

**INDIGENOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM CASE STUDY**

**EMPOWERMENT AND ACTION:  
LAYA'S WORK IN TRIBAL EDUCATION**

*By Dr. (Ms.) Nafisa Goga D'Souza, Laya*

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## **EMPOWERMENT AND ACTION: LAYA'S WORK IN TRIBAL EDUCATION**

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'Learning for empowerment' is a phrase so often quoted in literacy programme reports that we may no longer stop to think what it really means. This case study from India however takes us into what 'empowerment' means to young women and men living in tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh. Through a first-hand account of the activities initiated by the organisation, Laya, we are introduced to an unusually holistic approach to adult education, based on the philosophy that "major learning in the tribal context takes place through struggles on issues focusing on human rights of tribal communities" (p. 24). The word 'empowerment' is not used in a rhetorical sense here, but becomes the guiding principle behind the educational processes developed: whether in terms of setting up appropriate organisational structures, identifying and responding to specific needs of different groups of tribal women and men, or developing new training approaches.

'Laya' represents 'rhythm' and belief in 'the wisdom of the "rhythm" underlying tribal societies' which drew together the team of people who began working to empower tribal communities in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, back in 1985. In this area of India, tribal groups were increasingly affected by the adverse effects of development – deforestation meant that many people were displaced and government attempts to integrate tribal communities into the mainstream brought their whole culture and way of life under threat. Though the government aimed to increase access to education for tribal communities, only poor quality schooling was offered, with a curriculum which neither met their needs nor recognised their traditional knowledge and value systems. Laya's alternative educational approach grew out of experiences with young tribal people who were campaigning against government land reform in 1989 – although they were acting on this specific issue, it became clear that they did not "demonstrate a broader vision of tribal rights". Since then, Laya has developed training programmes for the young tribal people to gain a deeper understanding of the macro and micro level context within which they act, as well as the skills to tackle injustices within their communities. This case study describes in detail the innovative training curriculum and methods used in a variety of programmes, such as mock courts where trainees can practise their legal skills and health courses where traditional medicine is promoted through trainees growing medicinal herbs in their gardens.

Over time, Laya recognised that women were not participating fully in the training programmes, partly because of their limited mobility and domestic pressures. In response to the realisation that development had actually had greater negative effects on tribal women, Laya initiated a separate programme for women addressing the specific issues they faced, including domestic violence and lack of property rights. We read here about the opportunities that arose when women came together as a group, not just to share their similar experiences but to learn from each others' differences: for example, in relation to whether dowry was still an oppressive tradition within each community.

What is striking in this case study is that literacy is not identified as a major issue or constraint: training methods were developed to enable both literate and non-literate women to participate. This is in contrast to the common viewpoint of literacy as the entry point to women's empowerment. The many examples of people successfully challenging injustices and initiating reform illustrate the effectiveness of a process that started with the simple step of outsiders joining a tribal community campaign, "asking provocative questions, supporting some of their activities and creating an environment for deliberation and reflection". This case study demonstrates the value of building up and developing long term relationships as a model for social change and an educational approach that responds to local needs and constraints.



### **The Tribal Community Context in India**

The total number of tribal communities recognized by the government as Scheduled Tribes is 572 in number. Scheduled Tribes are those tribal communities who have been listed so by the President of India in keeping with Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution. These tribal communities mainly live in Scheduled Areas, or those outlying areas, which during the British times did not come under the direct purview of civil, criminal and revenue administration.

#### **Regional Concentration of Tribal Communities in India**

**North-Eastern region:** In the mountain valleys and other areas of north-eastern India, covering the States and Union Territories like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura live tribes like the Abor, Garo, Khasi, Kuki, Mismi, Naga, etc., who mostly belong to Mongolian racial stock.

**Himalayan region:** In the sub-Himalayan regions covering parts of North-Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh live tribes like Lepcha, Rabha, etc., mostly belonging to Mongolian racial group.

**Central India region:** In the older hills and Chotanagpur Plateau, along the dividing lines between peninsular India and the Indo-Gangetic basin, live many tribal communities like the Bhumij, Gond, Ho, Oraon, Munda, Santal, etc., covering the States of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal and mostly belonging to Proto-Australoid racial stock.<sup>2</sup>

**Western India region:** Covering the States like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli live a number of tribal communities the most important of them being the Bhil racially belonging to the Proto-Australoid group.

**Southern India region:** Covering the States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, in the Nilgiri Hills and converging lines of the Ghats live the Chenchu, Irula, Kadar, Kota, Kurumba, Toda, etc., having Negrito, Caucasoid, Proto-Australoid or mixed physical features.

**Island region:** Covering Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands live a number of small tribes like the Andamanese, Onge, Sentinelese, etc.

*Source: Chaudhuri, Bhddhadeb (Ed). (1992), Tribal Transformation in India Vol. I, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications*

*Traditional* tribal communities are mainly characterized by:

- Relative geographical isolation and thus experiencing political, economic and social discrimination. The mainstream ruling elite treats the homeland of the tribal communities in India as their internal colony.
- Dependence for their survival mainly on natural resources and being spiritually linked to their lands.
- A distinct culture, which is community oriented and valuing the power of nature. They believe no one should take advantage of another's weakness.
- No centralized political institutions and are organized at the level of the community making decisions on a consensus basis.
- A differing worldview, consisting of a custodial and non-materialistic attitude to land and natural resources.



- Women enjoy relative freedom within their society.

However, traditional tribal societies are undergoing a rapid change with the mainstreaming policy of the Indian government. For the tribal communities the process of becoming a part of the mainstream has meant a declining control on their resources and erosion of their cultural heritage. The major issue affecting the tribals in India is displacement: not merely displacement by large projects but resource displacement, thus violating the basic survival rights of tribal communities. Tribal areas reveal a high degree of land alienation. Non-tribals have invaded tribal protected areas. Deforestation, mainly due to exploitation of forests for industrial purposes, is another manifestation of resource displacement. This has resulted in decreasing access to forest resources by tribal communities. With increasing globalization and privatization, the land rights of tribal areas is under even greater threat since these are regions, which have a high natural resource base and has tremendous potential to meet multiple market demands. Added to resource displacement is project displacement where development projects have threatened the livelihood needs of tribal communities. More than 40% of displaced persons of all large development projects are tribals.

More importantly displacement has been accompanied by erosion of the identity of tribal communities, which is being subsumed within the dominant culture. There is a breakdown in their own community institutions, which hitherto safeguarded their resources, traditional practices and values. In the process the richness and wealth of their knowledge systems, identity and survival with integrity is being destroyed.

Although there are protective laws governing tribal areas these laws are being circumvented or not implemented in spirit. For example the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India which is a protective legal framework for tribal areas is under threat of being amended due to the mining lobby in India which is keen to exploit the minerals from the habitats of tribal people. The forest laws and land acquisition laws also run counter to the land rights of tribal communities. The government programmes especially earmarked for tribal areas do not reach the people for whom they are meant due to ineffective implementation systems.

