

**Asha for Education  
Fellowship Application Form**

<b>SECTION I: Personal Contact Information</b>
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Nominator(s): Mr. CK Ganguly, Chairperson, Timbaktu Collective, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh, India.
Have you applied to Asha Fellowship Program before? If yes, when? No.
Do you or your organization receive or has received any other form of financial support from Asha? If yes, please give details. No.

  

<b>SECTION II: Summary of Work</b>
Name of Project (if any):

Working together with members of the *Bhil* community, in Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, who are largely small land-holding farmers, towards strengthening livelihoods and food security of participating farmer members, by work on soil and water conservation, organic GM-free agriculture and collective marketing and purchase.

**Location - Village/City/District/State:**

I am looking to work in 10 villages spread over Bicchiwada, Sagwada and Dungarpur blocks of Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, India, over a period of 3 years.

**Which communities will your work serve?**

I am looking to work with the *Adivasi Bhil* community, who constitute more than 65% of the total population of Dungarpur district. *Bhils* are classified as Scheduled Tribe (ST) by the GoI. (See [http://tribal.nic.in/alphabetical\\_list.html](http://tribal.nic.in/alphabetical_list.html))

**Briefly describe the socio-economic background of the community?**

● **Climate, Rainfall and Forest land**

- Dungarpur district (along with Banswara and parts of Udaipur, Chittorgarh and Pratapgarh) is classified as a **semi-arid region** coming under the central plateau/hills agro-climatic region. It has a humid climate with an annual average rainfall of about 760 mm. Its high humidity and mild summers/winters have led to a profuse growth of natural vegetation dominated by teak.
- Approximately, 16% of the total land area is classified as forest, of which about 8% is land that has been farmed by the *Bhils* for the past 3 generations, but which is still under Forest Department control. **Continuous oppression of the Bhils by the Forest Department**, with respect to this disputed forest land has been a constant feature of this region since the last few decades. An ongoing struggle in this regard is being led by the Vagad Mazdoor Kisan Sanghatan since 1997 (read relevant sections below for brief on VMKS).

● **Agriculture situation**

- Almost all *Bhils* in Dungarpur district, are **small land-holding farmers** owning an average of 1.32 Ha of land. This does not include the farm land which is under official Forest Department control, which varies from 1-3 Ha per family. Almost all such cultivable land in the district is along **low-sloping hilly terrains**. “Dungar” literally means small hills in the Vagadi, the local dialect (which sounds like a progression of Mewari<sup>1</sup> mixed with

<sup>1</sup> Language of adjacent Mewar area of Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Rajsamand and Bhilwara.

Gujarati).

- About 78% of the land holdings in the district are classified as small & marginal (less than 2 Ha / family) as compared to a state average of 50%. Further, the per capita land availability is very low, about 0.34 Ha, as compared to a state average of 0.60 Ha, indicating that the **human pressure on land is very high**.
- The **net sown area in the district is only about 32%** of total land area, compared to a state average of 46%. Less than 20% of the total cultivated area is double-cropped and **only 10.3% of the district's area is irrigated**, compared to a state average of 32%. Major crops in Kharif are maize, black gram, paddy (largely for food consumption) and bt cotton seed, red gram (as cash crops). Major crops in Rabi are wheat, mustard, maize which require irrigation and chickpea, wheat (traditional variety) which do not require irrigation but require a good rainfall year. There has been an **increasing trend in shift of food crop area** from maize/paddy/black gram **to cash crops** such as red gram and bt cotton seed. Farmers with water also grow small garden patches of vegetables for household consumption.
- Agricultural productivity in the district is abysmally low – 4.25 qtl/ha for cereals/pulses and 1 qtl/ha for oilseeds as compared to national averages ranging from 12-15 qtl/ha for cereals and 9-12 qtl/ha for pulses/oilseeds (all figures for Kharif). Dungarpur thus is a **very high deficit region in agricultural production** as compared to its potential production and the rest of the State.
- Agricultural operations in the region, are characterised by very low mechanisation, low-moderate use of chemical fertilisers at present and mostly traditional/*desi* seed varieties for red gram, black gram, paddy and chickpea. Major local organic input used is cattle dung and leaves of certain trees. In case of maize, only hybrid seeds are used while in the case of bt cotton seed (whose area is increasing), genetically modified seeds, higher dose of chemical fertilisers and pesticides are being used. It must be noted that in Bt cotton seed production, the seeds require to be compulsorily bought every year by the farmer and the use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers is compulsorily mandated, since its a full package deal offered by the trader who deals in the supply of agri-inputs and crop purchase. **Farmers are converted to mere contract agents in such heavy control of input and outputs by external agencies, and are therefore subject to extreme risk.**
- About 18% of total district land area is cultivable land but currently barren/fallow; un-cultivable barren land (due to its rocky nature) is about 25% compared to a state average of 20%. Both of these figures, indicate a **high potential for land use for non-agricultural biomass development**, such as through trees and grasses, which can contribute as additional fodder for livestock, income through horticulture/minor forest produce/medicinal plants and for organic composting for use in cultivable land.
- Based on preliminary visits and rapid surveys in villages primarily in Bicchiwada block, some information about volumes of production have been collected. This picture maybe similar but not the same for the other blocks in the district. On an average, a farmer has at least 5 quintals, valued at

Rs. 2000-2500/ql, of surplus pulses (red gram, black gram, chick pea) and oilseeds (mustard and some groundnut) every year that is marketed. Every one in three farmers, grows at least 0.4 Ha of Bt cotton seed, which generate a marketable surplus of 1-2 quintals of cotton seed, valued at Rs. 20000-25000/ql. There is an increasing trend nowadays, of farmers also trading in their cereal crop (maize, paddy, wheat) in the short term for cash needs, which was earlier earmarked for self-consumption and purchasing their food requirements from the market. Hybrid maize seed, fertilisers and pesticides (for bt cotton) (about Rs. 3000-5000 / family) are some of the major agri-inputs purchased. ***In all, for a sample of 10 villages with total of 2000 families, the total market transactions, including what is sold and purchased, amount to about Rs. 10 crores.*** *This does not include the value of their market transactions with respect to credit, labour, livestock, forest produce, non-agri/food consumption goods etc.*

- **High migration to Gujarat farms and cities**

- Considering the low productivity from agriculture and high pressure on land, ***nearly 1 member from every Bhil family in the district migrates for labour work to cities and farms in neighbouring Gujarat state*** for periods varying from 3 – 6 – 9 months. Most adult men on the younger side and some proportion of the older adult men migrate for construction, industrial and services sector wage labour work to cities. Adolescent boys and unmarried girls migrate for agricultural wage labour work in Gujarat farms. Married girls/adult women normally do not migrate and stay back to manage the household, farm and livestock.

