



Govt. of Odisha



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AJY MIRROR

A Quarterly Newsletter of
AMA JANGALA YOJANA

July-September 2022

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PROJECT DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Ama Jangala Yojana has entered into the maintenance phase after completing six years of its successful journey. During the implementation phase, many milestones were covered and many successful models were created pertaining to Sustainable Forest Management and Livelihood Augmentation of the forest fringe dwelling communities. Our sincere effort in inter-sectoral convergence for holistic community development has been appreciated in many forum.

The project has completed its implementation phase and entered into the maintenance phase of the resources and infrastructures created during the previous phase. The present quarter of the year (July-September, 2022) was an eventful period for implementation of the scheduled forestry and community development interventions. Additional efforts have been made for livelihood promotion of the forest fringe communities through inter-sectoral convergence.

A brief account of major activities accomplished during the quarter has been compiled and placed in this issue of AJY Mirror for reference by all stakeholders. In addition to this, exemplary VSS efforts have been narrated exclusively in this issue as success stories of livelihood and convergence initiatives.

I feel happy that all the Divisions and the functionaries have performed their best during the present quarter towards achieving the objectives of Ama Jangala Yojana. I also hope that all the AJY Divisions will continue their innovative works for the welfare of the forest fringe communities 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"



BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF AMA JANGALA YOJANA DURING THE PRESENT QUARTER

The major objective of Ama Jangala Yojana is to ensure restoration of the degraded forest on one hand and augment the livelihoods of the forest fringe dwellers on the other. During the implementation phase (till March, 2022) total 4,601 numbers of VSSs in 23 Forest Divisions have been covered for restoring 2,29,568 ha of assigned forest area and creating 1005 ha of Block Plantations with active participation of the local forest fringe dwelling communities. In the extension phase, the maintenance of the resources so created during the implementation phase has been scheduled over 20,000 ha of ANR with gap plantation (in 446 VSS, 18 Divisions) and 75,837 ha of ANR without gap plantation (1964 VSSs, 22 Divisions) till the 4th year. The scheduled maintenance activities were carried out in 95,837

Ha of treatment areas under 1964 VSSs during the present quarter. Community Development & Institution Building being a major component under AJY, 5906 numbers of VSS monthly meetings was organized during the quarter along with other community development initiatives.

In addition to this, Rs. 33.37 Crores have been mobilized during the present quarter through convergence with the Line Departments benefitting 1,08,847 beneficiaries. The schemes which have been successfully linked under convergence with Line Departments are MGNREGS, Mission Shakti, Odisha Livelihood Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Swachha Bharat Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, National and State Horticulture Mission, National Health Mission and various schemes under ITDA.

SUCCESS STORIES

A number of successful cases have been created under convergence initiatives through Ama Jangala Yojana. Most of them are related to Livelihood Augmentation and Community Development which showcase our achievements under convergence efforts. There are also a number of extra ordinary VSS achievements in protection and conservation of resources. Most of them are highly appreciable and regarded as milestones for holistic development of the community. Some of them have been placed here for wider dissemination.

Story - 1

Successful collaboration for mutual benefit: The story of combined effort by Bijakhaman VSS & Bolangir Forest Division that benefitted both of them.

The Covid-19 pandemic has critically affected the livelihoods and income of the forest fringe dwelling communities. Earning additional income to compensate the loss was a big challenge before the households in the forest fringe areas during post Covid period on one hand. On the other hand, there were some vermi-compost units within the mega nursery which were managed by the community members in a productive way. With a mutually agreed modality, the compost produced in the unit was used in the plantations by the Forest Division and the community was paid for their service, which improved their economic condition.

Bijakhaman is a tribal village under Bolangir Forest Division comprising of about 100 members, most of them are daily wage earners. The VSS was re-constituted under Ama Jangala Yojana during 2018-2019. The livelihood of the VSS members got a set back during the Covid pandemic period. Reviving the livelihoods through additional

income generation activities was the only option for the VSS members. The forestry activities through Ama Jangala Yojana could not suffice to meet their basic needs. Although forestry interventions which provide ample wage earning opportunities within their own village, the necessity of earning additional income was felt. The Division staff, on their



The Vermicompost unit managed by Bijakhama VSS



The stock of vermi-compost & the storehouse

periodical visit to the village could find an alternative way for possible solution to this problem. Having being provided with the scope of contingent funds for VSS, Bolangir Forest Division in a Pilot Project Mission, has organized a meeting with Bijakhama VSS for encouraging them to take up a business opportunity.

