



Rural Education & Action Development (READ)

Andimadam, Tamil Nadu, India

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Fiscal year April 2004- March 2005.

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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,

With the blessings and support of many good hearts, READ has completed its 11th year of service for the deprived and marginalized in our community. To accomplish this to our best capacity, we had to walk upon a bed of roses, with its petals and its thorns. Many have walked along with READ to achieve its mission - our staff, the board members and friends. As in the past years, our beloved partner organization, Sahaya International Inc., USA walked along with us, bearing and sharing all our problems. Fortunately we have also received grant support in this reporting period to continue our mission.

It is my pleasure to present this report of READ's activities for the year 2004-2005 to the honourable general body members assembled here, for their approval and valuable further guidance in our enduring service.

Sincerely,

D. Selvam (Secretary, READ)

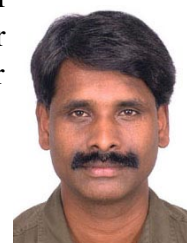


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1. HIV/AIDS intervention.

This program is ongoing since 1998. This program started humbly with awareness education to a small group of people in Andimadam, but has now grown into multi-dimensional activities covering all of Perambalur District and part of Cuddalore District

in Tamilnadu. In this year, 292 males and 8469 females in self-help groups were given HIV education. Among them 20 male and 23 female were suspected to be HIV infected and were sent for voluntary counseling and testing (VCT). Eighteen of them were diagnosed HIV infected. In addition to its regular services, a new project on HIV/AIDS prevention was also started in this reporting year. Here is a summary of the different activities:

1.1. Perambalur Education and Prevention program (PEPP).

PEPP was launched during January 2005, thanks to a generous grant from the Elton John AIDS Foundation (UK). It is a district-level massive HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention program to reach the general public with correct information on transmission, prevention and care. It is supervised by a Community Advisory Board consisting of 15 members representing a broad cross-section of the community. Twenty Outreach Workers representing the AIM network of NGOs are the key



The Outreach Workers of the Perambalur Education and Prevention Program for HIV/AIDS.



The women self-help group members discuss and select candidates to become peer health educators to promote correct awareness on HIV.

staff, and they received first extensive training and education on HIV/AIDS, sex and sexuality, gender issues, preventive measures and project management by YRG Care (Chennai), Dr. Venkatesh Chakrapani (Chennai), Mr. Lobithas (Trichy) and Mr. Selvam (Andimadam). In the next step, the program identified and provided skill-building training to 100 female Peer Health Educators, (elected by the women self-help groups) who will do HIV awareness programs to the local communities. The program also trains 50 local barbers to reach their male customers with HIV/AIDS information.

Equipment that was purchased by READ to facilitate this program include a laptop computer, a laser-printer and an overhead projector. This is a one-year project aiming to achieve its stated goal within the stipulated time period, and with sustainable effect.

1.2. HIV/AIDS awareness.

This ongoing program supplements the PEPP project described above. Two strategies were adopted this year.

- Cultural program dissemination:

Street theater programs were conducted by our 'Vidiyal' cultural team to reach the general public with HIV information messages. During this reporting year, 28 programs were conducted in 28 different villages for farmers, youth and women. These activities were possible thanks to the generous grant support of Gilead Sciences and Global Strategies.

- School HIV/AIDS education program:

Dr. Koen Van Rompay and Dr. Adele Moussas (Sahaya International, USA) visited READ during November- December 2004, and gave lectures followed by question-and-answer sessions on HIV/AIDS to students in Higher Secondary Schools,

both in Andimadam and Senthurai Blocks. The participating students gave very positive feedback on the usefulness of these programs.

1.3. World AIDS Day rally.

To commemorate World AIDS Day in December, we organize different programs every year. This year, we organized a rally in Andimadam to educate the general public through placards and slogans. Approximately 1,300 self-help group members, students and staff participated in the rally.