- **Other major livelihood activities**

- Apart from agriculture and migrant labour, *Bhils* here depend on **local wage labour** (primarily through the NREGA) and **minor forest produce collection** (primarily *tendu patta* leaf of *tendu* tree, used in making *bidis*) - both of these activities mainly in summer. Apart from this, **small-ruminant livestock rearing** – primarily goats and poultry (which constitute about 43% of the total livestock in the district) is a pre-dominant occupation, which gives all year-round income. There is a good presence of large livestock – cattle and buffaloes (44% of total livestock), whose major use seems to be for draught power in agricultural operations and milk for household consumption.

- **Literacy and Status of Women**

- The overall literacy rate is about 48%, much lower when compared to a state average of 61%. Rajasthan itself has the 29<sup>th</sup> rank on the literacy front

in the country. The literacy rate for women is 31%, which is also much lower compared to the state average of 44% (All figures are from 2001 Census). **The sex ratio is 1022, which is the highest for any district in Rajasthan**, compared to a state average of 921. There is however, a clear preference for male child, which is evident from the large family size. Within the respective community, as indicated by freedom to remarry and mobility to work (girls migrating for work is unthinkable in 'upper' caste communities), higher role in social customs, lower incidence of *purdah* and so on, the social status of women within *adivasi* communities is considered far better, when compared to women of communities considered higher up in the social ladder (such as Rajputs, Jats, Jains etc). The better social status however, does not necessarily translate into better education, health or economic status for women with respect to men within *adivasis* or with respect to women of other communities, as the low Gender-related Human Development Index figures (from relevant table below) indicate.

- **Access to basic amenities – safe drinking water, electricity and sanitation (toilet facilities)**

The table below depicts the position of total households in Dungarpur vis-a-vis the state and the country, who have access to these three amenities, which are considered basic for living. **The most stark indicator is that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total rural population of Dungarpur even today, does not have access to ANY of these three facilities.**

**Table 1: Comparative position of Dungarpur within Rajasthan with respect to access to basic amenities**

	Have safe drinking water access		Have electricity		Have toilet facilities		Have access to all three		Have access to none	
	Total	Rural	Total	Rural	Total	Rural	Total	Rural	Total	Rural
Dungarpur	65.6	63.7	23.3	18.9	6.9	2.6	6.4	2.3	31.4	33.5
Rajasthan	59.0	50.6	35.0	22.4	19.6	6.7	15.7	3.7	32.7	40.9

(Figures are in terms of percent of total households, 2001 Census)

- **Overall social-economic situation of Dungarpur**

The **Human Development Index** is a composite index comprising of levels of human development in **education** measured in literacy rate and school

enrollment, **health** measured in longevity; and in **access to economic opportunities** measured in per capita incomes and poverty rate. The present status of districts in these parameters is related with certain absolute achievement positions or some desirable achievement positions. This index is a measure of how far a district has traveled from a minimum level of achievement and the path still to travel. The table below shows the position of Dungarpur within the state on all three parameters – Education, Health and Income. **Dungarpur is ranked the LOWEST on the Human Development Index amongst all districts in Rajasthan.**

**Table 2: Comparative position of Dungarpur within Rajasthan on Education, Health and Income HDI Indicators**

	Literacy rate (%)	Children Enrollment in Schools (%)	Education HDI (Rank)	Life Expectancy (Yrs at birth)	Health HDI (Rank)	Adjusted PC Income Development Index	Poverty Rate (%)	Income HDI (Rank)	Overall HDI (Rank)
Dungarpur	48.32	70.2	<b>0.274 (28<sup>th</sup>)</b>	58.8	<b>0.563 (28<sup>th</sup>)</b>	0.513	41.9	<b>0.530 (32<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	<b>0.456 (32<sup>nd</sup>)</b>
Rajasthan	61.03	67.6		60.3		0.655	20.1		

(Based on 2001 Census figures. Rank amongst all 32 Rajasthan districts is indicated in brackets.)

● **Overall gender-related socio-economic situation of Dungarpur**

The Gender Related Development Index (GDI) uses the same variables as the HDI, but factors in the relative position of women vis-a-vis men on the three parameters. The GDI adjusts the average achievement of each district in life expectancy, education attainment and income in accordance with the degree of disparity in achievement between woman and man. **Dungarpur is ranked 30<sup>th</sup> (THIRD LOWEST) on the GDI amongst all the districts of Rajasthan,** indicating that the relative position of women with respect to men on the overall HDI, is abysmally poor.

**Table 3: Comparative position of Dungarpur within Rajasthan on Gender-related HDI Indicators**

	Literacy rate (%)		Children Enrollment in Schools (%)		Education GHI (Rank)	Life Expectancy (Yrs at birth)		Health GHI (Rank)	Adjusted PC Income (INR)		Income GHI (Rank)	Overall Gender HDI
	Male	Female	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female		
Dungarpur	45.7	15.4	25.2	16.7	<b>0.225 (25<sup>th</sup>)</b>	58.7	58.8	<b>0.560 (28<sup>th</sup>)</b>	3721	1835	<b>0.475 (29<sup>th</sup>)</b>	<b>0.420 (30<sup>th</sup>)</b>
Rajasthan	55.0	20.4	44.2	26.3		62.2	62.8		6652	2332		

(Based on 1991 Census figures. Rank amongst all 32 Rajasthan districts is indicated in brackets.)

