



Rural Education & Action Development (READ)

Andimadam, Tamil Nadu, India

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Fiscal year April 2008- March 2009

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(READ is registered under the Societies Registration Act 27 of 1975 and registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act of 1976).



Honourable President and Members of the General Body,

Once again I am privileged to present the progress report of READ's activities, for fiscal year 2008-2009. This was the fourteenth year in our long mission pace. This year we developed more infrastructure for READ to promote the sustainability of our activities, particularly in the area of education. We also continued to focus on our micro-finance program to bring significant economic progress into the lives of the poor class people and through extension, uplift their communities. Finally, we continued many activities of previous years, including our children sponsorship program, care and support services to people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV), women empowerment trainings, vocational trainings, disability services and link services to new NGO partners.

As in the previous year, Sahaya International Inc., and its network of volunteers and contributors in the USA and Belgium continue to be the major funding partners supporting the welfare and infrastructure development activities of READ. I take this opportunity to thank sincerely Sahaya International (USA & Belgium), the Alliance for Youth Achievement Inc. (USA), SAWES (Belgium)/ Inba Seva Sangam (ISS; Sevapur, India) and other friends, partners and well-wishers for their generous support in different ways. I wish and request this cooperation to continue in the coming years to help READ achieve its development mission.

D. Selvam (Founder Secretary, READ)



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1. EDUCATION

READ continues educational service both to normal children and differently-abled children from poor social groups who are deprived of quality education and educational training.

1.1. Formal education to children:

Three schools run by READ offer formal education in English medium to poor rural children. The Mother Theresa Standard English schools at Periyakrishnapuram and the Jawahar Nursery and Primary school at Andimadam offer primary education (kindergarten and 1-5 Standards). The Mother Theresa school of Thirukalapur offers lower and upper kindergarten (LKG, UKG). In this reporting year, the Mother Theresa Standard English schools have an enrollment of 147 children (65 girls +82 boys) with 8 teachers. The Jawahar Nursery and Primary School has 66 children (29 girls + 37 boys) enrolled and 7 teachers.



READ's main areas of activity are Andimadam and Senthurai blocks of Ariyalur district.

The Mother Theresa School at Periyakrishnapuram has got a full-fledged school building constructed in this reporting year thanks to the contributions from Sahaya Internal Inc., USA. This new building was inaugurated Dr. Koen Van Rompay (founder of Sahaya) and a team of friends from Belgium on December 22, 2008.

For the Jawahar Nursery and Primary School, construction of a new building was started in this reporting year, with the goal of being ready at the onset of next academic year in June 2009. Funds for this school building were provided by Sahaya International Inc. and its network of supporters in the USA and Belgium, with special attention to the fundraising efforts by Koninlijk Atheneum Ekeren (led by Mr. Paul Verlodt)..

1.2. Special Education Schools:

READ runs two special education Schools, commonly named "ANBAGAM", for mentally challenged children; one school is at Andimadam and the other one at Perambalur town (90 kilometers away from Andimadam). These schools train mentally challenged children with different levels of disability on daily living activities, identification and perception of objects and persons with whom they are associated. The school at Andimadam has 25 children looked after by 2 special educators, 1 untrained teacher and 2 care takers. The school at Perambalur has 35 children, 4 special educators and 1 care taker. A grant was received from the State Commissioner



The Annai Theresa Standard English School (Periyakrishnapuram village), of which construction was completed in 2008, provides basic education to many children, most of them from low-literacy and poor farming families.

for Disability at Chennai for the Perambalur School to meet the salary for 3 special educators and the rent of the school. Additional support comes from the “Diamond House” (Rob Van Beurden, Belgium). The other school is being run with the local donations and other contributions.

2. ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM:

This is an ongoing program that sponsors the educational and health needs of poor orphaned or semi- orphaned children and HIV-infected

children. The Alliance for Youth Achievement Inc. (AYA), USA and the networks of Sahaya International in USA and Belgium are arranging sponsors for poor and vulnerable rural children in need of help. In this reporting year 9 children received sponsorship from AYA, USA, 151 children were supported by Sahaya (104 and 47 children by sponsors in the USA and Belgium, respectively), and 1 each from Sweden, Dubai and India. In addition, funds raised by Sahaya International through the Hope Walks event sponsors 14 HIV-infected children.



On December 28, 2008, we took many of the sponsored children and Hope Walks children to Pichavaram for a boat tour through the mangrove forest. The kids (and adults) also enjoyed the play garden.

