

ANISHA'S RURAL PROJECT: A BRIEF REPORT ON ITS ACTIVITIES (March 2006)
From Valli Krishnaswamy, Director

LOCATION: Kollegala Taluk, Chamarajnar District, Karnataka State, India

Anisha is now working in several nearby slums in Bangalore city, and recently began work on a new project in the distant rural setting of Kollegala Taluk, Chamarajnar District in the South of Karnataka.

The problems there are similar in many ways, but are specific to the different conditions found in this poverty-stricken agricultural area. Most people live by farming on small plots of land three months of the year. These farms are almost entirely dependent upon rainfall, and most farmers actually earn less than they spend on these plots.

As a result, they have to work on other farms the rest of the year to survive on very low wages, thus pushing the small and marginal farmers to give up agriculture and migrate to urban areas as wage laborers. The challenge is to enhance agriculture productivity in rain fed regions and ensure food security.

Recently Anisha had several interactive meetings with the farmers of 20 villages belonging to one Grama Panchayat. There was very good response from the farmers for alternative methods of farming. Most of the small and marginal farmers are not cultivating their land due to lack of rain and increase in the cost of inputs. So Anisha started its work to implement organic farming and environmental issues this year. Anisha is working with farmers, village panchayat members, and youth and school children.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Organic and Natural Farming:
 - Education in sustainable organic and natural methods of farming for these farmers and laborers to increase yields, create a healthy environment, improve produce quality, and lessen dependence upon unpredictable rains
 - Teaching how to identify, conserve, multiply and distribute produce
 - Use of traditional varieties of various seeds (millets and other cereals, beans, vegetables and fruits, etc.)
 - Bio-intensive kitchen gardening activities for families of farmers
 - Organize self-help groups for both men and women.
 - Employment-generation activities for families of small and marginal farmers
2. Research Studies:
 - Conducting research on the impact of insecticides on the health of women agricultural laborers in the fields of cotton, rice paddies, and sugarcane crops
3. Health Education:
 - Providing basic healthcare and education to children
4. Awareness education for students and youth towards conserving natural resources
5. Food and Consumer Rights:
 - Issues related to food adulteration and activities towards food safety

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

1. Mr. Vasu, a specialist in organic farming for 16 years, is working with small landholding farmers under rain fed conditions. He is also involved in a campaign against Genetically Engineered Food crops. He has done his Degree and Bachelor's of Law. (Consultant)
2. Mr. Nagaraj has 15 years experience in rural development and community organization and human rights. He has done his Master's Degree in Sociology. (Paid Staff – Full time)
3. Valli has 12 years experience in the development field. She has done her Master's Degree in Sociology, Bachelors of Law and Diploma in Personnel Management and Industrial Relation. (Non-paid staff)
4. Mr. James, a school teacher (Volunteer)
5. Mr. Joseph, a farmer (Volunteer)