References: The above information has been compiled mostly from data available in the Rajasthan State Human Development Report 2002, the official site of Dungarpur administration - [www.dungarpur.nic.in](http://www.dungarpur.nic.in) and the official site of Rajasthan government - [www.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.rajasthan.gov.in).

Type of work (Select 3 maximum)					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Curriculum Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate Technology
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching Methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health and Nutrition	<input type="checkbox"/>	Right to Information
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Reform	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Income Generation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People's Struggles
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer Based Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Food and Agriculture</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Civic and Human Rights</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adult Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Land Reform	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please specify)

<b>SECTION II: Education</b>		
Degree, Certification or Training Year	Institution	Location
Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.) with Honours in Civil Engineering - 1998-2002	Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani	Pilani, Rajasthan, India.
Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Management (PGDRM) - 2002-2004	Institute of Rural Management (IRMA), Anand	Anand, Gujarat, India.

<b>SECTION III: Work Experience</b>
Please describe the top 3 most relevant experiences.
<b>1. August 2004 – September 2007: Core Team Member – Organic farming and marketing program team, Timbaktu Collective, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh.</b>

Was responsible for the design and overall management of “**Timbaktu Organic**” - collaborative venture involving the Timbaktu Collective (a civil society organisation) and Adisakthi MACTS Limited (a thrift cooperative society with rural women as members), that worked to improve income of participating dry land farmers in Anantapur district, by promoting sustainable agri-based livelihood activities. The three main thrust activities of the program are:

- Promoting labour-intensive organic farming methods based on locally available inputs. This reduced production costs and improved the soil fertility over a 3 year period with no drop in yield.
- Diversification of the existing groundnut-mono-cropping with millets and pulses. This reduced the risk of crop-failure and improved food security at the household level.
- Organising marketing of organic produce in both local and urban areas. This improved the net price and weight received by farmers over the local market and also ensured a minimum support price for millets and thereby provided some incentive for farmers to shift from groundnut. Millets are hardy and nutritious cereal food crops, which otherwise were sold for poultry feed at a throwaway price.

Apart from overall management responsibilities, was specifically responsible for implementing the post-production and marketing sub-division of the venture, with activities ranging from fund-raising, research and documentation, organic certification, procurement from farmers at a premium price, processing, storage, building a team of 10 full-timers, setting up a storage and processing unit, marketing in local and urban markets including promoting consumption of millets, building capacities of Adisakthi MACTS Directors (who are all women leaders from rural farming and labour background), as well coordinating with and providing necessary support to the production sub-team.

#### *Main Achievements*

- The pilot phase of the venture (2005-09) involved about 450 small-holder dry land farmers covering 1400 acres (560 Ha) in 10 villages. It improved cash incomes of participating farmers by over 30%, over the 3½ years, through gains in reduced production costs, improved yields and better prices and weight.
- Apart from this, the program led to a net improvement in community asset base in the form of land, biomass and livestock resources. Use of toxic pesticides and chemical fertilisers was completely stopped by farmers from Year 1 itself, leading to natural regeneration of soil life; a minimum of 50000 trees survive of the 140000 planted which will be used in composting and finally, the number of livestock significantly improved due to the new and greater demand for cattle dung and urine as organic farm inputs. Additional gains are in terms of better health of farmer families and the environment as

a whole.

- In 2008-09, the marketing organisation managed by Adisakthi Women's Cooperative Society, achieved a net turnover of Rs. 30.27 lakhs, at a gross profit of Rs. 0.99 lakhs, after giving farmers a premium of at least 15% (amounting to approx Rs. 3.4 lakhs), over the local market, through better price and correct weight. The total net value of fixed assets created, including building and processing machinery, as of 2008-09 was about Rs. 20 lakhs.
- The marketing venture was driven not by regular sources of capital, but by a group of 60 Socially Responsible Green Investors, who contributed approximately Rs. 35 lakhs as loan, based on their interest in supporting a venture oriented towards triple bottom-lined social, ecological and economic goals. For a note on this subject, please see this article by Rajni Bakshi (Author of *Bapu Kuti*), titled Mindful Markets: <http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/nov/rbk-markets.htm>
- The pilot phase of this unique comprehensive production end to marketing end program, served as a base for the ongoing expansion phase (2009-14). This will take the total organic farmer member strength to 1200, covering 3650 acres in 28 villages, with a minimum sales potential of Rs. 150 lakhs and an estimated gross profit of Rs. 20-25 lakhs, making it the largest and most comprehensive livelihoods program ever, promoted by the Collective. The program is anchored now by the Dharani Farming and Marketing Cooperative, an independent community-based business organisation, composed now of the member organic farmers themselves. Adisakthi MACTS now serves an advisory role in the new institution.
- The venture serves as a sustainable model in resurrecting the agrarian crisis triggered by faulty State policies in Anantapur district and other similar regions, which has led to more than 700 farmer suicides over the last one decade in Anantapur alone and more than 100,000 farmer suicides in the whole country (figures as of 2004).

*(It must be noted that the above work was built upon 15 years of expertise built by the Collective in working with natural resources and more than 10 years of relationship that the two organisations (Adisakthi and Timbaktu Collective) had built with the participating farmers until that time. The above work equally represents the contributions of co-team leaders and co-team members.)*

**2. November 2007 – April 2008: Was based within the Adivasi Bhil hamlet of Amarpura and Magarda, Chittorgarh district, Rajasthan**

These are both 'upper'-caste dominated villages in the feudal Mewar belt of South Rajasthan. The purpose of the village stay was to gain some practical experience of living and relating with the local community in a Rajasthan village. I was not working with any group or organisation in this time.