### **The Context of Laya's Work**

The word 'laya' represents 'rhythm'. We believe in the wisdom of the 'rhythm' underlying tribal societies. 'Laya' in mythology implies a cosmic balance of creation and destruction, which to us means retaining what is beneficial and destroying the impediments to the development process.

Our work began in East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh way back in 1985 mainly in tribal pockets of the district on local issues and programmes. In 1989 Laya was registered as an organization and a Resource Centre for Tribals was initiated at Visakhapatnam with the idea of reaching out to the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh and linking up with the adjacent tribal region.



Our major work objectives in relation to the tribals are:

- To empower tribal communities to secure access and control of their land, forest and water resources;
- To sustain and promote sustainable alternatives for security of livelihood; and
- To ensure self-governance recognizing their cultural identity and value systems

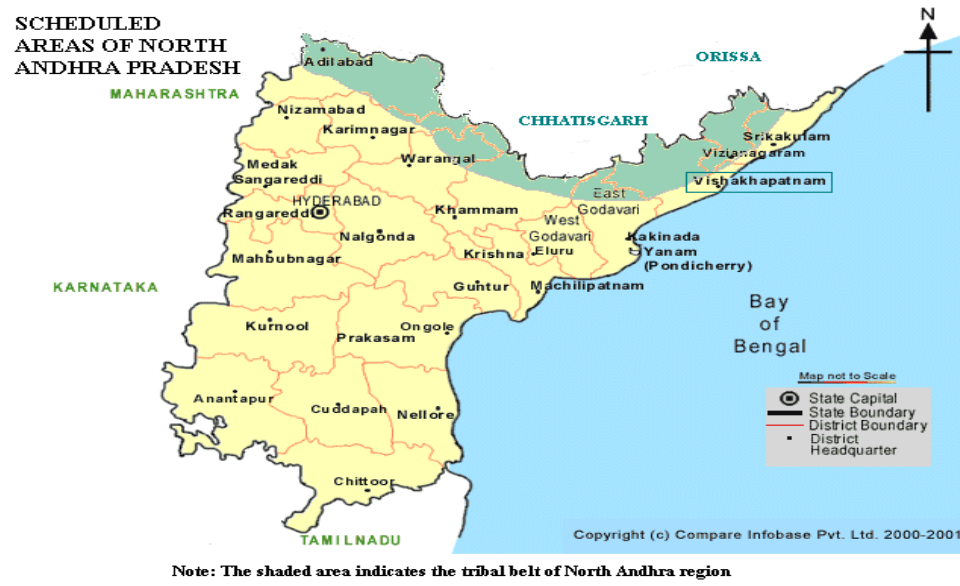
Our programme thrust areas include:

- Legal Assistance and Advocacy
- Sustainable Resource Management: (health, agriculture, micro enterprise)
- Capacity Building of Tribal Youth and People's Institutions
- Empowerment of Tribal Women
- Issues in the Region and Campaign Activities
- Research, Documentation and Dissemination

We are a team of approximately 30 persons: 15 from varied professional backgrounds relating to social work, management, environment, law and agriculture, 10 are graduates and field based, playing community mobilization functions, and the rest perform support functions. Eight of us in Laya are women. None of our team members belong directly to the communities we work with, as our strategy is to promote and encourage independent, self managed groups or organizations of the target communities.

Our engagement is mainly with the tribal communities residing in the Scheduled Areas of North Andhra region and we network with other tribal regions in India. There are about 33 tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh. Although some of them still retain their own dialects, most of them speak Telugu, the local language of Andhra Pradesh. About two thirds live in the hilly and Scheduled Areas of Andhra Pradesh.





Note: The shaded area indicates the tribal belt of North Andhra region

**Tribal Population in Scheduled Areas of Andhra Pradesh.**

Name of the District	Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Villages	Population (1991 census) in lakhs
Srikakulam	Savara, Jatapu, Gadaba, Konda Dora	108	1.3
Vizianagaram	-do-	298	1.7
Visakhapatnam	Bagata, Gadaba, Kammara, Konda Dora, Kotia, Khond, Mali, Manne Dora, Mukha Dora, Reddi Dora, Porja Valmiki, Goud, Kulia	3368	4.6
East Godavari	Koya, Konda Reddi, Kammara, Konda Dora	559	1.7
West Godavari	Koya, Konda Reddi, Yerukula, Yanadi	102	0.8
Khammam	Koya, Konda Reddi, Sugali or Lambada	889	5.3
Warangal	Koya, Lambada	412	3.7
Adilabad	Gond, Kolam, Pardhan, Thoti, Lambada, Naikpod, Andh	23	3.4
Mehaboobnagar	Lambada, Chenchu	177	2.2
<b>Total:</b>		<b>5936</b>	<b>24.7</b>

Source: Mohan Rao, K (1991), Tribal Profile of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad: Tribal Cultural and Training Institute; Mimeograph



This region has a high degree of land alienation both by non-tribal landlords and traders with the indirect assistance of the judicial and the executive arms of the State as well as land alienation by the State itself through its various development policies aimed at 'public purpose'. This includes exploitation of water, mineral and forest resources for commercial and industrial use.

Although there are protective laws, as a large part of this region is under Scheduled Areas, the rights of the tribals are in fact violated. For example, in tribal areas non-tribals, who now constitute as much as 48% of the population own 55.6% of the land. Moreover, the Andhra Pradesh government in its Vision 2020 Statement has identified agribusiness, mining development and industrial engagement as the key strategies to be adopted for the development of Andhra Pradesh. These strategies, while they may ensure economic growth for the State, for the marginalised tribal communities they are likely to further threaten the resource base and hence the survival rights of these communities.

Thus at the grassroots level, the manifestation of human rights violations are varied and many: decreasing access and control over natural resources that are the habitats of tribal communities; threat to livelihood; inadequate basic infrastructure for survival: water, electricity, roads etc.; lack of access to basic services such as health and education; violation of the right to information; threat of right to identity. The nature of violations becomes more complex in an environment, which is more and more exposed to market forces.

### **The Educational Context in the Tribal Areas of Andhra Pradesh**

The population of tribal people in Andhra Pradesh is 4,199,481 (6.3%) of the State's population. The literacy rate for total population of the State as per the 1991 Census was 44% (male 55% and female 33%) and these figures have gone up to 61% (male 71% and female 51%) in the 2001 Census, apparently due to the intensive literacy drives initiated by the State government. The corresponding literacy rate among the tribal population was 17% (male 25% and female 9%) as per the 1991 Census and 22% in the 2001 Census. This reveals the gap between the general population and the tribal communities.

Although the statistics show a vast change in literacy levels, the issue of literacy depends on how it is defined and the extent to which it is enabling in qualitative terms. While there are special programmes initiated for adult education, the implementation process is far from effective. Fifty-four years after Independence on November 28, 2001 the Government enacted the 93<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution making the Right to Education a Fundamental Right. It puts the onus of sending children to school on parents rather than the State. It is not enough to talk of fundamental rights and fundamental duties of the citizens. It is equally necessary to dwell on the fundamental duties of the government. The extent to which this enactment will be increasingly backed by resource allocation will be the test of the seriousness of purpose of the government to implement the law.

