

Annual Report – 2019-2020

Visionaries of Creative Action for Liberation and Progress – VICALP

Visionaries of Creative Action for Liberation and Progress (VICALP) is a not-for-profit voluntary organization working with the indigenous communities and other marginalized sections of the society in Odisha since 1995. The inception of VICALP steps back to the pan-India indigenous people's struggle for Self-Rule Act (73rd Amendment of the Constitution) in the 1990s when a group of socially committed local enlightened leaders came together to form a platform for the cause of the people. This attempt eventually emerged into a collective legal entity as VICALP and evolved as one of the most active, reliable, and progressive democratic people-centric organization and got registered under SR Act 1860 on 31st August 1995.

VICALP initiated its community engagement in 36 rural inaccessible tribal and dalit villages in 6 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in one block in the district of Gajapati in the year 1992 with a research activity in association with Dr. Dip Kapoor, now Professor in Advanced Education at Alberta University-Canada. In the process, few likeminded friends from Canada through "HELP-Canada" extended support for promoting grassroot level people's organizations including women's organizations and SHGs in the target villages. VICALP also achieved one of the first India-based community mobilization project support of Rs. 72000/- from Center for World Solidarity-Secunderabad in the year 1999 and thus the journey of VICALP though began in a very humble way but with a strong determination and commitment for the emancipation of people especially the women, men and children of the excluded communities.

Vision of VICALP

The Visionaries of Creative Action for Liberation & Progress (VICALP) seeks for the all-round and sustainable development of Adivasis, Dalits and the poor people by addressing poverty, and inequality thereby promoting social justice, equality, cooperation, human rights and communal harmony. VICALP recognizes and affirms a commitment to non-violent action and the possibility for social change through activation of our constitutional rights, freedoms and responsibilities.

Mission of the Organization:

Our mission is to partner with the poor, marginalized and excluded communities in Odisha to promote and facilitate collective and creative actions towards ensuring their rights and entitlements, generation of sustainable inclusive development and growth of communal harmony; and collaborate with civil society organizations for working together towards socio-economic empowerment of partner communities.

Objectives:

1) Promoting socio-cultural education, which seeks to uncover the societal structural basis of the continued marginalization of adivasi, dalit and poor communities;

- 2) Promoting the development of adivasi, dalit and poor people's organized positive activism and collective assertion of equal rights to land, water, forest and livelihoods in the scheduled areas as per constitutional guarantees enshrined in the fifth schedule;
- 3) Promoting the development of coalitions between community organizations, other marginalized social groups (landless and fishing/coastal communities), civil society, and NGOs in the interests of protecting and promoting constitutional rights and safeguards for rural marginalized communities in relation to land, forest and water resources and livelihoods;
- 4) Providing facilitative support for local livelihood based development activities and entrepreneurs that are consistent with the communities' conceptions of culture, economy, and progress;
- 5) Promoting land claim, land associated activities such as agriculture based livelihood promotion, organic and eco-friendly agriculture promotion, and promotion of horticultural activities among the excluded communities;
- 6) Promoting children's education in relation to child attendance, retention, completion of high school, and linking with need based vocational trainings;
- 7) Activating mother and child health services and promoting sanitation, health and hygiene with special attention to the adolescents' health needs;
- 8) Encouraging active participation and citizenship of aivasis, dalits, and poor people in the democratic process of the Nation;
- 9) Supporting collective non-violent struggle against discrimination and oppression on the basis of caste, gender, ethnicity, and class by promoting unity, cooperation, and communal harmony among marginalized and vulnerable social groups.

VICALP's Partner Communities:

VICALP started its development initiatives involving the tribal, dalit, and other down trodden communities in the rural and remote 36 villages in 6 GPs in the block of Mohana in Gajapati-Odisha. In course, the organization expanded its field base to 20 Gram Panchayats in Mohana and then to the entire 129 GPs in 7 blocks in Gajapati in 2014 while implementing a HNWASH Shakti Varta program in collaboration with the WCD and H&FW departments of the Government of Odisha. Similarly, over the period, VICALP also expanded its various programs to 7 districts both in terms of direct implementation of programs and through NGO networks.

One of the most remarkable achievements of VICALP was when Christian Aid South Asia Desk selected and enrolled VICALP as its point organization for its humanitarian assistance work in the State of Odisha after VICALP's effective involvement in the Phailin-Cyclone relief and rehabilitation measures in the year 2013/14. Since then, VICALP has been taking up humanitarian emergency relief and follow-up support programs for the victims of natural calamities across castes and faith of people irrespective of rich and poor in the State of Odisha.