There was a scope for production and marketing of Vermicompost by the VSS members. The VSS members agreed with the proposal and proved their accountability by initiating the preparatory works at their end. Accordingly necessary training for production, quality management and the use of vermicompost was imparted to the VSS members through Horticulture Department. But, arrangement/creation of necessary infrastructure and other logistics were the main hurdle for giving shape to this initiative. Up on their request, the Divisional Forest Officer, Bolangir agreed to provide the Vermicompost Unit constructed at Mega Nursery site through a resolution and certain modalities. Collection of cow dung, domestic wastes, forest wastes and

other raw materials were easily initiative through the VSS members. About 100 VSS members were involved in vermicompost production in the Mega Nursery since 2019-2020.

The working capital was provided to the VSS out of the funds prescribed for vermicompost in different Plantation cost norm of the Department. The result was amazing. About 1000 quintals of vermicompost have been produced by the VSS during 2021-2022 only whose market value is about Rs. 20.0 lakhs. The entire products were procured by Bolangir Forest Division to meet their requirement for different plantation programs. A good amount of income has been generated by the VSS members through this effort by which they could overcome the financial instability within a couple of years. In the compliment, the VSS members contributed free labour for watch & ward of Central Nursery through shared 'Shram Daan'. This inspiring story encourages other Divisions to explore all sorts of options for economic upliftment of the community members.

Story - 2

Mushroom Farming: A viable source of alternative livelihoods for the SHG members of Jareikela Village under Deogarh Division

Brundabati SHG, formed in the year 2006 is now working under Ama Jangala Yojana in collaboration with Jareikela Vana Surakshya Samiti under Deogarh Division. It was formed by mobilizing ten women members of the village with support from ICDS, Deogarh. Initially their activities

were confined to thrift & credit only in which internal lending was the major function. They were collecting Rs. 50/- per member per month and operating in a limited sphere. Later, they opened a saving account at UGB, Deogarh Branch and were able to raise funds worth of Rs.1,50,000/- by the end of 2020.



SHG Members demonstrating the method of mushroom cultivation



Mushroom production & sale by SHG members

During 2007-08, they started group farming of pisciculture in a leased pond through loan support from Utkal Gramya Bank, Deogarh. They were unable to manage the group activity in a profitable way for which they incurred substantial loss and closed the activity for a considerable period. Till the beginning of the year 2020, they were not doing any income generation activity in group mode, anticipating repetition of the previous experience. Afterwards, in the year of 2020, the VSS encouraged them to take up alternative income generation activities to boost their income and to utilize their valuable time in a productive way. They invited the

P-NGO team through the VSS and made a consultation to take up secured income generation activities within their limited resource. The P-NGO team consulted the local representatives of Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) and prepared a plan for possible convergence. The OLM team came forward with many options, but the SHG members selected mushroom farming as the most suitable alternative to boost their income, looking at the resources available with them and the marketability of the product. During preparation of microplan in Jareikela village, the SHG members put emphasis on mushroom cultivation for their

income enhancement. Following this, they were given comprehensive training and hand holding support for mushroom farming and value addition.

Then the SHG members started mushroom cultivation by arranging spawn from the Krishi Bigyan Kendra, Deogarh through the P-NGO team. In the first phase, the production was satisfactory. They sold the product in Deogarh market with the help of P-NGO team & got an average net income of about Rs.1700/- per member

within a month period. They were highly encouraged by the production and income, and carried out the activity throughout the year. With a little hand holding and support from the project through convergence initiative, the SHG members are now able to handle their own production and marketing. The SHG members are now acting as master trainers for replicating mushroom production in the nearby areas with support from Odisha Livelihood Mission and other agencies.

Story - 3

Mobilizing the youth towards protection & conservation of Forest Resources: A local initiative by Bonai Forest Division for a greater impact

Youth have immense energy and great commitment. They are capable of doing wonders with a little mobilization and grooming. Forest Divisions under AJY should harness similar local opportunities to mobilize the youth towards protection & conservation of forest resources. Such an effort has given positive impact in Sole Range of Bonai Forest Division by constituting Primary Response Group. Here is the story behind their success:

There was a time when Sole Range under Bonai Forest Division was infused with Illicit felling, timber smuggling, incidences of Human-Elephant conflict and forest fire incidences. Lack of knowledge, orientation and involvement of the local people in sustainable forest management were the major reasons behind this scenario. In this backdrop, 17 numbers of VSSs have been formed in the villages under Sole Range through the community mobilization process under Ama Jangala Yojana. All the project activities were also implemented in these VSSs. However, the issue of forest protection could not be handled successfully due to the small population in the community with respect to the forest area.

