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AJY MIRROR

A Quarterly Newsletter of
AMA JANGALA YOJANA

April-June, 2024

Volume – 8 ■ Issue - I

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PROJECT DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Ama Jangala Yojana has entered into the final year of its extension period and being implemented in 22 Forest and Wildlife Divisions of Odisha. The scheme has a holistic approach encompassing many components of forest protection, livelihood promotion, income generation and handholding support to the forest fringe dwelling communities. Its implementation plan follows the Joint Forest Management principles and ensures that participation of all stakeholders is considered judiciously during the implementation of the program.

About 4.2 lakh households and 14,263 women SHGs of the State covering 4601 villages have been directly benefitted through the Scheme. The impacts of the interventions are very inspiring with a larger outreach. AJY is one among the few projects that reaches to the remotest and inaccessible pockets of the State.

The present quarter (April-June, 2024) was a crucial period of the year for protecting the Assigned Forest area from fire incidences during the long prevailing dry spells and scorching summer temperature. Community mobilization for forest fire prevention and control has been a special drive during the present quarter in addition to the routine project activities. As a result, in spite of excessive heat wave and rapid forest fire incidences, there is hardly any case of fire disaster in the assigned forest areas under AJY.

The livelihood promotion initiatives have a greater impact on the household income of the forest fringe communities. Though the project has no direct financial support for livelihood promotion, these activities have been carried out by leveraging funds from other line Departments and agencies through convergence process. This was made possible due to strong involvement and commitment of AJY team members.

A brief description of the activities and events accomplished till June, 2024 has been compiled and placed in this issue of AJY Mirror for reference of all stakeholders. In addition to this, exemplary VSS efforts have been narrated as success stories of our initiatives in this issue. I hope, all the AJY Divisions will continue their innovative works in future.

Dr. Meeta Biswal, IFS

PCCF (Projects) & Project Director
OFSDS

"What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another"



CUMULATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER AMA JANGALA YOJANA DURING THE PROJECT PERIOD

During the year 2024-25, Ama Jangala Yojana (AJY) is operational in 1424 VSSs under 22 Forest Divisions in which maintenance activities in 19,975 Ha of ANR with gap plantation and 49,812 Ha of ANR without gap plantation have been carried out. In addition to this, community mobilization and livelihood promotion activities are also being carried out in the entire project VSSs.

Till June 2024, total 4,601 nos. of VSSs have been covered under the Project. In addition to this, 14,263 Women Self Help Groups are also linked with various Income Generation Activities (IGAs) under inter-sectoral convergence with Line Departments. As on June, 2024, Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR)- without gap plantation has been carried out in 2,09,543 ha of forest area and ANR-with gap plantation has been carried out in 19,975 ha of forest area under the project. Apart from these, block plantations have also been raised over 1005 ha of forest land in 12 Forest Divisions. So, total 2,30,523 Ha of forest area have been achieved under forest restoration initiatives. In addition to this, Forest Protection and Soil & Moisture Conservation activities have been carried out in the assigned areas under the project VSSs. Most

importantly, the fire incidents in the assigned areas under AJY could be handled by the proactive response of the VSS members and the project team. Capacity Building Training programmes and support for income generation & livelihood enhancement have been conducted through convergence involving 14,263 women SHGs of the project area. During the project period, total 2,75,117 members have been covered under 9171 numbers of capacity building programs under AJY scheme. In addition to the above, 612 numbers of VSS buildings-cum-IGA Facilitation Centers have been constructed and handed over to the communities in AJY project area.

During the project period (up to June, 2024), the AJY teams could be able to mobilize Rs. 1022.11 Crores through convergence with other Line Departments under different Schemes, benefitting about 31,58,820 persons of the project area. Additionally, AJY team has accomplished many activities pertaining to community infrastructure development like construction of 612 numbers of VSS Buildings-cum-IGA Facilitation centres and livelihood promotion of the local communities.

SUCCESS STORIES

A number of successful stories have been created under convergence initiatives through Ama Jangala Yojana. Most of them are related to livelihood improvement and community development which showcase our achievements through convergence. There are also a number of extra ordinary achievements by the VSSs in protection and conservation of forest resources. Some of them are highly appreciable and regarded as milestones for holistic development of the community. Some of such efforts have been placed here for wider dissemination.

