also arranged training for others.'*



## **Ms Ratanben Harilal Gadia**

Ratanben is 40 and lives in Dudapur village, Dist. Surendranagar. She studied upto 12<sup>th</sup> Std and was a housewife, farm worker when she joined SEWA in 2001. She underwent health training and helped the villagers in their health problems moving door-to-door to provides cheaper medicines and any other assistance. Now a health spearhead team leader and SHG group member, Ratanben compiled a list of patients suffering from life threatening diseases like TB and cancer and got them admitted to the hospital. She has also arranged guidance and appropriate information for them

*'After joining SEWA, I have undergone health and mid-wives' training. I also attended many conferences. After learning the basics of IT, I attended the Baramati conference where I spoke about the use of ICT at the grassroots. I feel happy to be involved in such work'.*

Ratanben has organized many health camps and works closely with government health agencies. During epidemics, she works tirelessly, providing relief and medicines to the disease stricken. She is a source of inspiration for others and has now begun to use technology in her work. She motivates other women to live hygienically and use scientific methods for treatment.



## **Ms Saritaben Mukeshbhai Rathava**

27 year old Saritaben belongs to village Aleekherava in District Vadodara, and has passed 10<sup>th</sup> Std and pre. P.t.c. When she joined SEWA in 2002 she was a housewife. She took membership training, health training, hand pump repairing training, leaf-cup training from SEWA, also took computer training in 2003 from ICT team of SEWA.

As spearhead team member and part of the board of directors for the savings activity, Saritaben encouraged more women to join in the savings and insurance groups. She gave training to Aagewans for leadership, membership, kadam and SEWA movement and made others understand the integrated approach of SEWA and how capacity building can make the community more confident and self-reliant.

Saritaben learns with confidence and teaches patiently. Thus, she has helped women in her community to learn livelihood skills. In addition, she has learnt basic computer usage and creates awareness about technology in her village. At present she is handling more than 1200 members in insurance and handling 6 savings groups in the village. She is also handling two Life schools in the village and has changed from a simple housewife to being on the board of directors for the savings activity.



## **Ms Sarojben Natubhai Gohel**

32 year old Sarojben has passed 7<sup>th</sup> Std and comes from village Tundel in District Kheda. She was an agricultural worker when she joined SEWA in 1990. She is now actively involved in water campaigns and is a spearhead team member. She conducts awareness programs on the importance of water in human life and how to use water without any waste. Build other members' capacity with the sharing of her knowledge and experiences, she makes them aware of how waste of water can spread diseases and arranges drip irrigation training.

*'I convened an assembly in my village for water campaign. In this assembly we are trying to solve the water related problems in the village. I am also giving knowledge related to water like, How to reuse water? What are the benefits of proper usage of water and danger of wastage of it? I am giving training to villagers how to make their village clean.'*

At present Sarojben is holding public meetings for the awareness of water usage in her village as well as in schools. She is also a member of savings activity in which a group is made and enrolled in SEWA Bank. Because of this savings one of the team member had been able to get a loan from SEWA Bank and she purchased a machine for her livelihood. This way Sarojben is helping her community. She is also using computer in her activity and makes others understand how this technology is helping her in her regular work.



## **Ms Shobhanaben Dhirubhai Vadhela**

Shobhanaben is 29 years old and comes from Visavadi (Navagam) in Surendranagar Dt. She has studied up to 11<sup>th</sup> Std and after joining SEWA in 2001, she is an ICT user and involved in Jeevika, agriculture and education activities. She provide appropriate knowledge regarding agriculture to the community and also does insurance and savings work and gives literacy training.

*'I work as a Vidya Gauri – a trainer for literacy skills. I have also worked on insurance campaigns and motivated women to take up policies. I feel inspired, especially as I am contributing to raising the literacy levels in my community.'*

Shobhanaben has organized the village women into SHGs and maintains accounts for various groups. She is confident and is open to learning new methods of teaching and modern tools of technology. She motivates other women to learn to read and write and explains the importance of education in our life. She also teaches the children in the village.





## **Ms Sumitraben Amaratbhai Parmar**

30 year old Sumitraben has passed 10<sup>th</sup> Std and lives in Punasan Village, Mehsana District. A housewife, she joined SEWA in 2002 and actively involved herself in water harvesting and water conservation activities. She is now a spearhead team leader and has conducted various training programs related to membership, health, water, savings and insurance.

She has conducted various meetings at the grassroots to spread awareness about the importance of water and conserving it effectively, using simple tools like paintings and wall posters on water saving methods in her campaigns. She also works with health issues and explains the significance of female and child health aspects to the women in her community. Sumitraben is pro-active and always on the move, talking to people and working towards the development of her community.



## **Ms Urmilaben Vinodkumar Nayak**

Hailing from village Sardhav in District Mahesana, Urmilaben is 35, and has passed 12<sup>th</sup> Std. A landless labourer before she joined SEWA in 2001, she is now a spearhead team leader working in savings activity. She has been creating many new saving accounts as well as insurance for members, and providing loan facility to needy groups and getting recovery.

Urmilaben provides information regarding savings, insurance and its help to the members. She also organizes training, imparts information regarding trade samiti and its roles, so more and more members come for attending these meetings.

She has taken several technical training courses like computer, photography, video replay training, SATCOM training etc. passes it on to others so that current trends in technology reach the grassroots. Also she uses this skill in her activity work.



## **Mr Vimal Shastry**

Vimal Shastry from Mehmabad, Gujarat is around 30 years old. Once he has heard about Chiraag computer centres he wanted to be a kiosk operator and after few days he started the kiosk in his village. He is earning from education, browsing and games, astrology, chatting, down loading, etc. and earns more on photography services and computer education.

Vimal Shastry has more than 35 students in his centre. From the start to date about 500 to 600 members use these services. In his village maximum number of people are coming to know about government services and information.



## **Ms Vimalaben Bhanuprasad Chavada**

37 year old Vimalaben hails from village Langhanaj in District Mehsana. She joined SEWA in 2001. As agriculture spearhead team leader she has arranged finance to buy fertilizers, vermicompost, etc for agriculture groups in the villages. She has encouraged and provided information on crop insurance and assisted land assessment. She organized training for farmers in collaboration with IFFCO and pro-actively the community became aware of water saving techniques and its benefits and began following the same. Now she has also initiated health and nursery training in the village .

Vimalaben has organized women and taught them about savings and health in her community. She takes decisions independently and also liaisons with government agencies effectively. She is constantly in touch with her people and arranges for workshops and trainings, based on the needs of the community. She has been involved in SATCOM, video replays and other such interactive exposure forums, which has motivated others to emulate her.



## **Ms Vinaben Rajubhai Rathava**

Vinaben is 25, has studied up to 12<sup>th</sup> Std and lives in Juni Bodeli village, Vadodara district. She was a labourer living under too much poor conditions without enough money for survival. She joined SEWA in 2004 and is involved in savings activities. She conducts meeting with village people , provides information related to saving. The community is encouraged to take up savings more vigorously and more women have formed SHGs

*'I save money and join in saving groups. Also I give information to the members to save money for any harsh condition comes you needs money. I have participated in several training like Aagewan, chalaval, savings, insurance, membership and crop insurance training, thus building my capacity.'*

Vinaben is confident and works closely with the Gram Panchayat for development of her village. She has also been exposed to the working in other districts, which have a better pace of development, and has shared her experience in her community. She has inspired women to form SHGs and spearheaded the savings activity in her area.



Haryana

## Mr Arshad Hussain

30-year old Arshad Hussain is a “Village Champion” of the Sehgal Foundation working in Mewat district of Haryana. He is trained in, and responsible for the grassroots implementation of the “Integrated, Sustainable Village Development” model. Arshad’s work includes making sure that rainwater is harvested and conserved, and there is an increase in the villagers’ income. Dissemination of knowledge on preventive health measures and effective curative health linkages as well as making sure that all the adolescent girls and boys go through the family life education curriculum are also his responsibility. For this Arshad has to create partnerships with the Panchayat, Government, Village Level Institution and the community.