1.4. HIV/AIDS care and support services.

In this ongoing program, the following services were offered to HIV positive people in Andimadam and Senthurai Blocks in this year:

- The HIV positive network named 'Malarum Mottukkal' was organized during 2002 and is continuing. Presently the network has 35 HIV positive members - 10 male and 25 female of whom 3 are children. Once in a week, our field staff visits them to offer counseling to them and to their families. Rs. 300 is provided to each

member every month for food and nutritional supplements. Once a month, they will be called together in our training center to share their grievances, views, ideas and feelings. Their food and travel expenses on this day are met by READ. Besides, once a month they are sent to the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine (at Tambaram) to get their medicine quota for which their travel expenses are met by READ.

- Credit was given to 8 HIV-positive people to buy a goat, a sewing machine or to start a petty shop to generate income for their sustenance.
- Educational support (school fees, notebooks, dress and stationery) was provided to 17 children, including HIV-infected children and children whose parents are HIV infected.
- Thanks to sponsors in the USA, we covered the expenses for daily anti-HIV treatment, CD4 & viral tests (once in 3 months) and schooling for two HIV positive girls.
- Forty-three HIV suspected people were referred to voluntary counseling and testing centers at Ariyalur, Jayankondam and Perambalur



HIV/AIDS awareness rally organized by READ in Andimadam on December 1, 2004.

Government Hospitals; 18 of them were diagnosed as HIV-infected.

These activities were performed thanks to generous grant support from Gilead Sciences, Inc. (USA) and Global Strategies for HIV Prevention (USA).

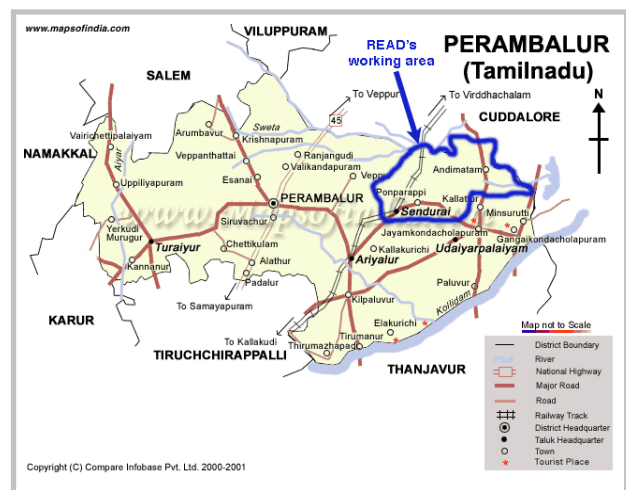
1.5. AIM network activities.

READ previously promoted networking of 7 NGOs in different parts of Perambalur District and Thanjavur District under the name of “AIM Network” to undertake and coordinate HIV/AIDS prevention and control activities. This network is currently involved in our newly launched “PEPP” project described earlier. The heads of member-NGOs in the network met three times in this reporting year on several pre-informed agendas related to our collaborative HIV/AIDS prevention and control efforts.

1.6. HIV/AIDS Collaborative Services.

READ continued its collaboration with SAATHII (www.saathii.org), by being the fiscal agent for fund transfer and by monitoring the financial aspects for 2 grant programs.

- One program is the second phase of the “mapping of HIV/AIDS services in India” project, sponsored by the John M. Lloyd Foundation (USA). The 2nd program, sponsored by the Elton John AIDS Foundation (U.K) is titled “Support centre for voluntary agencies working on sexual health and related issues concerning sexual minorities in Eastern India”.
- READ also served as fiscal agent to transfer funds to Dr. Venkatesh Chakrapani, Chennai for a project “HIV risk and prevention among MSM in Chennai”.
- READ is collaborating with Sahaya International Inc., and I-TECH (University of Washington, USA) in developing cartoons for flipcharts and booklets with information on HIV/AIDS and text in tamil script.
- READ served as channeling organization to transfer funds from Sahaya International Inc., USA to FHORD, Madurai to buy a Slide projector for use in their HIV/AIDS dissemination activities, and to Rhema Educational Trust (Gujarat) to maintain and expand their Silent Valley English Medium School.



