ANNUAL REPORT
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Cover Picture: The entrance to 'Timbaktu', the agro-forest habitat which inspired the creation of the Timbaktu Collective.

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The Timbaktu Collective
Annual Report 2016-17
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I. Message from the Chief Functionary

Dear friends,

Another year has passed. And what a year this was.

After all these years, I am still amazed at the resilience of the rural people. The rains failed for the fourth consecutive year, prices for agriculture produce went through massive fluctuations, demonetisation crippled local petty businesses, while the local economy is on the brink of total collapse. Thousands of trees in this ecologically fragile arid region have died. Yet life goes on. People laugh, they celebrate festivals, marriages and births and deaths.

Earlier, individuals used to migrate during the lean periods. Now, whole families have begun to migrate. Yet, they usually come back at the first sign of hope. Small holder farmers have been selling their lands to the highest bidders. The situation is so critical that whole villages are selling their lands. Land acquisitions by large corporations carry on unabated. Labour rates have gone up so much that if a farmer does not have family labour, she or he has to give up farming. But, people who can work are earning much more money than they could even ten years ago. The cattle population has dropped drastically and yet the small ruminant population has grown considerably. And life goes on.

Hope, however, is never lost. In this fast changing scenario, the work of the Collective has, even if I say so, been quite commendable. You will, of course, read about all the work that the Collective and Cooperatives promoted by it, have done through the year and their various achievements. The farmers’ Cooperative has achieved a Rs. 2.43 crores revenue record, even after such a massive drought year. The four women’s thrift and credit Cooperatives are doing well and growing as per plan. The labour Cooperative is all set to become financially independent by March 2018, and even go into the raw meat business. Bhavani, the weavers’ collective, is churning out yards and yards of wonderful cloth with intricate designs. The Cooperative of persons with disabilities is stronger than ever and their soap making unit is on its way to design more products. The tree growers’ Cooperative is holding forth even after the onslaught of the wind farms and drought. The school and the children’s resource centre are doing a phenomenal job despite a fund crunch.

On behalf of the Collective and the people we work with, I must thank our donors and well-wishers for their uncompromising support. I must thank the Government of Andhra Pradesh for releasing water into the Handri-Neeva canal system even though all the canal work has not been completed. This was a boon beyond measure, at least for the farmers who had lands near the canal system, as the water table rose and they were able to take the Rabi crop. I must also thank RangDe, the online crowdfunding platform, which supported Dharani to raise working capital by giving loans at a 5% flat interest rate. And I must compliment the Cooperatives for supporting each other through all the major crises.

I hope you enjoy reading the report and know that we will go on till it is impossible to do so. Thank you all for your kind and generous support.

Viva

C.K. Ganguly (Bablu)
II. Who We Are

1. About Us

The Timbaktu Collective is a grassroots non-profit organisation which works towards the sustainable development of marginalised people across 172 villages in the drought-prone and ecologically challenged Ananthapuramu District in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. The Collective was registered in Bangalore in November 1990, with its field office located in Chennekothapalli village.

Our mission is "to enable marginalised rural people, landless labourers, and small and marginal farmers, particularly women, children, youth, Dalits and persons with disabilities, to enhance their livelihood resources, get organised and work towards social justice and gender equity and lead life in a meaningful and joyous manner". The values dear to us are the celebration of life, gender equity, faith in people and their wisdom, and excellence.

With community participation and ownership as the underlying theme, we develop and implement various thematic programmes. The operational strategy across the majority of our programmes is the creation of independent people’s organisations in the form of Cooperatives [registered as Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies or MACS], to build solidarity among marginalised sections of rural people, and address issues of poverty, food security and livelihoods.

The Collective is closely linked with ‘Timbaktu’, a 32-acre agro-forest habitat and intentional community which prioritises organic farming, renewable energy, and sustainable living. A school for underprivileged children, ‘The Nature School’ is also located within its premises. Timbaktu is just off the National Highway 44 which links Bangalore and Hyderabad, and is 7km from Chennekothapalli.

2. Our Programmes

- **Dharani**
  - "Earth"
  - The promotion of organic farming and marketing among small and marginal farmers

- **Gramasiri**
  - "wealth of the village"
  - Enhancing livelihoods of landless labourers through the rearing of small ruminants

- **Enterprise Development**
  - Promotion of new rural business enterprises: weaving unit for rural women & soap making unit for persons with disabilities

- **Kalpavalli**
  - "eternal source of abundance"
  - Natural regeneration and biodiversity conservation of common lands

- **Swasakthi**
  - "power of self"
  - Financial empowerment of rural women through thrift and credit activities

- **Militha**
  - "Inclusion"
  - Advancing the rights of persons with disabilities

- **Chiguru**
  - "new leaf"
  - Alternative schooling and child rights: The Nature School + Children’s Resource Centre (CRC)
3. Impact

- After our successful effort to protect and regenerate ‘Timbaktu’, we engaged with local communities on the same theme, resulting in the establishment of the Kalpavalli Tree Growers’ Cooperative and the ‘Kalpavalli Community Conservation Area’ (KCCA). The KCCA now covers 9,000 acres of contiguous village common lands and serves as a critical biodiversity reserve and wildlife corridor.

- We are enabling thousands of rural women, constrained by layers of discrimination, to become financially self-reliant and challenge prevalent gender bias from a position of strength. We have set-up four women’s thrift and credit Cooperatives grouped under the ‘Mahasakthi Federation’, with its members pooling their savings, providing loans to each other and taking up leadership positions. At the close of the 2016-17 financial year, the Mahasakthi Federation had 20,973 members and a capital base of Rs. 20.43 crore.