Mewat is socio-economically an extremely poor region of India where mainly Meo-muslims and some scheduled castes live. In this challenging environment Arshad, a standard X passed Meo-muslim, has been dedicatedly working for the development of his native place. The youth of this community respect him as a role model and enthusiastically work with him as volunteers to bring about positive changes in the villages He has been involved full-time in social work for 5 years and his work has spanned across 11 Mewati villages. He formed successful SHGs which have sustained and are growing in scope. His forte is community mobilization where he stresses the sustainability aspect of projects and the key role of men in empowering their women folk. Arshad feels that a combination of ICT tools must be used: like wall paintings, village newsletter and charts, but the most important is face to face focused group discussions.



Haryana

## Ms Razia

26-year-old Razia is from the Mewat district of Haryana. This area has some of the poorest socio-economic indices of the country. Literacy rate amongst women of this area is between 20% to a mere 2% in some villages. In this community women are hardly allowed out of the house, the average family size is 7, and their age at marriage is about 15 years.

In such a milieu, Razia continued her education and proceeded to fulfill her desire to serve her community. Each year her family tried to stop her studies, but as she won prizes, they were proud and relented for another year, amid taunts from the strict community. She topped her college and got the "Best Woman Award, 1998" by Mewat Development Agency.

Now Razia has a Masters degree in sociology, 4 years of full-time experience in social work, plus 6 years of occasional community work. Currently she is Block Coordinator with the Sehgal Foundation, implementing the "Integrated, Sustainable Village Development" model, which has 4 components: Water Management, Income Enhancement, Rural Health and Family Life Education.

She is a community mobilizer par excellence and has been instrumental in getting women to step out of their homes to seek medical attention, training and participating in community work. She has also consistently achieved success in inspiring the male youth towards community work. So far Razia has found the old fashioned ICT tool of pictures on charts to be quite effective, however she feels the key is to initiate participatory dialogue. She says, "Mewat being a backward area I lost many opportunities. Now I want the youth of Mewat to have all that I had to struggle for so much". She has attained the status of a role model in this community, who are now more open to educating their girls and having them earn.



Haryana

## **Mr Subhash Chandra Saharan**

Subhash, 25 years old, belongs to a poor farmer family. He is 12<sup>th</sup> Pass and has been running his Drishtee kiosk for the past 2 yrs in village Poharka, in Sirsa district. Through the kiosk he is providing various types of services to the villagers like digital photography, E-governance services, insurance, computer education etc. He has appointed a computer teacher who teaches basic computers to adolescents and children.

He is a very hard working person, actively involved in social activities. He conducts monthly group meetings with the villagers to know about their satisfaction with the services he provides through the kiosk, and how there can be enhancement of his service . He is very well known as a kiosk owner, not only in the local villages but also in all neighbouring villages. He always ready to take initiative for any kind of challenging job.

Villagers come to him to seek any type of help. He actively participated in the OKN project and motivated the villagers to give the world something unique about the villages which could be always remembered.





Madhya Pradesh

## **Mr Hari Shankar Chourasia**

Hari Shankar comes from a village called Teherka in the Tikkamgarh District of Madhya Pradesh. The 25 year old postgraduate (M.A. Political Science) has been involved with community activities since 2003 as TARAKendra Coordinator.

Hari Shankar was exposed to computers while pursuing his graduation from Niwari, a Tehsil town of Teherka. He could have easily opted for a livelihood in a city or town but he decided to work for the development of his own village. In the initial years he was involved in community development programs. Today, as a Kendra Coordinator, he teaches the students computers and promotes Information Technology amongst his community members. As a part of TARAhaat's e- governance program, Hari Shankar assists the people of his and surrounding villages in registering their grievances with the government electronically through the internet. He has also been instrumental in conducting workshops in Teherka and surrounding villages and in keeping the community informed about the government schemes.



## **Ms Priti Sharma**

24 year - old Priti comes from Orchha, a very small village in the Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh. She is a graduate, and has been involved with community activities for 2 years. In the year 2001 she used to travel from Orchha to Jhansi, a distance of 22 kms, to learn computers and another 40 kms to her college in Niwari (a Tehsil town of Orchha) to pursue her graduation. When TARAhaat opened its TARAkendra in TARAgram in 2002, she enrolled to study the Tally accounting course. Impressed by her commitment and sincerity, Priti was immediately appointed as an Instructor in the TARAkendra. She also continued to pursue her post-graduation in Sociology.

In the last two years she not only completed her post graduation but through sheer hard-work rose to the position of TARAkendra Coordinator and also took on the added responsibility of Community Coordinator in Bundelkhand. She is currently in-charge of implementing the Open Knowledge Network (OKN) programme for information sharing across communities in the Bundelkhand region. Her TARAkendra is managed by an all girls team.



## **Ms Shobha Genbhau Shinde**

Shobha is a frail and delicate village girl from Inglenagar (Village – Karanjawane), Pune district, whose higher education was sponsored through Ashta No Kai scholarship funds. Hailing from a family where her father deserted her mother when Shobha was a child, she and her mother now reside with her maternal uncle. Shobha has a slight handicap being stricken with polio as a child and walks with a limp. It is very creditable that despite her background and financial hardship, she completed her Master's degree in Social Work at Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune. During the senior year of her MA studies, she interned with Ashta No Kai for a year, and since she showed promise and belonged to one of Ashta No Kai's project area villages, she was hired as a Program Supervisor.

In the two years she has been with Ashta No Kai, Shobha now 23 has grown up to be a mentally strong leader. Her position at Ashta No Kai and encouragement by senior staff and colleagues has helped her to mature. Realizing her potential as a leader, her self confidence has grown and found roots. She, who could not even ride a bicycle has learned to ride a moped, and today moves from one village to another helping women conduct meetings, guiding them in account keeping, motivating them to take up small scale business, access government schemes and participate in village Gram Sabhas. She accompanies women's groups to banks and introduces them to bank officials. Her house to house visits have made her a familiar figure in the villages she works in.

Shobha has got the village girls together to form Kishori Mandals. She has encouraged girls to attend school by taking advantage of Ashta No Kai's Bicycle Bank scheme which gives a bicycle to any

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school girl who lives more than 2 kilometers away from school. Shobha has attended several capacity building workshops, and participated in various training sessions and workshops with different NGOs to improve her field of knowledge. She attended a 9 month legal literacy course conducted by the local ILS Law College, SHG capacity building training and adolescent girls training. She keeps a check of all office work and records at the Ashta No Kai field office in Ranjangoan.

Shobha realizes that to work for the improvement of village women in her area, she needs to spread information to the village women, encourage them to spare time to come together and debate ways and means to improve their lot. With her understanding of village women's psyche, her knowledge of professional social work and her desire to help the down trodden she has gained the confidence and support of women in her area who call her often to seek her advice. Shobha has a vision – to empower the women and girls in her village, and is happy to be instrumental in helping village women on the path to village development.



## Ms Vijyantha Raut

Vijyantha Raut is a 35 year old empowered village woman who has been instrumental in creating waves of change in the remote village of *Nimgoan Bhogi*. The village with 12 hamlets nestles among barren patches of land, deprived of water and the absence of green becomes obvious. Vijyantha got married at 14 years; she had just completed 7<sup>th</sup> class. She came to *Nimgoan Bhogi* as a child bride and soon settled into the hard life of a farm worker. She struggled along with her husband to feed her growing family. When Ashta No Kai started working in her village in 1998, and was looking for a community worker to promote their activities, the village elders suggested her name. As an OBC she was elected a member of the Gram Panchayat.

Working for Ashta No Kai fulfilled a long pent up desire of Vijyantha to do social work for her people. She saw a mission to be achieved and embraced it with all her energy. Vijyantha was always willing to do something for herself, her family and neighbourhood. Her friendly demeanour, bold ways and desire to help others won her many friends.

Vijyantha, although only a 7<sup>th</sup> class literate, showed far more depth and understanding of social issues than any trained MSW. A willing and eager learner she lapped up whatever knowledge Ashta No Kai fed her through different trainings, workshops and exposures. Vijyantha received literacy training and motivated village women to become literate conducting night classes in her village .

Vijyantha threw herself wholeheartedly into the women's micro credit movement that held the key for future economic prosperity of village women. Today, thanks to her, there are 21 savings groups

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in her village of 1800, each of the hamlets have at least one women's savings group. She was largely responsible for securing almost 3 lakhs in loans for her BPL group for cow and goat rearing.

