



Rural Education & Action Development (READ)

Andimadam, Tamil Nadu, India

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Fiscal year April 2003- March 2004.

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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,

It is my pleasure to present the tenth annual report of READ before this honorable General Body. READ, as you all know, is focused on providing human services particularly in the development of rural women, children and disabled individuals. In this reporting year also, READ has undertaken different services and accomplished them all successfully, even though financial support from some agencies was not materialized as anticipated. Yet, our beloved patron and partner organization – Sahaya International Inc., USA and several regular supporters continued to support us. Our thanks are due to them all. The accomplished works and ongoing activities are presented in this report for the General Body to approve and guide us further.

Sincerely,

D. Selvam
(Secretary, READ)



Progress report:

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I. HIV/AIDS awareness & intervention.

This ongoing program was started in 1998. This program has crossed many stages; starting from awareness it is now also concentrating increasingly on providing specific support services to affected individuals. The programs implemented in this year are:

1. Cultural way for dissemination of HIV awareness:

Although awareness was given through different programs in the past, continued awareness and information dissemination is needed to make people vigilant of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Our field staff continued to spread HIV awareness to the different sections of the society. The Field staff regularly supplies condoms to the needy during their field visits. The condoms were obtained free of cost from the local Primary Health center, Head quarter Government hospital at Perambalur. Around 900 condoms were distributed in this year.

In this reporting year, our cultural team - “**VIDIYAL**”- was entrusted with the responsibility to disseminate information. This team prepared folk songs and a street play on the subject, and performed these in 36 villages both in Andimadam and Senthurai Blocks. This enabled READ to identify an additional 6 HIV positive people from the area.

Further, this team had performed its program in 5 schools in this reporting year to aware and educate the students on HIV/AIDS issues and prevention methods.

2. Identification/testing, medical guidance and counseling to HIV Positive people:

In this reporting year, 16 persons were identified as HIV suspect and were referred for testing to the Tambaram and Perambalur Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) centers. Of them, 7 were tested HIV positive. They are all in the HIV Positive people’s network “Malarum Mottukal” promoted by us. Every month, our staff collected medicines for opportunistic diseases and vitamins monthly from Tambaram TRC and distributed them to these HIV positive people.

3. AIDS orphan children support services:

Food, medical and educational support to 3 orphan children started during last year was continued in this reporting year. An additional 10 children were supported with school materials only. Twenty AIDS orphan children under the care of CST organization at Namakkal were also supported with food and hostel needs. Sahaya International Inc., USA extended financial support for this program in this reporting year.

4. HIV positive people’s network:

This network, which was started during the year 2002, was continued in this year. At the beginning of this year, 17 positive people were the members of this network, 2 of which passed away during November 2003 and January 2004 respectively. Now 15 people form the network. Once a week, our field staff visits them to offer counseling to them and their families, and to monitor their physical and mental conditions. Rs. 100 (approx. USD 2.20) is provided every month for their food and nutritional supplements. On 15th of every month, a meeting is convened for them at Andimadam to facilitate them to share their feelings, grievances, information, physical fitness ideas etc., This continuous program invites also new members. Seven more positive people are in touch with us but due to fear of exposure they preferred not to become members of the network. However we also offer confidential counseling and support to them at their home.



To draw the attention of the villagers (A), the cultural team of READ combines song, traditional dance (B) and sketches (C) in their street theater performance. A story is told in which several drunk men go to the house of a sleeping prostitute (D). Following unsafe sex, the HIV virus destroys the white blood cells that protect our body, eventually leading to opportunistic infections (E); the social worker is notified and comes to help the affected family (F). The women self-help groups participated in an HIV awareness rally on World AIDS Day 2003 (G).

5. World AIDS day – rally

To mark the world AIDS day during December, we have organized rallies in 2 villages, Senthurai and Variyankaval. Brief lectures were delivered on the causes of HIV epidemic and on the prevention and control methods to the village participants after the rally. READ's staff organized this program along with the local women self-help groups (SHG's).

II. HIV/AIDS AIM network activities.

As you may know, we have previously promoted a network of 7 NGOs named "AIM Network" to coordinate and guide HIV/AIDS prevention and control activities throughout Perambalur District and in part of Tanjavur District.

The trained staff of the respective NGO's of this network continued to organize HIV/AIDS awareness programs in different parts of the

District. A staff review and planning meeting was held monthly to appraise the progress of the field work. Similarly, once every 3 months, the Heads of the network NGOs assembled to discuss the progress. Efforts were taken to promote HIV positive people's networks in different service areas of the NGOs and unite them all under a Federation.

