A Risk Reaps Rewards
Success with Organic Farming

“We took a chance and tried something different,” explains Rajan, a farmer from the small tribal village of Sadivayal in Tamil Nadu. “The result was selling a new crop for double the price of anything we had grown before. Not only that, but the seeds we planted gave us a double yield.”

A group of 20 marginal farmers came together to form a farmers’ club to grow crops as a team. Working on their own had led to five years of failure. They had faced lack of rainfall and destruction of their fields by wild boar and elephants. Most of the farmers had to become day labourers in the nearby forest.

Then came the big risk.... These farmers decided to grow organic rice. It was the first time anyone in their village had tried for decades, since such practices were abandoned for the use of pesticides and fertilisers. They prepared a field of 35 acres and planted 535 kg of Bhavani Organic Rice.

“At first we were unsure and more than a little tensed,” tells Kaliswami, another member of the farmers’ club. “But once we started to see the first rice sprouts spring from the ground, we knew success was on its way.”

Finally, a harvest of healthy rice began and each member of the farmers’ club made nearly ₹20,000 per acre profit. This success was huge as in previous years, the farmers often still owed money for their loans after harvest. For example, one farmer had a debt of ₹20,000, but thanks to this year’s results, he was able to pay that off and now can move forward.

“We are committed to continuing with organic farming,” says Kaliswami. “It won’t be easy. We know there are challenges. But we have to continue this practice to heal the soil.” For Amrita SeRVe, the next step is to start farmers’ clubs in all of our villages.
By the Numbers
Government of India 2011 Census Data

1,210,854,977
people live in India, the second largest population in the world.

833,748,852
people live in rural India, 69% of the population.

Drinking Water
35% of rural households have drinking water within the premises. In urban areas, it is 71%.

Sanitation
31% of the households in rural India have latrine facilities within the premises. 81% for urban.

Literacy Rates
59% of people said they were literate with a higher percentage for men than women.

Source of Lighting
55% of people reported electricity for home lighting. Solar energy was slim but it is in development.

55% electricity
43% kerosene
0.5% solar
0.5% no access

One Step at a Time
Celebrating every success, no matter how small

When we see the statistics about rural India from the perspective of numbers only, the size can be overwhelming. However, great social change through the ages often goes one step at a time.

Amrita University students visit villages to give tuition. But they say they learn more from the children, because of the good social discipline.

We assist government health workers to give polio drops to children five and under. Hundreds have been vaccinated and work is ongoing.

Our village coordinators visit every household on a regular basis to listen to the villagers’ needs as well as ideas. Everyone must be heard.

Women in our self help groups in Odisha and Bihar have received goats. The milk is a good source of income and is very healthy for small children.

We are conducting medical clinics to bring doctors, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to places where health access is limited.

Amrita University students visit villages to give tuition. But they say they learn more from the children, because of the good social discipline.

We assist government health workers to give polio drops to children five and under. Hundreds have been vaccinated and work is ongoing.

Our village coordinators visit every household on a regular basis to listen to the villagers’ needs as well as ideas. Everyone must be heard.

Women in our self help groups in Odisha and Bihar have received goats. The milk is a good source of income and is very healthy for small children.

We are conducting medical clinics to bring doctors, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to places where health access is limited.

Amrita University students visit villages to give tuition. But they say they learn more from the children, because of the good social discipline.

We assist government health workers to give polio drops to children five and under. Hundreds have been vaccinated and work is ongoing.

Our village coordinators visit every household on a regular basis to listen to the villagers’ needs as well as ideas. Everyone must be heard.

Women in our self help groups in Odisha and Bihar have received goats. The milk is a good source of income and is very healthy for small children.

We are conducting medical clinics to bring doctors, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to places where health access is limited.

Amrita University students visit villages to give tuition. But they say they learn more from the children, because of the good social discipline.

We assist government health workers to give polio drops to children five and under. Hundreds have been vaccinated and work is ongoing.

Our village coordinators visit every household on a regular basis to listen to the villagers’ needs as well as ideas. Everyone must be heard.

Women in our self help groups in Odisha and Bihar have received goats. The milk is a good source of income and is very healthy for small children.

We are conducting medical clinics to bring doctors, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to places where health access is limited.

Amrita University students visit villages to give tuition. But they say they learn more from the children, because of the good social discipline.

We assist government health workers to give polio drops to children five and under. Hundreds have been vaccinated and work is ongoing.

Our village coordinators visit every household on a regular basis to listen to the villagers’ needs as well as ideas. Everyone must be heard.

Women in our self help groups in Odisha and Bihar have received goats. The milk is a good source of income and is very healthy for small children.

We are conducting medical clinics to bring doctors, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to places where health access is limited.

Amrita University students visit villages to give tuition. But they say they learn more from the children, because of the good social discipline.

We assist government health workers to give polio drops to children five and under. Hundreds have been vaccinated and work is ongoing.

Our village coordinators visit every household on a regular basis to listen to the villagers’ needs as well as ideas. Everyone must be heard.

Women in our self help groups in Odisha and Bihar have received goats. The milk is a good source of income and is very healthy for small children.

We are conducting medical clinics to bring doctors, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to places where health access is limited.
Our work is oriented towards preventive measures and home remedies as well as continuous health education.

We give the villagers awareness about their actions, so every day they can realise what is missing. This can directly increase the curve of their health status.

Ultimately, it can bring the changes needed so all in the community will have better health.