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

2. Service to Disabled People.

Our ongoing programs include both Community-Based Rehabilitation and Institutional programs, with separate programs for disabled children and adults. The following services were offered this past year:

2.1 Capacity building.

We have already promoted 33 Sangams (Associations) for the disabled people - 18 Sangams in Andimadam Block and 15 Sangam in Senthurai Block. These Sangams all function on the basis of the self-help group concept. We have been conducting periodical meetings and seminars to these Sangams to provide updated information for their development and for capacity-building of their individual members. This year, we held 4 capacity building meetings for the Sangam members.

2.2. Physiotherapy.

Regular physiotherapy service was offered to 70 orthopedically handicapped people in the communities. A qualified physiotherapist has been appointed for this task. She regularly visited the villages and particularly Sangam members to offer her services. In addition, one physiotherapy training program was organized this year for 52 parents to provide home-based services to the affected individuals.

2.3. Other services offered (both at Andimadam and Senthurai blocks).

- READ arranged provision of a tricycle for 14 members.



Awareness rally on World Disability Day (December 3, 2004), organized by READ.

- READ arranged identity cards for 908 persons.
- READ arranged house construction support to 8 persons under the Indra Gandhi housing scheme.
- READ referred 110 children with cleft-lip for corrective surgery to Ramachandra medical College and Hospital, Porur, Chennai.
- READ provided support for corrective surgery to 5 persons with club foot.
- READ arranged educational scholarships to 37 persons.
- READ provided a railway travel pass to 14 members.
- READ arranged a loan from the District Rural Development Agency to 7 persons at Rs.10,000 each.
- READ arranged a loan of the SGSY program for one person.
- READ provided support for eye operation to one person.
- Note books were provided to 6 Sangams.

2.4. Disability awareness.

Although we have already undertaken several

awareness programs on disability in the past years, we have yet to reach many people in our service area with appropriate information on disability. To reach at least a section of these uninformed communities, our cultural team '**Vidiyal**' performed street plays, folk drama and folk songs in 15 villages in this year. In addition, 7 field staff have organized the following programs this past year:

- Awareness Education to 227 self-help groups (87 in Andimadam Block and 140 in Senthurai block).
- Awareness education to 450 students in 10 schools.

2.5. World Day for Persons with Disability.

To commemorate the World Day for Persons with Disability, a special meeting was organized for Sangam members on December 3, 2004, at Manapathur village. Mr. Lobithas delivered a lecture on a positive approach to face life's challenges. This was a real booster to young disabled people who are striving to achieve something in life.



During the evening, READ's cultural team uses street theater to spread awareness on disability, HIV, sanitation and environmental issues to rural communities.

2.6. Special schools.

We continue to run two Special Schools by the name of "Anbagam" for mentally disabled children – one at Andimadam and the other at Perambalur. Anbagam at Andimadam has 15 children enrolled, of which 3 are residential children; two Special Educators and one Assistant are in charge of this school. The Anbagam school in Perambalur has 25 children enrolled, of whom 18 are residential.

Three Special Educators and one assistant look after this school. Both schools provide training on daily living tasks to these children.

3. Child Sponsorship Program.

We have continued a children sponsorship program, from which 35 children have benefited this past year. Sponsorship is either full (17 children) or only educational support (18 children). These

sponsorship programs are arranged via the Alliance for Youth Achievement (AYA), USA (www.allforyouth.org) and Sahaya International. Generally, these sponsorships meet schooling needs of respective children such as school fees, note books, school stationery, school uniform/dress, nutrition, and in some cases also the children's boarding fee.

In addition, we supplied school note-books and stationery to 30 poor children in this year. Thanks to interest accrued from micro-credit activities, we were also able to provide 15 parents of poor school-going children with a small grant to generate income for their children through goat or chicken rearing, a petty shop or other activities.

4. Schools and Tuition centers.

This is an ongoing program providing poor rural children with quality education and a learning atmosphere that stimulates academic achievements.

4.1. Formal schools.

To provide quality education to poor rural children, we run three schools with pre-primary and primary classes at Periyakrishnapuram, Thirukalapur and Andimadam. The Periyakrishnapuram Mother Theresa School has 44 students and 4 teachers. The Thirukalapur Mother Theresa School has 15 students and one teacher, while the Andimadam Jawahar Matriculation School has 50 students and 6 teachers. The medium of instruction is English in all these schools.