An external evaluation of the network activities was performed this year by appointing Mr. Lobidas, ODA, Trichy.

A total of 15 NGO heads and staff from the AIM network participated in the "4th International Conference on AIDS India", November 9-12, 2003 conducted by the Dr. MGR Medical University in Chennai. Among the 15 attendees, five staffs were from READ, including READ's Executive Director. This network also presented a poster at the conference about their activities.



The AIM network staff attended the 4th International Conference on AIDS - India

III. HIV/AIDS collaborative services.

"Mapping of HIV/AIDS services in India" was undertaken by the organization SAATHII; READ was a collaborator in terms of fiscal agent for fund transfers and monitoring of the financial aspects of the project. This mapping work cumulated in the publication of a Directory of HIV/AIDS services in India, by the name of "SAATHII RED RIBBON PAGES". These directories were distributed in this reporting year to many NGOs. As continuation, a second phase mapping work was started in this year.

In addition, another program on sexual health and related issues has just been initiated in collaboration with SAATHI, which is yet to be implemented.

Similarly, Sahaya International Inc., USA, in collaboration with READ and Global Strategies for HIV Prevention, has produced HIV Awareness materials with cartoons that are culturally adapted for India. This educational material is in its final stages of development and will be published in Tamil through a collaboration with I-TECH (Univ. of Washington). It is also being translated into other Indian languages.

IV. Empowerment of persons with disability.

To empower persons with various types of disabilities, a community-based rehabilitation program was launched two years ago, and was continued also in this reporting year. This program consists of the following components:

1. Sangam (Association) formation:

READ organized 16 Sangams in Senthurai Block and 11 Sangams in Andimadam Block for the persons with disabilities. Each Sangam meets once monthly, in the presence of our staff to discuss together their problems and the possible remedial measures. Sometimes experts in the field of disability services are also called upon to discuss development schemes. These Sangams not only instilled confidence in the disabled but also raised their leadership and self-initiative qualities.

2. Services offered:

To the Sangam members, different services were offered in this reporting year.

- 4 tri-cycles to needy people.
- Financial support for corrective surgery to 6 physically handicapped people.
- Referrerral of 3 cleft-lip children for corrective surgery to Ramachandra Medical college and Hospital, Porur, Chennai.
- Awareness meeting on disability to school children in 18 schools.
- Regular physiotherapy service to 64 people by our staff.
- Two physiotherapy training camps to parents through Mr. Srikanth, Physiotherapist, Chennai.
- Educational scholarship to 3 physically handicapped children.
- Identity cards for 12 persons.
- School admission for 15 children.



Rallies on World Disability Day.

- Vocational training support to 13 persons
- Bank finances mobilized for 12 persons

This program will continue in the coming years with more service facilities and to reach more needy people. Resources are explored for this purpose.

3. Cultural program on disability:

In 32 villages, our 'Vidiyal' cultural team performed street play and other cultural programs to enlighten the people on disability and to get their cooperation for our community-based rehabilitation activities. This program was well received and had a positive impact on the people.

4. World Disabled Day – rally:

During December 2003, we celebrated the World Disabled Day with a rally in two villages. Approximately 450 women and students rallied with placards and banners in Manappathur village inviting people's attention and care to disabled people/children. Approximately 263 women, youth and farmers rallied in Thirukkalapur.

V. Schools, Special Schools and Coaching Centers.

Since its inception, READ has been involved in educational activities through formal schools, special schools for disabled children and coaching



The students of the Periyakrishnapuram Mother Teresa school.



The students at the evening tuition centers receive special coaching that improves their learning process.

centers for the children who lacked reading atmosphere at home. This program continued this year.

1. Formal schools:

Three schools with pre-primary and primary classes are being run by READ at Periyakrishnapuram with 32 children, Thirukkalapur with 16 children and at Andimadam with 66 students, respectively. All the three schools are for rural children and offer quality education.

2. Special schools:

Two special schools are being run for mentally challenged children – one at Andimadam and the other at Perambalur. Andimadam school has 12 children enrolled with two trained Special Educator and an Assistant. The Perambalur school has 15 children, 2 Special Educators and a Cooking Assistant. Both schools are with residential facility for 2 and 10 children, respectively.

3. Tuition centers:

In 8 villages tuition centers are functioning for the children who do not have reading facilities or educational back-up at home. In each center, an average of 25 students are undergoing educational coaching. An educated person from the respective villages functions as tutor, and is paid a nominal fee by READ. The educational achievement of these children is appreciable. Some children are currently first in their classes.