STORY-1

FROM CRISIS TO CREATIVITY: PATH TO FOREST REGENERATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

An exemplary story of Khillaput VSS under Koraput Forest Division

This case study focuses on a village that once faced severe forest degradation due to shifting cultivation and excessive reliance on fuel wood for daily needs. As deforestation intensified, both the environment and the villagers' livelihoods were at risk, with dwindling resources threatening their way of living. Realizing the urgency of the situation, the community took collective action to restore the damage. Through various rejuvenation efforts such as reforestation, sustainable land management and promotion of alternative livelihoods, they successfully regenerated the forest. This transformation not only restored the ecological balance of the locality but also provided new economic opportunities, demonstrating the power of community-driven conservation and sustainable development practices.

Khillaput is a small village with 46 families, living by the dense forest with a simple living practice. Their life cycle is strongly embodied with natural forests and their day to day need is fulfilled by the available natural resources. Gradually, the forest resource became limited due to shifting cultivation, over exploitation for fuel wood



and NTFPs. A time came when the ecology and their livelihood was under stake. The villagers understood the situation and decided to protect the forest and rejuvenate the forest resources with community participation. They formed Vana Surakhya Samiti under Ama Jangala Yojana in 2020 in coordination with IAET, the partner NGO.

The community started their journey by preparing a comprehensive micro-plan by the help of State AJY Cell and the Partner NGO. As per the proposal in the micro-plan, about 50 hectors of ANR without gap plantation had



been carried out in the VSS area to restore the assigned forest land. Soil moisture conservation measures & silvi-cultural operation were also carried out in the assigned area so as to promote healthy growth of plant species. The VSS members got actively involved in protecting the forest area from fire hazards and illegal felling and their by, improve their income through AJY Project interventions. Regular meetings were conducted in the VSS to plan, review and take new initiatives.



Gradually the members of Khillaput VSS planned for taking up alternative livelihood vocations for reducing their sole dependency on forest resources. They formed four numbers of SHGs and started small business with the loan support from local bank. They started their business under different Schemes and committed to repay the loan amount on time.





Maa Tarini SHG, consisting 10 women members established a poultry rearing unit with technical support of Veterinary department. The SHG established a poultry unit of 2000 bird capacity under the Scheme of Mission Shakti Department. The total cost of the poultry unit was Rs.7,20,000/- out of which, the Govt. has approved a subsidy of Rs. 2,88,000/- in 60:40 ratio of the total sanctioned amount. As on June, 2024, the 1st installment was released to the group for construction of the poultry shed. The construction work was completed during the month of May, 2024. After completion of the construction work, the Veterinary Department has supplied 2000 numbers of chicks for rearing. The birds are now in growing stage and it is expected that the birds will be ready for sale by the end of September, 2024.

Shanti SHG, consisting 10 women members have constructed a solar operated cool chamber in their village with support from Department of Horticulture under subsidized Scheme. The total project cost of the cool chamber is 15,00,000/-, out of which the group got a subsidy amount of Rs.10,50,000/- (70%) from National Horticulture Mission. The AJY team helped them to get the rest amount of Rs.4,50,000/- from District Mineral Foundation, Koraput. The structure is complete and the farmers, especially the vegetable farmers are extremely benefitted from the cool chamber by addressing their age old issues of distress sale. The local farmers are now been able to preserve their perishable vegetables and connect to distant markets.



The other women groups established a goat farm supported by the Veterinary Department through Mission Shakti with the similar modalities as the above poultry farm. The total cost of the goat farm is 2,30,000/- out of which they got a subsidy amount of Rs.1,15,000/- on 50:50 ratio of the total loan amount. The 1st installment was released during March, 2024 by which they have constructed a goat shed. After completion of the shed, the Veterinary Department supported them with 32 numbers of goat kids, 30 female and 2 male.

The initiatives taken up by the proactive participation of the members of Khilaput VSS in forest protection and livelihood promotion is noteworthy. The VSS was honored with the best VSS in District level during 2023-24 by Hon'ble MLA of Koraput during 75th Vana Mahotsava.