It is pertinent to look at the education scenario of Andhra Pradesh in this context. As far as elementary education is concerned, the government has undertaken several measures to reach out to tribal communities, such as the Girijana Vidya Vikas Kendras with





standards I and II in areas where 'primitive tribal communities' reside; mandal (sub-district) level elementary schools; special residential schools called Ashram Schools mainly in tribal areas; the 'Alternative Schools' etc., and monitoring systems such as the School Complex System. There have also been some special programmes such as bridge courses and back to school initiatives for dropouts. For adult literacy, the State has launched a special programme known as 'Akshara Sankranthi' which is for 'adults' above 15 years of age.

All these attempts fall far short of the specific educational needs in tribal areas. Apart from access to education is the issue of quality of the education process. Many of the existing schools do not have adequate number of teachers. The quality of teaching leaves much to be desired let alone the content, which does not take into account the tribal reality situation.

### **Defining 'Education' in the Tribal Context**

For us 'education' is an integral part of the empowerment process. Empowerment of the tribal community means capacitating tribal communities to secure access and control of their land, forest and water resources as well as sustain and promote viable alternatives for security of their livelihoods. Empowerment thus is an interactive process whereby tribal communities are enabled to participate actively in local governance (decision making that affects their own life situation).

It is in this context that we need to define the role of adult education. For us, educating tribal communities in a more concrete sense means to facilitate processes, which will enable tribal representatives to:

- develop an analytical capacity for assessing their external and internal environment impacting on their own communities;
- develop confidence and capacity to articulate their interests and perspective thereby participating in decision making processes leading to better governance;
- develop skills to initiate local relevant alternatives to improve livelihoods and challenge external pressures;
- value self and community history with a critical appreciation of traditional knowledge systems.

We do recognize that adult literacy constitutes an important part of adult education and we have made some attempts in this direction. From 1992-1997 we facilitated tribal youth to take up night schools as a part of the government drive for adult literacy. Several of the trainers were absorbed into the State-run literacy programme initiated in 1998.

However, our major involvement has been with young adults who have been dropouts of the school system. School dropouts have very little opportunities for further education. The percentage of enrolment in schools is 79% (89% for male and 68% for female). But the dropout rate among the tribals is as much as 71% while for the general population it is



only 65%. The ambitious ones tend to be frustrated with an alienating education experience and some of them often land up joining extremist groups in the area.

Mainstream educational institutions do not 'educate' because the curriculum does not give due consideration to the rich traditional knowledge and value systems prevalent within tribal societies. These institutions do not create an opportunity to develop and learn skills which are relevant to the needs, lifestyle and aspirations of tribal communities. We believe that it is important to invest in the youth because it is they who are going to steer the future of tribal societies. Hence we have been focussing on 'alternative education' mainly with tribal youth.

### **Alternative Education Processes: Thrust and Target Groups**

Within the framework of the above definition, the following is our thrust and target groups with whom we have been working:

Thrust of the alternative education processes:

- Need based and functional
- Develop capacities beyond basic literacy skills attained in formal education
- Change agent oriented for social transformation

Major target groups:

- Young men and women with potential for leadership roles
- Specific education processes with young tribal women
- Paralegal education for tribal youth
- Potential and elected leaders at the local level

Type of programmes:

- Long term and short term
- Intensive and non-intensive

### **Alternative Education with Tribal Youth Dropouts: Yuva Parichay**

Yuva Parichay was a one-year process initiated in 1991 and discontinued in 1998 after the training programme was decentralized. The trainees were drawn from tribal areas of 7 districts in North Andhra Pradesh. Each batch ranged from 30 – 40 trainees in the age group between 18-25 years. The minimum educational qualification was basic reading and writing skills or those who had dropped out after completing Standard V.

The need for initiating an educational process with youth emerged in 1989 when the land rights of tribal communities were under tremendous threat because the State was seeking to repeal a land regulation in favour of tribal communities. During this time a campaign against the repeal of the law was initiated all over the state by several concerned organisations. An analysis however of the campaign revealed that local tribal youth



although involved in the campaign, did not demonstrate an understanding of a broader vision of tribal rights.

The thrust of the training was to facilitate a relevant response and a meaningful educational process, which took into consideration the problem situation, the tribal learner and the principles of learning. Over a period of time the programme content underwent several changes. In time equal emphasis was paid to learning skills on micro alternatives and on exploring values.

The training programme was designed to include:

- About one weeklong session, four times a year for all trainees: These sessions covered three major areas: problems and perspectives in the tribal areas in Andhra, law and administration and interventional methods and techniques. The content aspects of the training modules are annexed.
- Intermittent interest area workshops held between each of the sessions: These were a source of exposure and demonstrative learning from observing best practices within organizations, which were deeply engaged in a specific activity. The trainees were divided based on their interests so as to make specific, smaller groups which were more manageable and learner focused (each learner could attend a choice of three workshops). The interest area workshops offered were:
  - Health and role of traditional knowledge systems
  - Micro credit
  - Micro enterprise
  - Culture and cultural forms
  - Waste land / watershed management
  - Land survey
  - Legal education
  - Non-formal education focusing on literacy skills

Between specific sessions and workshops the learners operated in their own areas guided by the NGO/ CBO that they were linked with in the region. The involvement of the learner in specific activities related to community development processes in their own areas enhanced his/her learning process. The kind of activities that they were engaged in included initiating self-help groups, representing community needs to local government officials, participating in campaigns, undertaking sustainable agriculture programmes etc. They had also to work on specific assignments in order to help them assimilate what they had learnt during the training/workshop sessions. Both the learner and the organisation gained from an interactional relationship provided their roles were clearly understood, which was not always the case.

The trainers played a role of facilitation. A team essentially carried out the training process, although a specific resource organisation or person coordinated every workshop. Resource persons were additionally engaged to enhance the learning process. Differing training techniques were utilised: reflective and provocative discussions, lecture inputs, field visits, role-plays, audio-visual aids and simulation exercises and games. Fieldwork in their own areas included assignments, which were to be prepared by the trainees and presented in the following session. This was further followed up by field visits from the Centre in order to facilitate the learning process of the trainees. The trainees submitted regular reports on their fieldwork in the local language, Telugu.



The tribal youth were provided with an honorarium of Rs. 450/- per month. This ensured them their basic sustenance and hence allowed for their full participation in the education process. They also contributed to the development process in their area linked with a local NGO. Attendance in all workshops was compulsory. The trainees were dropped if attendance was irregular. This discipline was absolutely necessary to achieve the objectives of the training.