**3. August – November 2008: Coordinator, Samarthak Samiti, Dungarpur district, Rajasthan**

Was responsible for overall management of "Strengthening minor forest produce-based livelihoods of forest-dwelling *adivasi* families in Southern Rajasthan" program of the organisation. Primary work responsibilities in this period were:

- Providing production, marketing and management support to strengthen minor forest produce cooperatives, promoted by Samarthak Samiti.
- Providing administration support to Samarthak Samiti, towards improving its internal organisational systems and building capacities of its team members.

<b>SECTION IV: Organizational Affiliations &amp; Memberships</b>		
Organization	Your Role	Dates
<b><i>Chitrika, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.</i></b> An Artisan-support organisation, established in 2005, which works to improve livelihoods of artisans through the set up and strengthening of artisan production and marketing collectives in rural Andhra Pradesh.	As Board member, my primary responsibility is to govern the overall functioning of Chitrika, through quarterly board meetings. I also provide management support to Chitrika's work whenever required and possible.	October 2008 - Present
<b><i>Vagad Mazdoor Kisan Sanghatan, Dungarpur-Banswara, Rajasthan.</i></b> A large community-based institution of <i>Adivasi Bhil</i> farmers and labourers, which works to enable and organise its members to secure their rights and provisions from the Government and thus make some attempt to reduce social and economic disparities within the local society.	As Volunteer, I participate in activities of the Sanghatan, to learn about the local region and its people. I also provide some administration support to their work, whenever required and possible.	November 2008 - Present

<b>SECTION V: References</b> <b>(in descending order of period of association)</b>			
Name	Organization	Address/Phone/Email	Context of Association
Ms. Mary Vattamattam	Secretary, Timbaktu Collective  <a href="http://www.timbaktu.org">www.timbaktu.org</a>	Chennekothapalli village, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh – 515101.  Ph: +91-8559-202149, 202335 Email: mary[dot]timbaktu[at]gmail[dot]com, mary[at]timbaktu[dot]org	As Core Member of the “Timbaktu Organic” team (details in work experience section above) from 2004-07, I have worked closely with Mary, in the overall design and implementation of the program.
Ms. M. Maneelamma	President, Adisakthi Mutually-Aided Women's Thrift Cooperative Society  <a href="http://www.timbaktu.org/detailwomensi.html">http://www.timbaktu.org/detailwomensi.html</a>	Chennekothapalli village, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh – 515101.  Ph: +91-8559-240551 Email: C/o Timbaktu Collective's email ids above	As Core Member of the “Timbaktu Organic” team from 2004-07, I have worked closely with Maneelamma and other Adisakthi Directors, in the design and implementation of the program, specifically towards building capacities and ownership of Adisakthi directors in governing the marketing division of the venture.
Ms. M. Annapurna	Founding and Managing Trustee, Dastkar Andhra Trust  <a href="http://www.dastkarandhra.org">www.dastkarandhra.org</a>	95A Park Lane, Behind Siddamshetty Complex, Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh – 500003.  Ph: +91-40-27721735, 66311577 Email: dastkarandhra[at]gmail[dot]com, annapurnam[at]gmail[dot]com	As Core Member of the “Timbaktu Organic” team from 2004-07, I have worked with Annapurna in 2005-06, in developing the marketing component of the program, during her one-year tenure as Member, Timbaktu Organic Advisory Committee.

<b>SECTION V: References</b> (in descending order of period of association)			
Name	Organization	Address/Phone/Email	Context of Association
Mr. G.V. Krishnagopal	Director, Programmes, Access Livelihoods Consulting India Pvt Ltd.  <a href="http://www.alcindia.org">www.alcindia.org</a>	H.No # 12-5-12/4/1, Vijaypuri, Tarnaka, Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh – 500017.  Ph: +91-40-27001147 Email: gvkgopal[at]alcindia[dot]org	As ALC India Fellow, from August 2008 till present, I have been working with Krishnagopal, in evolving and organising the ongoing work in Dungarpur district.
Ms. Judy Frater	Project Director, Kala Raksha Trust  <a href="http://www.kala-raksha.org">www.kala-raksha.org</a>	Parkar Vas, Sumrasar Sheikh village, Taluk Bhuj, Kutch District, Gujarat – 370001.  Ph: +91-2808-277237, 277238 Email: info[at]kala-raksha[dot]org, judyf[at]kala-raksha[dot]org	As intern with Kala Raksha for 10 weeks in 2003, I have worked with Judy, in developing a production management system for the KR Trust's livelihood enhancement program with women artisans.
<p>1. Personal direct phone numbers of people referenced above, are available on request.</p> <p>2. The above references are related to work/internship experience only. References related to academic work from faculty at BITS Pilani and IRMA Anand, are available on request.</p>			

<p><b>SECTION VI: Proposal</b></p> <p>Please answer the following questions in the space provided. Please attach any additional documents for clarity and better understanding of your work.</p> <p><b>Name of Project (if any):</b></p> <p>Working together with small land-holding farmers of the <i>Bhil</i> community in Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, towards strengthening their livelihood and food security, through work on soil/water conservation, organic GM-free agriculture and collective marketing and purchase.</p>
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#### Objective:

To work together with about 200 small farmers<sup>2</sup> of the *Bhil* community, in 10 villages of Dungarpur district Rajasthan, towards improving their income by at least 30%, over a period of 3 years, through work on improving agricultural productivity as well improving market returns (better sale prices & lower purchase costs) for agri-inputs/produce transacted by farmers.