Today if any outsider wants any information about Nimgoan Bhogi village, he/she is directed to Vijyantha Raut's two roomed hut. Vijyantha is the village development leader. She rides on her moped – a confident woman on the move. She never dreamed that she would own and ride a vehicle of her own – but the presence of an NGO and her own determination made it possible. Vijyantha is the new generation village social activist, who with her self motivation and vision has changed a whole village's outlook.



## **Mr Soumyaranjan Pattanayak**

Soumya Ranjan comes from a tribal village called Digdhar in the Mayurbhanja District of Orissa. The 21-year-old who has studied up to + 2 and has a diploma in cinematography, has been involved with community development activities since 2002 .

Soumya Ranjan was exposed to photography while pursuing his intermediate studies. Today, as MYS coordinator he teaches the students computers & photography and promotes Information Technology amongst his community members. As a part of the MYS program, he assists the people of his village and surrounding villages in registering their grievances with the government through photographs. During the 2003 flood, he took photographs of the marooned villages in Orissa and sent them to the government for rehabilitation and resettlement packages. OSDMA (an agency of Govt of Orissa) awarded him the best organiser on the eve of Disaster Day Observation & National Day for Disaster Reduction on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 2004 at Bhubaneswar. Soumya Ranjan wishes to work for the voiceless in India.



Pondicherry

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## Mr S Bharthidasan

Bharthidasan, aged 26 is an ITI professional, associated as a volunteer of the knowledge center of Koonichempet, a dalit village in Pondicherry. He is an energetic youth participating in several village level development activities and member of an active youth association. He has contributed his services for a number of environmental protection and pollution control programs. Under his own initiative he planted more than 200 saplings around his village and tended them personally. He organized ozone related workshop in his village and created awareness on ozone protection. He also motivated 25 youths in his village to take an oath to celebrate Deepavali festival without using crackers to protect the atmosphere.

Bharathidasan has expertise in the area of health promotion as part of village development activities. He organized first aid camps for fire and vehicle accidents to create awareness among his villagers, and also organized eye camps. More than 165 persons from his own village – Koonichempet received eye treatment, and more than 300 village children received eye check up in eye camps in his village schools. He also organized an eye donation camp where about 50 person's names were registered by him as donors, and also organized a volunteer blood donor camp. Bharathidasan acted as a volunteer in polio drops immunization programs.





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## **Ms Dhanalakshumi Radhakrishnan**

Dhanalakshumi Radhakrishnan aged 32 from Embalam village in Pondicherry, has school education up to 9<sup>th</sup> std. She is a senior volunteer in the Rural Knowledge Centre holding active membership as treasurer of a womens association, executive committee member in the Village Development Council and President of a self help group.

She is good trainer on formation of self help groups and maintenance of SHG accounts in digital format by using MSSRF-SHG accounts software. She promotes computer literacy as well as serves as a resource person for training on various enterprises such as production of incense, candles, phenol, washing powder, artificial seashell ornaments, pickles, etc. She is a member of the editorial board of MSSRF "Nammavoor Seithi" bi-monthly newspaper.

Dhanalakshumi has contributed much on health promotion in her village and continuously for 2 years participated in Pulse Polio Immunization volunteer work in Embalam. She participated in health camps for HIV-Aids, malaria, elephantiasis and leprosy and about 100 patients benefited, including a few who were sent to Aravind Eye Hospital for cataract operation. She has been associated with the family counselling programme held in Kalitheerthalkuppam village and guided women on fundamental legal rights, and has also participated in watershed management and rainwater harvesting programme organized by the Public Works department. She motivated about 30 women and 10 SHGs to participate in mother and child health, nutrition programmes.



Pondicherry

## **Mr R Elumalai**

R.Elumalai aged 31 is dynamic in every initiative he takes for his coastal home village Veerampattinam in Pondicherry. An insurance agent by profession, he is a senior volunteer of the Knowledge Centre in his village, associated with MSSRF since 1999. A diploma holder in Engineering (mechanical), he has taken every step to promote computer literacy in his village through the Knowledge Centre.

Elumalai has diverse experience as Knowledge Centre volunteer in a coastal village and the experience he gained helped him to manage the tsunami affected village Knowledge Centre at Kovalam coastal village near Mahabalipuram which was established in early 2005 as immediate relief measure for the tsunami affected people.

As a volunteer Elumalai guided many youths in Veerampatinam to apply for government jobs due to which about 12 youths got government jobs in Pondicherry. He also guided students to take up some courses relevant to fishermen, which benefited a number of youths. As a trainer he guided teachers and students to participate in computer assisted learning programmes. His other services include identifying patients with cataract problems to get free treatment in Aravind Eye Hospital, centralizing the electricity department's services through the Knowledge Centre, and taking the responsibility for dissemination of coastal information to the fishermen on a day-to-day basis. With full zeal and interest he spends much of his time for the development of fisherfolk community.



Pondicherry

## **Ms Ezhilarsi**

Ezhilarsi aged 28 is a farmer's daughter and housewife, hailing from Kizhur village in Pondicherry. She is senior volunteer in the Rural Knowledge Centre with expertise in training women in tailoring. About 9 women members from the SHGs were guided by her to own tailoring machines through bank loans, and to have their own tailoring centres to take on jobs they get from garment units.

Ezhilarsi trained more than 50 women members from SHGs in collaboration with Motilal Nehru Govt. Polytechnic in Pondicherry. Her programmes were chosen as a model, prompting the Polytechnic institution to take up similar training programmes in other MSSRF information villages. She is also good in documentation of indigenous knowledge of the village in areas of agriculture and health. She motivated students to have computer literacy, which made more than 100 students become computer literate by studying in the knowledge centre.

Ezhilarsi devoted much of her time in helping SHGs for financial record keeping and directing them to take up various training programs announced by District Industries Corporation and Women Development Corporation.



Pondicherry

## **Mr G Jayakrishnan**

Jayakrishnan is a diligent 23 year old youth hailing from a farmers' family in Kizhur in Pondicherry. He has graduated in commerce with diploma in co-operation and has also participated in a vocational course in Scientific Agriculture. He is proficient in computer languages and has become a master trainer. He prepared excellent documentation based on the process and composed 100 case studies of the users of the Rural Knowledge centre located in Pondicherry by interviewing all the users personally.

As a technical person with training in system maintenance and wireless networking, he is helping all the knowledge workers (youth) in the rural knowledge centers located in 12 villages in Pondicherry to get trained in computer operations and wireless connectivity. He became a village resource person for technical guidelines.

As a trainer Jayakrishnan guided teachers, youth and students to participate in computer assisted learning programmes. He is good in documentation and content development based on indigenous knowledge of the village, in the areas of agriculture and health. Since 1995 till today he has rendered his services to youth development in his village and helping youth from other villages to become knowledgeable in technical matters and change the quality of their life.



Pondicherry

## Ms P Packialoutchmy

Her village in Pondicherry was among the first to be devastated by the deadly Tsunami, last month. Several lives were lost and many more houses, devastated. But far from feeling dejected, the tsunami only strengthened her resolve to use ICT to ensure that another such disaster does not wreak havoc in her village again.

Packialoutchmy works as a volunteer in an MSSRF project in a village in Pondicherry. She uses the Internet to download life-saving weather reports on the sea conditions and wave heights and then shares these through radio broadcasts, with the fishermen in the nearby villages. She also gathers, collates and disseminates information from government departments on health facilities, employment news and entitlement schemes and sends these to surrounding villages. With just a rudimentary knowledge of English, she uses the English letter keyboard to create Tamil fonts.

Packialoutchmy hopes that the society of tomorrow will incorporate the needs and perspectives of people at the grassroots such as herself. This she feels is imperative, if the benefits of ICTs have to reach all, especially the voiceless, the marginalised and the poor.



## **Ms Prabuvani Ranganathan**

Prabuvani Ranganathan aged 27, a dynamic young commerce undergraduate with Postgraduate diploma in computer application promoted computer literacy programmes in her coastal village, Periakalpet in Pondicherry by using the rural knowledge centre. She is a senior volunteer at the centre and has guided a good number of fisher families to get their government entitlements and also helped widows and aged to get their pensions. She organized several training programs for fisherwomen - one of them was ornamental fish rearing conducted by the department of fisheries and fishermen welfare.