VICALP's partner communities in terms of development support can be classified into three broad categories. First, directly working with the communities and secondly working through

network partners and thirdly interacting with the communities through humanitarian emergency relief and rehabilitation activities.

VICALP's direct partner communities include a little over 22000 families in around 500 villages with population counting more than 100000, mostly Kondh, and Sabara adivasis, dalits, OBCs, and general poor spread over the districts of Gajapati, Kandhmal, Ganjam, and Jhasuguda. Similarly, VICALP is also engaged through NGO network basis involving another 25000+ families comprising more than 1,25,000 population in the districts of Gajapati, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Rayagada, Jajpur, Nawarangpur in the State of Odisha.

VICALP' Understanding and Stand on Partner Communities:

Orissa is generally regarded as the poorest and one of the least developed states in India with per capita income of Rs. 5985/- annually and 46.8 percent of the population living below poverty line. The southern region of the state comprising the Eastern Ghats and adjoining hill areas especially in the operational districts of VICALP namely Gajapati and Kandhamal, has a massive incidence of poverty of 72.7 percent. Further the north and south Orissa together account for almost 75 percent of the state's poor (Govt. of Orissa 2002). The incident of poverty among the STs is 75.8 percent in rural Orissa as a whole, as high as 82.2 percent in south Orissa.

Similarly in rural Orissa 50 percent of Dalits are poor and in south Orissa 67.2 percent Dalits are poor. In the southern Orissa even 64.7 percent OBCs are poor. In Orissa 44.45 percent of the total land owning Tribals fall under poor category, similarly 35.48 SCs, 26.4 OBCs and 15.90 others land owing families fall under category of poor. The high incident of the poverty in the land owning tribals and dalits shows the low productivity of SC/ST agriculture, which is largely hill agriculture compared to plains' agriculture. Between 1994-2005 agriculture grew at 1.83 percent, forestry at 1.90 percent and fishing at 4.96 percent in the state. There is almost stagnation in agriculture growth.

VICALP's target communities are basically the rural poor living in the scheduled districts and rural areas; and they happen to be the Adivasis, Dalits, OBCs and the general poor. These communities live as traditional neighbors and natural allies for centuries and this historical 'living together' has manifested itself in their inter-dependence in economic life, affinity in socio-cultural behavior, values and belief system, customs and traditions. Moreover, they have seen each other as supporters, friends in need, collaborators in individual and community actions, and advisors to each other in times of struggle, strife and crisis. These communities are located at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder and have been subjected to centuries of economic marginalization and social exclusion. Till date these communities live a life of abject poverty with comparatively higher rates of maternal and infant mortality, and deprivations.

VICALP believes that development is best achieved when people have democratic space for participation in decision making, planning, and implementing processes. This makes them not only active participants but also gives them a sense of ownership of their own development. VICALP also believes that given an opportunity and right facilitation people are capable of addressing their own issues and safe guarding their own rights and entitlements. It is a matter of strategic intervention that is required to unite a dynamic organizational and developmental process among the communities.

VICALP places people at the center of its development planning and hence develops community-based organizations (CBOs). They become the vehicle for sustainable change in the communities. However, women's effective and equal participation is ensured in every step of such processes. The CBOs through continuous capacity building activities get socio-politically educated and organize themselves for democratic collective rights assertion through constructive engagement with the government grassroot institutions to mobilize various development schemes and other resources. People's interaction with government departments and financial institution is strategically carried out through action-reflection and action processes ensuring democratic and constructive participation of women and men.

Developmental Interventions:

Past Interventions at a Glance

Ekta Abhiyan



VICALP founded Ekta Abhiyan people's campaign with the help of HELP-Canada which has become the cornerstone in the entire activities of the organization. Ekta Abhiyan was promoted on the plunks of protecting people's rights and thereby promoting communal harmony. Along with peace and livelihood restoration in the districts of Kandhamal and Gajapati riot during 2007 - 2008, Ekta Abhiyan actively got involved in ensuring rights, entitlements and basic

services to the marginalized and socially excluded communities. Ekta Abhiyan have been a collective journey of the socially excluded communities with equal participation and ownership of the process by women and men till date.