#### Clearly describe the need for your work:

- Overall need to work with *Bhil* communities in Dungarpur district:
  - As per the Rajasthan State Human Development Report 2002, brought out by the Government of Rajasthan and UNDP, Dungarpur district ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in the Human Development Index ranking, which is the lowest amongst all 32 districts of Rajasthan. ***This indicates that a very high degree of human poverty is concentrated in this region*** (HDI details described in the socio-economic background section of this application).  
***Rajasthan itself is considered to be one of the most backward states in the country.***
  - Dungarpur district is inhabited in majority by *Bhil* communities (65% of total population). It is commonly acknowledged that *adivasi* along with *dalit* communities, historically and today, are one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups in the country. A study by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India and UNDP (Mihir Shah et al, 1998) further provides statistical data to establish that there is ***high concentration of poverty and distress in the dryland, hilly and adivasi-inhabited areas of India.***
- Specific need/potential to work on agriculture, land, water and local labour-based activities:
  - There is very ***high pressure on existing land resources*** indicated by low per capita land availability and ***poor crop productivity*** due to lack of water for protective and second-crop irrigation as well as due to soil fertility enhancement practices not being followed and ***high soil erosion*** due to the high slope. This indicates the need to ***intensify production from existing agricultural land*** available.
  - On the other hand, there is good existing vegetative cover, as well suitable climate and reasonably good rainfall (Avg 760mm, Min 400mm and Max 1600mm). Therefore, a ***high potential to use un-cultivable rocky waste-land*** which can be used for agriculture (25% of total land) for biomass development for use in organic farming or for horticulture/minor forest produce, as well great scope for soil and water conservation work on agricultural land. All this can significantly improve productivity of existing agricultural land as well as improve returns from non-agricultural land.
  - Nearly every family here, migrates under pressure to earn, for wage labour to Gujarat farms/cities and ***face poor working and living conditions at***

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2 Small farmers are defined as those owning less than 5 acres (or 2 Ha) of agricultural land

their work and living spaces, and also face **risk of human rights violations** from owners, employers and contractors.

- Both Dungarpur and Rajasthan, **rank very high in NREGA implementation**. However, the focus of existing civil society work, has largely been on ensuring full 100 days of work and maximum wages. There is a need for working closer with the community and to plan and implement more effective and higher quality soil/water conservation/harvesting structures and other possible natural resource based work, so that the **NREGA funds utilised can be more of an asset/investment that can give productivity returns in the long run**, rather than just be a expense item.

Due to the three factors above, there is a need to work on **improving productivity from existing agricultural land in the individual and collective ownership of communities**, through more effective use of NREGA and available government schemes, so that income from local livelihoods can improve and migration can be voluntary and not distress. That there is tremendous demand for work on water and soil conservation, is indicated by the fact that farmers when they have sufficient cash (from their migrant labour and other earnings), first decide on investing in buying a pump or motor, for irrigation, though this is not necessarily backed by work on soil or water conservation.

- Farmers depend on traders for sale of their surplus agri-produce – local traders for red gram and distant traders based in Gujarat cities for sale of bt cotton seed. In the case of bt cotton seed especially, whose area of cultivation has been increasing progressively over the years in Dungarpur, farmers are tied to the same trader (inter-linked market) for purchase of inputs such as seed, pesticides and credit, and also for sale of their produce, and thereby face exploitation in weight and price received due to dependence on one entity. Payment terms are also weighed heavily against the farmers as they receive their price due after 5-6 months of sale based on seed certification tests. In many cases, traders are known to disqualify seeds produced or simply pack up and leave, and many farmers have lost lakhs of rupees of their entire money and labour invested in this 6-month duration crop. Farmers however, continue cotton seed farming, due to the promise of high returns.

***There is thus a great need to work on increasing farmer control over the pre-production and marketing process of the major agri-commodities sold, especially cotton seed (but also red gram and other crops), considering the high risk nature of their operations and increasing area under cultivation.***

- Further, **the GM/Bt revolution is being touted as a second green revolution**. With an unproven technology and proven damage, the GM revolution promises to cause further destruction and poisoning of farming systems and livelihoods, increase corporate control over agricultural inputs and outputs

and escalate health problems for consumers compounding the current effects from pesticide-laden food. ***Organic alternatives to GM is the need of the hour, and will help farmers be in control of their production systems through better use of local inputs including local seed varieties, cattle urine and manure, biomass, trees etc.***

- Considering the overall socio-economic situation in Dungarpur, as indicated by the HDI indicators, work is required on several fronts including livelihoods enhancement, child and adult education, health, provision of basic amenities, human rights issues of women, children, migrant and local labour, forest rights, ensuring minimum wages under NREGA and Government schemes and so on. Even within livelihoods work, income generation work is possible through interventions related to local and migrant labour, livestock, minor forest produce apart from land, water and collective marketing/purchase activities. ***To begin with I will be focusing on the latter, since I am keenly interested in doing and learning about work with land and water and since it is immediately related to the current capacities I have. In time, this does preclude taking up on other themes of work, depending on the interest and demand from the communities, as well as related capacities and partnerships I am able to develop.***

Clearly describe your proposed approach/solution:

***The proposed approach of work will be towards working together with the farmers and to evolve and implement solutions to the existing problems through a collective community-based business-oriented initiative.*** This process of engagement will also include inputs pertaining to the different thematic areas, from the organisations that I will be seeking support from (see relevant section below).

It is my sincere belief that a community-led business-oriented approach, through which the concerned community members transact with production and marketing systems as a collective (be it any sector – livestock, labour, agriculture, fisheries, weaving etc), can bring true, meaningful and lasting improvement in the lives of the participant marginalised and disadvantaged communities. On the recent furore over the farmer's suicides, Dr Verghese Kurien, the architect of Operation Flood, the largest producer-led development program in history, famously said, ***“No farmer has committed suicide, where there are cooperatives”***.

What is envisaged, is not that communities merely own and govern institutions concerning their lives, ***but ultimately own brands***, that deliver maximum value to customers while generating maximum returns to themselves (An interview by Shri BM Vyas, MD, GCMMF, in the third issue of Transforming India, is instructive on this subject). The most stellar examples we have in this respect, are Amul, Lijjat and more recently Swakrushi, which are brands owned by

lakhs of Gujarat dairy farmers, thousands of urban Maharastrian women and hundreds of Telengana women dairy farmers respectively, that continue to deliver great value to customers and maximum returns to their producer-members even today.