In order to overcome this issue, co-operation from the local people, especially the young community was sought. It was observed by the AJY team that the sports clubs are the most dynamic institutions in the locality with proactive and accountable members. With a little motivation, they can be effectively mobilized for protection of forest resources, thereby supplementing the work of VSSs. Finally, this idea was shared among the communities and a common consensus evolved. The role of AJY team in grounding such innovative idea is ever commendable. The challenges in the field of natural resource conservation and human animal

conflict became manageable by the involvement of members of the sports clubs. They supplemented the work of VSS like an informal subcommittee. In order to organize the young mass, trust building activities were initiated as per their interest areas. Therefore, the work in close co-ordination was very progressive, resulting in immediate positive impact.

In the above said circumstances, Range administration in co-ordination with P-NGO team identified the sports clubs in the locality as units of motivation towards forest protection. They conducted meetings with sports clubs in the locality and motivated them to support Forest Department in various protection and conflict mitigation activities. New sports clubs were also formed in many villages with the help of Forest Department, and supported with Sports Kits & uniforms through convergence. Members of sports club agreed to work as Primary Response Group (P.R.G) in the villages on the occasion of human animal conflict and forest fire.

Over and above, one Range Level Hockey Tournament was organized among all the 17 PRGs at Sole to kindle the initiative. Thereafter, the Range administration has received many responses pertaining to forest protection issues through the PRGs, for which the illicit activities and fire incidences have been reduced substantially.



Sports Clubs are being mobilized for Protection of Forest Resources through Primary Response Groups



DFO, Bonai and Range Officer, Sole felicitating the Sports Club members during the Range level Hockey tournament.

Story - 4

Barren Valley Smiles with Greenery: Vegetable Cultivation has changed the economy of the VSS members- A success story of effective convergence in Phulbani Forest Division.

Tomerbadi is a small tribal village under Raikia Block of Kandhamal District with a typical hilly landscape. There are 43 households in this village, all belonging to ST category. Subsistence agriculture is the main source of their livelihoods and almost all households are below the poverty line. They meet their livelihoods from paddy and vegetable cultivation, and collection of minor forest produces. A Vana Surakhya Samiti (VSS) was constituted under Ama Jungle Yojana (AJY) in the year 2019-20. During micro-planning process, the AJY team discovered that a large patch of land lying barren in the village which can effectively be used for agriculture purpose with a little effort. The Departmental staff and P-NGO team observed that a small Nalla is flowing near the barren land, which can be effectively used for irrigation with a little investment. Additionally, the villagers can also make use of the water for other purposes. Then it was proposed before the VSS to make use of the flowing

water to bring greenery in the barren land and a meeting was convened by AJY team. The major constraint was the funds arrangement for the poor villagers who were ready to contribute labor for this purpose. There was another issue too. The major portion of the land in the proximity of the Nalla belonged to a few land owners only, for which other households were not expressing their interest. With the initiative by AJY team, the owners of the land (Shri Sarat Kumar Pradhan & Purna Chandra Pradhan) were contacted and motivated for cultivation of vegetables on shared basis during initial 3 years. An informal consensus emerged in the meeting with mutual agreement with the land owners and VSS members. Thereafter, Horticulture & Panchayati Raj Departments were contacted for suitable convergence. The Nalla diversion work was carried out in convergence with Panchayati Raj Department through MGNREGS and the input support was mobilized through Horticulture



Department. The Horticulture Department also supported the village for Pomegranate cultivation through National Horticulture Mission Scheme. They advised intercropping of vegetables and turmeric crop in the pomegranate field, which will fetch dual income. Some selected farmers were also sent to Horticulture & Agriculture Department for undergoing trainings. Within a few days, land development work was completed and the field was filled with vegetable crops like brinjal, tomato, peas, potato, pumpkin, maize and turmeric etc.

