



AMRITA
SeRve
SELF RELIANT VILLAGE

AMRITA SERVE
SNAPSHOT 2015



OUR VILLAGE CLUSTERS

Amrita SeRVe has identified clusters in 27 states and is now actively working in 21 states of India.

In every state, there is a cluster of 3-5 adjoining villages, with the work being focused first on 1 village within that cluster.

Our teams are serving and learning....

Amma is guiding.



AMRITA SeRVE SNAPSHOT 2015

Om Amriteshwaryai Namah! The **Amrita SeRVE** (Self Reliant Villages) project was started in September 2013 during Amma's 60th birthday celebrations to bring about sustainable development in village clusters all over the nation. Two years have elapsed. Change is beginning to be seen.

Amrita SeRVE is now working in 21 states all over India. Activities are ongoing

in the areas of Health, Education, Water and Sanitation, Agriculture, Eco-Friendly Infrastructure, Income Generation and Self-Empowerment.

This report presents a brief snapshot of the activities undertaken and the impact on rural communities. The journey has started. For our villages to become truly self-reliant, change has to be driven by the villagers themselves. And that is beginning to happen.



HIGHLIGHTS





Harirampura in Rajasthan was formerly the hamlet of a larger village. After the Amrita SeRVe team started working here, there were rapid changes. This former hamlet obtained the status of a revenue village in December 2014. Regular medical clinics were initiated, and for the first time after India's independence, the villagers were able to consult with a doctor in their village itself. In order to make this happen, the Amrita SeRVe team took the help of the State Government's Mobile Medical Service Unit.

The Amrita SeRVe team worked with the village school where only one

of the three classrooms was being used, because two others leaked. When repair work was completed in May 2015, the Block Elementary Education Officer visited the school. Toilets were also made functional and fans were installed. Our team distributed school uniforms to the children. School children have undertaken to teach their uneducated mothers, thus helping with adult literacy efforts.

Devgain in Jharkhand is home to nearly 500 people, many of whom met Amma when she visited Ranchi in 2006. Homes were built for five of the poorest families in the village. The village had no toilets; eight toilets



were built. Amrita Nidhi pensions were given to 59 people, including many widows, old and destitute people. Vidyamritam scholarships were given to 112 school-going children. The Block Development Officer is regularly consulted for making village development plans.

Drip irrigation systems were installed for farmers' groups, enabling them to grow a second crop leading to better incomes. 450 saplings of guava, lemon, mango, neem and custard apple were distributed. Planting trees is an activity the Amrita SeRve team wants to promote in all villages. The goal is to plant not merely hundreds of trees,

but hundreds of thousands over the next few years. Trees are powerful allies in our fight against global climate change; they also help regulate the microclimate of the village.

Kalinagar in West Bengal has no medical facilities. The nearest medical center is 3 km away. The Amrita SeRve team has initiated regular homeopathic clinics in the village. Women in the village have undergone training in beautician techniques. During festivals and marriages in neighboring villages also, these women are now able to find gainful employment. Tailoring classes have also been organized for women in the village.



The Ayudh group in this village consists of young men and women who are beginning to take responsibility for the development of their own village. One of the first tasks that the group is focusing on, is cleanliness. Regular Amala Bharatam Cleanup Drives are being conducted. The focus is not only on clean surroundings but also proper disposal of the waste. Waste segregation and recycling is being emphasized.

Gudipati Cheruvu in Andhra is a tribal village with around 200 families. When Amrita University students spent about two weeks in the village as part of their rural internship program, they

helped all villagers apply for Aadhaar cards, ration cards and bank accounts. As a result, the village Sarpanch was able to use a government scheme called Deepam to get approval for 10 free gas connections for deserving households in the village.

In most villages in India, there are temples that honor village deities. In poorer villages, which lack adequate resources, temples are often in a state of disrepair. In the past, village temples were focal points of learning and other developmental activities. As a first step to strengthening local traditions, the Amrita SeRVE team is undertaking repairs of village temples.



In this village, the temple for the local Satyamma deity in this village was repaired.

A borewell was dug in Komalikudy village in Kerala and a water distribution system was instituted in May 2015 that brought much relief to the villagers.

It is estimated that women worldwide spend an estimated 40 billion hours per year fetching water for household use. Women in Komalikudy also were walking to the river to fetch water; now they get water from a tap near their homes.

The villagers themselves selected 12 locations in the village where common taps were installed.