Further, there is growing realisation today, that development driven by single-dimensional economic growth, without concern for the environment and the future, will not be sustainable and will quickly implode. Climate change, alternative energy, organic agriculture, socially responsible green investing are just some of the terms that highlight this growing concern. Working on such **sustainable ecological alternatives** connected with the lives of farmers, consumers, investors will thus be another basic dimension of the overall work approach.

It is worth mentioning here that this movement for sustainable ecological alternatives in all fields of life, is however being countered by critics who question whether such alternatives can meet the demands of the world's population. With respect to organic farming, a striking quote by Bernard, an experienced organic farmer based in Auroville (Tamil Nadu), in an article titled: "Agro-ecology: the only way to regenerate the devastated lands of India", is apt - *"Will organic farming feed the world? It could be argued that no agricultural system (including one that is chemicals-driven) will ever feed the 'world'. All points to the fact that only a drastic change in mindsets and lifestyles, a veritable paradigm shift could lead to a just and hunger free world"*. The article is good read on the need for sustainable ecological alternatives and the overall philosophy behind it, and can be accessed at this link:

[www.annadana.com/actu/new\\_news.cgi?id\\_news=152](http://www.annadana.com/actu/new_news.cgi?id_news=152)

Lastly, **community-based institutions are critical not just in the transaction of economic goods/services, but most essential to ensuring basic human rights of disadvantaged and marginalised communities**, whether in regard to protecting their production bases, resisting social exclusion/atrocities or demanding basic accountability from the Government administration. The Vagad Mazdoor Kisan Sanghatan in Dungarpur-Banswara districts, which has very effectively campaigned for the rights of its adivasi members to their forest land against the oppression of the Forest Department, is one such brilliant example.

Thus, my humble attempt and overall approach of work in time, will be towards building such a community-based institution, in partnership with the communities involved, that adopts both a Sangharsh and Nirman approach (a concept first used by Shankar Guha Niyogi, the late veteran leader of the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha) in **transacting in basic goods/services that its members can produce, working towards sustainable ecological alternatives and also simultaneously working to ensure that basic human rights of its members are maintained.**

An article by Stephen Vetter (written when he was with the Inter-American Foundation), on the work of a peasant leader Ramon Aybar, in Latin America, (See: [www.geocities.com/ahminotep/Ramon\\_Aybar.pdf](http://www.geocities.com/ahminotep/Ramon_Aybar.pdf)) is one such inspiring example of this multi-pronged constructive action and rights-based approach to community development. As Ramon demonstrates, a community-based institution, is like a perpetual social motion machine, one that is constantly at work for social purposes.

Clearly describe any background work done so far in the location of your work that will help towards your work.

I have been based in Dungarpur town since August 2008, and have been attempting to develop a personal relationship with local communities in the proposed work area, and trying to get a general sense of the area and basic problems communities face. I have also been attempting to build my own capacities in being able to do the required work and have been working towards developing partnerships with organisations and individuals (mentioned in a later section) towards getting technical and other support for taking up the proposed work.

Much of my preliminary visits have been within Bicchiwada block and I have yet to initiate preparatory work in the other blocks.

What activities will be undertaken for your work?

- Relationship building with the community
- Building my own capacities to do the required work
- Organising background research study to study local marketing and production systems and collect baseline data
- Developing relationship and seeking support of OFFER, Sambhaav, ALCI and VMKS towards planning and implementation of the work
- Planning with the community and participating farmers towards taking up the core work
- Implementation of the core work which will basically involve doing:
  - Soil and water conservation through effective utilisation of the NREGA and other government schemes available for the purpose
  - Promoting organic farming methods that can use the locally available livestock and biomass inputs available, to improve the fertility of the soil.
  - Collective purchase and marketing of agri-inputs, surplus agri-produce and consumption goods. This will include developing market contacts, fund raising for working capital and fixed assets, setting up and running of processing and storage infrastructure for value-addition to the produce.
  - Working on organic alternatives to Bt Cotton seed production.

- An ongoing activity throughout this period, will be building a team of local volunteers, co-team members and community leaders, to implement, consolidate and expand the proposed work. This will also serve as a base for building in time, a community-based institution with the stake of the participating farmers.

The plan of work is to initiate work in about 4-5 villages in 2 blocks in Year 1 and 2, and increase the work area to another 5-6 new villages in 1 new block by Year 3. I should therefore, be working at least in about 10 villages in total, in 3 blocks by Year 3.

*Please note, that based on the actual outcome of the process of engagement with the local community, the exact nature of activities taken up and their time line can vary.*

Clearly describe the expected impact of your work.

- Work on soil/water conservation will help farmers seek a second crop as well as save their first crop in drought years. This will help farmers achieve higher incomes by 30-100%.
- Organic farming methods such as composting will help to improve soil fertility, reduce cultivation costs and improve yields, through effective use and development of local biomass and livestock resources. Net gains in income, would be at least 10-30%.
- Work on collective marketing/purchase and GM-free agriculture, will help farmers achieve better prices for their produce, as well reduce costs for items that they consume/purchase. Net improvement in income through better prices and weight and cost gains, would be at least 10-30%.
- Overall, ensuring effective implementation of related Government schemes such as NREGA, Irrigation schemes etc as well will help make better use of public funds for a public good.

It is expected that the net incomes of farmers part of the intervention will improve by a minimum of 30% up to 100%, over the 3 year period.

***The period of next 3 years, will be an initial pilot phase, after which the work will be significantly expanded to impact a larger number of people, based on the community institution set up and experience developed with the involvement of a larger team and support of regular program funds from the government and other development agencies.***

Describe any innovative ideas & approach:

- Local farmers have inherent capacities and potential to take hold of their lives and can collectively build a viable significant economic enterprise.
- Sustainable ecological alternatives that are also financially viable and socially relevant, are possible.
- Integrating both constructive action (*Nirman*) through agriculture production and marketing work and rights based approaches (*Sangharsh*) in accessing and demanding government accountability and support.
- Integrating both productivity improvement and marketing activities. Working merely on one or the other is futile. Increased production may simply lead to reduced prices and vice versa, and therefore have no improvement in net gains.
- This maybe one of the first such development interventions taken up within the challenging context of Dungarpur district, attempting to accomplish work of such a wide scope in an integrated manner and anchored within a community based institution.