- We have organised 2,113 small holder farmers working on around 12,000 acres of land into the Dharani Farming and Marketing Cooperative (Dharani FaM Coop), which procures, processes and markets their organic produce under the brand name ‘Timbaktu Organic’. They are certified organic under the Participatory Guarantee System. The Cooperative, now a profit-making entity, is popularising traditional, nutrient-rich millet crops and has established a significant presence in the organic food market in south India.

- Since 1992, we have supported around 1,500 underprivileged children to get access to primary and secondary education in a safe and protective environment through the Nature School and the Timbaktu School (now merged with the Nature School).

4. Recognition

- The ‘One World Award 2014’ from Rapunzel Naturkost GmbH and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

- ‘Jeeya Vyvidhya Rakshak’ (Biodiversity Conservationist) – 2012’ award from the Andhra Pradesh State Biodiversity Board and the Centre for Forest and Natural Resource Management (CEFNARM)

- ‘Real Heroes – 2013’ (Mary and Bablu) in the Environment category of the annual awards organised by the CNN-IBN television channel in partnership with Reliance Foundation

- ‘Vanitha Woman of the Year Award – 2010’ (Mary) from the Malayala Manorama Group

- Mary and Bablu were selected as the ‘Couple of the Year – 2005’ by ‘The Week’ magazine and featured as the cover story in its year-end, special edition

- Acharya Vinobha Bhave National Volunteer Award 2001

- Bablu was elected to the prestigious ‘Ashoka Fellowship’ in 1993
III. Programme Highlights

Dharani
About

The Dharani ("Earth") programme promotes organic, sustainable and traditional farming practices among small and marginal farmers who are engaged in the cultivation of nutrient-rich and climate change-resilient millets, pulses and oilseeds. The programme also supports the operations of the Dharani FaM Coop, a producer owned and managed business enterprise which markets its produce under the brand name 'Timbaktu Organic'.

The programme undertakes the following activities:

- provision of extension support;
- provision of inputs (seeds);
- training in preparation of organic fertilisers and pesticide;
- conducting Farmer Field Schools;
- crop planning with all sanghas;
- procurement of produce;
- organic certification as per the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS);
- data collection and management;
- facilitating the subsidising the purchase of the Halikar cattle, a traditional draught and milch animal.

Dharani FaM Coop is an apex body of three, mandal-level farmers’ Cooperatives - ‘Bhoomatha’ (Chennekothapalli), Avani (Roddam), and Vasudha (Ramagiri). It was setup in order to enable farmers to gain control over the agriculture value chain and improve their returns. The services offered by the Cooperative to its members include efficient and timely procurement at the farm gate at a fixed price; accurate measurement of produce; processing, storage, value addition, packaging and marketing; and the redistribution of profits based on the participation and patronage of members. Dharani FaM Coop was established in 2008.

Main Products

- Millets: foxtail millet, little millet, great millet, finger millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet, pearl millet etc - in the form of flour, rice, semolina
- Groundnut: whole, roasted and spiced, oil
- Pulses: red gram, cow pea, green gram, horse gram
- Ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook items

Highlights

- Dharani FaM Coop (Timbaktu Organic) had net sales of Rs. 2.43 crore in 2016-17, a 19.11% increase from the previous year. In addition, sales of Rs. 30 lakh were achieved for three successive months for the very first time. These results were based on aggressive marketing and the introduction of a direct distribution system with retailers;
- 350 individuals and institutional customers were supplied with 342 tonnes of produce through 1,245 orders;
- Value addition: 20 new products were released during the year, with high levels of customer satisfaction being reported for the horse gram rasam powder and moringa powder;
- 13,000 days of employment was created for 50 women from Chennekothapalli village, who undertook cleaning, grading, value addition, and packaging of produce at the central processing unit. As a result, Rs. 25 lakh was added to the local economy;
- As on March 2017, Dharani FaM Coop had 2,113 members who collectively own more than 12,000 acres. Of these, 1,452 members are certified organic as per PGS;
- 704 farmers undertook cultivation of millets and pulses across 1,234 acres. There was a major reduction from the crop planning target (covering 3,420 acres through 1,089 farmers) due to less than normal rainfall during the Kharif season and a complete absence of rain in November and December;
- 289 tonnes of produce was procured from 550 farmers - a 22% increase from the previous year;
- The Timbaktu Collective and Dharani FM Coop were profiled in a case study published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The case study [http://www.fao.org/3/a-br441e.pdf] focuses on the benefits of PGS to stakeholders across the organic farming supply chain;
- Dharani FaM Coop signed a power purchase agreement with Andhra Pradesh Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (APSPDCL) to sell excess power generated from its solar power generation facility for use in the main grid. In August 2016, Dharani exported 1,259 units of electricity to the main grid.
Subhadramma is a farmer who lives in Dubbarlapalli village in Ramagiri. She owns 5 acres of land. Like most farmers in her village, she was incurring losses from a high-input and chemically intensive groundnut crop. She joined the Dharani FaM Coop after she heard about the Cooperative and the Collective’s organic farming activities from other members.

Subhadramma started attending sangha meetings and Farmer Field Schools, during which time she started observing the benefits of millet cultivation using organic methods. She soon decided to sow a foxtail millet crop across her entire farm. The total cost of cultivation - Rs. 14,850, was lesser than what she had estimated.