#### TRAINING MODULES

##### ***I. Problem Perspective in the Tribal Context of Andhra Pradesh***

- *Demographic characteristics of tribals in the Andhra context.*
- *Local level problems:*
  - *Types of problems and the impact of these problems on the local community.*
  - *Causes of the problems.*
  - *What can be done about these problems at the local level.*
- *Macro level problems and analysis;*
  - *Type of problems e.g., deforestation, land alienation, displacement, mining.*
  - *Structural reasons for these problems.*
  - *Link between local level action and macro problems.*
- *Perspective of development in the tribal context:*
  - *Historical perspective of tribal development in the agency areas*
  - *Critical appreciation of traditional knowledge systems*
  - *Poverty and development in the tribal context.*
  - *Power analysis.*
- *Analysis of intervention in relation to*
  - *Political parties*
  - *Non government organizations*
  - *Militant groups*
  - *Local level groups*
  - *Any other movements.*



## **II. Intervention Methods and Techniques**

- *Understanding the village:*  
*Methods of observation of land ownership patterns, cropping patterns, flora and fauna, production pattern; areas of co-operation and conflict; interaction between groups; changing realities; government programmes and structures, leadership patterns, traditional leaders and panchayats, role of women, youth, children.*
- *Self awareness/development:*
  - *Through individual and group exercises.*
  - *Confidence building exercises.*
- *How to work on issues and problems with people:*
  - *Problem identification*
  - *Principles of working with individuals and groups in the community*
  - *How to ensure participation of people*
  - *How to form local sanghams (associations): Role and how to sustain sanghams*
  - *Qualities of a good leader and follower*
- *Communication methods: Culture, role-plays, video, photographs, slides, press.*
- *How to work with Government:*
  - *How to present problems to government representatives*
  - *How to write petitions, letters etc*



### **III. Law and Administration**

#### **III A. Administration:**

- *Decision making bodies from the local to the state level:*
  - *Panchayat Raj (Local self-governance) structure.*
  - *Role and their functioning: critical analysis.*
  - *Traditional leadership structures*
- *Administrative structure: Revenue.*
  - *Village, mandal (sub-district), district.*
  - *How it functions; critical analysis.*
- *Development administration:*
  - *Village, mandal, district.*
  - *How it functions; critical analysis.*
- *Relevant bodies set up by the government pertaining to tribal areas such as:*
  - *Integrated Development tribal Agency (ITDA) : departments and structures; critical analysis of functioning; participation by people*
  - *Other institutions such as the Tribal, Cultural and Research Training Institute etc.*
  - *Schemes and programmes*

#### **III B. Law:**

- *Legal structures:*
  - *Prevailing legal institutions/Courts from local to state level*
  - *Critical analysis*
  - *People's role*
- *National policies/laws relevant to tribal areas: ex. Forest laws, displacement policy etc.*
- *State policies/ laws relevant to tribal areas: ex. Land related laws, maintenance regulations etc.*
- *Decision making structures from the grass roots to the state levels: executive, legislative, and judicial systems.*
- *Role of Customary Law in the tribal context*
- *Special focus on role of panchayats and traditional leaders in local areas*
- *Laws pertaining to agency areas*
- *People's rights vis-a-vis the police*
- *National Bills, policies having local relevance: e.g., Forest Bill, Rehabilitation Policy, Land Acquisition Act.*



### ***My Journey as a Change Agent***

(Reflections by Arika Krishna Rao, member of the Savara tribal community, Thitukupai village, Seethampeta Mandal, Srikakulam district, who was one of the trainees of the 1991 batch of Yuva Parichay)

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*I learnt reading and writing in a night adult education centre run by a local NGO in 1983. Subsequently we started a youth association in our village. Almost all the villagers in my village belong to Savara Tribe. The exploitation of middlemen was very high in our areas. This organization inspired us to develop and perform a role-play on this situation in the village. Through this role-play and with the encouragement of the NGO, we got the idea to start an association of youth. I was elected President. By the end of 1989 our work extended to 7 villages. We began by forming thrift groups with nearly 120 members. We succeed in thrift, but we were not able to address issues related to land, water, forest etc.*

*I participated in the Yuva Parichay training programme in 1991-92. This training helped me a lot. Earlier I used to go to the forest and be involved in Podu (shifting cultivation). That was the only thing I knew at that time. I had no opportunity to know what was going in the outside world. After joining in Parichay I felt that I came into the world and into the light and I felt proud. Now I can even read newspapers and write letters. After completion of my training I thought very seriously about what to do next. After understanding the kind of problems faced by the tribals and the nature of exploitation in the society, my mind did not allow me to go back into the routine and pushed me forward. We started activities with other youth from our tribal community. Some new villages also joined with us. I started going to the Court on local disputes also which was something I had never known before. We started once again to concentrate on Night Schools. In order to facilitate the functioning of the schools and to strengthen the thrift groups we raised resources through collective labour work. Slowly we started work on health issues. We also prepared the people to demand their due remuneration from the traders for their produce.*

*We further started some income generation programmes by taking loans from banks. This created anger among the 'sahukars' (moneylenders) in our villages. They retaliated by politicking with the thrift groups and created problems. We then developed specific strategies to overcome these problems and thereby standardized the thrift activity. At the end of 1995 this thrift activity was extended to 125 members.*

*There are 10 Yuva Parichay trainees in our area and except 3, the rest are working for the development of the village. I am coordinating this team. Presently we are studying the government initiated 'joint forest management' programme and its problems and are also trying to bring all the groups involved on one common platform. We are also planning to use the local agro-forest resources effectively by starting more income generation programmes with the help of relevant NGOs.*

*I have got knowledge on health and herbal medicines, soil conservation and land and legal related issues. Achieving identity for our local tribal communities at the district level and bringing all the tribals of different districts on one platform is my objective.*

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This is a translated extract from Krishnarao's contribution to a quarterly magazine, *Mannem Lo* (October-December 1997). *Mannem Lo*, translated 'In the Forest Habitat' was initiated with the idea of keeping all the young tribal activists who have been part of various training processes abreast with the latest developments.

Krishna Rao is at present the President of 'Andhra Pradesh Adivasi Sanghala Samakhya', the CBO Federation of which he is a founder member. He has participated in the Asian Social Forum in January 2003 at Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh as well as at the Climate Change workshop during the time of the United Nations Conference of Parties held in New Delhi in October 2002. He also now assumes roles in the capacity of a trainer and has initiated a district level network with 25 CBOs. He maintains an excellent relationship with Panchayat members and plays a crucial role in decision making in his own panchayat.





### Major Effects

- We trained seven batches from 1991 - 1998 comprising altogether 241 trainees from mainly seven districts of Andhra. The women's representation was 17 percent. The reason for this low participation was mainly familial and logistical. It was difficult for women without explicit family support to be away from their homes for relatively long periods of time. Also since women are less exposed than men, travelling to the different districts for the training workshops was a major hurdle. This prompted us at a later stage to introduce special educational processes for women responding to their specific needs.

**Tribal Youth Trainees in Yuva Parichay**

Year	Total	Female	Male
1990 – 1991	13	0	13
1991 – 1992	31	5	26
1992 – 1993	39	5	34
1994 – 1995	43	2	41
1995 – 1996	41	9	32
1996 – 1997	34	11	23
1997 – 1998	40	8	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>201</b>

- 70% of the trainees are involved in development process: the nature of involvement depended very much on the motivation and capacity of the ex-trainees. Some are actively working with NGOs, several are members of CBOs, and others are working in their individual capacity in their own villages. About 10 of them are absorbed within the government structure as lower level functionaries.
- Emergence of tribal led CBOs in several districts: Some of the trainees initiated CBOs and are engaged in development activities and this has had a spread effect in the region. Each of the CBOs is unique, not only in the kind of issues faced but in the capacity and nature of response.
- Increased efficiency in literacy levels of all those who went through the training process. This was evident from the nature of presentations made when they were called upon to do so during the workshops. This was also clear from their increased capacity to read materials and write reports in the local language by the end of the training programme.
- Facilitation of networking among the tribal youth and solidarity development as they interact with each other on several platforms.
- Small NGOs were facilitated in their activities through the availability of tribal youth as part time functionaries for the organization. This further impacted grassroots level intervention due to the enhanced performance levels of the tribal youth. In several cases there were requests from NGO representatives to provide them with the curriculum content so that they could keep abreast of the new developments in the field.