Land Rights and Food Security Supported by HELP-Canada-1997 to 2017

Vegetable cultivation by individual families: With the 10 varieties of vegetable seeds to 151 villages of both Mohana and Daringbadi blocks comprised of 6011 households, all the farmers successfully produced around 692412 KGs of vegetable in Kharif and Rabi seasons every year. Each Dalit and Tribal household produced approximately 145 KGs of vegetable in an average and used for self-consumption and local market sale. Around 35% of the total households could sell the surplus vegetable and earned an extra income Rs. 1200/- to 2500/- approximately.

Community fruit orchard plantation: The existing fruit orchard were groomed for better production. The orchards were with the fruit trees of cashew, guava, jackfruit, papaya, pineapple, pomegranate, mango and banana. However, initiatives were taken to expand the orchards with proper marketing of the produce to city vendors and markets. The government horticulture department has asked VICALP to promote the fruit orchards in Daringbadi and Mohana blocks through MGNREGS.

Promotion of millet cultivation: The program aimed at strengthening people's claims over forest land. During 2014-15, technical (SRI) and financial (Manure) support for millet cultivation was provided to 151 villages for 6011 farmers. The farmers cultivated millet from 32421 acres of fallow/hilly/sloppy land. This activity is linked to occupied land under FRA by which the millet cultivated fallow land was used as agricultural land under FRA.

The millet cultivation program included elements of organic farming, mixed/multiple/inter cropping, etc. In 2013 and 2014, the Government of Odisha declared Mohana block as a millet/maize producing cluster and recognized VICALP as one of the major contributors in promoting millet cultivation. As a result, VICALP has been accepted as a pioneer and lead NGO for promoting traditional and organic crops by the adoption of scientific method of cultivation.

Community grain bank: In 2014-2015, VICALP provided 13401 KGs of grain to the Dalit and tribal communities. The communities have mostly used the grains for cultivation as well as consumption purposes during the lean seasons and collected them during harvest. The value of the grain from the grain banks distributed in monetary terms is estimated to be about Rs. 502217.

Continuation of village level people's organizations in and strengthening by collective decision and actions: This is an ongoing activity of the organization where the CBOs get refreshed in terms of election of executive committees and inclusion of new youth members into the village organizations and involve them in the village decision making process. The village organization functions as the highest policy and decision-making body in the village. The chief/head of the village organization along with a group of office bearers (nominated by the villagers), function as a team to oversee and supervise day-to-day programs. Besides, the women organizations and WSHGs also follow the same process and update their various books and records.

There are also special groups evolved in the Daringbadi block of Kandhmal district promoted by VICALP. These groups are formed basically to organize the small holding farmers as producers' associations. They are known as Common Interest Groups (CIGs) consisting of +5000 small holding farmers in 51 CIGs. The aim of these groups is to promote organic agriculture, vegetable and rice cultivation.

Continuation of Panchayat/ Regional organizations with village men and women's representatives: Panchayat Level and Central Level people's organisations have been formed and strengthened to make them function as people's forces vis-à-vis the government. There are regular Panchayat and central level meetings organized. The central organization, i. e. Ekta Abhiyan have been functioning regularly in the field level offices. These activities were initiated in the district of Gajapati and later VICALP expanded and replicated the Ekta Abhiyan experience in Kandhmal and Jharsuguda districts with active membership in 500 plus villages, covering 23,000 plus households with a population base of more than one lakh. The process also has created 3 district level and 7 block level Ekta Abhiyan federations, which are active on various rights issues.

Advocacy and lobby: The block level EA committees which meet every month in the 8 block headquarters have bi-monthly district level central EA meetings at district headquarters followed by one day of interactive meetings with government officials presenting before grievances and issues in relation to rights and entitlements. Besides this, the Panchayat level task force from regions/panchayats also meet the government and elected representatives to press on their grievances. The EA people's representatives go to the

district headquarters several times to present their demands and grievances to the government authorities on the issues of FRA, land, education, MGNREGS, health facilities etc.

PDS centers: VICALP has promoted eleven village Public Distribution Centers (PDS) managed by Women Self Help Groups (WSHG) covering 18 Panchayats. These PDSs continue to supply Kerosene, rice, dal and essential commodities to more than 6011 households in the program Panchayats. The monthly turnover is around 1 Lakhs rupees in an average of all PDSs. People get regular supply of ration on monthly basis. PDSs appoint a point person by paying Rs. 1500/- per month from the PDS profit to manage the outlet.

