Amma’s Dream

“Everyone in the world should be able to sleep without fear, at least for one night. Everyone should be able to eat to his fill, at least for one day. There should be at least one day when hospitals see no one admitted due to violence. By doing selfless service one day, everyone should help the poor and needy. It is Amma’s prayer that at least this small dream be realized.”
Agriculture & Environment
Goal: To increase agricultural yield with a focus on food production to ensure food security and economic empowerment by promoting cash crops, cow breeding.

Activities:
- Encourage agricultural practices based on soil/water survey with a focus on immediate food security.
- Permaculture and food forest (fruit bearing trees, kitchen garden) cash crops, herbal plantations.
- Implement rainwater harvesting techniques to improve ground water table, tree plantation.
- Zero waste village in connection to disease prevention (composting, waste segregation and recycling).
- Use of indigenous inputs, fertilizers eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers and harmful pesticides.
- Dairy farming, cow breeding to reduce malnutrition and immediate economic empowerment.

Skills Development
Goal: To improve employability of village youth in industry, and thus enhance the earning potential of the self-employed/village industry.

Activities:
- Identify skills in demand in the local market and provide vocational training.
- Support village-based industry by training; enhance skills to improve product quality to ensure better marketability and price.

Sustained Livelihood
Goal: Transition from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture to ensure sustainability of project gains.

Activities:
- Empowerment through setting up of business groups (self-help groups), milk co-operatives and farmers clubs.
- Facilitate marketing of village produce to get remunerative price for farmers.
- Facilitate employment through self-employment schemes and industry placements.

Infrastructure & Innovations
Goal: To increase access to education, modern health facilities and hygiene standards; to increase understanding of information technology; and to improve the general quality of community life to reduce migration to cities.

Activities:
- Building and rehabilitating all-weather roads, street lighting and drainage system.
- Building homes for the poor.
- Building sanitation facilities.
- Setting up community centre, school, library, health centre, Amrita Village Resource Centre.
- Setting up Yoga and Meditation centre.

Self-empowerment
Goal: To inculcate a value system in community members; to enhance their self-esteem and their quality of life by bringing them closer to Indian culture and traditions through various programs.

Activities:
- Conduct yoga and meditations classes.
- Promote cultural awareness workshops and community festival participation.
- Organize village-level sports events.
- Conduct personality development classes, as well as children's and youth camps.
- Set up libraries.
“There is more to life than the bright lights of the big cities. There are also rural villages and agricultural communities. It is the people who live there who produce the fruit, vegetables and grains that feed the entire world. Without them how can we continue to exist? Amma’s humble suggestion is that we spend time in such communities. We should interact with them and listen to their problems. This will provide us with insight into aspects of life that otherwise would remain concealed to us.”

—Amma

The Village

It is true that India lives in its villages. According to the 2011 India census, about 70% of India’s population (around 833.1 million people) live in 640,867 different villages, which is the largest rural population in the world. There are more than 550 million youth (below 35 years) in India today, and of this number, 500 million youth live in rural areas. Out of India’s BPL (below-poverty line) population of about 300 million, 80% live in villages.

In spite of India’s impressive economic growth, the fact remains that her Human Development Index (HDI) is low. One of the reasons for this is the poor quality of schools and hospitals or their absence in villages. The problems of poverty, malnutrition among children, and the lack of educational facilities are acute in villages. In addition, there are problems of under-employment and unemployment among youth. We need to create a sustainable development model that is unique to each adopted village to ensure holistic and integrated development.

Over the years, during Her annual Indian tours, Amma has personally listened to the problems of millions of poor villagers. In fact, all the humanitarian activities of the Mata Amritanandamayi Math (MAM) — whether building homes for the homeless, or distributing pensions to destitute widows — have been the direct outcome of stories of suffering Amma has heard from the poor throughout the length and breadth of India.

Over the last 30 years, MAM has gradually gained the expertise and experience needed to develop a nationwide infrastructure that can help to eradicate poverty and illiteracy, promote cleanliness and hygiene, and develop a self-reliant economy. On the auspicious occasion of Amma’s 60th birthday, MAM will launch the Amrita Self-Reliant Village Program, i.e. Amrita SeRVE. In many ways, it marks the culmination of MAM’s charitable humanitarian mission thus far.
**Humanitarian Initiatives**
From the first humanitarian program that Amrita launched in India, to the latest, all have been pieces in a huge jigsaw aimed at the material and spiritual overhaul, rehabilitation and uplift of India and Indians, especially the poor and needy. The MAM’s extensive experience and expertise will directly help in the AmritaSeRVe project thus:

- Ensure each village has a proper home and that villages have school buildings, street lights, community halls and proper drainage through MAM’s Amrita Kuteeram Free-Housing Project.
- Start a free vocational-training institute centred around Computerized Vocational & Education Training (CVET) and Life-Enrichment Education (LIE) systems, developed and managed by MAM’s AMMACHI Labs.
- Establish basic health facilities, clinics and trained health-workers via MAM’s AIMS Hospital, and ensure basic nutrition for children.
- Keep children in school until the 12th standard through MAM’s Vidyamritam scholarship program.
- Provide two hours of after-school tutoring through tablet-based programs, as well as tablet-based literacy training for adults with a goal of 100 percent literacy in villagers under the age of 60.
- Help women start self-help groups through MAM’s Amrita SREE program.
- Provide pensions to widows and the disabled through MAM’s Amrita Nidhi pension-for-life program.
- Set up zero-waste production through recycling under MAM’s Amala Bharatam Campaign.
- Increase trees in each village through MAM’s GreenFriends Afforestation Program.
- Establish proper nutrition and food supply by teaching villagers to grow their own organic vegetables through MAM’s Haritamritam Program.
- Ensure safe drinking-water supply and increase ground-water levels through rainwater harvesting.
- Impart healthy lifestyles through MAM’s Amrita Yoga and Integrated Amrita Meditation (IAM) Technique.
- Reduce alcohol and tobacco abuse through awareness camps.

**New Tools & Technologies in Village Development**
Alongside proven interventions, AmritaSeRVe will introduce new solutions to persistent development challenges. Leveraging on innovative tools and technologies developed by Amrita University, AmritaSeRVe will serve as an incubator for new approaches to ending poverty. Some of these innovations are summarized below.

**Tutoring through tablet-based programs:**
With the goal of supporting the educational needs of rural children so that they continue going to schools, MAM proposed the implementation of two hours of after-school tutoring in adopted villages using tablets to establish skills in basic literacy, language learning, science and mathematics. Developed by Amrita University’s R&D department, the unique tablet-based multimedia learning program takes into account the learning needs of multi-grade rural students and is exclusively designed for the tablet format, taking into considering its screen size and low processing power. The learning program is designed to work where there is little or no Internet connectivity. There will be a similar tablet-based adult-education program to promote literacy in adults.
A-VIEW:
A-VIEW has been specially designed for online classes, faculty training and online meetings. The system enables online education and meetings using various communication modules like audio/video, Whiteboard collaboration, content sharing and other advanced features. It addresses the issue of shortage of qualified teachers.

Millions of students want to learn, but are not fortunate enough to have well-qualified teachers to train them. With A-VIEW, one good teacher can teach tens of thousands of students simultaneously at different locations all over India, as though in person.

Clean Energy Initiative:
In a landmark joint project between the Amrita Centre for Nano-sciences & Molecular Medicine and Amrita University's School of Engineering in Amritapuri, MAM has developed integrated nano-material-developed solar cells and batteries that are 500 times more efficient than existing technology and have much larger power densities. Ultimately, this technology will be used to ensure that tablets are rechargeable via solar power.

In addition, much of the research spearheaded by Amrita University in areas such as disaster management, rural electrification using micro-grids, monitoring of water quality using wireless sensor networks, and wearable wireless devices for monitoring remote patients can promote a higher quality of life in Indian villages.

Transition to Full Local Ownership
Critical to the success of AmritaSeRVe is the tenet that village communities must be empowered to become the driving force of their own development. They are expected to contribute a substantial amount of their time, skills and resources. The approach is integrated and can be scaled up, depending on the results of interventions made in the first few years.

The communities will be deeply involved in making and implementing decisions. For example, community members will identify and evaluate possible solutions supported by the project officials and experts. Together, they will create a package of village-specific solutions deemed most appropriate and cost-effective, as well as produce a village action plan for implementing and managing these solutions.

The social and physical infrastructure put in place during the project stage—in the form of self-help groups, health facilities, schools, water systems and agricultural innovations—shall continue to function and improve past the life of the project, because AmritaSeRVe is essentially a village development program designed and driven by villagers themselves, based on local conditions. The MAM's role will be that of a mentor.

Towards Self-reliance
In the attempt to attain sustainable growth, the project tests a number of hypotheses. By raising productivity, diversifying into high-value crops and promoting off-farm employment, incomes will rise in the villages. Higher incomes will also raise household savings, thus accelerating economic diversification and household investments in human capital. The resulting economic growth will reduce poverty. Over time, these communities will end their dependency on outside assistance, thereby ensuring sustainability.

Critical to the sustainability of AmritaSeRVe is the need to empower the entire community, including women and other vulnerable groups, by building local technical, administrative and entrepreneurial capacity. The project will also create amenities like roads, health centres, schools and community halls that will enable the village not only to maintain the gains made during the project but also to move ahead with further development.