### Girimitra Seva Sangham: The growth of a dynamic CBO in Vizianagaram District

The eleven founder members of this CBO are ex-Yuva Parichay trainees. The CBO was started in 1994, focusing on savings and credit activity. In time this group expanded its programmes to various other issues affecting them in the local area.

In 1994, the newly formed CBO called a meeting of the village community including the elders and after having long discussions with the people and elders, they collectively took a decision not to allow non-tribals to do business in tribal villages. This is because non-tribal traders were exploiting them. With this initial step they began slowly questioning the power of the non-tribals who used to take decisions on behalf of the tribals in their village. At the same time they started creating awareness on the need for thrift and people in the villages began to respond.

In 1997 they confronted the Girijana Cooperative Corporation (GCC) which is a government initiated marketing agency for the tribal communities in the Scheduled Areas of Andhra Pradesh. The reason was that GCC was buying tamarind from them below the market price. As a result of their agitation they succeeded in forcing the GCC to give them the current market price. In 1997 they also initiated a campaign against the consumption of arrack (country liquor) in the villages. There was a lot of opposition but they succeeded at least partially in stopping arrack preparation and sale in the villages. In 1998 they took up a major case of corruption by the local Village Administrative Officers (VAO) who were not giving them proper receipts for their land and house tax. The group surveyed the villages and brought this matter to the notice of the then Mandal Revenue Officer. Ever since the VAOs are doing their work with caution. In 1999, with the assistance of youth, women and elders in the villages GSS took up a project to build their village roads, repaired the local school and undertook the construction of a check dam with the financial assistance from the ITDA. They built a community hall with financial assistance from the ITDA and managed to save 40% of the amount as they contributed their voluntary labour and utilized the rest of the money for village development activities. Meanwhile their efforts at thrift continued. 40 self-help groups were regularised and they received matching grants from ITDA.

In 2000 they took up a case against a bus conductor and driver for attempting to rape two women in the village. The bus driver was fined Rs. 80000/- and this amount was given to the concerned women. In this year their group also decided to participate in the panchayat elections and one of the key members from their group was elected as a Panchayat President. In 2002 they got a check dam constructed worth Rs160000/- in Thurpunaiduguda village, Kurupam mandal.

In 2003 the core team of 11 founder members continue to be active. The total membership has gone up to 120, working in 44 villages in two mandals (Kurupam, G.L.Puram). The CBO now has savings of Rs. 90000/-.

#### New Initiatives

##### *Yuva Sikshana and Yuva Chaitanya*

Since 1993-94 two field based educational programmes of one-year duration were initiated in two districts: Yuva Sikshana in East Godavari and Yuva Chaitanya in Visakhapatnam district.

These initiatives were undertaken as Laya was directly involved in implementing development programmes in these two

Tribal Youth Trainees in Yuva Sikshana

Year	Total Trainees	Male	Female
1992 – 1993	33	27	06
1993 – 1994	36	30	06
1994 – 1995	27	21	06
1995 – 1996	30	24	06
1996 – 1997	30	22	08
1998 – 1999	21	18	03
1999 – 2000	17	10	05
2001 – 2002	15	07	10
2002 – 2003	13	06	07
<b>Total</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>57</b>

Tribal Youth Trainees in Yuva Chaitanya

Year	Total Trainees	Male	Female
1999 – 2000	15	10	5
2000 – 2001	15	10	5
2001 – 2002	17	13	4
2002 – 2003	15	11	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>18</b>



districts and we felt that this educational experience would add value to the outcome. Today a majority of these youth are engaged in various issues and programmes in their village communities. About 20% of them are actively involved in CBOs. The content of the training and methodology was similar as in the case of Yuva Parichay. The difference lay in the context of the training activity, which related to the specific districts and involvement was linked with the kind of grassroots work that was being carried out in the area.

#### *Advanced Education Process with Select Trainees*

1999-2000: A one year advanced education programme was held for select trainees mainly from the previous training processes. The focus of this educative process was to further deepen their cognitive and analytical skills and develop their capacity in assuming leadership roles at a wider level in the tribal context. Six of the young adults who participated in this educative process assumed the initiative to facilitate a federation of CBOs in the region. They are also assuming leadership roles in taking up campaign activity on advocacy issues affecting tribal interests at the regional level. They have participated in state and national campaigns on tribal issues. Our role has been to accompany them, keep asking provocative questions, support some of their activities and create an environment for deliberation and reflection. We continue taking capacity building programmes with some of the key members focussing on special skills of developing proposals for support, report writing, accounts management, current issues, future challenges, etc.

#### *Decentralized Education Processes*

1999-2002: Two decentralized education processes of one-year duration each for about 20 youth in Srikakulam and Khammam were undertaken. Representatives from the CBOs identified the trainees and organized five workshops of five days each during the year. The basic objective of these workshops was to reach out to other tribal youth in assisting them to engage themselves in development of their local areas. The subject matter included an understanding of the tribal situation, causes of poverty and human rights, how to address problems and issues in the village context, laws that impact on their situation and what initiatives can be assumed. Our role was to act as facilitators and resource persons during the workshops. At the field level the CBOs took responsibility for the guidance of the trainees.



### The CBO Federation

The CBO Federation was initiated in January 2000. The Federation began with seven member groups, which increased to 20 in 2001. Today its membership consists of 33 tribal led groups, which are spread over seven districts: Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Khammam and Warangal. It is expecting to swell to 55 groups in 2004. Groups vary from size to size but most groups consist of about 12 members. Every group is represented by two of its members in the general body. They have an executive body, which consists of seven members. All the executive members have been part of Laya's training processes. The general body meets once a year and they discuss the activities and financial status of the previous year, plan for the next year and elections are conducted. The executive meets four times a year.