Prabuvani was also active in identifying cataract patients in her village and directing them to the Aravind Eye Hospital in Pondicherry. More than 100 children from the middle school were trained on basic computer operations and she also trained the local school teachers to use educational teaching aids for improving the skills of the children by using the CDs of Azim Premji Foundation.

After the tsunami she played a major role in documenting in electronic format the life and property losses due to tsunami in Periakalpet, which helped the grampanchayat to present before the government to get full relief measures.



Pondicherry

## **Ms Sumathi Janardhanan**

Sumathi Janardhanan is a housewife aged 37 having school level education upto 10<sup>th</sup> std. She hails from the village called Kalitheerthalkuppam in Pondicherry and is a senior volunteer attached with the Knowledge Centre since 2000. As a social worker she guided SHG members on various benefits they were entitled to from the government. She is good in e-commerce and innovated a method of publishing stock availability of food grains like pulses and cereals (black gram etc.), tender coconuts and coconuts for sale with the farmers in her locality in the wireless network established by MSSRF-Hub to various knowledge centres and developed e-commerce modality which fetched good response and increased farmers' business..

She guided many farmers and cattle owners to take part in awareness creation exposure visits to Rajiv Gandhi College of Veterinary Sciences in Pondicherry on scientific rearing of cattle. She helped cashew-cultivating farmers to identify solutions for various pest problems, which saved more than 2 acres of cashew cultivation. In addition to the above she became computer literate conducting computer literacy training programs to students.



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## **Ms Sundry Krishnamoorthy**

35 years old Sundry Krishnamoorthy is a mother of two children and house wife, studied upto 12<sup>th</sup> std from Embalam village in Pondicherry. A senior volunteer in the Rural Knowledge Centre she helps her fellow members in all walks especially women SHG members on various services like guiding them to get their entitlements from the government. She is good in documentation of many case studies of those who actually benefited by the knowledge centre. She became a computer literate after she joined as a volunteer in the knowledge centre, and developed skills for training others on income-generating activities like producing phenol, soap, oil, blue, washing powder, juices, soft drinks and ice cream production etc. She is a member of the Editorial board of MSSRF "Nammavoor Seithi" bi-monthly newspaper.

Sundry motivated 50 families to use smokeless chulas under the environmental protection program. She helped 10 widows to get their pension and guided many aged and below the poverty-line group women to get their entitlements from government agencies. She has been an active participant for four years continuously in pulse polio programme, and participated in HIV Aids, malaria and leprosy control and prevention camps by helping the health department. She assisted in identifying people with cataract and eye problems, and about 25 persons got better vision when she sent them to Aravind Eye Hospital for treatment.





Punjab

## **Mr Manmohan Singh Bhari**

A graduate in Arts from Patiala (1994), Punjab University with zeal to educate the rural people and empower them with the knowledge of IT, Manmohan Singh Bhari started his career as an IT instructor. He worked with various organizations and later set up his own business by purchasing two computers on loan under the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojna. He ran a successful IT related (education, DTP & EDP) business and returned the loan amount in time.

About three years back Manmohan came to know about Tarahaat and its endeavour to take IT to rural India. He decided to give it a try and joined the company-owned TARAkendra in Maur Mandi. Contrary to the general trend where people from Bathinda travel abroad for better career prospects, Manmohan decided to move to a small Mandi. He took the initiative in establishing a TARAkendra in Maur Mandi. He has taught students from over 40 villages surrounding Maur Mandi. He is now popularly known as Tara Wale Sardarji.

Manmohan has been instrumental in popularizing Information Technology and its applications in Government schools and colleges through presentations and road shows. He is currently involved in expanding the network of TARAkendras, thereby increasing the reach of Information Technology to the remotest areas of Punjab.



## Mr Chandan Singh

Chandan Singh is a 32 year old Secondary pass agriculture worker from Chhila Kashmir, Bajju, Bikaner. Although he belong to a remote village with little access to information, but he says he gets magazines from Bajju and studies them in the village at his home and then shares the knowledge with other people. He is also working as knowledge worker and collects information from the village for the access point at Bajju. He is also working as local news provider for a reporter. Under OKN program he is working as volunteer.



## **Mr Karna Ram Poonar**

Karna Ram Poonar has been associated with URMUL Setu Sansthan in Bikaner District, Rajasthan for the past 15 years. His knowledge and understanding has helped the organisation to use information technology for program planning, analysis and design.

Well versed in computer skills, he has been responsible for organising computer training workshops for NGOs and women field workers, and has been involved in continuous advocacy with the Department of Telecommunications at all levels, demanding quality Internet services at Lunkaransar block of Bikaner district. Development of data bases for programmes of health, income-generation, loans & savings for the use of field workers at URMUL Setu Sansthan, impact assessment of the integrated rural development project of ActionAid India, Lunkaransar, PPM Peer Review (Plan India) at SBMA, Tehri Garhwal, Uttaranchal and analysis and documentation of Lok Jumbish programme, Lunkaransar, are among the wide range of his experience.

He organised relief activities for the benefit of communities of village Gheghara, tehsil Chatargarh, when a branch of the Indira Gandhi Canal collapsed in December 2003. A sincere and proactive worker, Karna Ram Poonar has the potential be an agent of change through the use of technology at rural grassroots.



## Mr Mahendra Singh

34 year old Mahendra Singh is Secondary pass and a permanent resident of village Aladin ka Beda, Khajuwala. He has a shop in Khajuwala where runs STD booth.

He is a social figure for the area, participating in most of the activities relating to the common interests of the people. Being well known in the villages people contact him for various problems such as problems in getting benefit from a government scheme, education of children or health issues.

Mahendra Singh has participated in the promotion for awareness generation program of Uttam rja and has conducted these programs at the village level through music shows, solar rallies, road shows etc. He has been involved for some time in the OKN program to collect information from the villages. He has collected various types of information related to the history of Khajuwala, its traditions etc., and has also covered current events.



## Mr Narsingh Singh

Narsingh Singh is a 36 year old teacher with a post graduate degree from Charanwala, Bajju , Bikaner. Volunteering as a knowledge worker, he collects information from the village for the access point at Bajju. He is a social figure for the area of Bajju. He has been quite active at the time of pulse polio and its awareness program and also in a population control promotional activity named Goli ka Humjoli when with women volunteers he spread the programmes in the villages.

Narsingh Singh has been key person to take the program forward at the computer education center in Bajju run by Radhe Computer service. Under OKN program he started contacting the community to tell them about the uses of ICT. He has also started training volunteers.



## **Mr Pawan Kumar**

20 year old Pawan Kumar is a Secondary pass student living in a village near Khajuwala, Bikaner. He is working as volunteer and collects information from villages for the access point at Khajuwala. Although he is a student he takes a lot of interest in social work. He is member of Nehru Yuva Kendra and has also worked voluntarily for Urmul a local NGO working in Khajuwala. In OKN program he is a useful person and good volunteer. He regularly gives useful information related to income generation, health and education for the people.



## **Mr Rajesh Punia**

23 year old Rajesh Punia from Panchu, Nokha, Bikaner is a 9<sup>th</sup> pass agriculture worker. He is serving as a knowledge worker and collects information from the village for the access point at Nokha . He also collects information for Panchayti Raj and is working as local reporter for daily newspaper Rajasthan Patrika.

Rajesh is very active all the social work in the villages and is also involved in betterment of the infrastructure of the village.



## Ms Amalorpavamary

23 year old Amalorpavamary from Theradi, Mayiladuthurai, Tamil Nadu is a student undergoing B.com through distance education. She did D.C.A (diploma in computer application) and was familiar with computer applications well before starting her kiosk. Through her own interest , she is taking care of the kiosk, and her brother also helps her to develop their business. She does typing work, DTP and photoshop and takes various basic computer courses for the students.

She has been involved in community issues like preventing frequent accidents at a critical turning on the road by communicating with the District Collector through Isee sessions and getting his approval for a speed breaker. Amalorpavamary's communication with the Collector has also helped a retired person to get his pension and other such assistance to the community.