Story - 5

Kampur VSS; Extra ordinary convergence initiatives has changed the village economy- A success story from Khariar Division

Kampur, a medium populated village under the Larka Gram Panchayat is situated at 27km from Khariar Forest Range under Khariar Division. The population of the village is 780 with 287 households. The entire community comes under the three major social categories, ST, SC & OBC. Most of the families come under BPL category. The major

occupations of the inhabitants are agriculture, daily labour and NTFP collection. In such a scenario, the village was included in the Ama Jangala Yojana during the year 2019-20 and 50 ha of land within Kampur VF was assigned to them for protection and regeneration.



Meeting with VSS Members for Possible Convergence

Since the beginning of AJY, the villagers expressed their keen interest in protection of forest and NTFP base in the assigned area with active involvement of women members of the SHGs in the village.

The AJY team was instrumental in encouraging their spirit with regular handholding support and convergence initiatives. In addition to this, the VSS was mobilized for carrying out the forest development work like ANR with gap plantation and SMC activities for the restoration and conservation of forest resources. Moreover, effective measures for prevention and control of forest fire is being carried out with the involvement of VSS member during the fire season.

Looking at the dedication of the VSS members towards forest protection, the VSS has been in the good books of the Department since inception of the project. The AJY team has put utmost emphasis on livelihood improvement of the VSS members through all possible convergence alternatives. Many activities for livelihood improvement and community development were taken

through convergence with other Departments such as Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water, Horticulture, Agriculture and ST, SC Minority & Backward Class Welfare. At present, the village has successfully implemented more than 10 schemes under various departments within last 3 years. The most successful interventions were implemented through Department of Agriculture & Horticulture for installation of deep bore wells, onion cultivation, potato cultivation, mango plantation. As a result, 2 numbers of farmer got bore well support from Agriculture Department, 19 numbers of farmers are regularly cultivating onion, 17 numbers of farmers are cultivating potato, 6 numbers of beneficiary got support for mango plantation through NHM. In addition to these, Trench com Bond (TCB) through PR department and road construction through ITDA were the major infrastructures developed in the village through convergence initiative. Various skill based training such as SHG funds management training, training on various livelihood programs and training on mushroom cultivation were given to Self Help Group members through OLM & Mission Shakti Department. Now the entire village



Vegetable cultivation by the VSS members through convergence



Mango plantation through NHM



Irrigation through bore well supported by Agriculture Dept.



has a changed scenario with respect to infrastructure development & livelihood improvement.

During the interim baseline survey, it was found that the villagers are able to earn an average additional income of Rs.15,000 to 20,000 per household per year after being taken up by Ama Jangala Yojana. All of the households are now feeling satisfied with a secured source of income and better living condition. 'AJY has opened our eyes. Our

living conditions have improved a lot than what was before 3 years'- was opined by the villagers in the FGD during the baseline survey. This could be made possible through successful convergence with line Departments and sincere effort of AJY team. The cooperation by VSS members and the sincere effort by the AJY team have changed the entire scenario of the village within a short period, creating an example for others to follow

Story - 6

Earth worms unearthed the way of healthy food production and boosted household income: A Success Story of Aharposi VSS, Keonjhar Forest Division

Sustainable Agricultural practices and Chemical free farming is gaining pace in current agriculture production system. Of late, farmers have realized that use of organic manure has a greater impact on soil health and crop production, which ultimately add to their household income. This opportunity also provides a means for earning additional income by selling the surplus. This story depicts how some of the proactive community members of Aharposi VSS under Keonjhar Forest Division benefitted by collective vermi-compost production.



Aharposi, a tribal village in Kandraposi G.P. under Keonjhar Forest Division is located on the foothills of Tangarani hills, surrounded by a forest that comes under Dhanurjaypur Beat of Palaspanga Section. A Kachha road is the only means of communication to this village. The total population of village is 580 with 121 households; most of them belong to BPL category. Rain-fed agriculture and daily wage earning is the only source of their livelihoods.

For years, the villagers were practicing mono cropping during the Kharif season only. All the farmers used chemical fertilizers and pesticides with an objective



to meet their subsistence need from the small piece of land they own. This resulted in gradual deterioration of the crop land and substantial crop loss. They did not have enough knowledge on benefits of organic manure and its importance in sustainable crop production.