Continuing, the community's integrated approach and collective action have been the key drivers of their remarkable success in both forest regeneration and sustainable livelihood promotion. By working together, adopting sustainable practices and fostering a shared sense of responsibility they have not only restored their natural environment but also built a stronger, more resilient socio-economic future. Their journey highlights the power of unity and collaboration in achieving long term environmental and economic transformations.

STORY-2

GUARDIANS OF THE FOREST: THE PROGRESSIVE MARCH OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A success story of Bhalugharasahi VSS under Patna Block of Keonjhar Forest Division.

Vana Surakhaya Samitis' progressive efforts to safeguard local forests while improving the livelihoods of villagers are remarkable. By adopting various sustainable practices such as community-based resource management, afforestation and alternative income generation activities, the VSSs have successfully balanced forest conservation with their economic needs. Their efforts not only restored the forest health but also empowered the local communities by fostering a deeper sense of stewardship. This case highlights the critical role of community-driven initiatives in protecting forest ecosystems and ensuring livelihood solutions, balancing long-term sustainability of natural resources and people's need.

Bhalughara Sahi (Bhulda) village is situated at the middle of forest and strongly bonded with nature and its emulous benefits. The villagers depend on agriculture, mainly on paddy cultivation as primary stake and wage earning, vegetable cultivation and NTFP collection are the secondary income sources.

On 17th February 2020, the Forest Division, Keonjhar and the villagers partnered for Joint Forest Management to reduce the forest dependency and supplement alternative income for the forest fringe



dwellers. An MoU was signed with the VSS and 50 Hectors of forest area from Belda Reserve Forest was handed over to the VSS for restoration activities.

A comprehensive intervention plan was prepared for implementation of various activities of AJY in the VSS areas. A very realistic micro-plan was also prepared by the involvement of VSS members which was approved by the Gram Sabha. Preparatory works of VSS under AJY,



such as Survey and Demarcation, RCC pillar posting etc. were successfully completed with involvements of VSS members. Regular visits of P-NGO staff and monthly meeting kept the VSS members and the Executive Committee more active and vibrant to do something for the development of village as well as for the assigned forest area. After preparation of micro-plan, forest restoration and community development activities were carried out.

An ownership was developed among the VSS members to protect and regenerate the assigned forest area which is reflected on a specific chart for watching the assigned forest area. The chart indicates that the women SHG members of Bahulugharasahi VSS have taken initiative to protect their 50 ha of assigned forest area through Thengapali method for promoting community surveillance on forest protection.

To fulfill the Project objectives and to incorporate the sense of accountability among the VSS members, a long



LPG connection through the convergence with Pradhana Mantri Ujjala Yojana.

The other income generation activities carried out in the VSS are NTFP processing and trading, mushroom cultivation, vermi-composting, tailoring, agri-horticultural crop production etc. through which the VSS and SHG members have been benefitted a lot. The involvement of VSS members on forest protection and livelihood promotion is an example for others. A joy of satisfaction is visible when the present scenario of the VSS is compared with the then Bhalugharasahi village, before and after AJY intervention.

In conclusion, it is evident that the collective efforts of the villagers have not only revitalized the forest ecosystem but also brought tangible benefits to the socio-economic well being of the community. By fostering sustainable practices, the villagers have ensured the long-term availability of vital resources while enhancing their own livelihood base. This successful collaboration between people and nature serves as a model and depicts how local action can lead to environmental restoration for well being of the community.



term convergence plan has been prepared by consulting line Departmental Officials and VSS/ SHG members. The women SHG members got linked with various income generation activities through different Schemes of other line Departments under convergence initiatives. About 20 households have been provided with support for Mushroom Cultivation and training through convergence with Jan Shikshan Sanstan Keonjhar. Periodical animal health camps are being organized through convergence with Veterinary Department. Ten households have got



STORY-3

Collaboration for cash crop cultivation; a success story on the impact of AJY convergence Initiatives

A story of convergence with Agriculture Department and Akhupal VSS of Harichandanpur Block under Keonjhar Wildlife Division.