Clearly describe why you will succeed:

***The key factors on which success will depend upon are the depth of personal relationship and understanding I am able to develop with the participating farmer members***, trust I am able to develop with partnering organisations that I am seeking support from, and lastly, building the required capacities within myself for taking up the required work, especially with regard to abilities required in working directly with people, as well as in working with land, water and trees.

Positive factors that can lead to success can be:

- The focus on working through a community-based institution with stake of participating farmers as well depending on a local team, will lead to better long-term success and survival of the proposed work. If the relationship with farmers is strong, it will be prove to be a very strong support system both for me and the work.
- My four years of work - 3 years & 2 months with the Timbaktu Collective and Adisakthi MACTS, on agriculture and agri-commodity marketing with dry land farmers, the 6-month village stay experience within the *Bhil* community in Chittorgarh district and 4-month stint with Samarthak Samiti, related to work on promoting minor forest-produce livelihoods in South Rajasthan, has given me some practical understanding which will help me ground the proposed work better in Dungarpur.
- The partnerships I am seeking to develop with Sambhaav, OFFER, ALCI and VMKS, regarding the work on water, organic agriculture and marketing, will give me much needed technical, institutional and mentoring support to effectively take up the work on the ground.
- Apart from my work experience which is relevant to the proposed work, my educational background in related fields of Rural Management and Civil

Engineering, should help in undertaking the proposed work.

- I am particularly looking forward to the opportunity to work directly with land, water and trees, an interest that was triggered from my previous work at Timbaktu. Credit for this is specifically due to my two colleagues, Dinesh and Thachi. I am hoping that this interest will help drive me to give my fullest towards taking up the proposed work.
- It may be worth mentioning the journey I have traversed till now. My interest in taking up development work, was triggered by my three years of work related to education, being part of a group of learning student volunteers, with children of construction workers who were settled within campus. This was through the National Service Scheme, during my under-graduate course study in Rajasthan. Post this decision to take up development work full-time, I decided to do a professional course related to this field (Rural Management), to help me gain some capacities to do this work. I have followed this up with doing work on the ground over the last 4 years, in related fields and contexts similar to the work I am proposing to take up through this fellowship. My past record and path traversed till now, therefore should prove my commitment to the proposed work, which I have very much decided to do in the long term, in all seriousness.

Major challenges that can limit success will be:

- Working directly with my hands (I mean literally) with land and trees (for this, I was dependent on others while at Timbaktu), tackling GM-issues, doing water conservation work and rights-based work, are all new areas of work for me, which I need to explore, learn and seek support. My associations with OFFER, Sambhaav and VMKS, as well a patient, steady, studied approach with work on the ground, can help overcome this challenge.
- Raising the required funds for working capital and fixed assets, will be a crucial requirement for taking up work on marketing and developing organic alternatives to Bt Cotton. For the other activities, the extent of funds available, will not be as crucial, as the focus will be on utilising ongoing government funds/schemes, available natural resources within the village, as well as mobilising community contributions.
- Further, working on production alternatives to Bt Cotton, as well increasing farmer-control over the transaction system related to Bt Cotton will be very challenging, considering the high control of local enterprising traders and companies. My association with OFFER, ALCI and a detailed background research study of this system, can help better understand how to crack and intervene in this system.
- Working with the Government system can be a major challenge. My ongoing relationship with the Vagad Mazdoor Kisan Sanghatan as a volunteer, can help me get some insights and support, as their past and current work is closely linked to working with the Government system.
- Since the work is related to natural resources, actual rainfall received will be a major factor, that will impact success. For example, a series of droughts in the next few years, will impact success negatively and vice versa. Over a cycle of 5-6 years, however this effect will average out.

- Building a community based institution and preventing vested and powerful interests from controlling it, away from its primary purpose of serving the larger common good of its members, will be a major challenge. My previous work experience, as well support from partnering organisations, who all have decades of doing such community work, can help overcome this challenge.

#### How do you propose to track the impact of your work (data collection, interviews, etc)

- Baseline data of a representative sample of 10% of total families involved in the work will be collected and monitored at periodic intervals to understand work impact.
- Monthly work reports will be maintained by me along with photo and other written documentation.
- Periodically, say every year, evaluations of the work can be organised by ASHA or other external agencies appointed by ASHA. As part of these evaluations, field visits and meetings with community members and leaders can be organised to see the physical work and get a sense of the work impact.

#### What are the intermediate milestones:

- At the end of Year 1 (July 2010), in at least 5 villages, I would have:
  - Developed a comfortable personal and working relationship with the local farmers and the technical support organisations and individuals I am partnering with.
  - Developed a detailed understanding of the area, the people and their livelihood systems particularly related to water and agriculture.
  - Improved my personal capacities in being able to undertake the proposed work.
  - Initiated some work on soil and water conservation through the NREGA with engagement of farmers involved and the local panchayat and administration.
  - Got an in-depth idea of the Bt Cotton seed production and marketing system and an idea of a possible alternative organic farming intervention suited to the local context.
  - Got an idea of the local marketing system for pulses and hopefully (subject to availability of other resources) also completed one cycle of collective marketing of surplus pulses produced in Kharif 2009.
  - Developed a detailed business plan and proposal for the next 3-4 years of work, incorporating all aspects of the work, including a community-business institution setup plan. This document can be used for raising the necessary additional program funds to consolidate and carry the work

forward in the existing and new villages.

**What learnings from this work can be applied elsewhere & where:**

In the larger context of the agrarian crisis in the country today and the greater vulnerability of farmers in an economy that is fast opening-up, rapidly growing and increasingly competitive, the ***key learning that can be applied is how such affected producer communities can come together, effectively transact with production and marketing systems, and increase their share, bargaining power and dignity in the overall economy and society.***

The other key learning, is the development and application of sustainable ecological production and marketing alternatives, involving producers, consumers and investors, that factor in concern for the earth and our future.