Despite insufficient rainfall, Subhadramma’s millet crop gave her a yield of 1,670 kgs. She sold 1,500 kgs to the Dharani FaM Coop at Rs. 25 per kg, which fetched her a return of Rs. 37,500. She also earned Rs. 16,000 from the sale of millet straw as fodder and Rs. 4,000 from the sale of 40 kgs of millet seeds. After taking into account all expenses, her first trial of foxtail millet cultivation fetched her a net income of Rs. 42,650.

The good news for Subhadramma did not end there. She earned a patronage bonus of Rs. 7,000 from Dharani FaM Coop for choosing to sell her produce to the Cooperative. She is very happy with her first experience of organic farming as her farm income has now stabilised after many years of debt.
About

The Gramasiri (“wealth of the village”) programme creates assets for landless, agricultural labourers by promoting the rearing of small ruminants, operationalising thrift and credit activities, and developing common lands. With 270 members, the Collective established the Gramasiri Labourers’ Mutually Aided Cooperative Society for Livelihoods and Marketing (Gramasiri MACS) in 2010, as a collective entity owned and managed by its members.

Gamasiri MACS undertakes monthly thrift collection from its members and offers loans to members to buy sheep and goat, which are individually reared before being sold to the market on a collective basis. The Collective provides extensive technical assistance to the Cooperative, particularly on the rearing of small ruminants, facilitates access to subsidised loans for its members, and supports it in conducting day to day operations.

By 31st March 2017, its membership has risen to 1,050 families from 55 villages organised into 70 sanghas. Gramasiri MACS now has Rs. 1.37 crores as capital, including working capital deposits, thrift deposits and share capital from the members.

Highlights

- 183 members of Gramasiri MACS took loans worth Rs. 20,000 each to purchase 668 small ruminants. In total, Rs.44.20 lakh worth of loans were provided to members during the year. 40% of each loan is subsidised by a grant raised by the Collective from BfW Germany. The loan beneficiary subsequently repays the whole loan back to the Cooperative and the subsidy amount is converted as a deposit in the name of the member;
- With the Collective’s support, Gramasiri MACS expanded its membership to Penukonda Mandal, with the total membership increasing to 1,050 members from 55 villages. 83 new members joined the Cooperative;
- 23 one-day Member Education training programmes were conducted to enhance the knowledge and capacity of 526 members in organisation structures, roles and responsibilities, project objectives, and livestock management;
- 25 Directors and senior members of Gramasiri MACS took part in a nine-day training programme on ethno-veterinary and traditional medicinal practices in livestock rearing. The training programme was organised by the Collective and conducted by Ms. Asha Latha and Mr. Apparao from the livestock development organization Anthra. These 25 individuals are now entrusted with sharing this knowledge with other members;
- 810 labour days of employment were generated for members, who undertook fencing, mulching and watering work on 200 acres of commons belonging to 8 villages;
- 1,410 goat and sheep were insured as a follow-up to the pilot animal insurance scheme launched by the Cooperative last year. 19 claims were recorded and settled.
Muthyalamma and Narasimhappa live in Dodagatta village in Roddam Mandal. The couple, who were landless labourers for many years and had no assets, now undertake livestock rearing as their primary occupation.

Their is a family of six, which includes their son, who works as a daily wage labourer, his wife, and two children. Muthyalamma joined the Gramasiri MACS in 2012 as her family’s sole representative. Narasimhappa too wanted to join, but he was unable to do so since the applicable Cooperative law prevents two members of an immediate family to be part of the same MACS. Among the reasons that made her join the Cooperative was that she and her husband had experience in rearing others’ sheep and goat.

Since she joined the Cooperative, Muthyalamma has been making monthly thrift savings of Rs. 100. She took her first loan of Rs. 15,000 in 2012, which she used to buy five goats. Soon enough, their goat rearing activities, which culminated in the sale of goat kids to traders, began to make a big impact on their incomes. In 2016, she took another loan of Rs. 25,000 to buy more goats.

At present, Muthyalamma and Narasimhappa own a flock of 20 goats, which amounts to having an asset base worth Rs. 1 lakh. Their earnings from the sale of livestock have enabled them to become land owners; they now own an acre of land. They have also reconstructed their old hut by accessing a central government scheme for rural housing.
Enterprise Development
About

The Enterprise Development programme was initiated to establish and promote new community-owned and managed rural business enterprises. It supports rural business enterprises in nascent stages of growth in contrast to well-established businesses like Dharani FaM Coop and the Gramasiri MACS, which are assisted by separate teams. The programme is currently supporting the business development and marketing needs of the Bhavani Cheneta Sangam (Bhavani), a handloom weaving centre of and for young rural women, and the Militha Jeevanopadhula Sangam (MJS), a livelihood unit of Prathibha MACS. It engages in the manufacture of hand-crafted organic soap and related products. Bhavani and MJS market their products under the brand names ‘Timbaktu Weaves’ and ‘Timbaktu Soaps’, with all sales earnings directly being credited to two separate joint-bank accounts belonging to its members. The Collective is in the process of formally registering both groups as independent Cooperatives.