The sponsorship generally meets the cost of food, educational materials, school fees, school uniform dress, summer camp and tours. Some sponsors individually contributed for the special needs of their sponsored children such as bicycles, reading desks and so on. The sponsorship for HIV-infected children includes also the cost of their medical and nutritious needs.

One more girl student Vasanthi, who is studying in her 3rd year in pursuit of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Chennai was continued to be supported by Elisabeth Sherwin together with other sponsors of Sahaya International.

3. HIV/AIDS AWARENESS, CARE & SUPPORT PROGRAM

3.1. Sahaya International Inc., USA, Hope walks event and Gilead Science program:

- As in the last year, Sahaya International raised again funds through the Hope Walks Davis event to support HIV-infected/affected orphans

and vulnerable children. In addition, Gilead Sciences, USA also awarded us a grant to provide care and support services to persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV). These funds supported the following:

- PLHIV's network meetings every month to provide counseling and sharing opportunity. Around 85 positive people attended the meetings. Travel costs and refreshments are offered at these meetings.
- Travel support to 80 PLHIV including 14 children to go to the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine, Tambaram and the Government Hospital at Perambalur to receive Antiretroviral drugs and medications for opportunistic diseases. Simple medications and consultation with local doctors (Dr. Selvamani and Dr. S. Kandasamy) for 14 infected children.
- Medical expense support to approximately 45 PLHIV to cover treatment cost for opportunistic infections.
- Monthly supplies of nutritious food that includes green gram, peanuts and other gram varieties,



Through the proceeds of Hope Walks (USA), HIV-infected children receive a monthly supply of highly nutritious food supplements (left); the sponsorship program of orphans and vulnerable children supports the children for their daily needs, and also provides them with school supplies, including large items such as study desks that help to improve their education.

biscuits, date fruits and jiggery and additional medical needs to 14 infected children; also general support to children of HIV affected families.

- Childhood immunization of 4 HIV + children who did not avail the immunizations in their early age
- Schooling support to 11 orphan children and a two-day camp for children,
- Four-day training programs on Home-based Care were given to 73 PLHIV and 10 staff members not previously trained in HIV issues. They were provided with a health kit and a copy of the tamil Home based care manual.
- Micro-credit was provided to 15 PLHIV for a total amount of Rs.78,000 to start income-generating activities like street vending, goat rearing, milk cow rearing and milk vending. This loan fund is operated as a revolving fund to help other beneficiaries also upon repayment.

3.2. HIV Booklet printing Program:

In this reporting year, Global Strategies for HIV Prevention, USA contributed a fund to produce and print HIV Booklets in English to be used in Liberia, Uganda and USA for awareness generation. 7000 Booklets were printed by READ and sent to the respective countries in this reporting year.

4. TNVHA PROGRAMS

READ is the District Facilitation Centre and District Resource centre for Tamilnadu Voluntary Health Association, Chennai, covering Ariyalur and Perambalur Districts. Five NGOs are in this District network with READ to undertake TNVHA sponsored projects funded by Development Cooperation, Ireland. The trainings offered by the NGO's through READ include training to youth leaders, community leaders and NGO staff orientation.

In this reporting year 43 youth leaders (25 men and 17 women) from 5 NGOs were trained on Reproductive Health Rights (RHR), and they in turn trained 1759 (875 male and 884 female) community leaders in different areas of the district on Reproductive Health rights and the related topics of HIV transmission. The youth leaders also promoted peer educators from the community to sustain this education process.

Besides being one of the five beneficiary organizations of this project, as the TNVHA District Facilitation Centre READ organized and monitored these programs.

5. DISABILITY PROGRAMS

READ had already organized disabled persons



The Jawahar Matriculation School provides basic education to 60 children. During previous years, it has been operating in a rented building that is scheduled to be torn down soon. Construction of a new school was started in 2008 thanks to the fundraising efforts of volunteers in Belgium (particularly the Koninklijk Atheneum School of Ekeren) and the USA.



in its service area into SHGs and is in the process of further organizing these groups. Regular programs offered by READ to these SHG's include training on advocacy and capacity building and the dissemination of empowerment information. In this reporting year, 10 selected persons received small grants to start livelihood activities to earn for their sustenance. These programs were supported through the last installment of the grant from the ABILIS foundation, Finland.

In addition, community based trainings were organized to parents of disabled persons, to community leaders and to rehabilitation workers.

6. COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER (CRC)

We have constructed a Community Resource Center with major funding from the Japanese Embassy and other resources during 2007. This is a comprehensive center that now accommodates the office of the Executive Director of READ and many programs/ activities, including:

6.1. Vocational skill-training:

Skill-training is one of the ongoing programs since the inception of READ. In the beginning



In the newly constructed READ's Community Resource Center (RCRC), READ continues to provide a variety of vocational skill-trainings to adolescent girls and disabled people.

training on tailoring and greeting card production was offered; over time several new vocations have been added, such as typewriting, computer operation, book binding, fashion designing, garment making, and beautician training. All these training units are centrally located in CRC with adequate working and training space for each individual activity.

In this reporting year, 135 young women have undergone the certificate training course in tailoring, 25 in typewriting, 18 in greeting card making, 25 in Fashion dress making, 25 in beautician course, 5 in typewriting, and 30 in computer operation. In addition, 3 disabled young people have undergone training in book-binding. All these training were offered by qualified trainers in the respective fields.

The greeting card training is associated with production activity, and the cards are marketed in USA, Belgium and Australia as a fundraising activity.

The tailoring, type-writing and computer operation programs are self-supporting and are offered with a nominal course fee collected from the trainees.

6.2. 'Anbagam' Special School for mentally challenged children:

This school has been explained in the 'Education' section (see above). This school was previously run in a rented building before being moved to the CRC, with 4 spacious class rooms, recreation and play facilities, and 2 dormitories with dining facility.

6.3. Health unit cum physiotherapy center:

A separate health unit and a physiotherapy unit are operating in CRC as supportive units to 'Anbagam' special school children. Besides, these units cater to the needs of our community-based rehabilitation activities undertaken in villages.

6.4. Rehabilitation and career guidance to disabled adults:

This unit provides career guidance to educated and especially skilled handicapped persons trained in our program and trained elsewhere. Fifteen people came to use its services.

6.5. Trainings/workshops, seminars in CRC:

Residential training facility is available in CRC with 2 training halls, training materials, dormitory and dining facilities. Trainings are offered on health, entrepreneur development, home-based care to HIV/AIDS patients, community-based rehabilitation, outreach social work, NGO staff training, community leaders training, and training to parents of disabled children and many other training as per the need. At a time 25 people can undergo residential training and 30 can undergo non-residential training.

6.6. Dormitory for staff

There is one dormitory at the CRC for READ staff hailing from different places outside Andimadam.

7. INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (ICDS)

Integrated Child Development Scheme has sponsored a Entrepreneur Development training for teenage girls – one at Andimadam and the other at Senthurai. In each place the Entrepreneur development training was conducted for 5 days followed by a 30-days training on computer operation and tailoring. Thirty girls participated in this training at each location.

8. MICRO-ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (MEDP)

A Micro-Enterprise Development Program for matured SHGs was organized with the support of NABARD. Training on cashew nut processing, computer basics and hand-made greeting card production was given to SHG women under this program. Thirty women participated in this training in each vocation for two weeks.

9. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

This is READ's core development project. To empower women who were once suppressed, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were organized with the funding and resource back-up of the Mahalir Thittam project of State Government. These organized women are now growing into decision makers, not only of their social and economic life but also for the political system.



A self-help group member is processing cashew nuts.

Savings and internal micro-crediting is an integral activity of these SHGs and has a great impact on their economic life. The micro-finance program discussed later in this report added strength to this activity and made them economically independent.

Furthermore, these SHGs are the basic platform through which health, education and development information is disseminated to the community at large. They are the groups instrumental to bring difference in the community. A total of 883 SHGS are operating in Andimadam (469) and Senthurai Blocks (414) – the prime service area of READ.

10. MICRO-CREDIT PROGRAM

Women empowerment can be achieved through appropriate information and resource support. The SHG women received adequate information through various training and dissemination programs. But to get material benefit out of this acquired information and knowledge, they need financial support. In this context, READ's micro-credit program is a boon that promotes new enterprises and production activities among women. This increases not only the family economy but ensures gender equality and sustainable development.

Thanks to financial institutions like NDFS (Nanayasurbhi Development Financial Services) and the HDFC Bank which provided macro-loans to READ, we were able to give micro-loans to the local people. In this reporting year 2411 women

received micro-credit to develop their livelihood activities. The success of this program lies in the prompt repayment of loan from the beneficiaries.