4.2. Tuition centers.

We continued tuition centers in 8 villages for children who lack a reading atmosphere and educational back-up at home. In each center, an average of 25 children were coached by local tutors. We paid the Tutors a nominal amount. This extra coaching augmented the learning skills and academic performance of the children in school.

4.3. Pen pal scheme.

A pen pal scheme initiated last year continued also this year. Five of our school children communicate via letters with friends in the USA, Germany and Japan.

4.4. Educational tour.

This year, an educational tour was arranged for students of all three schools to Gangaikondacholapuram, a historical place near Andimadam.

4.5. School Annual Day celebration.

During March 2005, all three schools celebrated their Annual Day with performances of the school children in dance, drama, speech, fancy dress competition and other fun activities.

5. Women Development Program.

Women empowerment has been an ongoing program for the past 6 years, through self-help group (SHG) formation, education, capacity-building and skill training, micro-credit and savings activities, and resource mobilization. In this reporting year, the following activities were undertaken:



The children in two of READ's schools, the Mother Teresa school of Periyakrishnapuram (left) and the Jawahar Matriculation School (right).



Children perform at the Annual Day of the Jawahar Matriculation School in Andimadam.

5.1. SHG training.

This is a regular training being given to SHG members specifically on credit facilities, micro-enterprise selection and development, problem solving and current gender issues. A total of 591 SHGs in both Andimadam and Senthurai Blocks have undergone this training, in which 8779 women members participated.

5.2. Entrepreneur Development Training.

This year, Entrepreneur development training was given to 261 women from 55 SHGs. The District Rural Development Agency (Perambalur) funded the training of 141 women from 31 SHGs; THADCO (a state government organization) and MATHI each funded training for 60 women from 12 SHGs. The purpose is to identify and develop rural women entrepreneurs to enhance the participation and contribution of women to the local economy.

5.3. Animator and representative training.

In this year, a total of 1054 animators and representatives from 580 SHGs were trained at

different occasions on development stimulation, skills to guide members of SHGs towards economic prosperity, and problem solving techniques. The goal of this capacity-building training program is to strengthen the SHGs as a social institution.

5.4. Panchayat Level Federation training.

Select representatives from each SHG form this Panchayat level Federation (PLF). This representative group will have wider contact with other PLFs outside their area, so they can share their learning experiences. We conducted training for 277 members from 196 SHGs to make them more effective representatives and correspondents.

5.5. SHG leaders training.

Every now and then, the SHG leaders are to be given a refresher training to make them effective leaders of their respective groups. This year also one such training was arranged in which 50 members from 18 SHGs participated.



READ offers skill-training programs in card production, tailoring and type-writing to girls and young women from underprivileged families.

5.6. Credit extension.

Last year, we had launched a credit extension program to help SHG women develop micro-enterprises for their economic prosperity through a revolving fund provided by the Alliance for Youth Achievement (USA). The fund was revolved and continued this year also to support 50 women, each with Rs. 5000 to buy goats, to start a petty shop, to start a vegetable shop or other micro-enterprise of their choice. This will be continued in the coming years.

5.7. ICICI Insurance coverage.

ICICI Prudential Insurance company offered an insurance program for our SHG women with a risk amount of Rs. 5,000 at a one time premium payment of Rs. 50. A total of 546 women from different SHGs have been covered under this scheme in this year.

5.8. Tailoring training.

This is an ongoing skill-training program for poor school-educated girls who cannot pursue higher

education. This year, 60 girls were trained both in dress-making and embroidery.

5.9. Training in greeting card production.

This is a combined training and production program in which 25 girls were newly trained this year. The greeting cards are sold and are in high demand in the USA and Belgium.

5.10. Typewriting training.

This year, 24 girls have undergone training in the following categories, and have appeared for the Government Technical Examination:

- Tamil typewriting - Junior grade - 2 girls
- Tamil typewriting - Senior grade - 3 girls
- English typewriting - Junior grade - 15 girls
- English typewriting - Senior grade - 6 girls

Two girls appeared for both the Tamil and English Senior Grade Typewriting examinations in the same period. Of the 24 girls, 19 passed the examinations, including 9 with distinction.