BHAVANI CHENETA SANGAM

Bhavani was setup in 2007 as a training centre to promote traditional, handloom weaving among young rural women, particularly those who were abandoned, widowed, persons with disabilities, high-school dropouts and from other difficult backgrounds. None of the women associated with Bhavani come from weaving backgrounds, and have therefore learned this unique skill only after joining the centre. Today, Bhavani comprises of a vibrant group of 11 young women. With regard to its production process, natural dyes (anar, alizarin, katha, rattan jyothi, and indigo) are used to dye hand spun yarn that is procured from Ponduru in Srikakulam District. The yarn is then woven into stunning fabrics. In-house technical, design and marketing support is provided by the Collective.

MILITHA JEEVANOPADHULA SANGAM

MJS was an outcome of a series of training programmes on natural soap making organised by the Militha programme in 2014-15, which convinced its stakeholders to start a collective livelihood enterprise. Its membership currently comprises of 20 members of Prathibha MACS.

Highlights

- Bhavani (‘Timbaktu Weaves’) had total sales revenue of Rs. 3.25 lakh;
- Bhavani’s product range comprises of 21 items, including saris, yardages, stoles, dupattas, towels and baby wraps;
- Due to extensive focus on research and development, the unit’s design library now includes 121 high-quality designs;
- Improved brand recognition of ‘Timbaktu Weaves’ due to participation in various events and stalls and leads generated through social media. The weaving unit currently has bulk customers from 8 states;
- 8 team members attended a Natural Dyes Workshop at the Kalakshetra campus in Chennai. The objective of the workshop was to improve the colour depth in the fabrics and to ensure that all members of the unit were trained in the practice of dyeing;
- A sales partnership was undertaken with Jeypore Craft, an online store for apparel, jewellery and home decor. Profiles of the Bhavani team were also published on the website;
- 1,188 kg of natural, handcrafted soap was produced. 11 new products were introduced, including infused hair oil, dish wash liquid, laundry powder, travel soaps, and assorted soaps. Specially designed packages and labels were created and used for the final products;
- Enhanced brand recognition of ‘Timbaktu Soaps’ due to the distribution of soap samples to 15,000 women associated with the Mahasakthi Federation;
- ‘Timbaktu Weaves’ and ‘Timbaktu Soap’ products were sold in the following events and premises in Bangalore:
  - ‘Celebrating Rural Ingenuity’ [organised by the Collective] in Vermillion House, Benson Town in June 2016
  - Raheja Residency apartment complex in Koramangala on October 16, 2016
About

The Kalpavalli (“eternal source of abundance”) programme undertakes community-based natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in the Kalpavalli Community Conservation Area (KCCA), a 9,000-acre expanse of previously barren and degraded revenue waste lands that has been transformed into a vibrant Savannah grassland ecosystem. The KCCA is arguably one of India’s largest community-led environmental restoration sites and is home to endangered wildlife such as the Indian Grey Wolf, Black Buck, Leopard, Sloth Bear, Hyena etc. The programme seeks to reverse the damage done to this major productive ecosystem (located in a rain shadow area) on account of deforestation, overgrazing, forest fires and climate change. In undertaking its activities, the programme partners with the Kalpavalli Tree Growers’ Cooperative (Kalpavalli MACS), which the Collective helped promote and establish in 2008. The Kalpavalli MACS consists of ten village-level Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) from as many villages.

Besides its main activities, the programme is engaged in livelihood enhancement interventions for users of the KCCA and the implementation of the ‘Mogga’ (“bud”) and ‘Navayuvatha’ (“new youth”) projects.

MOGGA

The Mogga project addresses and promotes the ecological rights of children as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which encompasses the right to a good life, the right to ecological inheritance, and the right to information. The project has established groups of children (‘Balala Sanghas’) across 47 villages, which meet twice a month to discuss environmental issues and issues relevant to their regions. These sanghas have been federated into an apex body called the ‘Mogga Samakya’, which comprises of two elected leaders (one boy and one girl) who meet once a month for planning and review.

NAVAYUVATHA

The Navayuvatha project selects and trains village youth leaders on environmental, cultural and ecological aspects in order to contribute to sensitisation and collective participation in ecological restoration activities. The youth associated with the Navayuvatha project meet once every month to discuss and resolve local problems on environmental and social issues, undergo cultural training in dance, percussion, theatre etc; and to take part in conservation activities at the KCCA.

Highlights

- Fire breaks: 10.65 kilometres of fire breaks were created, thereby giving protective cover from forest fires to 80% of the KCCA;
- Seeds: 988 kgs of 34 varieties of flora were collected by the forest watchers. The seeds were planted in 156 acres by 525 individuals from among the members of FPCs, Mogga Samakya and Navayuvatha;
- Boundary Management: 76 boundary markers were created while 13 signboards were repainted and 6 new sign boards were installed;
- Counselling: Around 45,000 goat and sheep used the KCCA for grazing. During the peak grazing season between April to June 2016, two shepherd counselling sessions were held to advocate against over grazing;
- 24 families registered themselves with the Kalpavalli MACS to earn a livelihood from the collection and sale of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFPs);
- An exposure visit was made in February 2017 to the ‘Marudam Farm School’, a community Eco park and school in Thiruvannamalai District, Tamil Nadu which is run by The Forest Way;
- A five-day theatre training was organised for 26 youth, which resulted in a theatre production called ‘Molakka’ (‘Germination’). The play was performed during the World Environment Day celebrations and in 18 villages;
- 25 educational camps were held for 499 members of Mogga Samakya and Navayuvatha. The topics covered included tree identification, grassland ecology, tropical linkages, ecological history and the use of medicinal plants;
- A day-long ecology camp was organised with the participation of 486 children as part of the World Environment Day celebrations on June 6, 2016;
- Four camps were held for 11 forest watchers. Upon completing their training, they undertook pond desilting, construction of a rock filled dam, and building basins for 1,427 trees.
♀ Swasakthi
About