Many adult members of the rural community regularly drink alcohol. Awareness programs were conducted and children were educated so that they can lead the fight against alcohol in their own communities. At the Bison Valley Higher Secondary School in this village, in August 2015, children from the tribal children communities pledged that they would do all they could to end in this menace in their community.



When the Amrita SeRVE team started working in the village of Ransai in Maharashtra, it found that most children would discontinue their studies after Standard X. Most boys would get married by the age of 18 and girls by the age of 16. Today, many young boys and girls are committed to studying further in the village. The number of drop-outs has greatly reduced. The credit for this transformation belongs to a retired couple serving selflessly in the village.

Sarai Nuruddinpur in Uttar Pradesh celebrated the Janmastami festival in 2015 in great style. The entire village came together to take part in the festivities. The celebrations were organized by a team of two Amrita SeRVE Fellows. Celebrating festivals together is the first step in bringing about a sense of unity in the village. In this village and many others, Amrita SeRVE village development committees are taking the lead in developmental efforts. Self-reliant groups of women and youth are driving change.



FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM





Amma would like to offer a suggestion that She feels would be helpful for our society. At least one child from every family must first serve in rural areas for one year after graduation.

- Amma

The Amrita SeRVe Fellowship Program was begun in May 2015, to give an opportunity to our youth to live among the poor, understand the problems they face and find solutions to help them.

Fellows are trained to be facilitators (instead of executors) of change. They bring the community together and help develop the plan and timeline of developmental activities according to villagers' priorities.

Fellows come from different walks of life. They may be graduating students, former corporate professionals, doctors, teachers,

yoga teachers or nurses. Although their qualifications or former work experience are a great asset in village development work, what really distinguishes most Fellows is a deep desire and the heart to serve.

At the beginning of each Fellowship term, Fellows come together for training in Amritapuri. The training emphasizes organic agriculture, agro-forestry, watershed management, kitchen gardens and waste management. Through learning about these, Fellows gain the opportunity to deeply engage with the most pressing needs of the world and India today.

Along with development work, Fellows are encouraged to focus on spiritual practices. Training is provided in Amrita Yoga and meditation. Fellows are encouraged to equip themselves to lead satsang and bhajan sessions in the villages.



GLIMPSES





HEALTH: Clinics and Awareness Campaigns

AmritaSeRVe conducts free and ongoing health clinics in several states. The Amrita Swasthya Mit health workers trained at the Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences are bringing awareness about prevention and helping with early diagnosis of diseases in our villages.



HEALTH: Personal Hygiene

Children are learning to bathe regularly, cut their nails, wash hands frequently and otherwise remain clean. Teenage girls are being introduced to reusable sanitary napkins even as they learn the importance of menstrual hygiene.



HEALTH: Smokeless Chulhas

WHO estimates that 4.3 million people die every year from inhaling smoke during cooking. That is more than succumb to AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Using local resources, the Amrita SeRVe team is beginning to make improved cook stoves in our villages.



EDUCATION: Evening Tuition

A person might live until 80 or 90, but Amma teaches us that he will learn the most important lessons in life as a child before the age of 10. Amrita SeRVe is working to ensure that children in all our villages begin to receive quality education. Adult literacy programs are also happening.



EDUCATION: Tablet Learning

Amma teaches that the real goal of education is not to create people who can understand only the language of machines. Children in our villages are learning important lessons for life through the use of modern technology.



EDUCATION: Live-in-Labs

As per Amma's suggestion, Amrita University is organizing Live-in-Labs rural internships for students from Amrita University. Internships are also being organized for students from leading international universities.



WATER & SANITATION: Drinking Water

In Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan, impoverished rural communities were provided with easy access to piped water near their homes. In Kerala, the piped water supply is powered by a hydro power source implemented by the Amrita SeRVe team.



WATER & SANITATION: Toilet Construction

42% of the world's population lives without a toilet at home. Women groups in the Amrita SeRVe villages are learning to make their own toilets. With their example inspiring the rest of the community, open defecation may end in our villages soon.





WATER & SANITATION: Amala Bharatam

India generates 150 million tons of waste daily. Now in our villages, groups of children and youth are organizing Amala Bharatam Cleanup Drives. Fourth Sunday every month is especially earmarked “Clean Sunday”.



AGRICULTURE: Kitchen Gardens

The Amrita SeRVe team is promoting kitchen gardens in village homes to combat malnutrition. Farmers are also being given awareness about the harm caused by chemical pesticides and fertilizers.



ECO-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE: Solar Power

Rooftop solar panels with integrated battery storage brought much relief to the villagers in Komalikutty in Idukki district in Kerala. A microgrid solution using solar panels was also implemented in Valaramkkundu in Wayanad district in Kerala.