People's constructive engagement with Government institutions: Regular Gram Panchayat and block collective visits of leaders are organized by Ekta Abhiyan on various issues regarding FRA, LRA and MGNREGS. FRA, LRA and MGNREGA are the three important Acts/schemes enacted by the government of India to eradicate poverty in the country basically by providing land and land entitlements by FRA and LRA, and 100 days employment to the people. Ekta Abhiyan ensures that maximum people get benefits out of these provisions through collective action.

Human Rights Project supported by EU/EIDHR-2007-09

The EU/EIDHR project, supported through CA was a part of a national level coalition program that focused on protecting human right. The main work was monitoring atrocities committed on SC and ST communities in the country. The Project aimed to use the judiciary and the legal remedies to address atrocities and activate atrocity monitoring through human rights defenders. VICALP implemented this project four districts in Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, and Rayagada districts. The project was able to pick up 77 atrocity cases and took it to the court. It supported the victims in claiming compensation and justice with a higher conviction ratio.

Inclusive Economic Development with support from Scottish Govt./CA 2010-2016

VICALP in collaboration with Christian Aid, New Delhi and Scottish Govt. International Development Fund, UK, implemented a project titled 'Inclusive Economic Development (IED) through integrated Food Production and Income Security' involving 1568 smallholding turmeric farmers from 29 tribal and Dalit villages of Daringibadi block in Kandhamal-Odisha. The beneficiary farmers were organized into Common Interest Groups (CIGs) leading towards registered farmers producers'



company named as "Jaiva Jeevan Producer Company Ltd. (JPCL)", along with a small-scale industry named "Jaiva Jeevan Agri-Enterprise".

Vocational Skill Development for Tribal-Dalit Youth in South Odisha-supported by CA-New Delhi

VICALP initiated market relevant employment oriented skills training in 2019-2020 in its training centers at Mohana, Daringbadi, Gopalpur and Berhampur in the districts of Gajapati, Kandhamal and Ganjam-Odisha. To begin with 750 youth (both male and female) were enrolled from excluded and marginalized tribal and dalit communities, and were facilitated to undergo vocational skill training on electronics, computer/ITES,



office and back-end work, and electrician trades. After the training the trainees were assisted in placement in appropriate industries and private organizations. VICALP in technical collaboration with “Globsyn Skills, Calcutta, is conducting regular vocational training courses which is job linked and recognized by the industries. The initiative has helped 750 young women and men get gainful employment in industries and service sectors.

System of Rice Intensification (SRI)-Supported by SDTT-2008-2014

In collaboration with Sir Dorabji TATA Trust (SDTT), VICALP has taken up System of Rice Intensification (SRI) among the vulnerable tribal and dalit communities in the operational area with a view to replace traditional method of less-productive cultivation.

Poorest Area Civil Society (PACS) program-supported by DFID/CA-2011-2017

VICALP with the support of DFID/Christian Aid initiated PACS program from September-2011, through a 4 member NGO network process implementing this program covering 23000 rural poor households in 394 villages in 6 blocks in Kandhamal and in Jharsuguda districts-Orissa as beneficiaries of the project ensuring basic rights, entitlements and livelihood. The basic thrust of PACS program was to achieve MDG in its operational villages ensuring livelihood rights: LRA, FRA, MGNREGA, Skill Development, and basic services: Health, Nutrition and Education.

The PACS program also implemented the RSBY and Dalit Open Budgeting as add on activities in its operational areas in the district of Kandhamal and Jharsuguda. The RSBY intervention aimed at addressing the health issues of the people through health insurance by effectively utilizing the benefit of Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY). Similarly, the Dalit Open Budgeting sensitized the communities on the processes and procedures of State budgeting, and mobilized the communities to collectively put pressure and impact the annual budget of the government budget and make it a Dalit and tribal pro budget.

Shakti Varta supported by DFID in collaboration with WCD/H &FW dept. Government of Odisha-2014-2017



VICALP mobilized a project from IPE Global titled as Shakti Varta for its two operational area 1) Gajapati and 2) Gajapati in 2014 which was launched in august 2014. The project was implemented in 12 blocks in Gajapati (7 blocks) and Jharsuguda (5 blocks). It is a DFID aided Government of Odisha convergence program, which is being led by VICALP and was implemented in collaboration with Government of Odisha department of Women and Child development, Health and Family Welfare, and Rural Development. The project focused around Mission Shakti/ICDS and WSHGs and aimed at the drastic reduction of IMR, NMR, MMR and malnutrition in its operational area. VICALP facilitated the process as trainer and facilitating organization and in reporting and documentation, staff, and on monitoring in the community processes at the field level.