This case study explores the successful convergence between farmers and various line Departments, which enabled the introduction of cash crops that significantly improved crop production and farmers' income. Recognizing the need of diversified farming practices, local farmers collaborated with agriculture experts, extension service providers, and financial institutions to implement innovative methods for crop production. Through training programs, input support and effective marketing strategies, the initiative empowered farmers to make transition from traditional crops to more lucrative cash crops. This partnership not only enhanced the economic viability of farming vocation in the region but also demonstrated the potential of collaborative approaches in crop production and income augmentation.

Akhupal is a tribal village, consisting 85 families in Harichandanpur block under Keonjhar Wildlife Division. Agriculture is the major contributor to the livelihoods of the families in the village. However, the farmers struggle with climatic threats, volatile markets, lack of quality input materials and working capital. Diversification towards market oriented cash crops were out of reach of small and marginal farmers of the village. During the GB meeting of the VSS, the case was raised and a collective decision was taken to come-up with a concrete strategy to mitigate the risks so that the small land holder farmers of the village could be benefitted. The VSS with the help of AJY team selected a patch of land for collective farming. The

non-perishable in nature, market demands and ease in inter-cultural operations, farmers decided to go for collective sunflower cultivation. The farmers underlined the modalities, interventions, role and responsibilities of each individual farmer for effective management of the sunflower field.

This convergence initiative was a breakthrough for assured income for the small and marginal farmers in the village. They have earned one lakh rupees by sale of sunflower seeds from one acre of land. By leveraging collaborative resources, farmers have transformed their traditional practices towards improved livelihoods and



interested farmers were identified and motivated to take up a suitable cash crop. Thereafter, the AJY team helped the VSS to avail necessary benefits from the Department of Agriculture. The Department extended their support and mobilized the farmers to go for sunflower cultivation. Considering the natural qualities of sunflower, such as



increased income. This successful initiative highlights the importance of partnership and shared responsibility for sustainable development, serving as a model for similar efforts in other regions. The achievements demonstrate that, when communities unite with supportive institutions, they can overcome all challenges to thrive.

STORY-4

HARVESTING HAPPINESS; THE JOURNEY OF TWO INNOVATIVE FARMERS

A story of Tankamani Kisan & Soubhagya Kisan of Bhulukabahl village under Deogarh Forest Division.

In the face script of unpredictable climate conditions, soil degradation, and limited access to modern resources, farmers often struggle to maintain productivity and profitability. Here, in this case study, two committed farmers from a rural village could be able to make a satisfactory income amidst all these challenges. Determined to succeed, he adopted innovative practices such as crop rotation, organic fertilizer application and water-saving irrigation techniques. By addressing the market demands and adopting new technologies, they not only improved their crop yield but also enhanced the quality of their produce. Their ability to navigate these obstacles transformed their small piece of land into a thriving enterprise, serving as a model for resilience and innovation in agriculture

Tileibani block is one of the highest poverty stricken block in Odisha economic Index of Deogarh district. Highest concentration of tribal and PVTGs has underlined with special attention of government for development of settlers. Majority of families displaced from Regali Irrigation project and settled in Tileibani. Agriculture is the major earning source of families supplemented by wage earnings, livestock rearing, collection of minor forest produces and small business. Gradual degradation

of agri-horticultural production has been noticed in the area. To address the situation, District Administration and line Departments extend intensive support to the farmers to cope with the situation. At a particular time, consensus was raised to establish a sustainable approach in which the small and marginal land holders can be engaged in agriculture at their fullest and bring an encouraging change in the farming scenario.



Tankamani and Soubhagya; two farmers of the village who belong to tribal community having a small patch of land. But their dedication to adopt new practices in agriculture is exemplary. Their past contained with discouragement due to small land holding, absence of irrigation facility, high input cost and unpredictable market price. However, their efforts could be able to bring a sustainable change in their income and living.

