

VILLAGE VOICE

Quarterly Newsletter - Volume 4 - 2024



VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION

(For Private Circulation only)

FROM THE DESK OF ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FR DR S EMMANUEL SJ

FOREWORD



Thanks to our Founder, Late Prof. Michael A Windey SJ, who established the edifice VRO on this corner stone namely, 'Better Village for a better world', the aim of VRO. Village is the cornerstone of a society. It is where the values, traditions, and culture of a community are nurtured and passed down from generation to generation. A better village can contribute to a better world by fostering a sense of community, promoting sustainable living, and preserving cultural heritage.

First and foremost, a better village is one that fosters a sense of community among its residents. This can be achieved through various means such as community events, volunteer opportunities, and shared spaces. When people feel connected to their neighbours and have a support system in place, they are more likely to feel happier and more fulfilled. This sense of community can also lead to increased cooperation and collaboration, which can have a positive impact on the world at large.

Additionally, a better village is one that promotes sustainable living practices. This can include initiatives such as recycling programs, community gardens, and renewable energy sources. By embracing sustainable living, a village can reduce its environmental impact and contribute to the global effort to combat climate change. Furthermore, these practices can serve as a model for other communities, inspiring them to adopt similar measures and create a ripple effect that can benefit the entire world.

Preserving cultural heritage is another important aspect of creating a better village. By celebrating and maintaining traditions, languages, and customs, a village can contribute to the rich tapestry of global culture. This can foster a greater appreciation for diversity and help to bridge cultural divides. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is crucial to preserve and honor the unique identities of different communities.

In October, with a heavy heart VRO bid good bye to Fr Peter Daniel SJ who had rendered yeomen service to VRO in his capacity as the operational director. He steered VRO through Covid times with the help of Fr K Velangani Raj SJ, then Associate director and volunteers. Children and the staff joyfully celebrated Neighbourhood festival, Christmas and New year and they were given towels and calendars. All our beneficiaries and the staff, children and women are expressing their sincere thanks to all our beloved donors for their generosity. We all pray to God almighty to bless all of us in this new year so that we as the instruments of God will be able to achieve many more milestones for VRO.

“Sustainability is not about doing no harm, but about doing more good”

Child Education and Rights-CER

Quality education for their children is still a dream for many parents in rural areas. Many factors contribute to this problem, such as poverty, distance, lack of infrastructure, teacher shortage, social norms, and cultural barriers. These factors not only affect the enrolment and retention of children in schools, but also their learning outcomes and future prospects.

To address this challenge, VRO has been running Evening Supervisory Study Centres (ESSCs) to ensure zero dropout and provide quality education to children in rural areas. These are community-based learning spaces where children can receive academic support, guidance, mentoring and individual attention from trained volunteers after school hours. The ESSCs also serve as platforms for engaging children in various activities that enhance their life skills, leadership, and civic participation. Some of these activities include children service camps, children parliaments, parents’ meetings.

The ESSCs also aim to strengthen the communities by involving parents, teachers, local leaders, and other stakeholders in the education process. By doing so, we hope to create a culture of learning and empowerment that respects the rights and dignity of every child.



Associate Director testing the reading skill of N. Keerthana, 4th class of Dharmavaram ESSC.



Children focus in study hours – Ravipadu ESSC



Community Worker of Ravipadu ESSC took the Children for an exposure visit



ESSC children engaged in Sapling - B Sivaramapatnam village.



Sagarapeta village - ESSC children, Parents and Trainees of YSD Tailoring in Swachh & Swasth Bharat program -2nd October 2023



Health checkup camp organised by Jaggampeta PHC for Children & Parents in Sagarapeta ESSC



Ramayapalem - ESSC Children celebrating Gandhi Jayanthi



ESSC Children, Parents, CW & VRO staff participating in Rally at Phirangipuram ST Colony, Perecherla Circle - 2nd Oct'23



International Girl child day Celebration, Muniguda, Odisha



VRO Formation Day - YSDC Bayakumutia, Odisha

Youth Skill Development–YSD

Rural youth are often faced with limited opportunities for education, employment and income generation and sometimes even lack the skills and knowledge that are in great demand in the fast-growing urban and industrial sectors. Through Youth Skill Development (YSD), VRO aims to provide short-term training courses for rural youth in various sectors such as Driving, Electrical Wiring, Tailoring and basics of Computers. These courses are designed to meet the needs of the local labour market and the aspirations of the rural youth that can enhance their employability and entrepreneurship potential.

Driving

Driving is a crucial initiative that can enhance the employability and livelihood opportunities of the rural youth, as it is a skill that creates many opportunities especially in the areas where public transportation is scarce. VRO aims to tap these opportunities and to provide rural youth with necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to drive safely and carefully on the road and making a living out of the skill.