The federation has been involved in several campaign issues:

- Petitioned for the implementation of 1/70, which is a protective legislation of land rights in the area, and the Panchayat Act in 2001
- Took up a case of a tribal woman raped by a landlord in Kamakutam in Madgula mandal, Visakhapatnam district. The Sub Inspector of Police was suspended.
- Undertook a postcard campaign in 2001 in order to stop the practice of mining in tribal areas. The cards were addressed to the Chief Minister of the State government. The 'Vision 2020 Statement' of Andhra Pradesh has highlighted mining as a priority area for the development of the State. This happened as a result of an exposure visit by some of the key members to bauxite mines in Orissa where impacts on local communities are evident. They created awareness but were not able to influence policy as this is a complex issue.
- Undertook a post card campaign in 2002 against the ban on collection of beedi leaves in Warangal and Khammam and they succeeded in pressurizing the government to revoke the ban.
- Undertook another postcard campaign in the same year on land issues in Rajavamongi mandal of East Godavari and succeeded to safeguard land in favour of the tribals
- Sent a petition to the Principal Conservator of Forests, AP and Director of World Bank, Tribal Welfare Ministry and Panchayat Raj Ministry with reference to the World Bank supported State initiative on what was called a Community Forest Management Programme. This programme sought to involve the community involvement in conservation of forests on one hand, but also threatened the survival rights of several vulnerable tribal people who were residing in these forested areas. Their major demands were:
  - that the CFM programme be approved by the concerned gram sabha (village assembly) before its implementation,
  - that Community shall have access and control over non-timber forest produce including bamboo and medicinal plants.
  - that tribals cultivating forest lands shall not be disturbed and their rights to sustain on such forest lands shall be continued.

The major challenge for the Federation is its sustainability in the long run. They are currently developing alliances with other federations of tribal groups in the region. The focus of their work in the next year will be on 'identity'.

### Paralegal Training

The paralegal training programme for tribal youth was initiated in 1996. This is a 10-month programme for tribal youth who have completed Std X. The major objective is to enable them to become community based advocates by responding to human rights issues through the process of legal and non-legal advocacy. The key areas of study include an understanding of governance in Scheduled Areas, laws related to land and forest resources, Constitutional and Human Rights, legal institutions and procedures, customary



law. Frequent tests are taken to make sure that the learners have grasped the concepts. A wide variety of methods including mock courts, case studies and records and maps as teaching aids are used during the sessions. During the sessions they are also helped in drafting legal appeals, in pleading cases and exposed to the functioning of lower courts. At the field level they are expected to work on assignments relating to specific relevant topics. After the training period an interaction session is held with the Project Officer, ITDA for his evaluation of the trained candidates and a recommendation is made to the District Collector to grant a 'sanad' certificate which permits the trainee to practise in courts in tribal areas. So far from 1996, 44 were selected of whom 14 dropped out and 11 were able to obtain 'sanad' certificates. The major reason for dropping out of the programme was their inability to keep pace with the requirements of the course. One of the programmes was exclusively for seven young women. The content of this course differed partially as it also focused on the rights of women and the role that they can play in safeguarding them.

#### **Paralegal Workers Training Programme: Course Content Outline**

- General Profile of Tribal Areas
- Structure of bureaucracy: Village to State
- Legislative bodies with special emphasis on the Tribes Advisory Council
- Hierarchy of courts: powers of different courts: criminal, civil, Sub-Divisional Court.
- Land Transfer Regulations: Settlement, Assignment, Land Encroachment Act, Land Records, Key judgements.
- Forests: Conservation of Forests Act; Powers of GCC, Classification of Forests
- Police: Structure, Rights of Citizens, FIR, Remand, Seeking Bail, Types of Bail
- Women's Rights: Property Rights, Special privileges under the court, Right for maintenance, Equal Remuneration, Rights against Domestic Violence.
- Constitutional Rights: Fundamental, Directive Principles, and Human Rights.
- Pleading and Drafting of Petitions.
- Customary Law
- Non Legal Advocacy Methods.

#### *Education Process with Tribal Women*

Specific workshops were organized for tribal women on issues affecting them as a part of an ongoing educational process in 1997-1998. This we felt was necessary because of two reasons:

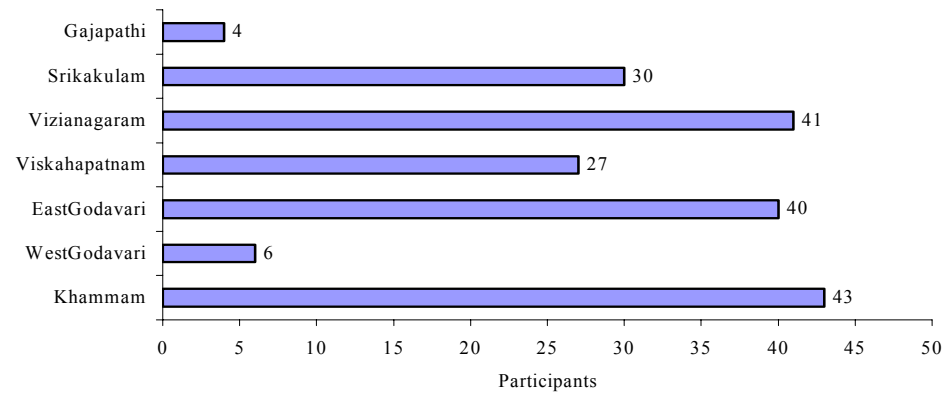
- the relative low participation of women in the *Yuva Parichay*, *Yuva Sikshana* and *Yuva Chaitanya* programmes
- the need to respond to and address issues facing tribal women on a priority basis.

The process consisted of three phases: two plenary workshops followed by sub-regional workshops at Khammam, East Godavari and Srikakulam districts. The outreach was 191 women mainly from six districts of Andhra Pradesh. A majority of them were of the age group between 20-35 years belonging to 18 tribal communities. About 45% were literate and 60% were married.