## Mr Arunkumar

Arunkumar comes from the village of Valaiyathupatti in Theni Dt, Tamil Nadu. He has completed DCE. He has good communication skills, runs an active kiosk which gives good performance. He has been involved during the past 6 months in DTP Works, Data Entry in rural areas. He mainly uses iSee service for agriculture related questions and he sends very useful solutions and thus helps his villagers in their main occupation of agriculture farming.



## Ms Barathisala

Barathisala is a graduate from Thirukolakudi, Sivaganga, Tamilnadu, a village where women are not encouraged to earn on their own. But at her own risk, she started the kiosk in her village. She went canvassing on her own with the help of n-logue people, explaining about all the services and convinced the villagers. Now all the people in that village say *'If we need anything, we just approach Chiraag and get it done'*.

Slowly the children in the village started attending the educational courses on computer. There is no hospital in the village, so Barathisala helps her villagers to communicate to the doctor through iSee . Many in her village use this opportunity. Barathisala is active, dynamic and a good influence in her village, utilizing her training to the fullest for supporting her village people.



## Ms Bhavani

Bhavani comes from a village called Okkur in Sivaganga Dt, Tamil Nadu. She has been involved with community activities since 2000 as Nehru Yuvakendra National Service volunteer.

She started a Chiraag information centre in 2003 where she teaches students about computers and promotes agricultural services in the village. She implements medical services as well as , agricultural services in and around her village.

Many of the villagers are working abroad, so the only contact with them was through postal services alone. She convinced the people to communicate through video/audio mail with their family members who are in abroad. She is also giving free education service for poor children.



## Ms Bhavani Elango

27 year - old Bhavani Elango, a graduate from a rural BPL background, has worked as an MSSRF - VRC volunteer since April 2004. She is a traditional agricultural farmer with a strong social commitment and has been actively involved along with her husband in social and development programmes especially for women in development, since 2000. Independently elected as President of Merpanaikkadu Panchayat, her concern was effective administration so as to be a role model Panchayat President. She became actively involved in developing micro level planning with a participatory approach for assessment, identification of problems and finding solutions for implementation.

Taking action for promoting a sense of self reliance in her Panchayat, she played a leadership role to remove malpractices, organize the community for development work and network with other Panchayats. She mobilized local leaders and formed "Makkal Mayyam", and encouraged SHG's and income generating activities.

She has worked for improving the environment by developing a model Green Village in Aranthagi Block, and has served as a Member of the District Rain Water Harvesting Committee and Member of the Block Level Committee's Total Sanitation Programme.



## Mr Chandrasekar

Chandrasekar from Kulamangalam south, Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu is 25-years old and has finished 10th std from his village school. He had no prior computer knowledge, but after attending the SHG meeting in Aranthangi arranged by n-logue and after completion of the basic computer training he started a kiosk in his village.

He earns from DTP, typewriting, photo, education, spoken English course, browsing and games. In DTP work (school identity cards, invitations, visiting cards). iSee for agriculture is another service used by his villagers. This agriculture session is conducted on every Wednesday, and many farmers have had the opportunity to clarify their doubts through this session. Every week at least 5 to 10 farmers attend the session, so Chandrasekar is happy to provide these services to his village.



## Mr V Dheenadayalan

V.Dheenadayalan studied up to 10 th standard. He is a 43 year old farmer in Umbalchery village, Vetharanyam taluk of Nagapattinam district.

He is an active volunteer and helps poor people avail of Govt. Schemes. He promoted a people's group called " Tharasu Makkal Mandram" 4 years back. The members keep vigil of Govt. implementation and point out any lacuna in the programme. Now the people of that area have nicknamed him "Tharasu Dheenadayalan" . With the help of an NGO he formed "Umbalcherry Indigenous Cattle Herders Association" to conserve the Umbalchery indigenous cattle. He is also honorary secretary of the association. Now he is promoting village level groups of indigenous livestock keepers in Aymur, Wattakudi , Umbalchery villages of Thalaignayaru block, Nagapattinam District. Through these groups calf rearing programme is being implemented by the NGO. He also advocate indigenous animal healing practices by using herbal plants.



## Mr Elango

Mr Elango, a Dalit youth heads the Kuthambakkam Gram Panchayat in Thiruvallur Dt., Tamil Nadu. An engineer by profession he was earlier working at a Central Govt Research Institute, and later started an industry with his own investment. In his area 52% of the population is Dalit, whereas 90% of land available is with the upper caste groups.

Having the firm conviction that of all the institutions , grassroots institutions are the most powerful instruments to transform the lives of underprivileged people , he resigned from his job and contested in the election and won. Since 1996 he has been involved in community work. His objective was to protect the self respect of Dalits, creating awareness, upgrading their skills and link their economic activity with banks. He mobilized over one crore rupees for various schemes implemented in the panchayat which gave employment to local people and weaned them away from brewing illicit liquor which was ruining the lives of their families. He identified several technologies feasible for adaptation to the rural situation of his area such as mud block making, soap making, diary, bakery , thoor dal preparation, oil extraction, jute bag and handmade paper production, energy efficient lights, etc and created production units under the banner of a Trust he started called Trust for Village Self Governance .

Elango's vision is to make Kuthambakkam a model for total development using the Panchayati Raj system and to make it not only a learning center, but a doers academy or 'Panchayat Academy' for other Panchayats to replicate.



## Mr Gnanakulandhai

Gnanakulandhai from Theni District of Tamil Nadu is a 42 year-old postgraduate (M.A. Political Science) who has been involved with community activities.

He could have easily opted for a livelihood in a city or town but he decided to work for the development of his own village. In the initial years he was involved in community development programs. Today, as a Common Wealth Coordinator, he teaches students computers and promotes Information Technology amongst his community members. State Bank managers particularly appreciate his co-operation.

Gnanakulandhai has contributed to his village's development through active awareness and door-to-door dialogues with women, motivating rural women to pick up literacy skills, cultivate a habit of saving and thus organize SHGs for savings. In addition, he is actively working on improving agriculture methods and generating awareness amongst the farmers.





## **Ms R Gnanasundari**

Gnanasundari is 29 years old and working as a field officer in SEVA. She studied up to +2 and trained in computer operations. She has organized sheep herders group in 8 villages of Pudhur village of Thuthukudi district. She learned herbal healing practices for animals and organized animal health camp. She has so far organized more than 10 health camps with help from Government Veterinary Department. She also documented indigenous practices in agriculture, animal husbandry and herbal medicine in many villages of Thuthukudi district. She is trained in computer.



## Mr John Nelson

John Nelson is a 29 years old graduate from Vadalur, Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu. After graduation, he worked in Pondicherry in a small company, aiming to be an entrepreneur and also to generate employment.

He feels that though cities were developing in infrastructure, the villages are far behind in facilities. He liked the concept that the digital divide has to be bridged, and since Chiraag was doing that and was also linked to IIT, he decide to be part of it. He says, "I am happy to be among the first few in Cuddalore-Dist., when it was introduced". He was the first person to talk with the District Collector when video conferencing was arranged in Cuddalore district and was impressed by the Collector's immediate action on the queries.

He got data conversion work from USA through his friend there, and could employ 18 poor girls who finished 12th Std, some of whom were breeding cattle prior to this work and were not always able to have 2 meals a day. He could see their life style improve after they became earning members, which was possible only with n-logue's connection.

He says, "People respected us since we talked about e-governance and also because of the telemedicine session conducted with Arvind Eye Hospital, Pondicherry. We got recognition because of Chiraag". John is happy to be in the Chiraag family, and wants to do more good work which will improve the quality of life in rural India.



## Ms Kalaivani Rajendran

A dedicated farm woman striving hard to bridge the gap between scientific know-how and field level do-how, she aims to foster an evergreen revolution in her small farm, and enhance productivity in perpetuity without ecological harm.

Kalaivani Rajendran, a woman farmer from a tiny village called Kallar Pasupathikovil in Thanavur Dt of Tamilnadu was born in 1961 and studied up to S.S L.C. She was only housekeeper till 1992 when she attended a training on Women in Agriculture, a Danida-aided Project. The training she received from TANWA and subsequent training programs conducted by the Agriculture University and the Agriculture Department has completely changed her outlook.

She is the contact farmer for both the University and the Agriculture Dept. She has laid out a number of demonstrations to bring knowledge from 'Lab to Land'. At present she is following the SRI method of paddy cultivation which saves water, seed, labour and enhances the yield. She believes in organic farming, and produces many organic products and herbal pesticides in her own farm.