4. Installation of playing structures at school:

Two infrastructures- a swing and a slide- to entertain and to facilitate kids to play were installed in READ's Jawahar school at Andimadam. It is proposed to install similar play-equipments in our other schools in the coming years.

5. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings:

To run the school effectively and to provide feedback to the parents about the education of their children, the PTA meetings are called for once every three months. In this reporting year, 4 such meetings have been held in each school including the special schools.

6. Pen pal scheme:

A pen pal program was introduced in our Jawahar School at Andimadam, in which so far 5 children have established friendship with students in USA, Japan and Germany. We are planning to develop it further in the coming years.

VI. Children Support.

During the past year, we have started a child sponsorship program, which is planned to be a continuous program until the child attains self-managing status. The Alliance for Youth Achievement., USA (AYA; www.allforyouth.org) arranged sponsorship for 18 female children and 3 children of HIV-infected parents in this year. The sponsors reside in different countries including USA, Canada, Germany and Japan. These are educational sponsorships which include the cost of school uniform dress, school fee, note books and other stationary. Similarly, two individuals from



READ's skill-training programs provide income to many girls and women.

USA are supporting 2 HIV-infected children for the cost of anti- retroviral medication. Sahaya international Inc., USA supported 12 orphan children to meet the schooling needs in this year.

VII. Women development programs.

Women development through self-help group (SHG) formation, education and skill training, micro-credit and resource mobilization has been an ongoing program for the past 5 years. In this reporting year, the following activities have been undertaken:

1. SHG Training:

As a routine, SHG training was organized for 2658 women members representing 162 SHGs in this year. The training subject was on local resource management and water harvesting.

2. CAPART assisted SHG program:

CAPART had supported our NGO to organize 150 SHGs, which was started during the year 2002. This was continued in this year also. In this year,

accounts training was given to all 150 groups organized under this project. Following this, stationeries required for SHG such as accounts notebook, credit entry cards etc., were distributed to each SHG. This project was completed in this fiscal year.

A field visit was arranged for the leaders of the SHGs to learn about the function of Federations. Following the field visits, 3 Federations were formed – 2 in Andimadam and 1 in Senthurai to organize the SHGs under these Federations.

3. Entrepreneur Development Training:

In this year, 325 women from 65 SHGs were given Entrepreneur development training in our center; this was financially supported by the 'Mahalir Thittam' project of the State Government.

4. Animators and Representatives Training:

A total of 84 Animators and Representatives from 42 SHGs have undergone training in this year, supported by the 'Mahalir Thittam' project of the State Government.

5. Panchayat level Federation (PLF) Training:

This was organized for 48 members from 24 Groups under the 'Mahalir Thittam' project of the State Government.

6. SHG leaders' training:

This training program was supported by NABARD. Two batches of SHG leaders each with 40 members were trained on leadership and management techniques. This was a one-day program each.

7. Credit support through revolving fund:

This year 50 women from different SHGs in Andimadam Block were provided with a credit amount of Rs.5000 (approx. USD 108) each to buy a cow or goat or to establish enterprises of their choice. This revolving fund was extended by AYA (Alliance for Youth Achievement Inc., USA). All the beneficiaries were managed to raise a permanent income source through this credit support and were able to repay the amount to READ for further credit extension. Thus this fund is revolved to benefit nearly 65 women at present, including the first 50 beneficiaries.

We started a program with CICI Prudential Ltd. to cover 171 Women and 15 men of the self groups with life insurance. This insurance was paid via credit facilities available for women only. For example, an insured man (belonging to the HIV + network) passed away, and we claimed Rs. 5,000 from the insurance company and gave this to his wife and children.

8. Skill training:

This training is also an ongoing program in three vocations – Handmade greeting card production, typewriting and tailoring. And in this year, 25 girls were trained in card making, 30 in typewriting and 60 in tailoring. Most of them are self-employed now in their respective trade.

VIII. Other Training/Meetings/Seminars.

1. Staff training:

At the beginning of each year, we are used to arrange a training to our staff to strengthen their mental fitness, role play, adjustments, adaptation, leadership qualities and their understanding on the code of conduct of the organization. It is like a refresher course to refill vigor in their activities. Twenty-two select staff underwent this training with orientation for 8 days, conducted by Mr. Lobithas, Trichy.

Six staff members were sent for 'Trainer of trainees' training for 6 days to train Animators and Representatives of SHGs at IFPAAW, Perambalur, sponsored by the "Mahalir Thittam" program of the State Government of Tamil Nadu.