The Swasakthi ("power of the self") programme is the Collective's initiative for the empowerment of rural women. The programme focuses on the promotion of alternative financial systems in the form of community-owned and managed thrift and credit Cooperatives to further the financial independence of women. In addition to their financial dividend, the Cooperatives are important sites of solidarity, collaboration, and social change - they have set in motion a radical personal and social transformation encompassing choice, dignity and respect. The Collective has established four Mandal-level thrift and credit Cooperatives in its working area: Adisakthi MACS (Chennekothapalli Mandal), Ananthasakthi MACS (Roddam Mandal), Mahilasakthi MACS (Ramagiri Mandal), and Durgasakthi MACS (Penukonda Mandal).

The Cooperatives have come together under the banner of the Mahasakthi Samakya (Mahasakthi Federation), a network organisation promoted by the Collective to provide guidance and support in governance, financial management, member education, and advocacy. The Mahasakthi Federation also houses the Cooperatives' Legal Aid Cell, which is an informal grouping of CEOs, staff members and Directors that provides support to both members and non-members in case of marital disputes, property disputes, and any other difficulties.

Each Cooperative, as well as the Federation, are led by 15 Directors elected from among its members. The staff of the four Cooperatives and Federation are part of the Timbaktu Panchayati and the Swasakthi Working Group.

The Cooperatives have a total membership of 20,973 women (1,425 new members) and a capital base of Rs.20.43 crore (approx. USD 3.17 million). A sum of Rs.19.43 crore was revolved, which earned an interest of Rs.1.68 crore; The Mahasakthi Federation organised working capital loans worth Rs. 51.20 lakh for the Mahilasakthi Cooperative, which were borrowed from the other women's thrift and credit Cooperatives at a 7% annual rate of interest; Demonetisation: On November 9, 2016, the Union Government announced that Rs.500 and Rs.1000 notes had ceased to be legal tender. The Cooperatives' staff met with members to raise awareness on the issue and provide clarifications. The main difficulty was the inability of Cooperatives to accept Rs.500 and Rs.1000 notes as part of the loan repayment process. The members, however, were very understanding in dealing with this issue, and made their repayments with legal tender. In order to tide through a temporary shortage in cash, the Cooperative's ensured that almost all of its cash capital [excluding Rs.500 and Rs. 1000 notes] remained in circulation;

668 members were covered in the 'Member Education' trainings organised by a team of Directors. The trainings, which were conducted with support from the Collective, covered topics such as the rules and regulations of a Cooperative, leadership skills, sangha management, and financial management;

An Organisational Development (OD) process was conducted for the Directors of the four Cooperatives by Mr. Haritha Sarma and Dr. Anuradha Prasad. The objective of the exercise was the take stock of the Cooperatives’ progress, identify areas for improvement, and strengthen governance mechanisms;

The Legal Aid Cell handled 28 cases brought to it by members and non-members. Of these, 18 were successfully resolved;

Exposure visits were organised for Directors/staff to the Cooperative Development Foundation (CDF) in Warangal, Telangana, and to the Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivrudhi Society (APMAS) in Hyderabad, Telangana.
Profile: Settipalli village, Penukonda mandal

Settipalli is a small village located 17 kilometers south of Penukonda town. The village has a population of around 3000, almost all of whom are either marginal farmers or agricultural labourers. Due to frequent drought, migration to cities and towns for work is a common occurrence. Low income levels and lack of access to mainstream banking institutions have resulted in many falling into debt traps with local money lenders.

It was this precarious context that convinced 15 women in the village to form the ‘Vinayaka Sangam’ as part of the Durgasakthi MACS in 2011. In the beginning, the sangha members struggled to make monthly thrift savings of Rs. 50 each. The availability of small loans at a reasonable interest rate and easy repayment schedules encouraged members to continue thrift and credit activities. This effort convinced other women from the village to form their own sanghas.

Fast forward to March 2017. Settipalli village has six sanghas with a membership base of 231 women, which together have accumulated savings of Rs.5.47 lakh, and loan disbursements of Rs.7.76 lakh. The average member savings amount to Rs. 300 per month.

The loans are used by members of the different sanghas for the purchase of milch animals and small ruminants, starting petty businesses, health care, and the education of children. The village sanghas are well organised, with active involvement by its members and leaders. The sangha members have seen significant increases in their decision-making power at the familial and societal level, and many are more optimistic about the future of their children.
About

The Militha ("inclusion") programme advances the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and helps them gain an equal status in family and society. The programme partners with the Prathibha Mutually Aided Cooperative Society (Prathibha MACS), a membership-based organisation of PWDs living in three mandals of Anantapuramu District, established in 2008. Along with facilitating thrift and credit activities to enhance the financial status of PWDs, the Prathibha MACS provides a joint platform for PWDs to advocate for their rights and entitlements. The Prathibha MACS functions as an apex organisation of three mandal-level branches: Chaithanya Prathibha in Chennekothapalli, Swarnagiri Prathibha in Ramagiri, and Adarsha Prathibha in Roddam. At the grassroots level, the Cooperative comprises of multiple, village-level Cross-Disability Groups.