By virtue of her service to the farming community she was selected as the convener of the farmers discussion group of the Farmers Training Centre, is the recipient of the best discussion group award of the Govt of Tamil Nadu and the L.M.Patel National Award for best woman rice farmer in The International Year of Rice (2004).

Kalaivani Rajendran though a small farmer has shown the way to a remunerative rice based farming system through adopting modern technology.



## **Ms Kanagavalli Rajendran**

A social activist with a passion and commitment to the social and economic upliftment and empowerment of rural women, Kanagavalli aged 42 is a widow who has studied up to SSLC. Born in a traditional agriculture family which restricts women from going out of the house, Kanagavalli somehow managed to attend a training program organized by the State Agriculture Dept 1995. The training influenced her to develop income generating skills for the farm women to help enhance of their economic situation. She was a pioneer in vermicompost production in this area, taught a number of farmers in and around her village to produce this organic product to earn money and also thereby practice organic farming . Endowed with good leadership quality she has successfully mobilized women SHGs and enlightened them about the social and welfare programmes of the Govt.

She has dispelled several taboos, myths and evils in the society working against the rural women. By organizing micro-credit and savings through SHG she has saved farm women from the clutches of usurious money lenders.

The District Collector has praised Kanagavalli as a role model for many women in the village. Now she started learning computer with the help of her children and very soon she will emerge as a best knowledge worker using ICT for the empowerment of the farm women and development of the village.



## Ms Kavitha

28-year-old Kavitha comes from P.C.Patti, a small village in the Theni district of TamilNadu. She is a graduate B.Sc in Maths, and has been involved with community activities for 1 year. She enrolled to study the Tally accounting course, travelling from P.C.Patti to Theni, a distance of 15 kms to learn computers. She is confident with good public speaking abilities.

She uses computers for preparing reports and statements of accounts and has undergone other technical training like video replay, photography, etc. Though she wanted to become a school teacher she was not allowed to go for further studies so she started a tuition center in her home teaching village children free of charge. And also she is running a Chiraag centre.



## Mr T Mahadevan

Mahadeven is 32 and has studied B.A. in Tamil. He lives in Veeralampatti Village, Madurai District, Tamil Nadu and is a volunteer of SEVA involved in eradication of infanticide in Usilampatti and Peraiyur Taluks. Over the last 8 years, he convinced many families to prevent female infanticide.

Mahadeven helped the NGO to recover earlier dues from the members and became instrumental in linking with banks for availing micro credit facilities. This process has convinced the local banks to give loans and credit facilities to the women SHGs, which was very difficult earlier. He has promoted 35 SHGs near his village and mobilized credit from banks to the tune of more than Rs.10,00,000/-.



## Mr Maniyan

Maniyan, a dynamic and dedicated social worker from Keela Punavasal in Thanjavur District works hard in the field. He adopts and popularize new innovative agricultural practices for the benefit of the community.

Aged 46, Maniyan has studied only upto 8<sup>th</sup> standard but his knowledge of agriculture is great . He grasps all innovative ideas quickly and starts implementing it and extends to other farmers in and around his village. He has been a convener of the farmers' discussion group of the Farmers Training Center, Sakkotai from 1984 onwards. He has attended a number of training programmes conducted by both Agriculture University and Agriculture Department. He has attended 7 farm school on air conducted by All India Radio and won several prizes. He was responsible for introduction of a number of alternative crops like soya been, sunflower etc. He is popularizing organic farming and at present he is learning computer in the village resource center and he will be one of the volunteers in the forthcoming Rural Knowledge Center at Villangudy.



## Ms Murugaveni

Aged 35 Murugaveni is from Govindanagaram Village, Theni Dt in Tamil Nadu. She studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> std and was a farm worker and housewife till she started running Chiraag for the past 1 year. She conducts meetings with women and provides information related to savings through Chiraag which she joined in 2004, and also became involved in nursery activities. She is a Spearhead team member, and her work includes plantation, selling of ready plants, calculation and maintenance of prepared plants, seed collection and development work for wastelands. Through this she was able to build her capacity to make others understand the significance of plantations and nursery activity. She is a co-ordinator of Comman Wealth Association involved in COL project.

‘I was not eager to work with plants, in the initial stages. Gradually, I understood the importance of this activity and how I could motivate others in my community to nurture plants. Now, I work with the Sarpanch and others in the Panchayat and am fully involved in village development work. After two years of Nursery work, I got the opportunity to undertake computer training from Chiraag , I liked to learn new technology at this age. In future I will definitely learn more of new technology. I have become a more responsible person after joining CHIRAAG and have even built a small house with my savings.’

She provides information in her community for development work, taking forward the integrated approach of CHIRAAG. Murugaveni has developed into a confident woman; working for village development.





## Mr R Nalla Senapathi

Nalla Senapathi is a 26 year old youth in Nallam Palayam Village, Erode District, Tamil Nadu. He studied up to +2 and he is looking after his farms and sheep. He uses his knowledge of traditional veterinary herbal healing practices for treating animals and is an active social worker during his leisure time.

With the help of SEVA, Nalla Senapathi has promoted two peoples groups for conserving Korangadu pasture land in two villages viz. Nallam Palayam and Palanikaundanvalasu in Erode District. . These two groups have savings account (savings up to Rs.30,000) and with their savings they loan money to the members for strengthening livestock development activities. With these members he is involved in the formation of village roads, providing drinking water for animals, planting fodder trees in farmers' land and treatment of animals by using medicinal plants and herbs. He has treated so far more than 2,000 sheep using herbal medicines.

Nalla Senapathi is helping the panchayat and the university by providing information on the Korangadu pasture land and the livestock population by conducting actual field surveys. He also trained 20 members on animal feed preparation to meet the day-to-day feed requirements of dairy animals.



## Ms A Neelaveni

42 year old Neelaveni has completed SSLC and is secretary of the all-women farmers club of Iluppakorai in Papanasam taluk, Tamil Nadu. This club got an international award from World Women Summit Foundation based in Geneva for their innovative approach in empowering women.

Neelaveni comes from a traditional agricultural family and assists her husband in all farming operations. She was responsible for the introduction of SRI Method of paddy cultivation in her village and also in adjacent villages. This method which reduces the cost of cultivation by cutting down inputs like seed and water is welcomed by all farmers and the department is also promoting it and advocating alternative methods of cropping due to water scarcity. Neelaveni was the pioneer in introducing and demonstrating to others this method of cultivation which is the need of the hour.

She also underwent coir making training and earns additional income and motivate others also to take it up .She and few innovative farm women of her village are preparing various food materials and supplying to those who are in need. She is also learning computer from the Rural Knowledge Centre of MSSRF at Thiruvaiyaru. She is a role model for empowering the farming community especially farm women.



## Ms Parasakthi

Smt.Parasakthi(47) is an agricultural labourer in SundaraRajapuram village near Rajapalayam. She studied up to +2.. Since her husband has abandoned her and living with another wife, she wanted to help ladies abandoned by men. She has so far taken up 14 cases and united the couples or arranged marriage. In addition she is instrumental in stopping illegal liquor production by many husbands in SundaraRajapuram village. She promoted 4 women groups during 1999 attached with TANWA and now functioning independently.

She is a good communicator and is known as an active social worker on all issues related with women. She recently volunteered to work for 8 days for Tsunami relief during Jan'2005 in Nagapattinam District.



## Ms Preetha

23 year-old Preetha from Koduvai in Coimbatore has completed BCA. She had prior computer knowledge and was working as a teacher. She learnt about n-logue when she attended a self-help group meeting in Tirupur and started a kiosk in her village.

She is earning from from DDTP, typewriting, education, spoken English course, browsing and games. With her earlier experience as a teacher, she takes educational classes for her village students and is also doing project work for the college students.

iSee to Aravind Eye hospital, and veterinary doctors is another service on which Preetha concentrates. Villagers' doubts and questions in agriculture or veterinary problems are cleared through iSee to doctors. From the start to date many members are using Aravind services so she is very happy to provide these services to her villagers.



## **Ms Rajeswari Karthikeyan**

A dedicated social worker with grit and determination to elevate the status of women in the rural societies, Rajeswari Karthikeyan (38) hails from a peasant family from Pasupathikovil in Thanjavur Dt of Tamilnadu. Though she wanted to become a school teacher she was not allowed to go for further studies so she started a nursery school in her home teaching village children free of charge. She created Barathi women's group through which she trains women in tailoring and educates them about their rights.

After participating in an all women farmers field school she became an IPM trainer. As a result she has eliminated the use of pesticide in the area ever since she attended the school. Spearheading a group of 30 women from the FFS they approached the police and were successful in eradicating the illicit sale of liquor in the village. She mobilized 100 women to provide micro finance through formation of self help groups to help women to start small business. In the year 2001 she won the International award from world women summit foundation based in Geneva for her commitment to empower rural women. She is now a role model.



## Ms S Ramuthai

Ramuthai is 33 years old and has studied upto Xth Standard. She is a member and animator of a self help groups in Sanka kaundanpatti village in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu. She has promoted 20 groups of poor women agricultural labourers in Sanka kaundanpatti and nearby villages. She also struggled to get bank linkages and thereafter she helped in extending bank credits to 20 SHGs. She mobilized Rs.12,30,000/- as micro credit to provide resources to poor members for purchase of dairy animals, sheep and goats.

In close association with the Panchayat, Ramuthai was instrumental in construction of a community hall and toilet facilities for women. She relieved many members from the clutches of local money lenders and supported them through micro credit. She has also settled many disputes arising out of caste and creed and promoted dignity for women members.



## Mr Ravikumar

Ravikumar of Ekkadu in Tiruvallur Dt., Tamilnadu is 50 years old. He attended the basic computer training conducted by n-logue, and on successful completion of the training he has set up a kiosk in his village.

He is earning from Typewriting, Education, Spoken English course, photos Browsing and games, astrology services, iSee to Aravind Eye hospital, etc. He has helped a drug addict to come out this menace through iSee consultation with Ramchandra Doctors.

Though he didn't have any prior knowledge about the use of computers, after the periodical training he is very well aware of how to use the computer and the other activities and services offered through the computer. Now he is managing his computer centre very well and is taking computer courses for a number of students. More than 30 children have studied online tutorial and 60% of students have passed their 10 th. Std. examination. He gives the online tutorial free of cost to the village students.



## Ms Sagaya Shalini

Sagaya Shalini is 22 years old, from Pinjavakkam in Tiruvallur Dist. Tamil Nadu and a BA graduate through correspondence. She is member of SHG of Tiruvallur District and was selected by the district administration to set up a kiosk in her village. She attended the basic computer training conducted by n-logue, and on successful completion of the training she has set up a kiosk in her village. Though she didn't have any prior knowledge about the use of computers, now after the periodical training she is very well aware of how to use the computer and the other activities and services it offers. Now she is managing her computer center very well and is taking computer courses for a number of students.

She is earning from typewriting, education, spoken English course, photos bowsing and games, iSee to Aravind Eye hospital and also through astro services, since the people in her village are keenly interested in astrology. She has also helped to consult with Aravind eye hospital doctors for the benefit of 10 villagers. When she represented to the district collector about her village road through iSee, the collector granted Rs.2 lakhs for the road. The Central communication minister came to her village to see how the kiosks works.





## Mr J Senthil Kumar

25-year-old Senthil Kumar - a graduate from T.Vadipatty in Madurai Dt, Tamil Nadu has been a volunteer in civil society organizations as a learning experience. After joining the Centre for Rural Education and Development (CRED) in 2003, attending several training programmes and workshops. He is now a programme coordinator and has organized Reproductive & Child Health (RCH) campaigns, environmental campaign meetings for rural women and school students and also cleanliness campaigns in villages, along with other village development work, with the help of Panchayat.

*'After joining CRED, I realized my potential for knowledge and experience in the field of social development particularly on health and environment. Now I feel I have a new meaning in my life to serve the poor as much as possible '*

The community has benefited through his active work. He has managerial skill to organize meetings and work together to attain the overall objective of the team. He has had good exposure in project formulating, implementing and executing, and documentation analysis. He executes computer operations and prepares his daily reports on the office computer.



## Ms T Sudha

23 -year-old Sudha, a graduate from a rural BPL background family in Vadipatty in Madurai district, Tamil Nadu belongs to a traditional agricultural farmer's family. She has a strong social commitment and has been actively involved in social and development programmes especially for women in development, since 2000.

Sudha is a volunteer of CRED for the past four years, in its child labour eradication programme and became actively involved in developing micro-level planning with a participatory approach for assessment, identification of problems and finding solutions for implementation. She has experience in organizing programmes and in report preparation and documentation. She has good ability for communicating and interacting with people and was involved in imparting literacy skills to the women in her village.



## Ms Suganya

Suganya from T.Ulagupitchanpatty, Madurai, Tamilnadu is 21 years old and has completed 12<sup>th</sup> std from a government school. Though she didn't have prior computer knowledge, she underwent computer basic training in Madurai and after completion of the training she started a kiosk in her village T.Ulagapichanpatty.

Suganya is earning from DDTP, education, spoken English course, browsing and games, iSee to Aravind Eye hospital, and veterinary doctors. From the start to date 150 members have used Aravind services. Agricultural or veterinary doubts and problems of the villagers are cleared by the doctors through iSee. For instance when a farmer came to her centre and told her about the disease that has affected the ladies fingers crop in his field, Suganya forwarded his case to the agricultural college. The professor sent the solution to that disease, so the farmer was able to earn Rs.1 lacs because of this remedial measure. Every Friday she has an iSee session through which her villagers are able to communicate to their relatives (both by video/audio) living abroad.



## Mr S Thinakarasamy

53 year old Shri S. Thinakarasamy residing at Kooliyankadu Village, Pudukottai District of Tamil Nadu is a dedicated farmer, obsessed with a strong inclination towards attaining self- sufficiency in the farm front of Pudukottai District. His contribution towards rural development is immense and he is an asset to society and to the nation.

As a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and National Pulses Research Centre (NPRC), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, in Vamban, Pudukottai District, Shri Thinakarasamy has focused on the real training needs of unemployed rural youth and aspiring young women of Pudukottai District and has helped prepare a vision document. He as supplied quality seedlings of fruit and coconut trees to needy fellow farmers of Pudukottai District and has helped the District Administration to solve the real issues raised during Farmers' Grievance Day. He has been instrumental in greening and converting more than thousand acres of wasteland to economically viable lands.

The issues on farm development, rural credit, marketing of produce, subsidies on inputs etc, raised at grass root level were debated and brought to the notice of the concerned officials under the leadership of Shri. Thinakarasamy. His acumen while performing rural development activities towards self- employment, wasteland development, rural resourcefulness, establishing rural nursery, frontline demonstrations and community development, has impressed the District Administration and MSSRF. Now he is actively involved in establishing a Village Resource centre (VRC) of MSSRF.



## Mr G Thiyagarajan

G.Thiyagarajan from Perambur, Mayiladuthurai, Tamil Nadu has done his diploma in Electrical and Electronics . He was running an electrical shop and servicing electronic items, and joined the Chiraag family to educate people in his village and help them by using the services. His father is the president of Perambur village, doing social service in his village.

His major revenue earning service is DTP and photoshop. He is currently doing DTP and photo works for Perambur police station and is also earning well from photos taken for family cards. He takes computer courses for students. He also does work for the community by sending communications to higher authorities about village development works like roads etc, and getting their response and sanction.



## Ms K Vasamalli

Smt.Vasamalli is a 45 year old woman who is the first woman graduate from the Toda tribal community in Nilgiris. She has organized a buffalo-keepers association by involving Toda community members. She co-ordinates with various Government departments in getting community certificates for the members, title rights for land ownership, conservation of native buffalo breed and removal of eucalyptus plantation. She is very articulate on the issue of Toda tribes and she is a well known personality in Nilgiris. By seeing her involvement she was invited to attend the international workshop on participatory conservation organized by United Nations at Durban during 2004. She has been trained in computer. She is taking steps to preserve Toda culture, Toda language and revive nature worship and prayer performed by the original Toda peoples. She is also a governing committee member of the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP).