ECO-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE: House Construction

The Amrita Kuteeram project was started in 1998 and in the years passed, tens of thousands of poor people have been given free homes to live in. Now the Amrita Kuteeram team is building homes for the poorest families in our villages, bringing them relief.



ECO-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE: Tree Planting

Amma says that if we plant trees, this planet will become a paradise. A tree is like a house that we construct for Mother Earth. AmritaSeRVe is planting trees in all our villages to green them. Trees also help regulate the micro-climate of the village.



INCOME GENERATION: Traditional Potters

Our village in Uttar Pradesh is home to several families who make an income using the potter's wheel. Their deft fingers give shape to many useful items for household use. Our team is working to help these potters get better incomes through improved products.



INCOME GENERATION: Exhibitions and Sales

There are many artisans of traditional arts and crafts. Their items are beautiful, but often cannot compete with machine-made products. Amrita SeRve is helping them get a fair price. Artisans from Chattisgarh sold their sculptures at Amma's 62nd birthday celebrations in Amritapuri.



INCOME GENERATION: Tailoring

Empowering women's groups to learn a skill through which income generation is possible even from home is one of our goals. Tailoring machines have been distributed and tailoring teachers have been appointed in several Amrita SeRve villages.



SELF EMPOWERMENT: Yoga

International Yoga Day on June 21 was observed in all our villages as visiting students taught simple asanas and encouraged youth and children to make yoga a part of their daily lives. Village youth are being trained in Amritapuri to become yoga teachers.



THE ROAD AHEAD

India has the world's largest rural population. Most villagers live their lives with very small environmental footprints. They can be role models for people from around the world, who are beginning to now understand how their lifestyles and choices are affecting Mother Nature.

The team of the **(CIR) Corporate and Industry Relations Department** at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetam organized student internships for 108 students, faculty and staff members during summer 2015. The teams traveled to the Amrita SeRVe villages across India helping contribute to the developmental work ongoing there.

CREATE at Amrita University works to develop online learning programs including labs for school children. Now the same learning programs are available to children in our villages attending the free after-school tuition centers started by the Amrita SeRVe team in almost all villages around the nation.

Besides getting help to complete school homework and learn English, Science and Mathematics in a fun way, students are also participating in yoga sessions and conducting regular clean-up drives.

Ammachi Labs at Amrita University works in the area of women empowerment. In most Amrita SeRVe villages, staff from Ammachi Labs trained women to themselves build toilets for their homes. India still has the world's largest number of open defecators; in our villages change is now beginning.

Ammachi Labs also trains women from our villages in different trades such as making soap, artificial jewelry and other products from locally available resources.

The Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences provided training to forty village youth to work in their own villages as Swasthye Mitr or health workers. These health workers impart basic awareness to the community in prevention as well as help with early diagnosis of common illnesses.

The Amrita Swasthye Mitr have also built smokeless chulhas in their villages and started kitchen gardens.



TEAM

Amrita University's **Center for Wireless Networks and Applications** and the **School of Engineering** collaborated to bring piped water to impoverished rural communities in our villages in Odhisa and Rajasthan.

Many experts agree that access to piped water brings dramatic improvements in health. Infant mortality declines and children in the community enjoy better physical and cognitive development. The Centre also helped implementation of a hydro power source for the piped water supply in our village in Kerala.

Amrita Technologies launched the online Amrita Store which is beginning to feature products from the Amrita SeRVE villages as well.

The flagship product that was launched during Amma's birthday celebrations in September 2015 was metal art work made by rural artisans trained in our village in Chattisgarh.

Amrita Karshaka developed by the **Amrita Center for Cybersecurity** uses modern technology to help farmers irrigate their farms. This was piloted among farmers in our villages in Tamil Nadu. One of the quickest ways to end rural poverty is to help farmers grow additional crops through proper irrigation.

Amrita Center for Nanosciences has developed a technology that allows for solar panels to be deployed without the need for expensive batteries, since the panel itself features integrated storage. Household lighting systems were piloted by the Center for our village in Kerala.

In the future, youth from our villages will be trained by the Center in order to deploy and maintain these systems in Amrita SeRVE villages across the nation.





Villages are India's foundation—Her very life force—and it is society's responsibility to take care of them. In fact, it is our villages that sustain us by providing us, who live in cities, with the nourishment we need in order to survive. It is time to acknowledge that our villages are our very foundation and move forward with one heart and one mind to protect and serve them.

- Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, Amma



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