Micro-credit loan details for April 08 to March 09:

S.No	Source	SHGs	Members	Loan Amount (Rs)
1	READ	6	144	1,529,500
2	HDFC Bank	83	1282	14,430,000
3	NDFS	63	985	10,455,000
Total		152	2411	26,414,500

Because of the new enterprises and a new development pace in the lives of the rural women, the need has arisen for life and accident insurance and other investment plans to ensure the sustainability in this development process. These insurance products are offered by different insurance companies like TATA AIG, ICICI prudential and Birla Sun Life to our beneficiaries; the women now pay a small premium to these companies to ensure benefits to their families in case of unexpected life incidents. It has now become mandatory that all the micro-credit beneficiaries get one of the insurance products.

Death benefit claimed from ICICI prudential insurance company for our deceased clients during 2008-2009:

Micro-finance branche office	Number of death claims	Claimed amount (Rs.)
Andimadam	27	270,000
Senthurai	8	85,000
Variyankaval	8	75,000
Total	43	430,000

11. AWARENESS PROGRAMS

11.1. National Environmental Awareness Campaign.

Every year READ organizes Environmental awareness campaigns around a specific environment related topic chosen by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, (Government of India). This year the topic was 'Adaptation to Climate Change'. READ selected Kulumur village in Senthurai Block for this awareness and action program. It was a two-day program. In the first day, a rally was organized, and approximately

Profile of a self-help group member: Kolanchiammal

Before Kolanchiammal got involved with a self-help group, her family suffered a lot from money lenders and it was very difficult for her to maintain her family. She learned about self-help groups and became a member of the Vanavil Self-help Group which was started by READ. Through a contribution donated by Sahaya supporters, she received a loan from READ, which she used to buy four goats. She is taking care of them well. One of the goats has already given birth to 2 offspring. Now Kolanchiammal is able to save amounts of money for the future which benefits her whole family. Whenever work is available locally, she also does daily labor, such as construction work at the Jawahar Matriculation School.



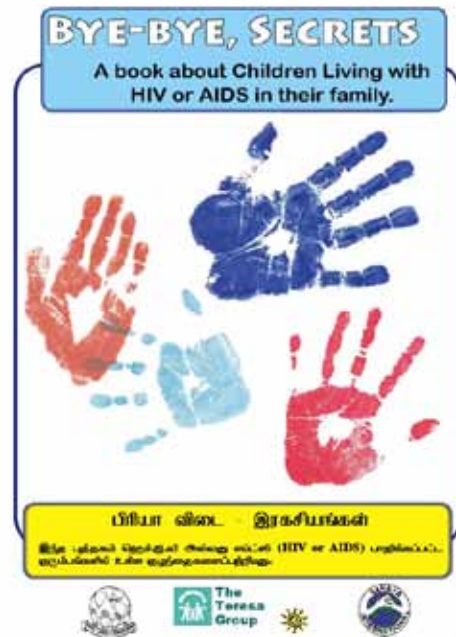
DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS ON HIV/AIDS:

In collaboration with The Teresa Group (Canada), READ (India), and the Hope Foundation (India), we developed “**Bye-bye, Secrets- A book about children living with HIV or AIDS in their family.**”

What is it like when HIV or AIDS takes over a child’s world? In Bye-bye Secrets, children, ranging in age from ten to twelve tell us about their experiences and about the secrets and stigmatization that have made them wise beyond their years.

It is their hope that this book will be used to help families living in areas where professional counseling support is limited; in health-care facilities to educate and support families; in classrooms to decrease the stigma and to sensitize children and educators to the impact of HIV and AIDS on families. Above all, they want all children with HIV or AIDS in their family to know that they are not alone.

While our financial resources don’t permit the distribution of hard-copies, this material is available for free downloading at www.sahaya.org/cartoons.html.



1500 SHG women participated in the rally with placards, slogans and banners on the topic given above. Before the rally, the participants were briefed on climate change and the related physical and health hazards it creates. Around 300 seedlings and saplings (neem, pomegranate, guava etc..) were distributed to participating women and planted in their house premises on this day after the rally.

On the second day, our cultural team enacted street play on environmental sanitation, pollution control and reduction of carbon dioxide emission and other eco-regeneration processes. Approximately 500 villagers witnessed the street play.

11.2. Awareness education on violence against women

READ organized awareness education programs in different villages against violence on women. An NGO network ‘We Can’ contributed the education kit for this program and READ organized community meetings, staff awareness meetings, SHG meetings and public campaigns to educate people on violence against women.

Twelve programs were organized in different villages.

12. THIRD PARTY PROJECTS

READ functions as a third party partner and fiscal intermediary for several projects and partner agencies:

- Project on “Integrating traditional Birth Attendants in PMTCT program at Mysore”, undertaken by Public Health Research Institute of India (PHRII); this was funded by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, USA.
- PRERANA clinic project of PHRI, Mysore, supported by Sahaya International Inc., USA
- ANM Training program of PHRI, Mysore supported by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, USA
- Ethics training of PHRII, Mysore, supported by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, USA
- Sponsorship of 2 children in Community Health Education Society (CHES), 2 children in Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT), 2 children in Jaya Prakash

narayanan Memorial Trust supported by AYA Inc., USA

- Student support program and school building construction in SHAMA Well G.V Naidu School in a village near Chittur with the support of SHAMA Inc., USA.
- Vocational training and infrastructure development in SEE-TRUST (Socio-Economic Education Empowerment Trust) at Cuddalore, supported by Sahaya International and Frank Melzerch, Germany.

13. ASSETS CREATED IN THIS YEAR

- New School building at Periyakrishnapuram – 266.59 Sq.mtrs plinth area (2870 Sq.ft) with 4 class rooms, 1 Head Master room, 1 staff room and toilet facilities.
- TATA safari Car
- Computers – desk top 4 Numbers (HCL) and Sony Lap top 1 number (Sony).
- ELISA machine (laboratory equipment) at PRHI, Mysore.
- Furniture
- Library books

14. PARTNERS, SPONSORS, DIGNITARIES AND VISITORS VISITED READ:

- Mrs. Joan Kruckewitt, San Francisco, USA
- Mr. Pelle Wallin and Mrs. Gittan, Ostersund, Sweden
- Mr. Oswald Noppe, Belgium
- Ms. Sylvia Boller, Belgium
- Dr. Koen Van Rompay, Sahaya Intl. Inc., USA
- Mr. Rene Marien, The Koninlijk Atheneum of Ekeren School, Belgium
- Mr. Paul Verlodt, vice Principal, The Koninlijk Atheneum of Ekeren, Belgium
- Ms. An Van Rompay and Mr. Raf Van Eyken, Belgium
- Mrs. Joan Schelpe and Klaas Soethout, Belgium/ Netherlands
- Ms. Dominique Vandekerchove, Belgium
- Ms. Jeannine Luyten, Belgium
- Ms. Grete Belis, Crystal and Mr. Gohanuer, Sawes, Belgium
- Mr. Peter de Meyer, Reporter, Jana Struys and Iris Vanderhaegen, Belgium
- Mr. A. Selvaraj, District Disabled Rehabilitation

officer, Perambalur

- Mr. Peter Palaniswamy, SHEPHERD & NDFS, Trichy

15. PUBLIC STATUS ACQUIRED BY READ

READ has the following statuses:

- District Resource Centre for TNVHA, Chennai
- District Facilitation centre for TNVHA, Chennai
- NGO member and Convener of Local Level Committee, Perambalur Chapter of National Trust, New Delhi (National Trust is a statutory body promoted by the Central Government for mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy and multiple disability)
- District Coordinator for Special Olympics.

16. CONCLUSION

Each year, READ has to address new problems and challenges in its service mission. Extensive infrastructure and support systems help to address these problems and needs systemically. Thanks to the support of its partners and friends, READ improved its infrastructure and facilities, and could also get much recurring program support.

READ takes this opportunity to thank all of them, particularly Sahaya International (USA/Belgium), SAWES (Belgium) and Inba Seva Sangam (Sevapur, India. READ is also immensely grateful to all the individual sponsors who help orphan children to meet their educational needs and pursue education without constraint. READ thanks also NDFS and HDFC bank for their financial assistance that allows READ to run the micro-credit program. We also thank our many other donors and supporters including TNVHA, Chennai, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, New Delhi, NABARD, ICDS, Gilead Sciences (USA) and Global Strategies for HIV prevention (USA).

Finally, READ also extends its thanks to its dedicated staff and Board members, without whom none of this work would be possible. I, on behalf of READ, wish and request everyone to join hands with us and continue their support and cooperation in the forthcoming years also to help READ achieve its development mission.

THANKS ONE AND ALL

D. Selvam