VRO has trained 30 rural youth as drivers (15-Jaggampeta and 15-Perecherla) in the 2nd batch.



2nd batch opening by Fr.Emmanuel - Associate Director.



Practical session of doing car tyre puncture



Electrical training with the practical session -how testing the electricity supply



2nd Batch of Trainees in Electrical class



2nd batch of YSD Day-scholars with certificates in the closing ceremony attended by visitors from France and Project Manager



Trainee, Mr. Mabu Subhani receiving certificate from the hands of Marielle Camard, visitor from France.



Driving Course Trainees with Certificates in closing ceremony in Jaggampeta in presence of Fr. S. Emmanuel – Associate Director



Trainee receiving certificate from the hands of Mr.N. Sudhakar, APO in the presence of Mr.S. Sreenivas, Project Officer, Jaggampeta Circle

Tailoring

The challenge faced by rural women is the lack of economic opportunities and empowerment. Many rural women depend on agriculture or informal sector activities for their livelihoods, which are often low-paid and insecure. Tailoring is a suitable activity for rural women because it requires low capital investment, can be done at home or in a community centre, and has a high demand in local and urban markets. Tailoring also helps these rural women to express their creativity, enhance their confidence, and increase their bargaining power within the household and the community.



Katravulapalli, Inauguration of Tailoring Centre by Associate Director



Devathpalli



Gandhinagar



Repalle

VRO provides rural women with basic tailoring skills, such as cutting, stitching, and simple designing. The training is delivered by experienced Trainers who use participatory and learner-centered methods. After the initial survey of need assessment is done, VRO sets up the Tailoring Centres in their own villages.

Impact on trainees through the Training program:

All of the women increased their knowledge in stitching activities like drafting, cutting & stitching new garments. Women with no education have gained the skill of tailoring which helped them to earn decent amount of money for their livelihood lifelong. 70% established their self-enterprise & 30% are employed in garments industry. 80% of the beneficiaries started earning Rs.2000 to Rs. 2500 approximately per week to support their families. This tailoring course has given all these women a sense of self-reliance that they shall have not to be dependent on anyone for money.

VILLAGE EMPOWERMENT & ENTITLEMENT (VEE)

One of the most effective ways to empower rural women and improve their livelihood is to promote the formation of Mutually Aided Cooperative Thrift Societies (MACTS). These are self-help groups that enable women to pool their savings, access credit, and invest in income-generating activities. These MACTS are based on the principles of mutual trust, cooperation, and solidarity among the members. They also provide a platform for women to exchange information, learn new skills, and take part in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

MACTS have helped these rural women in increasing income and savings. Members of MACTS access low-interest loans from their own savings or from external sources which they use to start income-generating activities such as agriculture, livestock, pickle making, sanitary napkin making and cashew nuts processing. VRO has helped to strengthen two of such MACTS in Kothakota Circle Office where the tribal women are trained in cashew processing and another in Repalle region where the members make pickles, edibles and sanitary pads. In all the areas of operation, the MACTS are being strengthened and monitored towards fulfilling their individual income-generating activities.



Lemon Pickle making at Circle Office, Repalle



Sanitary Napkin packing at Circle Office, Repalle



MACTS - Loan Distribution at Rajupalem



Pickles Packed for Promotions at Repalle Circle Office



RLP - Trainees at in cutting and packing process of Cashew Nuts in Prof. M.A. Windey Cashew Processing Unit in Ravipalem Village



1. SETTING EXAMPLE FOR OTHER CHILDREN



Ms. Ispita Pattanayak is the only daughter of Mrs. Shantilata Pattanayak and late Mr. Mrutyunjaya Pattanayak from Nadi Sahi, Phulbani, Odisha. She lost her father in her early childhood and therefore, her mother raised her with great difficulty doing multiple works here and there. Recently, her mother has been employed as a cook at Model School, Phulbani.

Ms. Ispita Pattanayak is studying in V class at A.J.O. Government High School, Phulbani. She is a studious student with maximum attendance in our Evening Supervisory Study

Centre. After joining in our ESSC, she has significantly improved upon both academic and extra-curricular activities. Earlier, she used to be rather weak in English, but now, she can read with good pronunciation. She has improved significantly in all other disciplines and is the first student who could memorize the entire multiplication table from 2 – 25, thereby setting an example to all other children. Now she is a rank holder in her school and hence, has received scholarship, many certificates and prizes in different competitions. She is now preparing herself for Novadaya entrance examination and her goal is become a Doctor.

2. CHILDREN'S SAVINGS BANK (CSB)



We are children of Evening Supervisory Study Centre at ST Colony, Phirangipuram, Perecherla Circle. In order to instil the idea of saving money in the minds of the children, our Community Worker has encouraged us to set up a bank called Children's Savings Bank for all children to save money. Children deposit their savings in this bank and withdraw as and when required. Children usually deposit in denomination of ₹2, ₹5, ₹10 and ₹20 per day as per money available with them.