Twenty-two staff of READ were sent for SHG promotion training at SHEPHERD organization, Perambalur, for 4 days (supported by CAPART).

2. Disability training:

Two trainings were arranged for the staff involved in Community-Based Rehabilitation and other services for the disabled. One training was at ODA, Trichy for 20 days, in which 3 staff underwent training and the other one was at TNVHA, Chennai for 3 days, in which 2 other staff attended. These



The women self-help group leaders receive regular training on a variety of social, economic and health issues.

trainings equipped our staff with updated information and working modules to augment their performance in the field.

3. Health awareness meeting and PLHA care & support:

As a continuation of last year's Tamil Nadu Voluntary Health Association (TNVHA)'s sponsored program, we have organized meetings for mothers on reproductive health and rights. This was a cyclic program being given to different groups of mothers on different occasions. As you may remember, READ is a permanent member of TNVHA, Chennai and also the District Resource Center, District facilitation center for disabled activities and Convener NGO for the District coordination committee for TNVHA; as part of its duties, READ it organizes this program and also monitors similar programs in the network NGO. In this year, TNVHA in collaboration with our organization have undertaken a program for PLHA (People Living with HIV/AIDS) in which we identify, guide and refer the HIV-infected people for appropriate care and support.

4. Consumer Awareness Seminars:

A series of seminars were organized for different clusters of women SHGs on consumerism and related problems. Rural consumers are easily exploited even in the purchase of seeds for sowing, pesticides/fertilizers and medicines for their health. They are exploited with low quality products, date-expired and banned medicines, and also in many other respects. This seminar exposed the facts to these SHG's. It was felt that this consumer awareness should be continued in several phases to enlighten all sections of rural people with the facts.

5. World Water Day Campaign:

READ and Water-Net Tamilnadu Federation jointly organized an education and action program to mark the World Water Day from April 9 to 11, 2003 at Vilandai, Senthurai and Kulumur villages. At Vilandai, this program was organized in our Training center in which 258 women leaders from different SHGs have participated. The campaign subject was 'water for future'. Dignitaries from the Government participated in this program.

At Senthurai, this program was organized in our

Training center building, and 150 SHG leaders participated. The subject 'Water for future' was presented through lectures, exhibition, group discussions and cultural song and drama. At Kulumur village, our cultural team performed street play, folk dance and folk songs on the same subject.

IX. General Programs.

1. Staff Welfare:

A staff welfare fund has already been created in our organization by saving a contribution from the staff salary and a matching contribution from the organization. This supports their medical needs and other emergency needs. This fund has been revitalized and regulated in this year to provide more benefit to the staff.

2. School Renovation:

Because our schools in all three locations needed infrastructure development, we renovated the roofing and made further improvements in the classrooms, such seating arrangements, etc.,

3. Training and Reinforcement of Cultural Team:

We have developed our cultural team, 'Vidyal' as a powerful way to disseminate information. This team was involved in all awareness, campaigns and training programs undertaken by READ. To equip this team, a 6-day training was organized. Twenty-two staff had undergone the training on enacting street play, expression in message delivery, folk songs and tunes. Mr. Fathimaraj from SHED India, Thanjavur was the resource person for this.

Similarly, one member from the team underwent an intensive training on HIV/AIDS information dissemination through cultural programs at SEVAI, Trichy. This was a 10 days program.

Another program was arranged for two of the team members. This was at the Culture and Communication Department of Loyola College, Chennai for seven days.

With these trainings, our cultural team is well equipped now to create, produce and enact street plays on any subject matter and with any type of cultural media.

4. Waste land development:

The Agriculture Department of State Government planned a comprehensive waste land development

program for the whole state of Tami Nadu. For Andimadam, Jayankondam and T. Palur Blocks, it was proposed to implement the program jointly by the Agriculture Department and our organization READ. The 3 stages of the project are identification of waste land, organization of farmers and plantation. READ assisted the Agriculture Department with the identification of waste land in these areas.

5. National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC):

Every year we undertake the NEAC program to aware and to activate our target population on environmental issues. The Ministry of Environment & Forest, Government of India, through the Nodal Agency – the CPR Foundation, Chennai, is funding this program. It is a small grant program. Under this program, this year we have performed a cultural program through our ‘Vidiyal’ cultural team and demonstrated rain- water harvesting by establishing a harvesting pit in the training center. This program was implemented in three villages – Vangaram, Senthurai and Vanjinapuram.

6. Rural Sanitary Mart:

We have started a rural sanitary mart in our organization and we supply sanitary wares to the needy villagers at subsidized cost. This is a service that also helps to enhance the environmental sanitation and personal hygiene practices.

X. Recognition and membership status.

Since its inception, READ has been growing in many respects including conceptual understanding and field work. Based on its experience and competence, it has attained the following statuses:

1. NGO member of Perambalur District Local Level Committee for National Trust, coming under HRD Department of Government of India (for autism, cerebral palsied, mentally retarded and multiple disability).
2. District Hospital Development Advisory Board.
3. District Task Force for Adolescents.
4. District Family Welfare Advisory committee.
5. Block Level Task force for Female victims.
6. Block committee member of SSA (sarva siksha abiyam- education to all) program of Government of India – for Andimadam and

Senthurai Blocks.

7. Andimadam Panchayat level SSA committee and building committee member.
8. Campaign Against Child Labor, Tamil Nadu.
9. District Convener and Resource center for TNVHA’s health program (Tamilnadu Voluntary Health Association), Chennai (for Perambalur District).
10. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Facilitation center for Perambalur District for TNVHA.
11. Member of Governing Body of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Perambalur.
12. Board member of CBR forum – network of disabled activities (Network of NGOs in Tamilnadu and Pondicherry).

XI. Representative Statuses.

1. READ functions as Regional Representative Office for AYA (Alliance for Youth Achievement) Inc., USA
2. READ functions as Nodal Agency for Sahaya International Inc., USA in appraising projects and transferring funds to local NGOs.
3. READ functions as fund-channeling and support agency for SAATHII, Chennai.

XII. Celebrations.

READ celebrated the following important International and National Days:

1. Independence Day of India -15th August 2003.
2. World AIDS Day - 1st December 2003.
3. World Disabled Day - 2nd December 2003.
4. Republic Day of India - 26th January 2004.
5. School Annual Day during February for all three formal schools.
6. World Water Day.

XIII. Staff recruitment.

Five new staffs have been recruited in this reporting period, replacing 5 staff who left our organization. They were deployed in different field activities.

XIV. Visitors.

Several dignitaries visited READ and its activities in this reporting period as listed below:

1. Dr. Koen Van Rompay DVM., Ph.D., Secretary, Sahaya International Inc. and Associate

-
- Research Virologist, Univ. of California, USA.
2. Mrs. Zama Coursen-Neff, Senior Researcher, Human Rights Watch, New York, USA.
 3. Mr. Karl Krupp, board director, Sahaya International Inc., California, USA.
 4. Mr. P.M. Chandrakasan, Project Officer, Mahalir Thittam, Perambalur.
 5. Mr. A. Sarangapani, District Disabled Rehabilitation Officer.
 6. Mr. N.V. Baskaran, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, Thanjavure.

XV. Resources.

READ had received financial support from the following Organizations/Government Departments to carry out the activities detailed above:

- Sahaya International Inc., USA.
- John M. Lloyd Foundation, USA.
- Alliance for Youth Achievement Inc., USA.
- Waternet, Tamilnadu Federation, Trichy.
- TNVHA, Chennai.
- CAPART, Government of India, Hyderabad.
- Women Development Corporation through District Agency, Perambalur.
- NABARD, Chennai.
- CPRamasamy Aiyar Foundation, Chennai.
- UNAIDS, New Delhi.
- Dr. Sai Subhasree Raghavan, USA.
- Elton John AIDS Foundation, England.
- DRDA, through BDO, Andimadam.

- Donations, local contributions, income from greeting cards sale, service charges from tailoring, typewriting and computer courses

XVI. Conclusion.

READ has accomplished many works in its 10th year of social services with the financial and moral support of different Organizations, Government Departments, Individuals and unnamed philanthropists as listed above. READ also secured valuable moral and physical support from its well-wishers, friends, board members and staff at times of crisis and need.

I take this opportunity to thank all our donors and supporters especially the network of Sahaya International (Dr. Koen Van Rompay and his friends and family in USA and Belgium) who stood on our side in all our activities, in our successes and also in times of distress.

Last but not least, I extend my heartfelt thanks to READ's office bearers and its committed staff for their best cooperation and dedication to achieve our objectives in this year.

While thanking them all, I sincerely seek all your continuous support and cooperation in the coming year to fruitfully continue our services to the people in need.

I once again thank one and all.

D. SELVAM, Secretary



The children of the Thirakkalapur Mother Teresa school on Children's Day, November 14, 2003.