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AJY MIRROR

A Quarterly Newsletter of
AMA JANGALA YOJANA

October-December 2023

Volume – 7 ■ Issue - III

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PROJECT DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Ama Jangala Yojana is in the midst of its extension period. Many initiatives on sustainable forest management & livelihood promotion of the forest fringe dwelling communities have been taken up during this period. Community development and livelihood promotion has been given top priority during this period. In addition to this, field level monitoring and supervision mechanism has also been strengthened during the extension period.

The core objective of the scheme is to ensure restoration of the degraded forest on one hand and augment the livelihoods of the forest fringe dwellers on the other. Till December 2023, a total 4,601 numbers of VSSs in 23 Forest Divisions have been covered for restoring 2,29,543 ha of Assigned Forest Area under ANR and creating 1005 ha of Block Plantations with active participation of the local communities.

The present quarter (October-December) was a very crucial period of the year for implementation of the scheduled forestry, livelihood promotion and community development interventions. Extra effort has been taken for protecting the Assigned Forest Area and completing the construction of VSS buildings-cum-IGA facilitation centres.

A brief description of the activities and events accomplished till December, 2023 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 livelihood and convergence initiatives in this issue. I hope, all the AJY Divisions will continue their innovative works for the forest fringe dwelling 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 PROJECT PERIOD

Ama Jangala Yojana (AJY) is a Flagship Program of Government of Odisha, being implemented through Odisha Forestry Sector Development Society with the objective to promote participatory sustainable forest management and alternate livelihoods for the forest fringe dwelling communities in the State. The initial duration of the Scheme was for six years, i.e. from 2016-17 to 2021-22 which has been extended till 2024-25. Presently, the Scheme is being implemented in 22 Territorial and Wildlife Divisions of the State, covering about 4.2 lakh households. All the activities are being carried out with active participation of local community based institutions called Vana Suraksha Samities (VSSs) in Joint Forest Management (JFM) mode. State CAMPA and State Plan (Programme Expenditure) are the major source of funding for Ama Jangala Yojana.

By December 2023, total 4601 nos. of VSSs have been covered under the scheme. As a major policy under the project, participatory village micro-plans have been prepared, approved in Gram Sabha and implemented in all villages under the Scheme. In addition to this, 14,263 Women Self Help Groups are linked to various Income Generation Activities (IGAs) through inter-sectoral convergence with the Schemes of Line Departments. During the Project period (as on December, 2023), Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR)- without Gap Plantation has been carried out in 2,09,568 ha of forest area and ANR-with Gap Plantation in 19,975 ha under the Scheme. Apart from these, Block Plantations have also been raised over 1005 ha of forest land. Out of the above, maintenance activities are being carried out in 69,837 ha of Assigned Forest Area during the present year, i.e 2023-24. In addition to this, forest protection activities like survey, demarcation, pillar postings and fire protection activities have been carried out in the assigned areas of all 4601 VSSs. Soil & Moisture Conservation activities such as Check Dams, Loose Boulder Check Dams (LBCD) and staggered trenches have been created in the assigned areas under the project VSSs. The fire incidents in the assigned areas under AJY were negligible by the continuous proactive efforts of the VSS members and the Project team.

Capacity Building Training programs have been

carried out under various project components and livelihood promotion through the project as well as inter-sectoral convergence involving 2,39,922 members from 4601 VSS and 14,263 women SHGs of the project area.

Livelihood promotion is an important component of Ama Jangala Yojana. AJY aims to promote alternative livelihood opportunities among the forest fringe dwelling communities so that the pressure on forests for their day to day requirements is minimized, while simultaneously, the forest based resources are protected. However, there is no direct assistance from the project to promote livelihood activities in the project villages. It has been carried out through convergence with Schemes of other Line Departments. Inter-sectoral convergence has been given priority by the project team for livelihood promotion, income generation and community infrastructure development. Fifteen Partner NGOs have been engaged in the field level as support organizations for community mobilization and livelihood promotion activities under the scheme. In addition to this, 612 numbers of VSS buildings-cum-Income Generation Activities Facilitation Centres have been constructed and handed over to the communities in AJY Project area for multipurpose use.