Three students were selected as manager, cashier and clerk of this bank. Saujanya studying 8th class is the cashier, Renuka of 7th class is clerk and Chandrika of 8th class is the Manager. The children have also come up

with the idea of a deposit form and a withdrawal form for the transactions. All the children are given an individual account number in the bank. So far, each student has an average savings of ₹70 and the CSB has a total amount of ₹1250. The children usually draw this money for purchasing stationery items. Recently all the students have decided to use this money to celebrate the Neighbourhood Festival of the ESS Centre. It is very encouraging to see the children are developing a positive attitude towards saving money from a very young age.

A Support in My Old Age



I am Segge Bodamma, and I reside in the village of Tatiparthi in the Anakapalli district's Cheemalapdu Panchayat. In our hamlet, the Girijana Mahila Sahakara Parapathi Podupu Sangam has been functioning for the past five years. Every month, each member saves ₹ 100 and applies for loans based on our needs. Due to my advancing age, I am unable to do hard labour, yet I still need to work to support myself. After careful consideration, I have chosen to purchase some sheep that I

can hand raise for a while and then sell for a profit in the future. But it would cost at least ₹ 8000 to purchase one. The minimum weekly interest rate charged by local creditors is between 4 and 5%. I then discovered that I could obtain a loan through Girija Mahila MACTS at a lower interest rate, so in August'23 at our regular monthly meeting, I asked for a loan of ₹ 10,000. After being approved for the loan I received the money in September, I went out and bought a sheep and began grazing it in village lands. Now that the sheep has also been conceived, I am overjoyed that I will soon have two sheep. Now, I intend to care for the sheep and the expected lambs for a while and then sell them in the market for a profit when the time is right. When I think about this, I feel strong and sure that I can take care of myself with the least amount of physical work while simultaneously providing for my daily needs. This is all made possible by the Girijana Mahila MACTS. I want to express my gratitude to VRO for inspiring me to build a society to help for one another financially.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FESTIVAL

Prof. Fr.M.A. Windey SJ, often said, "Coming together is good, talking together is better and working together is best". The neighborhood celebrations were conducted at each circle between 14th to 22nd December for the Volunteers and Community Workers. Children of CER and Trainees of ongoing YSD projects have celebrated Neighbourhood Festival in their respective centres in the presence of Volunteers and the Village Leaders. Every Volunteer was given a Gift Bag, Towel and Diary and every Child and Trainee was given a gift in the form of a towel during this celebration.

| Sl.No. | Region | Circle | Venue | Dates Held |
|--------|-------------|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 1 | Rajahmundry | Jaggampet | Circle Office | 09-12-2023 |
| 2 | Rajahmundry | Kothakota | Circle Office | 12-01-2023 |
| 3 | Nellore | Gandhi Nagar | Circle Office | 15-12-2023 |
| 4 | Guntur | Perecharla | Circle Office | 16-12-2023 |
| 5 | Odisha | Kuangabasa | Circle Office | 16-12-2023 |
| 6 | Tamil Nadu | Inungur | Circle Office | 16-12-2023 |
| 7 | Guntur | Rajupalem | Circle Office | 19-12-2023 |
| 8 | Guntur | Repalle | Circle Office | 20-12-2023 |
| 9 | Head Office | | Head Office | 22-12-2023 |
| 10 | Hyderabad | Kurmedu&Devathpalli | Circle Office | 12-01-2024 |



Kothakota Cluster



Glimses...Gift distribution

Gandhinagar Circle



Repalle Circle



Tamilnadu



Jaggampeta



Rajupalem Circle



Perecherla Circle



Hyderabad Region



Orissa Region



**Head Office
Pedda Kakani**

Special Events

On 6th October 2023, VRO Organized 52nd Annual General Body Meeting at VRO campus in the Head office successfully. On that day VRO 'Kalavedika' was also dedicated by Sri T. Gopala Rao IAS, (Retd.). The video clip showcasing the activities of VRO in the different operational areas was the highlight of the AGBM. Every member actively participated in the meeting and appreciated VRO and its volunteers for their wonderful service rendered to the poor in four states and suggested various proposals for the improvement of the activities in VRO.



Farewell to Fr. Peter Daniel - Operational Director (OD)

After serving 12 years with commitment, dedication and determination, OD has taken retirement from the active services of VRO. It was a great occasion on November 11, 2023 in VRO Head Office and it was a mammoth gathering of some Board Members, Well-wishers, Friends and VRO family from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states. He was well honored in the august presence of those present.



He was remembered for his relentless, selfless and sacrificial services rendered to VRO during his tenure. His passion and relentless and selfless services to the needy community, donor relationship and intimacy with VRO family was well recognized and rewarded.