Tanka and Soubhagya came in contact of ITDA and Horticulture Department and availed the Schematic support for watermelon cultivation with the help of AJY team through convergence initiative. They started cultivation of watermelon in their small piece of land. They prepared organic fertilizer and pesticides and applied in crop. They adopted improved crop management practices as advised by the local field staff of the Department of Horticulture. The AJY and ITDA team supported them with small water harvesting structure and a paddle pump to irrigate their crop and to protect the crop from water scarcity. Innovative cultivation practice, proper irrigation security and affordable input cost brought a bumper production. The ITDA and AJY team ensured the sale of

the produce in the remunerative market. Both of them earned a handsome return of Rs 60,000/- each from sale of watermelon from half acre of land. In spite of marginal land holding, they became the eye opener for the other farmers of the locality. They are now able to secure their livelihoods on a long term basis.

In conclusion, the success of Tanka and Soubhagya demonstrates that adoption of innovative and sustainable techniques and adaptability to the situation is the key to success. Tanka and Soubhagya, not only enhanced the productivity but also ensure long-term food security and economic resilience for their families. Both of them can be treated as flagship farmers in the District and State for their innovative efforts.

FEATHERS OF HOPE: A CASE STUDY ON RURAL POULTRY FARMING

The case study from Ghatralla village of Kotpad Block under Jeypore Forest Division.

Poultry farming has emerged as a popular rural venture in many areas of the State, offering a sustainable means of income generation, food security, and economic empowerment. In regions where agriculture faces challenges due to limited resources or climate constraints, small-scale poultry farming provides a viable income that requires minimum investment and infrastructure facility. This case study explains the role of poultry farming in rural economy; exploring its impact on rural households and the challenges faced by small-scale farmers. Through this mirror, the experience depicts how poultry farming can serve as a transformative tool for rural livelihoods, contributing to both nutritional and financial well-being.

Ghatralla is a tribal village situated in the dense rural regime with 226 households, containing high composition of Tribal followed by Scheduled Caste population. The entire population in the village majorly depends upon agriculture, daily wage earning and forest dwellings for their livelihoods. Gradual degradation of farm productivity and intensive input cost leaves agriculture under pressure. Most of the families reduced their agriculture stock and compelled to shift to other alternative options. Daily wage earning, collection and marketing of forest produces and livestock have a tangible contribution towards survival of families in the village to secure their livelihoods.

The villages stepped in to AJY by formation of a Vana Surakhya Samiti with a special agenda of protection and rejuvenation of forest resources under Ama Jangala Yojana. Appropriate forest management practices, inter-cultural interventions and alternative forest based



livelihoods benefitted the community at different means. Here is the story in details.

During the micro-planning process, the VSS identified backyard poultry rearing could be a significant contributor to the income of landless, small and marginal farmer families. The community, more specifically the



women had the skills for back yard poultry management and endowed with good market connection. The families in the village were already institutionalized through self help group movement. The women members came forward for poultry rearing which was the point of turn

of their livelihood pattern. The families having experience in country birds rearing were included with the support and ensured with breed improvement, vaccination and medical aid, proper shed management and coordinated market linkage through the local SHG and AJY team.

Odisha Livelihoods Mission supported capital support of 1 lakh to each woman farmer and ITDA, through Partner NGO, made the beneficiaries empowered the beneficiaries by extending additional support and capacity building. The result was quite encouraging. All the birds are now in laying stage. It is expected that, after another 3 months, each family will be able to earn an average additional income of Rs. 10,000/- per month by sale of eggs. It is hoped that the skill and practice-oriented intervention by the families will ensure a sustainable income to meet their financial requirements and add feather to their wings.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES BY AJY TEAM FOR FOREST FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Protection of forests from fire incidences is one of the prime objectives of Ama Jangala Yojana. Forest fire incidences not only affect the forest resources and ecology, a number of houses belonging to forest fringe communities also reportedly get damaged due to fire menace as they live in close proximity of the forests. Prolonged dry period and absence of summer shower have increased the number of fire incidences during the present quarter. However, the community based approach in preparedness, inter-sectoral initiative for fire surveillance and engagement of quick action teams for fire fighting has made it possible to minimize the fire hazards in the Assigned Forest Areas under AJY VSSs. The satellite based mobile alert system and community

based fire alert teams have helped a lot in early detection and control of forest fire incidences. As a result, almost all types of ground fire, surface fire and loss of property has been effectively managed by the proactive response of the AJY team members.