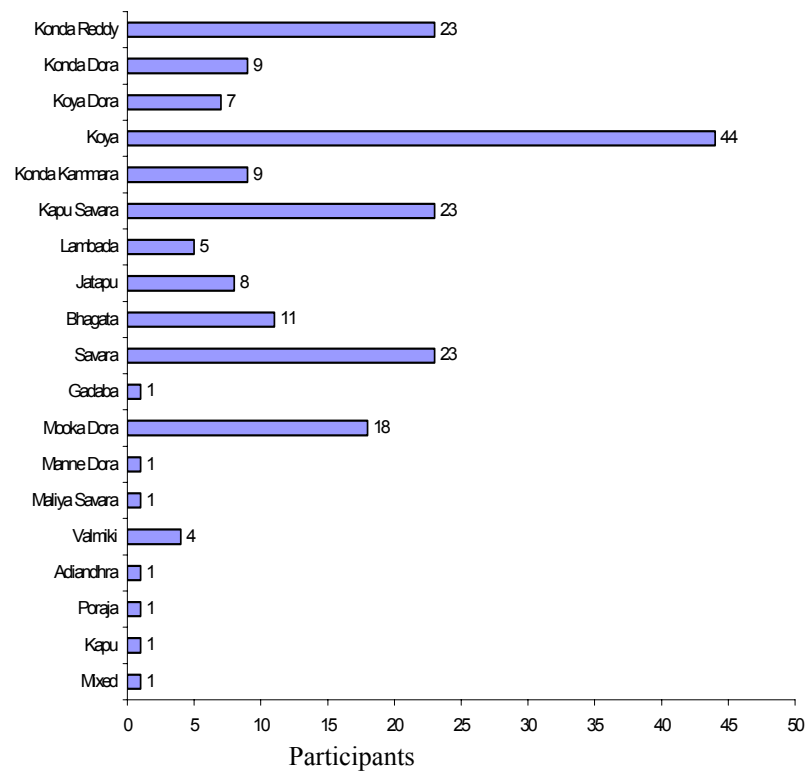


**Profiles of Participants of the Three Phases of Women’s Empowerment Programme**

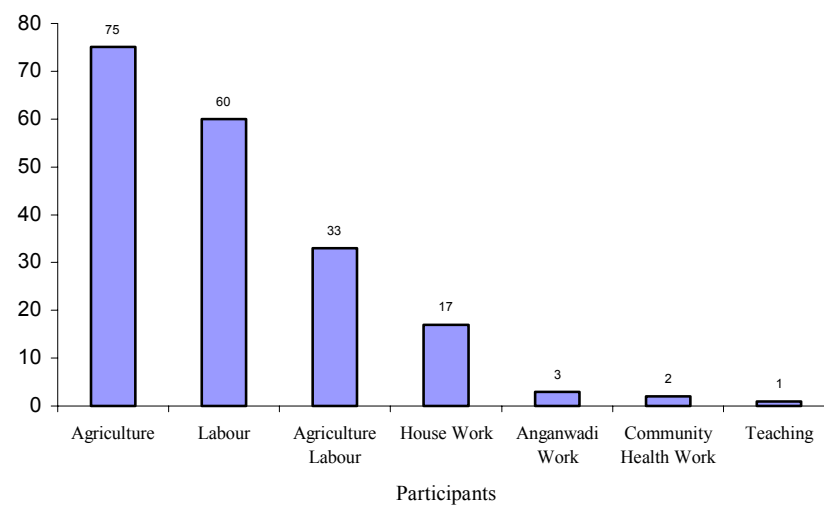
**1. District-wise Distribution of Participants**



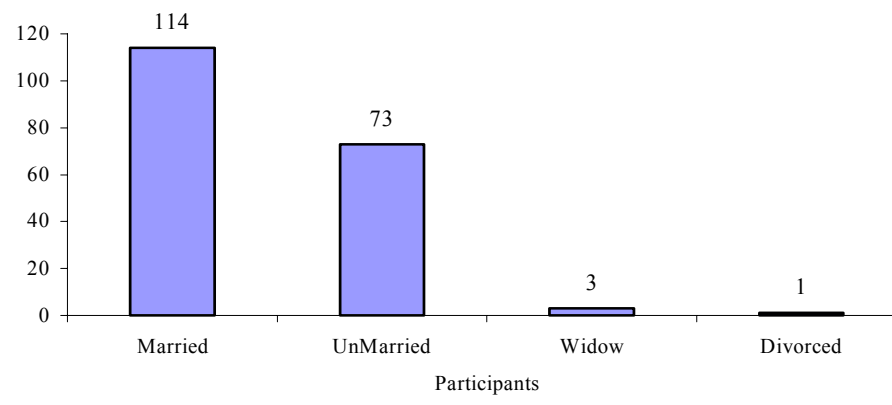
**2. Tribe-wise Distribution of Participants**



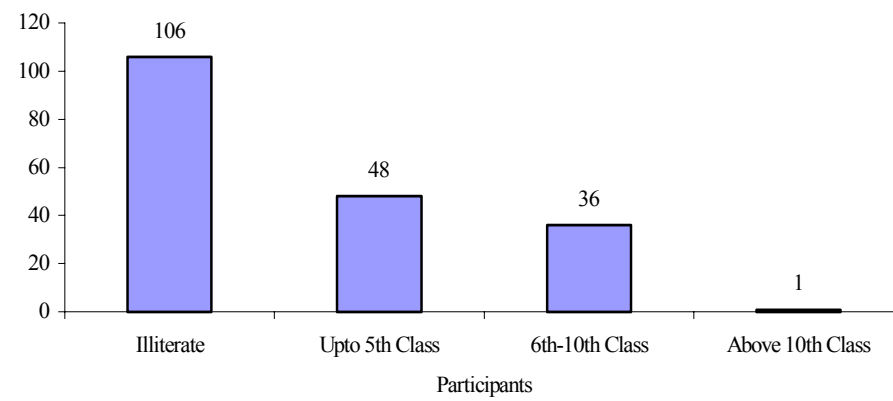
### 3. Primary Occupation-wise Distribution of Participants



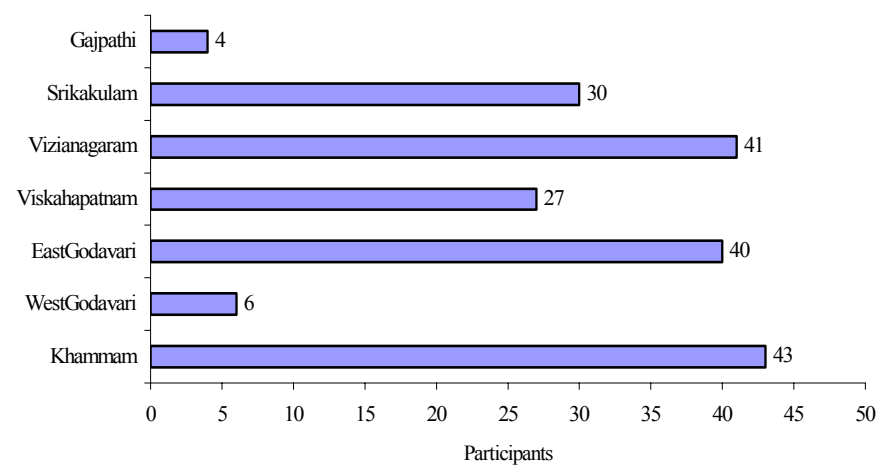
### 4. Marital Status of Participants



### 5. Education-Wise Distribution of Participants



### 6. District-Wise Distribution of Participants



The workshops were a novel learning experience for the tribal women as well as the facilitating team, as they provided insights into the perspectives and problem situation of tribal women in the region. Some of the major insights on issues affecting women included:

- Discrimination of women and work on the basis of sex
- Lack of access to education for girl children
- Violation of rights in relation to marriage, family harmony
- Lack of property rights for women
- Sexual exploitation – at workplace and institutions
- Discrimination in wages based on gender
- Atrocities on women by police during combing operations and investigations



- Lack of access to health services (both at family level and government level)
- Domestic violence
- Cultural and belief systems militating mostly against women
- Alienation of resources like land and forests and how they impact women adversely
- Displacement of women due to development projects militating mostly against women

What was clear from the workshops was that while there were some common problems there were also differences across the districts. For example the problem of dowry is an upcoming issue only in some of the districts. In some districts NGOs are already working with community based groups of women. In such districts the women are more vocal and active in development activities. The workshops that brought the women together were an excellent opportunity for such women to interact and share experience with other women from the districts. Also, coming together on a common platform provided a sense of solidarity to the women. Hence the women found this a meaningful experience in their lives. Not all the active women from different districts were literate. This factor has become a challenge for designing workshops as the methodology has to serve the needs of the literate and illiterate.

After 1998 a process of accompaniment with some of the tribal representatives who were part of the education experience followed. Out of this experience two women-led CBOs emerged: Vanaja in East Godavari and Vikasini in Visakhapatnam districts. At present 30 young women are playing the role of change agents in East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts and are involved in campaign issues affecting women as well as in development activities related to their local areas.