A fire in Tirukalapur destroyed many houses. READ helped the people by purchasing and distributing kitchen and food items.



part of the country from various people, NGOs, and government agencies. To help alleviate their sufferings, we collected Rs. 20,000 locally and supplied rice, provisions and other food materials to the surviving people at Kundu Uppalavadi village near Cuddalore as emergency relief. Our partner NGOs, OSAI, GGS and CPCT, also joined hands with us in this relief activity. Additional rebuilding activities are ongoing.

6. Emergency Relief.

This year we were involved in two emergency relief activities that were warranted by unexpected situations.

6.1. Fire accident relief.

Twenty-one houses/huts in Thirukalapur village (in which we have many service activities) caught fire and reduced all properties of the residents to ashes. Fortunately there were no casualties. To help the stranded residents, we supplied cooking vessels and food materials worth Rs. 700 to each family as emergency relief.

6.2. Tsunami relief.

On December 26, our coastal region suffered the worst disaster ever to these people due to the tsunami. Many villages were washed away, taking away the lives in it and leaving many orphans behind. Emergency relief rushed into this affected

7. Other Trainings and Meetings.

7.1. Staff training.

As in the past, we also arranged at the beginning of this year a staff training to refresh and reinforce their functional spirit and to get their best service. This was a two-day refresher training conducted by Mr. Lobithas, Trichy.

7.2. Staff review meetings.

To self-assess their past activities and to plan their next phase of work, the staff review meeting is called for at the end of every week and at the end of every month. The weekly meeting is for the field staff and the monthly review meeting is for all READ staff. These meetings were productive, as the problems and risk factors in the implementation were brought to the attention of the high administrative body and immediately discussed to try to come up with solutions.



Tsunami relief efforts: READ and other NGOs sent food and kitchen supplies to some of the coastal villages in Cuddalore district that were devastated by this terrible tragedy.

8. Other programs.

8.1 Consumer awareness program.

Since problems related to consumerism are vast, and most rural people are quite ignorant of them, we organized this year also consumer awareness meetings to 28 SHGs (both men and women SHGs). Awareness was given on under-quality products, short- measurement in shops, hazardous food stuff in markets, adulteration, where to file complaints and other related topics.

8.2. Health awareness and PLHA care and support.

This is an ongoing program of the Tamilnadu Voluntary Health Association (TNVHA) implemented through READ. Awareness on maternal and reproductive health and right issues was provided in SHG meetings sponsored by TNVHA. The TNVHA in collaboration with our organization has also undertaken a program for PLHA (People living with HIV/AIDS) in which we identify, guide and refer HIV-infected people for appropriate care and support.

8.3. National Environmental awareness Campaign (NEAC).

Every year we undertake the NEAC program to aware and activate our target population on environmental issues. The Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India through the Nodal Agency- CPR Foundation at Chennai, sponsored this program. The topic for this year was 'Solid waste management'. Under this project, we conducted a Seminar on the subject to SHG women. As action program, we have constructed two vermin-compost pits as demonstration pit for participants and other SHG members to learn how to recycle organic waste into enriched manure.

8.4. Staff welfare fund.

A staff welfare fund has already been created in our organization by saving 10% of monthly staff salary along with a 5% matching contribution from READ. For emergency needs, the staff can avail a loan from this fund. In addition, medical support is offered to every staff up to a limit of Rs. 2,000.

8.5. Training and reinforcement of cultural team:

We have a cultural team by the name of 'Vidiyal' with 10 active members that performed street theater programs. This is a powerful dissemination tool involved in all our awareness programs and campaigns. To reinforce its performance skills, three different trainings were given to this team in this year:

- A 10-day training program at Pattukottai offered by the Government of Tamilnadu on the topic "Namathu grammam" (It's our village) to strengthen the spirit of citizenship and patriotism among the people.
- A 2-day training on Environmental protection was organized by READ at READ's training center with the goal of undertaking environment-related programs.
- A 5-day training program on HIV/AIDS was organized to involve them further in our PEPP program described previously. New street plays and songs on HIV/AIDS were developed in this training to perform in the PEPP project.

This year, the team has performed cultural programs on different subject matters in 54 villages.