The forest fire management involves timely creation & maintenance of fire lines, awareness generation among local people and engagement of fire watchers in the forest areas assigned to each VSS. These activities are performed with the active involvement of VSS members, local SHGs and Forest Department staff. The awareness generation through meetings at community, School and college level, organizing awareness rallies and street

plays, inter-Departmental coordination meetings for forest fire prevention, engagement of fire watchers and women SHGs, and swift action by the fire response team by the projects under OFSDS has a greater impact on forest fire prevention and control in the Assigned Forest Areas. This year, the women SHGs have been engaged in fire line creation and maintenance work, which have shown exemplary results for forest fire control. In addition to this, the AJY team conducted a number of meetings at VSS and Inter-Departmental level which strengthened the surveillance that supplemented eradication of forest fire incidences to a great extent. In spite of continuous

long dry spell and excessively high summer temperature during the current year, the fire management activities could be handled by the efforts of the proactive VSS members and responsive Project team due to which, no major fire incidence has been noticed in AJY Project areas. Hence, a lot of resources have been saved by timely management of forest fire.

Apart from these, various innovative approaches and initiatives have been taken up for creating awareness among the general public, school and college students for forest protection and regeneration.



Latitude: 20.464683
Longitude: 83.375509
Elevation: 183.01113 m

Team prepared to protect Forest Fire at Chhitkeljore VSS, Bolangir Division



Latitude: 20.627982
Longitude: 82.76421
Accuracy: 700.0 m
Zimuth: 43° (NE)
Pitch: 15.0° (S,8°)
Time: 12-20-2023 14:35

Oath taking to protect Forest Fire at Chhitkeljore VSS, Bolangir Division



Latitude: 19.513526
Longitude: 82.699337
Accuracy: 3100.0 m
Time: 03-07-2024 17:14

Street play on Forest fire prevention awareness at Podakhol VSSs under Kalahandi South Forest Division



Latitude: 19.369564
Longitude: 82.934622
Elevation: 691.9417 m
Accuracy: 6.4 m
Time: 13-03-2024 10:33

Street play on Forest fire prevention awareness at Adri VSSs under Kalahandi South Forest Division



Latitude: 22.034302
Longitude: 84.843747
Elevation: 254.8615 m
Accuracy: 2.6 m
Time: 02-08-2024 10:08

Fire Line work at Rukhatola VSS of Rourkela Forest Division



Latitude: 19.355896
Longitude: 82.316391
Elevation: 614.9211 m
Accuracy: 7.5 m
Time: 04-15-2024 09:43
Note: Forest fire extinguished by PCCF, Rourkela Forest Division

Forest Fire Extinguishing at Deodongri PRF of Nabarangpur DIVISION



Latitude: 20°23'48"N
Longitude: 83°44'24"E
Elevation: 320.0717 m
Accuracy: 5.6 m
Time: 28-03-2024 17:30
Note: khamankhale RF fire

Fireline work at Sambruli VSS, Balliguda Forest Division



Latitude: 21.187849
Longitude: 85.757863
Elevation: 339.9541 m
Accuracy: 248.4 m
Time: 30-08-2023 08:08
Note: Kanjiapal

SHGs initiative for Forest Protection Awareness at Kanjiapal VSS, Keonjhar Wildlife Division



Latitude: 21.44701
Longitude: 86.123535
Elevation: 366.23514 m
Accuracy: 3.9 m
Time: 08-30-2023 13:04

Oath taking to protect Forest Fire at Ulbasa VSS, Keonjhar Wildlife Division



Latitude: 20.277488
Longitude: 83.2262
Elevation: 144.7716 m
Accuracy: 15.0 m
Time: 08-30-2023 13:04

Raksha Bandhan for Forest Protection Awareness at Parsukuna VSS, Bolangir Division

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Editor-in-Chief Dr. Meeta Biswal, IFS
PCCF (Projects) & Project Director, OFSDS

Editor Mr. Bijaya Ram Senapati,
Subject Matter Specialist (Publicity & Training), AJY

Please send your comments and inputs to:

Ama Jangala Yojana Cell
Odisha Forestry Sector Development Society
SFTRI Campus, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India
Phone: 0674-2386084, 2386016
email: webmail@ofsdp.org