Post-PACS Intervention on Village health and Nutrition Day (VHND) Monitoring and Strengthening in Gajapati District (2016-17)

The success of Shakti Varta project had a spillover effect as the collector of Gajapati district requested VICALP and its funding partner to help the district administration in monitoring the VHND activities in the district. The involvement requested was in the backdrop of non-improvement in the indicators which VHND program was aiming at. The collector, with the help of a technical team from VICALP streamlined the community level data collection, compilation and analysis process at the district office. The team also provided regular field visits and on site assistance/guidance to the field level health staff on the effective implantation of VHND in the villages. The program provided technical and monitoring guidance to the district health department for a little over six months.

Ongoing Interventions in the Year 2019-2020



VICALP is implementing a livelihood project titled as “Livelihood Project Odisha’ from 2018 which is supported by KARUNA Trust through Phia Foundation, New Delhi. The project aimed to strengthen the livelihood and inclusive development of tribal and Dalit communities exclusively targeting 5500 households as direct beneficiaries and 1500 households as indirect beneficiaries within a scheduled time period of 4 years. However, the project was kept on hold due to Covid 19 related lockdown.

The ultimate outcome of the project was envisaged as follows:

- 15 community based organizations (CBOs) and Common Interest Groups (CIGs) are actively managing village level development work on their own by the end of project period.
- 30 strong and vibrant women’s Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are doing savings and micro-credit business with active participation by 500 women in 30 village.
- Product specific 2 farmers’ business federations are engaged in business including Turmeric and Siali leaves.
- 15 villages and their federations are engaged in business with National Agricultural Bank for Rural Development (NABARD), Orissa Rural Marketing Society (ORMAS), 1 local bank and 1 Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) company.
- Strong and skillful women and men leaders are leading SHGs, CBOs, CIGs, and enterprises at the community level.

VICALP started implementing this project in 15 villages in 3-gram panchayats in the block of Mohana and the program indicators along with outcomes generated smoothly by the end of 2019 and up to March 2020. However, after the pan-India lockdown imposed by the Government of India due to Covid 19 pandemic, the project implementation was abruptly put on hold.

Conflict Transformation and Peace Building – Through SWAD Network



The Conflict Transformation and Peace Building project started after the Kandhmal unrest in the year 2008 to address the issues of communal violence and promote communal harmony in the district of Gajapati. VICALP implemented the project in 20 villages in 2 Gram Panchayats in the blocks of Mohana and Rayagada in Gajapati.

The project focused on promoting initiate inter-caste and inter-religion platforms so that people from different caste and religious background can reflect on the issues of communal unrest in one platform. The project also aimed at different issues of conflict resolution and promote peaceful coexistence of people irrespective of their caste and religious background. Besides this, the project also focused on development of people through constructive collective engagement with the government institutions.

In the year 2019-2020, VICALP's 20 operational villages communities achieved the following in terms of project outcomes:

- 80% reduction in domestic violence in comparison to the situation prior to the implementation of project in the 20 program villages.
- Peace and harmony established in the locality after the conscious efforts of the project team and leaders.
- 42 conflict sensitive development plans (CSDPs) were developed in Palli Sabhas and Gram Sabhas in the target area.

- 112 SHGs were promoted in the project through regular monitoring and linking to financial institutions.
- 20 youth organisations were formed in 20 target villages where the members promoted peace building and participated in development activities through innovative sports and cultural programs.

Conclusion:

The year 2019-2020 has been a very critical time in the history mankind as the Corona pandemic has brought life all over the world to a standstill. The consequence of the lockdown and shutdown was overbearing on NGO activities and VICALP was no exception. People in the field faced life and death struggles as the livelihood activities were not possible and Covid created havoc with a large number people bedridden or dead due to infection. All the developmental activities of VICALP were squeezed and the organization had to give standing instructions to the field staff not to take risk and stop the activities immediately. Nevertheless, VICALP is looking forward to restart the development programs and march ahead in its mission to work for the marginalized communities as soon as it becomes possible to resume normal life.

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