9. Recognition and Membership Status.

READ continued to hold its recognition and membership status in the following Block level, District level and State level Bodies/Organizations:

- NGO member of Perambalur District Local level Committee for National Trust, HRD department of Government of India (for autism, cerebral palsied, mentally retarded and multiple disability). READ received the "Best local level committee award" this year from the Minister of social justice and empowerment, Government of India.
- District Hospital Development Advisory Board.
- District task force for adolescents.
- District family welfare advisory committee.
- Block level task force for female victims.
- Block committee member of SSA (Sarva Siksha Abiyan), Andimadam and Senthurai Blocks.
- Andimadam Panchayat level SSA committee and building committee member.
- Member NGO in Campaign Against Child Labour, Tamil Nadu.
- District convener and resource center for the health program of TNVHA (Chennai) for Perambalur District.

- District Community Based Rehabilitation for disabled persons (CBR) Facilitation Center for Perambalur District for TNVHA, Chennai.
- Member of Governing Body of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Perambalur (State Government body).
- Board member of CBR forum- network of disabled activities (Network of NGOs in Tamilnadu and Pondicherry).

10. Representative Status.

READ continued to enjoy the following representative status also in this year-

- i) Regional representative for the Alliance for Youth Achievement (AYA) Inc., USA (www.allforyouth.org).
- ii) Nodal agency for Sahaya International Inc., USA (www.sahaya.org) in appraising projects and transferring funds to local NGOs.
- iii) Fiscal agent to transfer funds to SAATHII, Chennai (www.saathii.org) and to monitor its accounts.

11. Visitors.

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

- i) Dr. Koen Van Rompay, DVM., Ph.D., Secretary and Treasurer of Sahaya International Inc., USA and Associate Research Virologist at the University of California, USA.
- ii) Dr. Adele Moussas (USA), board member and volunteer of Sahaya International.
- iii) Ms. Alison Johnston, volunteer, Alliance for Youth Achievement (AYA), USA.
- iv) Dr. C. Lakshmanan (agricultural consultant, USA) and Chithra (child education specialist).
- v) Geoffrey Moussas, architect, Design 1st, Japan.

12. Financial Resources.

READ has received financial support from the following organizations and Government Departments to carry out the activities:

- i) Sahaya International Inc., USA., including its network of friends and other organizations (including Gospel Justice Committee of the St. James Parish in Davis, the Belgian Club of Northern California,

and SAGA),

- ii) Elton John AIDS Foundation, UK.
- iii) Alliance for Youth Achievement Inc., USA.
- iv) TNVHA, Chennai.
- v) Women Development corporation through District Agency (Mahalir Thittam), Perambalur.
- vi) NABARD, Chennai.
- vii) Ministry of Environment and Forest, New Delhi through CPR Aiyar Foundation, Chennai.
- viii) UNAIDS, New Delhi.
- ix) Gilead Sciences, USA (through Sahaya International).
- x) Global Strategies for HIV Prevention, USA (through Sahaya International).
- xi) Arokiyaagam, Andipatti, India.
- xii) Sarva Siksha Abiyan (SSA), Perambalur.
- xiii) CAPART, Hyderabad.
- xiv) BDOs, Senthurai and Andimadam.
- xv) Family Van Rompay and friends, Belgium.
- xvi) Donations, local contributions, income from greeting cards sale, service charges from tailoring, typewriting and computer courses.

13. Conclusions.

As this report highlights, READ has accomplished many activities during this reporting year. Our path of providing service crossed many ups and downs. But we gained strength to overcome difficult situations with the moral and financial support of our many well-wishers, friends, board members and staff. We remember all of them and want to express our sincere gratitude to them.

A special thanks goes to the many volunteers of the network of Sahaya International in the USA and Belgium, who stand on our side in all our activities, in times of success but also in times of distress. My special thanks are also due to my colleagues - READ's office bearers and our committed 59 staff members for their best cooperation and dedication to achieve our objectives in this year.

While thanking all of you, I sincerely beseech you for your cooperation and support in the coming year, so together we can continue our service to the underprivileged and needy people in our communities.

Sincerely,

D. Selvam, Secretary