By December 2023, Rs. 826.75 Crores have been mobilized through the Schemes of other line Departments benefitting about 28,21,539 persons belonging to 4601 VSS and 14,263 SHGs under Livelihood promotion and Community Development initiatives. The SHGs in the project area are also linked to various Income Generating Programmes (IGPs) in convergence with 39 numbers of Line Departments and CSR agencies. Additionally, many activities pertaining to community infrastructure development have been undertaken under convergence initiatives. Livelihood promotion activities such as skill development of rural youths, support to individuals/groups for entrepreneurial activities, construction/repair/renovation of roads, water bodies and other community assets, drinking water supply, linkage to Govt. welfare schemes, construction of individual houses and various MGNREGS based activities have been implemented through inter sectoral-convergence by which the quality of life of the forest fringe dwelling communities has improved remarkably.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT DURING THE PRESENT QUARTER

i) Community Mobilization

The Vana Suraksha Samities (VSSs) are the major grass root level institutions through which the AJY activities are being carried out. Therefore, strengthening of these institutions has been focused under AJY program. Conducting regular VSS meetings, capacity building trainings for the community members, livelihood promotion through inter-sectoral convergence with Line Departments are the prime activities conducted during the present quarter. During the present quarter, 5,668 numbers of VSS meetings have been conducted for 1424 numbers of VSS. However, the cumulative total

numbers of VSS meetings conducted till December, 2023 are 83,471.

On the other hand, women Self Help Groups (SHGs) are also playing an active role in community development and livelihood promotion under the project. Under AJY programme, 14,263 women Self Help Groups have been linked with various Income Generation Activities through inter-sectoral convergence with various Line Departments. AJY team is instrumental in facilitating all the community development activities and Income Generation Activities in the VSS areas.

Community Mobilization activities under AJY



GB meeting at Gamhardihi VSS, Redhakhol Division



GB meeting at Tentulikhunti VSS, Kalahandi South Division



VSS EC meeting at Dumdumi VSS, Bolangir Forest Division



VSS EC Meeting at Palsapada VSS, Kalahandi South Division



G.B. meeting at Badabahal VSS, Bamra WL Division



GB Meeting at Tamanguda VSS, Bamra WL Division



Range level VSS forum meeting at Keonjhar Range, Keonjhar Division



Women SHG meeting at Karalapasi VSS, Keonjhar Division



VSS GB meeting for Livelihood Planning at Suakati VSS, Keonjhar WL Division



SHG meeting for Livelihood Planning at Kholiamunda VSS, Kalahandi South Division

ii) Forest Restoration Initiatives (Maintenance of Assisted Natural Regeneration)

Assisted Natural Regeneration (with & without gap plantation) are considered as effective methods to restore degraded vegetation under Ama Jangala Yojana. During the present quarter, maintenance of ANR (with & without gap plantation) has been carried out in 22 Forest

Divisions. This includes 3rd year maintenance of 19,975 ha of ANR with gap plantation covering 445 VSSs sites under 18 Forest Divisions and 69,837 ha of ANR without gap plantation covering 1424 VSSs under 22 Forest Divisions.



ANR with gap plantation at Gopinathpur VSS of Keonjhar Division



Maintenance work of ANR with Gap site at Sundra VSS, Keonjhar Division



3rd year maintenance work at Bhulkabahal VSS, Deogarh Division



3rd year maintenance work at Kandiguda VSS, Keonjhar Division



Weeding and soil working at Gopinathpur VSS, Keonjhar Division



ANR with Gap Plantation at Remalasaahi VSS of Deogarh Division

iii) Other forest protection initiatives by the Divisions & VSS members

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. Some of them are highlighted below in pictorial form.



Rakshya Bandhan for Forest Protection Awareness at Kanjiapal VSS, Keonjhar Wildlife Division



Awareness building among Students at Th. Rampur North Range of Kalahandi South Division



Rakshya Bandhan for Forest Protection Awareness at Tamanguda VSS, Bamra Wildlife Division



Awareness building among Students at Khalasuni Range of Bamra Wildlife Division



Environmental awareness among School children at Jaipatna EM School, Kalahandi (S) Division



Environmental awareness among School children at Uchhala Girls' HS, Jaipatna, Kalahandi (S) Division

iv) VSS Buildings-cum- IGA Facilitation Centres

VSS Buildings-cum- IGA Facilitation Centre is a multi-purpose platform for community interaction, a place for operating livelihood activities, to keep up the records of VSS and a shelter during natural calamities.

Provision has been made under AJY for construction of VSS building of about 400 sq. ft. in selected VSSs. During the Project period (up to December, 2023), 612 Nos. of VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centers have been constructed and handed over to the concerned VSSs.



VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centre, Mukundpur VSS, Keonjhar Division



VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centre, Kasili VSS, Rayagada Division



VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centre inauguration at Kandili VSS, Rayagada Division



Inauguration of VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centre at Chedenga VSS, Malkangiri Division



VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centre at Bhaludunguri VSS, Bargarh Division



Inauguration of VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centre at Sikaripalli VSS, Bargarh Division



VSS Building-cum-IGA Facilitation Centre at Dhepaguda VSS, Jeypore Division



Inauguration of VSS Building at Dhabadi VSS, Keonjhar WL Division



Inauguration of VSS Building by Shri Debidatta Biswal, PCCF & HoFF, Odisha at Tapajodi VSS, Jeypore Division



v) Livelihood Promotion through Convergence with Schemes of Line Departments

Livelihood promotion of the forest fringe dwelling communities through various income generation activities is an important component of Ama Jangala Yojana. It has been envisaged to facilitate livelihood and income generation activities for the people living in forest fringe villages through convergence with Schemes of Line Departments. The communities covered under AJY have been linked with various socio-economic, welfare and income generation Schemes under Line Departments. There is a remarkable change in the livelihood scenario of the tribal communities over the last few years in the Project VSSs. Livelihood activities, skill development of rural youth, support to individuals/groups for entrepreneurial activities, construction/repair/ renovation of roads, water bodies and other community assets, drinking water supply, linkage to

Govt. welfare schemes, construction of individual houses and MGNREGS based activities have been made possible through Inter-sectoral Convergence. Additionally, support for village infrastructure development has been accessed from various Departments through this initiative with minimum project investment. The success of the convergence in AJY is evident from the fact that, during the year 2023-24 (April-December, 2023), the project could implement various activities amounting to Rs. 112.03 crores to benefit 2,37,729 beneficiaries. The scheme has successfully brought convergence from 39 Departments including MGNREGS, Mission Shakti, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), KALIA Yojana, Swachha Bharat Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, National and State Horticulture Mission, State Millet Mission, CSR and other funds.



Vegetable cultivation support to VSS members at Bhulukabahal VSS, Deogarh Division



Mustard cultivation support to VSS members at Bhulukabahal VSS, Deogarh Division



Mushroom cultivation at Naigaon VSS of Keonjhar Division



Cultivation of Okra through convergence at Dumdumi VSS, Bolangir Division



Business Plan Preparation at Manigiri VSS, Keonjhar Wildlife Division



Chicks distribution at Sagda L.I Office Distribution of poultry chicks to SHGs at Jugsaipatna VSS, Kalahandi (S) Division



Mushroom Production Training at Gangamata SHG, Gatamaha VSS, Phulbani Division



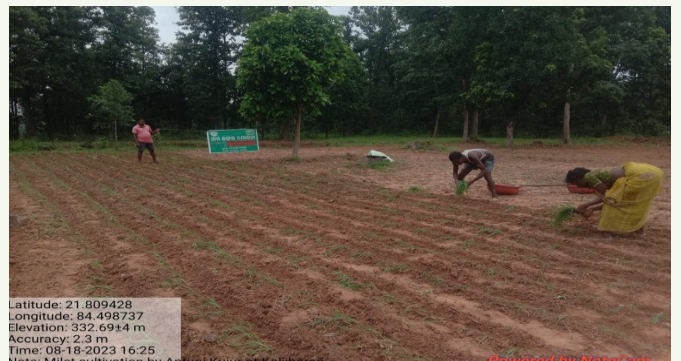
Agro processing machinery support to members of Dumdumi VSS, Bolangir Division



Support for Livelihood Promotion & Income Generation Activities through Convergence through AJY



Chilli cultivation at Pudiakhaman VSS, Bamra WL Division



Millet cultivation through SMI method at Kalijharan VSS, Bamra WL Division



Support for livelihood promotion at Baabaj VSS, Bolangir Division



Support for livelihood promotion at Tabalbanji VSS, Bolangir Division



DMU level training to VSS members on use of machinaries at Bolangir Division



Support for livelihood promotion to VSSs at Loisingha Range Office, Bolangir Division

NEWS IN BRIEF

REVIEW OF AJY PROGRAMME BY SHRI NARAYAN PATTANAİK, ADVISOR, AMA JANGALA YOJANA AT VARIOUS PROJECT LOCATIONS

Shri Narayan Pattanaik has been appointed as the Advisor, Ama Jangala Yojana in the rank of Secretary since January, 2023. He along with the PMU representative had visited different Project VSSs under AJY Divisions to review the interventions under Ama Jangala Yojana. He also expressed his satisfaction over the implementation

of Forest Protection, Regeneration and Livelihood Promotion initiatives under the Scheme. He has also expressed his pleasure over the fact that no fire incidence has been reported in the Assigned Areas of AJY VSSs which he has visited. His field visits have deeply inspired the local villagers. The details of the visit are given below.

Month	Name of the VSS Visited	GP/Block/Range	Division Name
November, 2023	Palukhola VSS	Taptapani GP, Sanakhemundi Block, Chandragiri Range	Paralakhemundi Division
	Saralapadara VSS	Parimala GP, Nuagada Block, R. Udayagiri Range	
	Bisampadu and Gandahati VSS	Narayanpur GP, Rayagada Block Mohendra Range	
	Gothei VSS	Narayanpur GP, Rayagada Block Mohendra Range	
	Chinariguda VSS	Regeda GP, Gunupur Block, Gunupur Forest Range	
	Kalamaguda VSS (A very remote village under)	Sundhi Damuni GP, Ramnaguda Block, Ramnaguda Range	
	Kandili VSS	Pitamalla GP, Rayagada Block Rayagada Range	
December, 2023	Koilarijor VSS	Jamankira Range Kuchinda Block	Bamra WL
	Tulsidihi VSS	Bhojpur GP, Jamankira Range Kuchinda Block	
	Lambtidadar VSS	Badamal Range	Redhakhhol Division
	Barahampura VSS	Charmal Range	

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ADVISOR'S VISIT TO AJY DIVISIONS



Advisor, AJY Visits to Palukhola VSS, Paralakhemundi Division



Advisor, AJY Visits to the IGA initiatives under Paralakhemundi Division



Advisor, AJY Visits Saralapadara VSS, Paralakhemundi Division



Advisor, AJY Visits Bisampadu VSS, Paralakhemundi Division



Advisor, AJY reviews the AJY activities at Gandahati Nursery, Paralakhemundi Division



Advisor, AJY Visits Gothei VSS, Paralakhemundi Division



Advisor, AJY interacts with the VSS members at Chinariguda VSS, Rayagada Division



Advisor, AJY Visits Kandili VSS building of Rayagada Division and interacts with the VSS members



Advisor, AJY Visits IGA interventions (marigold cultivation) at Kandili VSS of Rayagada Division and interacts with the beneficiaries



Advisor, AJY Visits Kuilarjor VSS building of Bamra WL Division and interacts with the VSS members



Advisor, AJY walks through the ANR site at Kandilii VSS, Rayagada Division



Advisor, AJY reviews the AJY activities at Redhakhol Division



Advisor, AJY Visits Barahampura VSS of Redhakhol Division and interacts with the VSS members



Advisor, AJY Visits Lambtidadar VSS building of Redhakhol Division and interacts with the VSS members



Advisor, AJY offers patrolling lamps to the VSS members at Lambtidadar VSS, Redhakhol Division

SUCCESS STORIES

A number of successful stories have been created under convergence initiatives through Ama Jangala Yojana. Most of them are related to livelihood promotion and community development which showcase our achievements through convergence. There are also a number of extra ordinary VSS achievements 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

HONEST EFFORTS ARE ALWAYS HONORED- A CASE OF HANDIBHANGA VANA SURAKSHA SAMITI UNDER KEONJHAR FOREST DIVISION

Handibhanga Vana Surakshya Samity of Keonjhar Forest Division is situated about 25 KMs away from the Forest Range Office, Keonjhar and 25 KMs away from Keonjhar Forest Division. The VSS is having 200 numbers of household with a population of 1200 members. The VSS was formed in the year 2019-20 as per the JFM Resolution and included under Ama Jangala Yojana. Area about 74.03 Hectare of Jadipada Reserve Forest has been assigned to this VSS for protection and regeneration.

as a result of which community participation in forest and wildlife protection improved significantly. The VSS members adopted "Thengapalli" for patrolling of forests with monthly schedule to protect the assigned forest area from theft, poaching and forest fire incidences. A group comprises of four members who participated to provide daily watch and wards on rotation basis as scheduled by the VSS. The VSS members actively protected the forest resources and were involved in a wide range of



Few years before, the VSS members were mostly dependent on the forest products for their livelihood and daily needs. The forest was largely degraded due to illicit felling by outside wood Mafias and forest fire incidences. After implementation of Ama Jangala Yojana in the VSS, community sensitization activities were taken up through community mobilization, orientations and regular interactions with the VSS members so as to involve them in active forest protection and management.