The Militha programme supports Prathibha MACS in conducting regular meetings, thrift and credit activities, and educational sessions for the Cooperative’s Directors – both at the apex and mandal-level. The programme also undertakes other activities such as rehabilitative therapy for children with disabilities and training of parents/caretakers; following up with relevant public authorities on schemes and benefits for PWDs; conducting camps for assessment and referral; interfacing with hospitals and other institutions; community engagement and sensitisation; and livelihood enhancement.

Highlights

- Membership: The membership of the Prathibha MACS as on March 2017 stood at 1,506 individuals from 137 sanghas in 105 villages – an increase of 56 from the previous year. The membership figure also includes caretakers of 242 children;
- All 242 young members of Prathibha were provided with rehabilitative care by the programme team, including referrals. Home adaptations, which feature ramp and/or toilet installations, were completed for 9 children;
- Financial health: The capital base of the Cooperative increased to Rs. 75.39 lakh from Rs. 66.87 lakh in the previous year. This was achieved due to a total loan disbursement of Rs. 68.25 lakh to 544 members;
- Access to entitlements: 51 individuals were supported to get Disability Certificates - a mandatory document to access public entitlements. The availability of this document was very helpful in ensuring access to public pensions for 42 PWDs, subsidised transport passes for 79 PWDs, and adaptive equipment for 90 PWDs. Till date, 1,259 members of the Prathibha MACS have been supported to get Disability Certificates;
- Rural Development Trust (RDT): The programme benefited from the strategic support of RDT, particularly in terms of enabling Prathibha members to access its housing programme, conducting health camps, and healthcare provision. RDT also arranged for the participation of its children’s cultural troupe - comprised of children with disabilities, to take part in the Disability Day celebrations in Chennekothapalli on December 8, 2016;
- Scholarships amounting to Rs. 76,940 were handed over to 13 youth with disabilities to cover their academic fees, transport fees and hostel accommodation;
- 13 mothers of children with disabilities were trained in tailoring as part of an effort to provide home-based livelihood options which allow for child care. All 13 women now own tailoring machines after receiving loans from the Cooperative;
- An Early Intervention Centre - to provide daily rehabilitative care for children, was established in Nyamadalla village;
- A workshop on the international legal framework for PWDs was conducted in Timbaktu on January 21-23 by Mr. Srinivasulu, the President of the Hyderabad-based Network of Persons with Disability Organisations (NPDO);
- The programme team and Prathibha MACS Directors visited Amar Seva Sangam in Tamil Nadu as part of an exposure visit.
International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (officially on December 3) was celebrated on December 8, 2016. The event was preceded by a rally from the Mandal Development Office in Chennekothapalli to the venue next to the Highway. Around 1000 PWDs participated in the celebration, which featured talks by members of the Cooperative and guests, some incredible dance and theatre presentations by children associated with RDT Anantapur, and a first-ever Chakkabhadana performance by 22 children associated with Prathibha MACS. Five hearing aids, 15 tricycles (part of a government programme), and seven wheelchairs were handed over to Prathibha members.
About

The Chiguru ("new leaf") programme addresses the needs of children: a happy childhood, a safe and nurturing environment, access to resources for their physical, mental and emotional growth, creative learning opportunities, and choices to shape their own futures. The programme implements two projects: The Nature School and the Children’s Resource Centre (CRC).

NATURE SCHOOL

The Nature School (‘Prakruti Badi’ in Telugu) is a semi-residential, alternative primary school (class 1 to 5) which caters to children from underprivileged and/or disadvantaged family backgrounds who are in need of protection, care and support. The Nature School, which is located in ‘Timbaktu’, provides an opportunity for its students to experience learning in a pressure-free environment while getting sensitised to environmental and ecological issues. The Nature School is an officially accredited school as per the provisions of the Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009), and it does not charge any admission fee. In 2016-17, the Nature School had a student body of 57, of whom 35 were residential students.

CHILDREN’S RESOURCE CENTRE

The CRC was established by the Timbaktu Collective in 2002 as a community centre for children and youth living in and around Chennekothapalli village. The objectives of the CRC: to facilitate deeper learning; to encourage extra-curricular activities and self-expression; to enhance life skills; and to provide young people with the spaces and opportunities for solidarity. The use of the CRC – which includes a Science Lab, a computer terminal with four devices, a library, and facilities for various arts, sports and game – is accessible free-of-cost to children from schools and hostels in the region. The CRC also hosts various public celebrations, events and competitions through the year. The CRC is open seven days a week from 9 am to 6 pm.

Highlights

- 26 new children joined the Nature School during the academic year. The new students were selected after a preliminary identification by the Collective’s partner Cooperatives, followed by a needs-based assessment by the project team and a discussion with parents or guardians;
- The Quarterly Assessments revealed that majority of students had met their learning goals;
- The Nature School’s Annual Day was celebrated on April 24, 2016. This was a very special occasion for the school and brought together several alumni;
- The students participated in the World Environment Day celebrations organised by the Kalpavalli programme in Srikailasam on June 6, 2017;
- Trainings on traditional dance forms: Kolattam (July 4-July 14, 2016), Chakkabhadana (August 9 to 19, 2016), Pandari Bhajana (September 2016);
- The students went on a day tour to Antanapur on January 4, 2017. They had an exciting time visiting the ISKON temple, the Archaeological Museum, and an amusement park;
- 622 children from local schools and colleges used the facilities of the CRC. Among them were students from the Nature School, who visited twice a month, and students from the Mandal Parishad Elementary School, the Andhra Pradesh Model School, the Kasturba Gandhi Girls’ School, the Zilla Parishad High School, and the Sri Sai Junior College;
- Around 1,900 children attended various events and celebrations hosted by the CRC;
- The Junior Sports Day (Class 1 to 6) on August 7, 2016, was the biggest and most fun gathering of the year, with more than 300 children taking part in games such as sack race, dog and bone, musical chairs, lemon and spoon etc.