The learnings are applicable for any individual, organisation or community, which is looking to take up similar work especially with farmers in dry land, hilly and *adivasi* inhabited areas, which form a significant chunk of the country's population and area. Specifically, I can also be involved in supporting other ASHA partners involved in similar work, based on my capacities and interest of the organisations and individuals concerned.

Also, it must be said, that the current work I am proposing, is in some sense based on the learnings from my own past work as well as work of other organisations and individuals, I have been able to interact and learn about.

**List the current financial resources, including any other grants or fellowships, available for the project/work:**

For the ongoing work, I have a fellowship for INR 8000 per month towards critical stipend support, from August 2008 till July 2009 for one year, from Access Livelihoods Consulting India Private Limited ([www.alcindia.org](http://www.alcindia.org)). The stated purpose of the fellowship is to work for "Sustainable economic development of the marginalised and disadvantaged community members, in Dungarpur district, Rajasthan". For more details on this, you can write to: GV Sarat Kumar – Senior Manager, Business and Strategic Development, ALC India. Email: [sarat\[at\]alcindia\[dot\]org](mailto:sarat[at]alcindia[dot]org), Ph: +91-40-27001147.

*(Please note that the time period of the current fellowship from ALCI and the fellowship requested from ASHA, does not overlap.)*

I have no other financial resources at present, for the ongoing and proposed work.

List any individuals, organizations, including universities, international agencies, NGOs, etc., involved in the work:

For the above proposed work, I am looking to partner with the following individuals and organisations for support.

1. **Farhad Contractor / Sambhaav Trust, Ahmedabad:** I have been in touch with Farhad since August 2008. I will be seeking his and the group's mentoring and technical support to learn about working directly with communities on water-related issues. Sambhaav has been working on development issues, primarily through work on water, in western and north-eastern Rajasthan, for the past two decades.
2. **Thachinamurthy / Organic Farmers' Federation of Erode (OFFER):** I have closely worked with Thachi for over a year in 2007-08, as colleague, in my previous stint at Timbaktu Collective. He has over 10 years of experience in working with farming communities on organic agriculture, and is now in the process of setting up an organic farm, at his hometown in Pudukottai (Tamil Nadu). He has been associated with OFFER, a group of practising organic farmers (led by Ramaswamy Selvam) for a very long period. I will be seeking the support of Thachi and farmers associated with OFFER, for taking up the proposed work relating to organic GM-free agriculture.
3. **Krishnagopal / Access Livelihoods Consulting India, Hyderabad:** I have known Krishnagopal since 2006. As Project Manager with the Cooperative Development Foundation, Warangal, he was instrumental in the setup of the Mulukanoor Women's Cooperative Dairy, the first fully women-owned cooperative dairy, setup in the country, which owns the brand "Swakrushi". In its eighth year, MWCD today has a 15000+ strong women farmer membership in more than 120 villages, with a net sales turnover of over Rs. 30 crores, making it one the largest community-based business initiatives setup in recent times. ALCI was co-founded in 2005 by Krishnagopal, to provide management consulting support to enable sustainable livelihoods for marginalised and disadvantaged communities. Since August 2008, I have been supported by ALCI, on a basic fellowship for starting off work in Dungarpur. Beyond the fellowship, I will be seeking Krishnagopal's and the group's mentoring and technical support for taking up the work related to collective marketing and purchase and community-institution building. For more information on ALCI, please see [www.alcindia.org](http://www.alcindia.org).
4. **Mansingh / Vagad Mazdoor Kisan Sanghatan (VMKS), Dungarpur-Banswara:** I have known Mansingh ji, Overall Coordinator and Advisor to VMKS (organisation brief mentioned in relevant section above), since November 2008. I am associated with the group as a volunteer, and I will be seeking the group's support in learning about the local region and people, making relationships with the local community in the villages I am choosing to work in and in learning how to work with the Government system through rights-based approaches, especially pertaining to accessing NREGA and other schemes.

These are the immediate current partnerships I am seeking to develop for taking up the proposed work. In time and as work progresses, I maybe able to involve more organisations and individuals in the proposed work.

What level of funding are you requesting from Asha for Education (stipend, project funds, etc.). Please give details about amount requested per month and duration.

I am requesting an amount of INR 240,000 in Year I (starting from August 2009), INR 264,000 in Year II and INR 290,400 in Year III, working out to a total of INR 794,400 over the three years. A break-up is given in the table below.

I expect that in three years, I would be able to sustain myself and the work, from program funding from Government and Development agencies, based on the work I am able to accomplish in this pilot phase, as well as on the basis of a standing community based institution.

Particulars	Year I	Year II	Year III
Stipend for myself (at an increase of 10% pa)	180,000	198,000	217,800
Work-related expenses – local & non-local travel, communication, stationery etc. (at an increase of 10% pa)	60,000	66,000	72,600
<b>Total per year (INR)</b>	<b>240,000</b>	<b>264,000</b>	<b>290,400</b>
<b>Total over three years (INR)</b>	<b>794,400</b>		

<b>SECTION VIII: Declaration</b>	
x	I am 18 years of age or older.
x	I am prepared to commit at least <b>80%</b> (a minimum of 32 hours a week) of my total working time to the proposed work.
x	I am prepared to commit a minimum of <b>3 years</b> to the proposed project starting <b>August 2009</b> .
x	I am not proposing an academic research project.
x	I am not a prior recipient of Asha for Education Fellowship Program funding.
x	The proposed project/work is not affiliated with any religious or political organizations.
x	The proposed project/work is an independent and autonomous project.
x	The idea proposed is my original idea.
x	I have attached a resume and other pertinent information to this application.
I certify that I have answered all questions truthfully. I understand that if I have misrepresented myself or my proposed work, Asha for Education may disqualify my eligibility.	

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Ashis Panda

Date: 14 February 2009