The VSS members expressed their keen interest in forest regeneration and livelihood promotion activities through AJY. Regular meetings and sensitization programmes were conducted by the project personnel

livelihood promotion activities through AJY convergence initiatives. The farm pond, mushroom cultivation, vermi-composting units have become ideal replicable models in the locality. Consequent upon their sincere involvement, the forest vegetation in the assigned area of the VSS has come up significantly both in density and height growth. Due to their sincere effort, the VSS has been conferred the state level "Biju Pattnaik Award" for Forest Protection and Conservation from Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department, Government of Odisha during the Year 2023. This recognition inspired the members as well as the project team to carry forward the initiatives to a wider community. The successful model for holistic

community development created in Handibhanga VSS is a truly replicable model, as opined by the District level officials in many forums. In fact, the development model

created in Handibhanga village is worth replication in other VSS of Odisha.



STORY-2

SMALL RUMINANT GAVE A BIG HOPE FOR STRENGTHENING RURAL ECONOMY- A SUCCESS STORY OF JAMUGUDA VSS OF KORAPUT FOREST DIVISION

Small ruminants have been the backbone of the rural economy in tribal areas. Backyard goatary units have been established as a successful livelihood intervention to provide additional income to the rural women in the forest fringe villages. On the other hand, goats have a huge market potential throughout the state. Hence selling goats at the door step become easy income generating activity for the women members of the family. However collective goat rearing, though a risky job, could be successfully practiced with AJY convergence initiative that provided amazing result to the women SHG in Jamuguda village under Koraput Forest Division. Here is the story behind their success.

Jamuguda is a small inaccessible village under Semiliguda Range of Koraput Forest Division comprising of 15 households. All the households belong to tribal community and mostly landless. The village is surrounded by Kolab reservoir on one side and the Kulab RPF on the other. Prior to intervention of AJY, collection of NTFPs and daily wage earnings were the only livelihood options for the households. A VSS has been formed in the village during the year 2016-17 under Ama Jangala Yojana. There was no cultivable land in the village due to its geo-physical condition. Collection of Siali leafs, Jamu, Amala and other NTFP items and selling them after primary value addition were the major practice of the villagers throughout the year. Few arid tolerant crops like Ragi and ground nuts were being cultivated by some households in the hill slopes which provided them with some marginal income.



In the year 2016, the P-NGO Team of Semiliguda Range along with the Forester and Forest guard visited this village in order to link this village with the Department of Veterinary and ARD, one of the line Departments closely associated with AJY convergence initiatives. During the visit, the AJY team after witnessing the existence of good forest vegetation adjacent to the village, held a close interaction with the villagers and motivated them to form a VSS under AJY in order to protect the adjoining forests. Because of the committed efforts of Jamuguda VSS, the forest density has increased significantly. Improved road facility and other basic amenities were created in the village due to AJY interventions through convergence.

Subsequent to the formation of the VSS, the PNGO team gathered the village women and motivated them to form women SHGs in the village. In the year 2016-17, Maha Laxmi SHG was formed with ten women members. After a few months, as the savings of the group increased, the group opened a saving account in SBI, Semiliguda Branch in the name of Maha Laxmi SHG. This had enhanced the confidence among the group members and they started participating in economic activities. The AJY team linked the SHG with the local office of the Department of Veterinary & ARD, Semiliguda for providing incentives for starting small goatary units by the SHG members. Around

30nos of goats were distributed among the marginal families. The beneficiaries took utmost care of the goats with the assistance from the Department. Thereafter, the Mission Shakti Department sanctioned a loan of Rs.50 000/- for construction of a goat shed for collective goat farming. The beneficiaries were very confident in achieving success in this endeavor with substantial family income. Due to this confidence and their ability to manage the goatary unit successfully, the beneficiaries were able to manage the unit very successfully. Now the SHG has a goat population of around 180 after selling about 30 numbers of goats to the nearby SHGs.

After witnessing the enthusiasm of the villagers in taking up new income generation activities, the PNGO team regularly visits Jamuguda and tried to motivate the VSS members to take up alternative income generation activities such as Leaf plate making, NTFP trading and other suitable vocations which are supposed to provide them substantial income. They are also now conducting regular VSS and SHG meetings in fortnightly interval and keep updating the members with regard to the progress made in different income generation activities, bank transaction details and other social issues. The remotely located tribal are now into the mainstream of development due to AJY interventions.



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