The Timbaktu Children’s Film Club

Starting from the New Year, weekly film screenings were held on Saturdays for residential students. The children enjoyed Telugu-dubbed versions of the following films: The Jungle Book, The Lion King, The Chronicles of Narnia series [The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe; Prince Caspian; Voyage of the Dawn Treader], Dr. Doolittle 1 and 2, Bolt, MS Dhoni – The Untold Story, and Ice Age 1 and 2.
IV. Visitors

We prioritise the sharing of our model for revitalising local economies with interested individuals and groups. To streamline this process, we organise structured three-day ‘Visitor Days’ once every three months. We also receive a host of visitors throughout the year.

We hosted visitors from the following institutions in 2016-17:

- Reliance Foundation
- Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivrudhi Society, Nallamada, AP
- University of Gastronomic Sciences, Pollonzo, Italy
- Coburg University of Applied Sciences (Hochschule Coburg), Germany
- Vidyaranya High School, Hyderabad
- Mysis Financial Software Solutions (India) Pvt Ltd., Bangalore
- Greenpeace India, Bangalore
- Raman Research Institute, Bangalore
- Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu
- Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC), West Bengal
- Vrutti Livelihood Resource Centre
- Action Aid, India
- Adoni Area Rural Development Initiatives Programme (AARDIP), Kurnool
- TREE Society, Kerala
- Rang De, Bangalore (financing partner of the Dharani FaM Coop)

Short-term, volunteer engagement:

- Shyam created several wildlife-themed wall paintings at the school and the CRC
- Therese and Esther from the USA taught nursery rhyme and flute at the Nature School
- Jerome and Emmeline from France trained CRC staff on moulding with clay and Plaster of Paris
- Dorothea and Michael from Germany held origami trainings at the Nature School and CRC
- Julia and David from France conducted a craft making workshop at the Nature School

V. Events & Conferences

The Collective’s staff participated in the following events and conferences:

- ‘Tassawur’ (“Imagine”: a two-day workshop on the link between tourism, nature, culture, architecture, urban development and the arts, which was held in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir (February 26-27, 2017);
- Agriculture Conference 2017, Goethenum, Switzerland (February 1-4, 2017)
- World Social Forum 2016, Montreal, Canada (August 9-14, 2016)
- ‘Future of Liberal Arts and Science Education’: a conference organised by the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, Pune (May 16-18, 2016)
## VI. Media Coverage

### 1. English

- **Goya Journal** (an online food publication) profiled Ms. Manisha Kairaly, Coordinator – Enterprise Development at the Collective and a resident of Timbaktu, on January 2, 2017. The article also focused on the importance of heirloom recipes and food sovereignty;

- Our work in the KCCA was featured in ‘India My Way’, telecast on **Discovery Channel India** on November 20, 2016;

- The Dharani programme was featured in the **Development Alternatives** newsletter dated June 16, 2016.

### 2. Telugu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Newspaper/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 11, 2017</td>
<td>Prathibha Leaders’ Meeting in Chennekothapalli</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 2017</td>
<td>International Women’s Day celebrations in Chennekothapalli</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 23, 2017</td>
<td>Distribution of disability aids and equipment to children in Roddam</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15, 2017</td>
<td>Training on compost preparation in Haryancheruvu village</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 10, 2017</td>
<td>Training in organic compost; detailed profile on Collective’s efforts to popularise organic compost &amp; DIY guide</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27, 2017</td>
<td>Distribution of disability aids and equipment to children in Chennekothapalli</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23, 2017</td>
<td>Workshop on international legal framework for PWDs</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 9, 2017</td>
<td>Rangoli competition for children at CRC</td>
<td>Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 9, 2017</td>
<td>Two-day organic farming fair by Dharani FaM Coop in Anantapur town</td>
<td>Eenadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 9, 2016</td>
<td>Celebration of ‘International Day of Persons with Disabilities’ in Chennekothapalli</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2, 2016</td>
<td>Profile on the Collective’s organic farming programme</td>
<td>Eenadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 28, 2016</td>
<td>Detailed profile on Gramasiri programme with beneficiary interviews</td>
<td>Eenadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3, 2016</td>
<td>Visit of ‘Mera Thera Run - 2016’ campaign to the Collective</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 6, 2016</td>
<td>Farmer Field School with Dhanalakshmi Farmers’ Sangha in Chennekothapalli</td>
<td>Eenadu, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28, 2016</td>
<td>Annual General Meeting - Prathibha MACS; feature on Militha programme’s livelihood interventions</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Eenadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 20, 2016</td>
<td>Annual General Meeting - Dharani FaM Coop</td>
<td>Andhra Jyothi, Sakshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15, 2016</td>
<td>Inauguration of Early Intervention Centre in Nyamadalla village</td>
<td>Eenadu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VII. Administration

Sruthi

The Sruthi Working Group comprises of all the administrative and support functions of the Collective. It encompasses fund raising, financial management; Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME); communication, documentation, reporting; legal compliance, hospitality and logistics; office maintenance as well as repairs and construction.