#### *Task Oriented Learning Process: Herbal Medicinal Practice and Micro Enterprise*

##### Training on Herbal Medicinal Practice:

This training process was taken up to make health care accessible and affordable. The allopathic medicinal system has failed to reach particularly the remote tribal villages. The primary health centres are often located more than 10 km from their villages. In these circumstances it is necessary to complement the existing system with an alternative which is not only accessible but also part of the knowledge systems of the tribal communities.

Hence two special training processes were initiated.

- Training programme with youth which involved a year long accompaniment process and special workshops focusing on an understanding of the basic diseases prevalent in the area, their symptoms and the uses of herbal medicines in the treatment of the illnesses. They are also encouraged to initiate herbal gardens in their own villages as well as to prepare herbal medicine from specific plants. The basic diseases included common fevers, diarrhea, jaundice, stomach problems and skin ailments. Of the 37 tribal youth (15 male and 22 female) that enrolled in three batches, 24 tribal youth (12 male and 12 female) have been trained. The youth then play the role of community health animators-cum-practitioners in their own and adjacent villages.





- Education intervention with traditional health practitioners in the region: An attempt is being made to upgrade and standardize their knowledge systems, practices of storage and transportation of herbal plants and medicines. Specific workshops are being organized to create opportunities for sharing their insights and problems as well as to interact with professional herbal practitioners.

#### Training in Micro Credit and Micro Enterprise:

This training process is aimed at developing the entrepreneurial capacity of the tribal youth particularly because the tribal communities are being gradually displaced from the natural resources. Youth have been playing the role of 'community bankers' in a savings and credit programme initiated in the area as well as are managers of a cooperative for marketing of local produce. Efforts are being made also for value addition in order to make the ventures more economically viable.

Most of the youth who are engaged in micro enterprise activity are those who have been part of the Yuva Sikshana, Yuva Chaitanya or Yuva Parichay training processes. The accompaniment process focuses on motivation, importance of micro credit and enterprise, basic business skill development such as identifying business opportunities, maintenance of records, business planning, management and marketing skills and social responsibility in the local context. This intervention is a challenge in the tribal context because of the non-monetised worldview of tribal communities on the one hand and an exploitative external environment on the other.

#### *Education Process with Tribal Leaders*

Specific workshops for potential and elected panchayat leaders, both men and women, have been held as part of a campaign for enlightened local governance. The Central Act, which sought to decentralize governance at the grassroots relevant for tribal areas, was enacted in 1996. The State government in Andhra Pradesh passed the Act in 2000. Although the Act has several limitations it still holds a promise to devolve certain powers of governance to panchayats. Good governance is only possible if the panchayat leaders are aware of the enactment so that they are enabled to implement positive aspects of the Act but challenge its limitations. This Act also ensures 33 % of the representation for women.

From 2000, our efforts have been to educate tribal leaders in those areas where we have been directly involved as well as to facilitate NGOs to take up similar processes in their own areas. The focus of the workshops has been on their rights under the law as well as on enabling local processes for deliberation and discussion necessary for the implementation of the Act.

This initiative has encouraged the CBO federation to take this up as part of their action plans and work towards striving to make their own panchayats 'model' panchayats!

#### **Implications for Policy Advocacy**

The quintessential issues of concern that require policy advocacy in tribal areas today:



- Decreasing access and control over natural resources on which the survival of the tribal communities depend
- Lack of access to basic services: health, education and infrastructure
- Violation of their identity rights leading to cultural erosion
- Encroachment of their right to self-governance

From our experience it is clear that we need to recognize that major learning in the tribal context takes place through struggles on issues focusing on human rights of tribal communities. The development of general awareness of multiple stakeholders is crucial for perspective building on tribal reality. More specifically, structured, systematic training initiatives for developing change agents add lasting value on internalizing learning processes. Also, education on alternatives, which challenge the existing processes of development, is crucial from the perspective of sustainable livelihood.

Hence as stated before, it is imperative that indigenous 'education' must be an integral part of the empowerment process. For a lasting impact, youth must be the centre of development activity. Therefore the need to invest in the education of young men and women in tribal areas. Governance functions in the future will be played by today's youth so the direction of development of tribal areas depends on them.

Within this framework, the following are some specific policy implications:

- The thrust of adult education processes must be linked with:
  - human rights education especially in the current context where there is an increasing threat to access and control of natural resources by indigenous communities;
  - development of skills to initiate and sustain relevant micro alternatives that address livelihood issues from a long term perspective and
  - Value based education with critical appreciation of traditional knowledge systems and relevant responses to the changing external environment.
- Need to create special opportunities to respond to the educational needs of women. Consequences of the development processes are not neutral. They militate more against women than men and hence tend to result in greater negative effects on women. Loss of access and control of resources in tribal areas tend to push women out of productive activities. This also affects adversely their status in their family and community as their participation in the economy decreases. Lack of basic services, particularly related to health and education makes women especially vulnerable. Moreover, atrocities on women are on the increase, as tribal areas become accessible to outsiders and commercially oriented activities. The major strategy to address this issue is to educate the 'panchayat' representatives to safeguard the position of women in the areas under their jurisdiction.
- Need to develop an informed cadre of tribal citizens in law related processes is vital. A critical understanding of the customary laws and the legal provisions in the tribal context is necessary to achieve social justice. The legal machinery in the current circumstances is either insensitive or manipulative in character.



- In order to safeguard human rights and ensure enlightened governance there is a need for a special focus on educating elected leaders on relevant laws, their role and functions. In the light of the specific application of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the Indian Constitution to tribal areas, a pertinent law known as the Panchayat (Extension to Schedule Areas Act) was enacted in 1996. This Act facilitates the participation of the 'gram sabha' and the panchayat leaders in playing a role in governance issues at the grassroots level. Several NGOs all over the country have taken this up as a challenge. However, the point remains that respective State governments are slow to act. For example in Andhra Pradesh even the rules and regulations pertaining to the Act are not framed as yet!
- Tribal institutions of secondary education are irrelevant and do not 'educate'. The main reason for this is that the content of education does not take into account their traditional knowledge systems, an understanding of their own environment which is rich in natural resources, relevant skills to provide access and control of their environment and a recognition of their own identity as tribal communities. Also where relevant, a major concern is the need for providing primary education in their mother tongue in order to create an opportunity for them to enhance their learning capacities. Mainstream educational institutions tend to create an alienated group of youngsters with few opportunities to use their capacities. There is a need to review the relevance of curriculum and methodologies of education currently in the tribal context. More specifically we need to campaign for a policy, which takes into consideration the learning needs of tribal youth dropouts at the school and pre university levels.
- Need to strengthen literacy levels by promoting opportunities for reading at the grassroots level. Even daily newspapers hardly reach remote villages. Decentralized libraries run by literate youth could be one initiative. Any educational process has to be sustained through creating conditions for being updated on current events and how they impact local communities. This means that processes of creative literacy must be accompanied by follow up measures whereby avenues for deliberation and some reading material is made available on a continuous basis.