## Mr Velmurugan

Velmurugan from Periakulam in Theni, Tamilnadu is a 25 year old BSc graduate. He was very interested in having a computer centre, so when he attended the Chiraag meeting in Theni, he was very happy to know about the n-logue services. He attended the training course, after which he started the kiosk in his village. He is earning from DTP Works, Data Entry in rural areas.

Velmurugan is a very active member. He has a special liking to work for the poor and is a prime motivator in spearheading projects that would directly benefit underprivileged people. He is able to establish a very quick rapport with the common man, identify their needs and organize his own skills as well as his contacts, to conceptualize schemes that will be beneficial in enhancing the standard of living of the poor.



## Ms S B Yoganandhi

33-year-old S.B.Yoganandhi is in Theni district, and has studied upto B.E, which she discontinued. She is a leader and member of the SHG Trade group. She organised agriculture campaign meeting for members, organised farmers groups and provided farmers with training and awareness, and seeds for better crops.

She is a very good leader and she has good communication skills. She has organised more than 300 members into SHGs. She provides very useful service of spoken English, teaches how to operate the computer along with data entries.

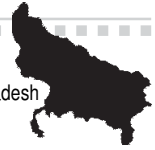




## **Mr Rajmani Parmar & Ms Priti Parmar**

Belonging to the most illiterate and poorest area of India, the Parmar sisters would normally have got married at an early age. But they chose to bring the benefits of Information Technology to their village in Uttar Pradesh and also earn revenue for their family. Rajmani is 25 years old with an M.A in sociology, and Priti is a 24 year old graduate in sociology and economics.

The sisters used their foresight and decided to open a TARAkendra at Punawali Kalan, a small village in Jhansi with a population of 4000. For the last four years, they are successfully running the TARAkendra against all odds such as power cuts, lack of connectivity, poor infrastructure etc. In these years they have successfully managed to overcome all social barriers that come along with the tag of a female entrepreneur. The Parmar sisters have not only taught students IT courses but have also spread a mass awareness about the benefits of Internet in their own and neighbouring villages. They conduct sewing classes for young girls under TARAhaat's Meljol Program, which provides an interactive platform for young girls and women to learn new skills. Rajmani and Priti have become role models for the young girls of their community. Their efforts in changing a male dominated committee, which was set up for managing community water management system to an all women committee and thereby rejuvenating the water system, has been truly amazing.

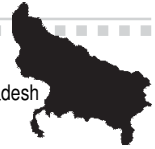


## Mr Sanjay Singh

Sanjay Singh is a village youth from Faizabad District of Uttar Pradesh. The 30-year old graduate has been involved with community development activities for last 8-9 years as an active social worker.

He is working as a facilitator cum worker in the community development works especially in organizing agricultural training, extension and knowledge spreading programs of the university and other agencies working in the area. He has been instrumental in bringing a number of on-farm programs of the university and motivated farm men and women to participate in these programs. He was at the forefront of the IRRI-NDUAT shuttle breeding and farmers participatory varietal selection programs. Sanjay organized the seed production of these new selections through farmers' cooperative and made them available to others including farmers of the neighbouring villages. Sanjay conducted surveys to identify the agricultural needs of the farmers in the areas, which ranged from varietal choice to the needs for fodder and fuel. NEFORD, an NGO working in the area, has helped him connect with World Agroforestry Centre regional office in Delhi and an on-farm testing programme has been initiated to find out the appropriate fuel and forest species to meet the dual needs.

Sanjay Singh was exposed to various training programmes organized by the Agriculture University and participated in field visits to different parts of Uttar Pradesh in a knowledge sharing program organized by NEFORD. Sanjay could have easily got a job in a city or town, but he decided to work for the development of his own village. He keeps himself abreast with new technologies and techniques in the field of agriculture. He has also won the confidence of his fellow farmers and helps them to test, verify and adopt new technologies.



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## Ms Uma Singh

32-year old Uma is a graduate from village Chandpur in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh. While residing in the village, Uma started her career in the field of rural development as a school teacher. She initiated her own school in 1995 and started taking interest in rural women and children's health and sanitation programmes in the village. She also got associated with the NDUAT, Faizabad and participated in their gender-sensitive programs. She played a key role in the study on male migration and its impact on agriculture.

Her association with the NEFORD – an NGO working in the fields of rural development and education, gave her a strong base to expand her education and health awareness programmes. Now she regularly organizes health camps and teaches young girls about pregnancy management and provides them with the current information on such diseases as HIV/AIDS etc. She strongly believes that only knowledge can empower rural women. NEFORD has also helped her to run an out-of-school education programme for the girls and elderly women who cannot afford to attend regular schools. NEFORD helped her to conduct surveys on rural drop out girls and provided them the opportunity to continue their studies in the out-of-the school courses. She also conducted surveys on food and nutrition status of women and children in the rural areas. Mostly girls were found to be the sufferers. Her team keeps a strict vigil on programmes such as mid-day meal programme of the Government.

*'I am satisfied with my work. Many people from the neighbouring villages now approach me to extend my work in their villages. I feel proud that I am doing something for my community',* says Uma.

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She has motivated a large number of farm women to form associations and work as a “pressure group” for the Panchayat to develop and implement a well chalked-out programme that benefits all. Uma has excellent leadership qualities and power to motivate illiterate women to move forward.



Uttarakhand

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## Ms Archana Raturi

24 year old Archana a resident of Khadi, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand discovered her hidden skill as a broadcast announcer at a training workshop for community radio in 2001. She has since become a tremendous asset to *Hevalvani*, the community radio service of which she is an active member.

Archana is an emerging youth leader, having several years of social work, particularly in health and literacy camps to her credit as a member of the *Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan*. But she feels that the social service groups have developed a style and manner which has become stale and they were all looking for a fresh way of getting people to participate, of getting their messages across. Community Radio provided her with the ideal platform, and Archana has been a very creative contributor to the popularity of Hevalvani in Tehri Garhwal district.

Archana has set an example to her fellow radio enthusiasts by doing the IGNOU diploma course on creative writing, and writes regularly for local magazines and *Amar Ujala*, a daily. She also takes part in street theatre dramas to spread social messages. She has participated in a media "Needs" survey conducted by Equal Access in her area. and has also made programmes for NABARD and for local schools and colleges. She organizes and participates in events to promote local products and handicrafts, and campaigns for local issues through *Hevalvani Samudayik Radio*.



Uttarakhand

## Ms Partima

Partima is a coordinator with Rural Litigation Entitlements Centre and hails from the newly carved Indian state of Uttarakhand. A tribal woman, belonging to the Koluta tribe, Partima was born in a poor but large family of seven siblings. She had to drop school at 5th Std. owing to financial constraints. Undeterred, she managed to take up non-formal education to complete her graduation. Today, she is sharing and imparting her knowledge and skills to the 'Van Gujjars' a roving shepherd community in the hills of Uttarakhand.

Partima uses the wireless to educate and train hundred of Gujjar children and women and to provide them life saving information. Thanks to the wireless technology she uses to empower the tribals, many pregnant tribal women were able to receive timely medical attention for their deliveries.

Partima, who herself has overcome discrimination, as a woman and as a tribal, feels that she has a lot to contribute and feels that development decisions must be sensitive to grassroots realities and concerns.



Uttaranchal

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## Mr Vipin Joshi

29 year old Vipin a resident of Tallihaat, Bageshwar district, Uttarakhand, is an unusual young man with a dream. Unlike most of his contemporaries in rural Kumaon, he believes that migrating to the plains in search of lucrative employment will not solve anything for his village or his people. Vipin became an active social worker from an early age, and also thoroughly involved himself in the cultural life of his area.

While still in high school he organized young students to form a social service group, the Nav Prabhat Yuva Samiti. They began to help with the organization of health camps in their village, provide clean drinking water to patients and their attendants, and arrange for facilities for hospital stay for patients' attendants. Through these simple beginnings they began to extend their work to include literacy camps for elderly and economically deprived persons.

Three years ago Vipin joined SIDH (Society for Integrated Development of the Himalaya) in Mussoorie where he helped research and implement an appropriate educational system for hill students. He is an eager and participative member of Pradeep Samudayik Radio, keen that this unusual method of communication and its participatory potential should be used for intellectual and social awakening for his people. His research papers on Ethnographic Action Research on ICTs commissioned by UNESCO through the Himalaya Trust were highly appreciated.