Welcome to new OD and AD

In the same meeting new incumbents for the posts of OD and AD were announced. Fr. Velangani Raju SJ and Fr. D. Emmanuel SJ - have taken charge as OD and AD respectively and are being welcomed.



3. First edition of Village Voice for the year 2023-24 was unveiled by Fr. Peter Daniel, SJ, Operational Director on 11th November 2023. "Go Green" was the theme and most of the governing body members and the VRO officials faithfully kept up to the theme for the year 2024.



Special Events

4. **Brainstorming Session held on 29th Dec'23.** It is the first of its kind in VRO to prepare and gear up the Field staff mainly to inculcate professionalism and to share experiences, challenges and suggestions on Budgets (realistic) for upcoming projects, shortcomings in ongoing projects; Planning



(field visits, execution of activities), Project Initiatives (ongoing and upcoming - proposed CSR activities / OB / HFH etc.). Project Manager has initiated this and asked Project officers and Circle Coordinators gathered to speak up the ground challenges and issues face by them in implementation of project activities.

Visitors Vibes

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5. Visitors Vibes

1. Operation Blessing (OB), Gurgaon

Operation Blessing organisation’s country office is based in Gurgaon, Haryana State. This organization is deeply involved in WASH project. Mrs. Preeti, the Regional Director for South Asia with her team - Mr. Nirupam, Sr. Manager - Programs, Mrs. Mercy, Manager- Micro Enterprises & Livelihood and Mrs. Angelina, Manager- WASH visited VRO office and Projects in the month of October 23. It was a follow up of visit by Fr. Velangani Raju – Operational Director and Mr. Paul Rajkumar – Project Manager to their office in Gurgaon in the month of Sep’23 seeking financial support for VRO projects. OB team had meeting with different stakeholders in VRO office to hear the need of community particularly supporting the school children studying 9th and 10th standards from vulnerable community and also expressed willingness to support the faculty teaching Mathematics and Science in the schools. Their objective of support is to bring the past glory of Christian educational institutions.

Later they visited VRO Circle Office in Repalle to see the Sanitary napkin, Edibles and Pickle making. Later the Team visited recently constructed houses in Isukapalle village and ESSC in the same village near Repalle. Their visit was wrapped up with recap of their visit, expressing their satisfaction with VRO activities implementation and commitment of VRO staff. OB team has indicated to give WASH program (Bore wells) as pilot project in different parts of AP.

OB has started a pilot project under WASH program in Namburu and Uppalapadu by supporting 3 Bore wells and the work is in progress. OB would like to gradually engage VRO in Andhra Pradesh supporting School children studying IX and X class students with Scholarships and the Faculty of Mathematics and Science besides providing books and laboratory equipment for the schools selectively, all this to revive the past glory of Mission schools through VRO. OB Team planned to make a visit in January 2024, post Pongal to Kothakota to have an idea of Cashew nut processing.



OB Team in a meeting with Stakeholders at VRO Head Office



OB Team, Delhi visit to Housing Project and interaction with Beneficiaries at Isukapalli



OB Team, Delhi interaction with MACTS group in Repalle Circle Office



OB Team interacting with Community Women – WASH programme in Namburu



Water and Soil Test carried out by Geologist – OB WASH Project in Namburu

1. Habitat for Humanity India (HFHI), New Delhi

Round Table Discussion – Stakeholders Engagement on Affordable Housing was held in NIRMAAN BHAVAN, AP State Housing Corporation office, Vijayawada on 14th Dec'23. This meeting was organized by HFHI in collaboration with Government of Andhra Pradesh and with the support of VRO. 24 Delegates, representing IFC World Bank, SMHFC- Delhi, ESAF Small Finance Bank -Mumbai, CRS - Odisha, IIFL and Officials from Government of Andhra Pradesh participated in it. Sri. Chakrapaningu, Board Member along with Fr. Peter Daniel, Fr. Velangani, Fr. Emmanuel and Mr. Paul Rajkumar represented from VRO. This Round Table discussion was mainly to look into the possibilities of tying up with state government and VRO to support constructing the houses for themarginalized communities. Sri. Ajay Jain garu, Spl Chief Secretary has commended the services of VRO in housing program.



5. Cyclone Relief Activity

VRO has spontaneously responded to the Michaung cyclone hit parts of Coastal Andhra Pradesh in first week of Dec'23. Fr. S. Emmanuel SJ, Associate Director with Finance Team and Operational Director engaged in distribution of food items in nearby villages of Bapatla, Budampadu and Uppalapadu areas with the support of stakeholders.





Village Reconstruction Organisation & Missionaries of Charity (Nirmal Hruday) Sisters are engaged in distribution of food items in the neighbouring villages of Budampadu and Uppalapadu areas.



Fr. Prof. Michael Anthony Windey SJ,
 Founder - Director of VRO



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