This was the first year in which the financial management was handled by an all-women team led by Ms. Zabeera Khanam, the Finance Manager. The team did a commendable job in ensuring that the financial systems were strictly adhered to. The Working Group faced a few difficulties due to a longer than expected vacancy for the post of Coordinator – Administration. The PME systems were improved with consultancy support from Mr. Vijay Krishna. All the reporting templates were put in place in line with the respective programme and project objectives, facilitating an effective monthly reporting mechanism. The communication and fund raising activities were taken forward with consultancy support from Mr. Ashok Kumar Ganguly, who ensured that several funding proposals were submitted on time besides handling the Collective's social media.

A Guided Self Evaluation of nine partner Cooperatives was conducted by Mr. Haritha Sarma and Dr. Anuradha Prasad. This enabled the Collective to take stock of their performance, assess institutional strengths and weaknesses, and identify Human Resource Development and institutional strengthening needs of the Cooperatives. The exercise also provided valuable insights into the operational strategy of the Collective. Their report was shared and discussed with all the Working Groups as well as the Cooperatives’ Directors for further follow-up.

The Sruthi Working Group has identified the setting of a fully computerised PME system, completing re-envisioning exercise, and updating the Governance Manual, as the key priorities for the coming year.

Consultancies

Mr. Haritha Sarma & Dr. Anuradha Prasad
Focus: Staff Performance Appraisal, Guided Self Evaluation of MACS

Ms. Sayonika Sengupta
Focus: academic quality, student assessment and teacher training

Mr. Vijay Krishna
Focus: establishing a Management Information System for the Collective

Mr. Ashok Kumar Ganguly
Focus: Communications and Programme Development

Internships

Mr. Naren Srinivasan
Wageningen University, The Netherlands
Focus: preparation of a draft Management Plan for the KCCA

Ms. Sandra Castro
Willy Brandt School of Public Policy at the University of Erfurt, Germany
Focus: research on fauna of Timbaktu and surrounding areas

Mr. Blake Suzor
University of Queensland, Australia
Focus: documentation support

VIII. Organisational Information

Managing Committee

C.K ‘Bablu’ Ganguly
Secretary

Mary Vattamattam
Chairperson

John D’Souza
Treasurer

Jayapadma RV
Garima Bhatia
Annapurna Mamidipudi
Pradeep Esteves

Steering Committee

Mr. V. Manikandan (Convenor)  Mr. A. Chennakesavulu
Ms. Mary Vattamattam  Mr. Ramesh Kumar
Mr. C.K. Ganguly  Mr. Siddharth Rao
Ms. Zabeera Khanam  Mr. K. Sannappaiah
Mr. P. Narasimha Murthy  Mr. T. Ramanjineyulu

Legal Status

Registered under Societies Registration Act (Act XXI, 1860) on November 14, 1990. Registration No: 546/90-91

FCRA Registration: No. 094420621 dated 03.01.1994; renewed on 01.11.2016

Exempted from Income Tax as per Section 80G of IT Act (1961). Registrations: DIT (E) BLR/80G (R)/590/AAATT760G/ITO (E) -2)/Vol 2009-10

Bankers

Canara Bank (Trinity Circle Branch)  Canara Bank (Chennakeshappalli) Branch
MG Road, Bangalore - 560001  Chennakeshappalli, Ananthapuramu District - 515101

Auditors

A.R. Rao & Rajan (Chartered Accountants)
186/A, 1st Floor, Venkatarama Iyengar Street, Seshadripuram, Bangalore 560020
IX. Our Donors

Our sincere thanks to the institutions and individuals who supported our work in 2016-17.

Institutions

Brot für die Welt

Bread for the World (BfW) - Protestant Development Service is the global development agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany. BfW supports our work in the Dhariani, Gramasiri, Enterprise Development, and Kalpavalli programmes, as well as a part of the Swasakthi programme.

Asha for Education

Asha for Education is a volunteer-driven, non-profit organisation based in the USA. Three chapters of the organization - New York, London, and Bangalore, have been key supporters of the Nature School and the CRC over the past several years.

KADOORIE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The Kadoorie Charitable Foundation (KCF) is a philanthropic trust setup by the Kadoorie family in Hong Kong. KCF supports our work on enhancing the rights and entitlements of Persons with Disabilities.

SPA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

SPA Education Foundation serves both as the holding company of Shirish Patel and Associates or SPA (a civil engineering company based in Mumbai) and as a trust which promotes improvement of primary education and healthcare in rural areas. SPA Education Foundation provides funding to the Nature School.

ION FOUNDATION

Ion Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Ion Exchange Limited, the water and environment management company. The foundation’s CSR activities include education, health care, the provision of drinking water, and environment protection. Ion Foundation provides funding to the Nature School.

Individuals

Anand Nair
Helga Fink
Sricharan
Bizeth Banerjee
Julia Chartic
Sunitha Abraham
Dorothea Heidorn
Madhu Konakanachi
Singham
Gerhard Salzmaan
Shibani Ganguly
Susanne Fink
Goutham
Sigrid Paulussen

X. Financial Information

Salaries of Timbaktu Panchayat Members 2016-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary in Rupees</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Below 10,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 to 20,000</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 to 30,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000 to 40,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,000 and above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Timbaktu Collective: Annual Report 2016-17
Life, we celebrate you.