In the above backdrop, a Vana Surakshya Samiti (VSS) was formed in the village during 2017 under Ama Jangla Yojana. The VSS members were actively participating in forest protection and regeneration activities. In order to improve their livelihoods, the AJY team interacted with the VSS in a series of meetings and consultations. But the expectations of the VSS members were very high and input intensive. During the interactions, VSS members always requested a permanent source of irrigation to support their cultivation so that they can do double cropping apart from seasonal rain fed crops. They also demanded an all weather road communication which was not possible for the project personnel to fulfill within a short tenure. On the other hand, the project team suggested some useful short term solutions to enhance their crop production and income. Crop diversification and adopting innovative cropping practice

were the available alternatives before the villagers. Some locally suitable short term income generation proposal such as NTFP collection and processing, small scale business through SHG, poultry farming, vermi-composting were put before the VSS members. Following this, a comprehensive discussion was held with the VSS members covering all the aspects of the above income generation activities, such as fund requirements, marketing facilities, net benefit, capacity building, follow up etc. After thorough discussion and considering the prevailing situation, the VSS members decided to take up vermi-composting activity on a pilot basis.

A comprehensive business plan was prepared to guide the VSS members to carry out the activity smoothly and timely. The AJY Coordinator appraised all the developments with the DFO-cum-DMU Chief, Keonjhar and after a thorough discussion, convergence was initiated with Gramin Product Marketing (GPM), an organization having expertise in production and marketing of vermi-compost, for improvement of the livelihoods of the VSS members through vermi-composting.



The Process of Vermicomposting production and sale by Aharposi VSS members

A training programme on vermi compost production was organized at the village on 26 April 2022 followed by a VSS meeting in which 12 nos of women beneficiaries were selected to pilot the activity. The beneficiaries agreed to contribute their part for installation of vermi-compost units of size 6' X 4' X 2' which costs around Rs.3500.00 per unit.

The process continued with regular monitoring by the P-NGO team. The 1st batch production of vermi-compost was started after 90 days of installation. Each beneficiaries harvested about 3-4 Qntl. of vermi-compost worth of Rs. 6000/- to Rs. 8000/- within a very short period. A part of the produce was used in their own paddy field during

the Kharif season which gave an impressive result in terms of crop production over that of past few years. In the second harvest, all the products (composts) were sold through the promoting agency (Gramin Product Marketing) providing an income of Rs. 4000/- to 5000/- per member. Now, the beneficiaries express their satisfaction with the results.

They are more interested to use the vermi-compost in their own crop fields rather than selling in future. Looking at the success of this pilot, the nearby VSSs such as Sanahundula and Baghianasa have adopted the similar strategy to augment their income. The success story started replicating automatically, and hopefully, the same will be repeated in other VSS in future.

Story - 7

Sweet corn brings sweet results: A successful intervention by Kamipadara VSS under Koraput Forest Division in convergence with ATMA, Koraput

Kamipadara is a small tribal village under Narayanpatna Range of Koraput Forest Division with limited accessibility. There are 53 households in the village, all belonging to ST and BPL category. The village was brought under Ama Jangala Yojana during the year 2017-18 by reconstituting the VSS. The VSS members are very cooperative towards forest protection and regeneration. Agriculture, especially cereal crops under rain fed mono cropping pattern is the only source of their livelihoods. The crop cultivation is limited to Kharif season only owing to lack of irrigation facility during other seasons. Hence, increasing the income of farmers from the existing cropping pattern was the only choice before the farmers.

The AJY team has initiated many activities pertaining to livelihood promotion in the village through convergence with Line Departments. However the promotion of sweet corn cultivation with support from Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), Koraput was the best ever effort made. Initiative was taken by the Partner- NGO & AJY team to support the farmers with good quality seeds and other input support through ATMA, Koraput. The selected VSS members were given a series of trainings and hand holding support through ATMA & AJY team. About 5 acres of compact patch was under sweet corn cultivation. The intercultural operations and fertilizer application was made in a collective approach. As a result, a bumper harvest was



observed. The number of cobs per plant and the size of cobs were really amazing. The green cobs were sold at the source at a cost of Rs. 8-10 per number, giving a total income of about Rs. 2.3 lakhs to the households within a period of 4 months. There is also a stock of dry cobs for domestic consumption. The cash crop did not require much manpower and effort as compared to other cereal crops and vegetables.

The convergence initiative of Ama Jangala Yojana in Narayanapatna Range was highly appreciated by the VSS members and the District level functionaries. Many farmers from other villages under ATMA, Koraput also visited the sweet corn fields through farmers' exposure visits organized by ATMA. This ensured price and prestige for the tribal farmers through a successful convergence effort by the AJY team. Sweet corn has brought smile back on the faces of Kamipadar VSS members.



Other crops cultivated by VSS members through AJY convergence initiatives

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