-Brahmacharini Swati
Amrita SeRVe Health Coordinator

**AN ESSENTIAL NEED**

**Community Health Workers**

The importance of community health in India’s villages is clearly demonstrated by how Amrita SeRVe trains one woman from each place to become a health worker. The women focus on teaching good health practices before ailments can take their toll.

The health workers visit homes daily to gather information from families about their health histories and needs. Their work includes things like checking blood pressure, sugar levels, and haemoglobin on a regular basis. There is an emphasis on children and pregnant women.

Health workers help villagers arrange ways to see the doctor when it is necessary, as in many villages, the nearest doctor is hours away.

Another way the health workers maintain communication is to connect with the village self help groups. One woman from each SHG is made the health leader for that group.

She then becomes a contact person for the health worker to be able to stay aware of what is happening with people’s health throughout the village.

Villagers are given family health cards to better track their health histories and have info ready for health professionals.
In today's world, people experience two types of poverty: the poverty caused by lack of food, clothing and shelter, and the poverty caused by lack of love and compassion.

Of these two, the second type needs to be considered first because if we have love and compassion in our hearts, then we will wholeheartedly serve those who suffer from lack of food, clothing and shelter.

- Amma
Stitching to Empower
Reusable cloth pads are a new source of income

In our world at this time, something unique is beginning to unfold. The age-old practices of honouring the woman’s body as divine are joining together with the modern need to protect the environment.

One of the remedies that has come about is reusable cloth menstrual pads, as disposable plastic pads are a huge pollutant. With a high potential for income generation, we have started training women in our villages how to produce the pads so they support the environment and village income.

The pads have been given the brand name Saukhyam—Sanskrit for happiness and well-being—and have many advantages. They are good for health because the cotton allows skin to breathe. They are good for wallets because they can be used over and over again for several years. They are good for the environment because they are eco-friendly. Finally, they are good for our village women because they are creating income and self-empowerment. Basically, it’s a win-win situation for all.

To find out more, contact saukhyampads@gmail.com

Creativity Manifests
Self help groups find new ways to earn

Our self-help groups (SHGs) across India join together to find new and creative ways to earn. The possibilities are endless when one is given the freedom to think in new ways...

Best Innovative Product
The National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) awarded us the title Best Innovative Product for the reusable cloth pads because they support the environment and village income.

In Sarai Nuruddinpur, Uttar Pradesh, they are experimenting with the crochet of bags and weaving of baskets—and orders have soared.

Mushroom cultivation has started in Guptapada, Odisha. Investment per bed is ₹30 and the mushrooms are sold at ₹50-60 per kg.

In Ransai, Maharashtra, women are selling handmade spices made at home. During festivals and special occasions, there is a huge demand.

In Kalinagar, West Bengal, women are upcycling used paper to make bags. Something that was waste now has a new purpose.

Beautiful handmade jhumka are bringing success to women in Sadivayil, Tamil Nadu. High sales at a nearby festival resulted in backorders.

Women in Ransai, Maharashtra are selling handmade spices made at home. During festivals and special occasions, there is a huge demand.

In Dunda, Uttarakhand, women are upcycling used paper to make bags. Something that was waste now has a new purpose.
We set out to determine which villages were in deepest need of access to clean and safe drinking water. A team of engineers from the Civil Engineering Department of Amrita University also worked with the villagers to find solutions. After consultations with local government officials, the Amrita Centre for Wireless Networks and Applications got to work.

In Dunda, Uttarakhand there were problems in the water distribution system, so not everyone in the village could easily access drinking water. The team built new buffer tanks at the source and the pipe system was modified to reduce leakage.

In Gudipati Cheruvu, Andhra Pradesh the dry climate often means no groundwater recharge. The team built a new distribution system with one main tank and eight small ones. There are borewells connected to the network and thirty taps throughout the village.

In Ratanpur, Bihar there was only one working handpump. Four new handpumps were installed and the existing two maintained. Now the whole village has easy access to clean and healthy water.

Over the last years, we have also installed new water systems in Kerala, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Odisha and Maharashtra.

We are teaching the steps of proper and regular self-cleanliness, especially in schools. Diarrhoea remains a leading killer of young children in rural India, 10% of those under five years old according to UNICEF numbers from 2015.
Real strength should come from within. If we are going to rely only on the external, there is no stability. In the olden days, the people of India’s villages knew their inner strength. They were also completely in tune with Nature which lead to a full harmony of being.

With the goal of returning to these traditions in mind, it was in 2013 at Amma’s 60th birthday celebrations that she launched Amrita SeRVe - Self Reliant Village.

It is our villages that sustain us by providing those who live in cities with the nourishment needed in order to survive. However, today, we are just exploiting villages and casting them aside. 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.

– Amma

So, in actual fact, this is a team effort. Both rural and urban people provide for each other. Amrita SeRVe’s work focuses on joining with India’s villagers so that they can understand their inner strength and from that foundation, achieve true self-reliance once again.

For many millennia, a completely self-reliant village was at the centre of life in India. A vibrant culture that evolved over thousands of years guided how to lead prosperous lives from all aspects—physically, mentally and spiritually. To revive this tradition would not only benefit the villagers, but also be a beacon of strength and union around the world.

Amrita SeRVe has projects underway in 21 states across India. Our priorities are health, water & sanitation, education, agriculture, income generation, eco-friendly infrastructure and self empowerment.
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 for at least one day, everyone should help the poor and needy. It is Amma’s prayer that at least this small dream be realised.

- Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi