

## **India**

### **Sostegno a Missionari Salesiani per aiuto a Bambini di strada**

#### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN JAWHAR AND MOKHADA BLOCKS**

##### **CONTEXT**

The indigenous or tribal people of India are a community that is caught in the midst of rapid change.

As development projects reach remote rural areas and try to forcefully integrate the tribes into the structures of dominant society, their own knowledge and skills are often sidelined.

At the same time, their lack of access to the most crucial resources necessary to survive in mainstream society—education and sustainable livelihoods—means that they are now finding themselves pushed into a strange new world with few means of coping with it.

##### **BACKGROUND**

###### ***Project Area***

The project area covers Jawhar and Mokhada, two blocks of Thane district, Maharashtra.

The population of both these blocks largely comprises indigenous people, whose main occupation is subsistence agriculture.

These blocks have poverty rates that are much higher than the state average-while the general poverty rate in Maharashtra is 45.08%, that of Jawhar is 70.88% and that of Mokhada is 66.27%.

The literacy levels for these areas are 36.02% for Jawhar and 41.47% for Mokhada (2001 Census of India). The indigenous people of this area include the Warli, Kokna, Thakur, Mahadeo Koli, Malhar Koli, Dhor Koli and Katkari tribes.

###### ***Social Background***

The tribal people of this area have followed a community-centred lifestyle for generations, and the approval or sanction of the community is a powerful influence even on personal and family matters.

This distinctive feature of their lifestyle has been recognized by the State, which has made special provisions for the governance of these areas.

For example, the assembly of villagers (Gram Sabha) has the right to determine who the beneficiaries of government schemes will be, it has the right to prevent land alienation and restore land to the tribal population, etc.

However, the people are not aware that they have these rights and so, they cannot claim them.

At the same time, the influence of non-tribal political leaders is so strong that the tribal population does not dare to oppose them.

Therefore, the people have no voice in their local institutions and no control over the issues that affect them.

### **Economic Background**

The people of this area have moved away from their traditional non-monetary system and adopted the rules of the conventional money economy.

However, they have not yet made the mental shift demanded by this transition.

They find it difficult to grasp the concept of 'saving', which is alien to many of them, and so they tend to spend their earnings immediately.

This in turn creates the misconception that tribal's are wasteful and are not credit worthy.

At the same time, the livelihood options that they have leave them with little chance to save, even if they want to.

Since they practice subsistence agriculture and do not sell the yield, they can earn money only by selling forest produce or by working as wage labourers.

This shortage of ready cash means that they cannot cope with emergencies such as illness and crop failure.

Therefore, every year, after the agricultural season, large numbers of people migrate to nearby towns and cities in search of work.

### **Educational Background**

The economic situation of the people of this area obstructs their access to education. When families migrate for work, the children's school year is interrupted.

Consequently, they fall behind in their studies or drop out of school.

Since they cannot complete their education, they in turn have the same limited livelihood options when they become adults and are also likely to become migrant labourers.

The children who do remain in their villages throughout the year face a different set of problems. On an average, every family has 4 to 5 children; while the parents are at work, the responsibility of looking after the younger children is assumed by the older siblings.

Many children are also involved in grazing of livestock, fetching water and running household chores.

Because of all these duties, they are either not enrolled in school or have very irregular attendance.

The school system in these areas fails to address the specific needs of tribal children.

Although almost every village has a primary school, the number of teachers is inadequate.

Therefore, the schools follow a multi-grade system in which one or teachers take multiple classes simultaneously. Hence, the children do not receive sufficient attention and are distracted by the lessons being taught to other classes.

Further, since the area itself is remote and transport is unreliable, the teachers do not come to school and take classes regularly.

Language is another problem for children in these areas, as their tribal dialects differ from the State language, Marathi, which is the medium of instruction in school.

Therefore, they speak one language at home but have to use another at school. As a result, even bright students find it difficult to cope with their studies.

To address the problems of migration and a high dropout rate, the State has set up residential schools (known as *ashram shaalas*) in these tribal areas.

In these schools, the children attend classes up to standard 10, and are also provided with a place to stay, uniforms, books, etc.

Nevertheless, the children still tend to find certain subjects, especially English, Maths and Science, too difficult to understand.

Therefore, they tend to fall behind in their studies once they enter higher classes.

## **INTERVENTIONS**

At present, the organisation is engaged in education and community organisation work in Jawahar and Mokhada blocks.

### ***Current Interventions***

#### **1. Education**

To enhance the quality of education available to children in the village, the organisation Divayadaan (where I teach) is currently working with 15 State run residential schools by conducting support classes for students in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standards.

In this intervention, the children are given daily tuitions in maths and science by teachers who speak their language and can simplify concepts to help the children understand.

The classes also give the students the opportunity to clarify any doubts they may have and receive help with their projects and assignments.

The students also attend English classes on weekends.

Since English is a language that is completely alien to them, and since most of the teachers in the residential schools are also not fluent in English themselves, the students generally memorise the lessons in their textbooks and do not learn to speak or understand the language.

In the support classes, however, they use English to play games, put up skits and organise other entertaining activities.

Consequently, they are able to overcome their fear of learning the language and can understand how to use it in everyday situations.

In addition to academic support, the classes help the children develop an interest in learning and the confidence to continue their studies after they finish secondary school. The students are also given guidance in choosing their stream of studies and in assessing the career options open to them.

#### **2. Community Organisation**

The organisation is involved in visiting villages in the area to assess the needs of the community and establish a relationship with the community members.

Jawahar and Mokhada are areas where a few NGOs as well as the government are already running projects.

While these have yielded some benefits, they have also created dependence, since people now expect that for anything to be worth their while, they should receive some economic benefit immediately.

At the same time, the local self government bodies over which the people should have complete ownership are either neglecting them or denying them their due.

Therefore, the aim of this intervention is to enable the people themselves to identify and initiate works which they find appropriate for the development of their communities.

### ***Planned Interventions***

The following interventions are planned for 40 villages in Jawahar and Mokhada blocks.

#### **1. Education**

##### ***a. Securing enrolment of all children and ensuring attendance***

At present, although enrolment rates in this area are high, many children do not actually attend school or attend only occasionally.

Through identification and enrolment of all school-aged children and by working out a feasible plan of action with parents and teachers, it will be possible to ensure that children attend and learn from their classes.

### **b. *Activating Village Education Committees***

According to the provisions of the Universal Education Campaign, every village should have a Village Education Committee (VEC) composed of parents of school children and other village leaders, to plan and monitor educational activities in the village.

By ensuring that the VECs are set up and function efficiently, the project will enable people to direct the educational works in their community.

### **c. *Extending study support facilities to school children***

The coverage of the existing study support classes will be extended to 40 villages, and will include children from classes 1 to 10.

The support classes will also secure the involvement of parents and community members through regular interactions and sharing of responsibilities with them.

Special attention and coaching will be given to students preparing for their standard 10 board exams.

### **d. *Link school drop-outs to NIOS so that they can complete SSC***

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) allows students who have dropped out of school to complete their education without having to attend daily classes. By enabling students to re-enter the education system through the NIOS, the project will ensure that they can earn the qualifications that will help them secure better jobs.

## **2. Community Organisation**

Community work will focus on enabling people to direct the development activities in their villages. This will be achieved by forming village-level people's organisations, linking these to the formal system of governance, and preparing them to establish links with other people's organisations to secure their rights.

## **3. Skills Development**

It is proposed to construct a multi skills training centre, where rural youth will be able to attend skills training courses to develop their skills in youth and enhance their employability.

Through Rural Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (REDP), local youth interested in setting up their own enterprises will be given access to the support and skills they need.

The project will also encourage the promotion and marketing of local arts.

## **4. Health**

The project will aim at improving the health status of the people by enabling them to revive and monitor government health programmes.

Awareness campaigns on health-related issues will also be conducted.

## **5. Agriculture Development**

Agriculture development programmes will focus on making the best possible use of the resources in the area.

This will be done by studying existing agricultural practices to determine how they can be improved, and by exploring the possibility of introducing and marketing new agricultural products to supplement the income of cultivators.

## CONCLUSION

By focussing on improving the quality of access to education in these areas, in conjunction with other programmes to improve the quality of life of the people, the project will enable the tribal communities of Jawhar and Mokhada communities to enjoy the benefits of modernisation on their own terms.

### DETAILS OF THE APOSTOLATE IN WADA – MOKHADA

2009-2010

#### \*Budget – Expenses per week for food and travel

\*\* (Stationery expenses – Annual)

| Name of Village | Number of children | Money spent on travelling (for two persons) | Food expenses (Breakfast + lunch for two persons) | Stationery – Books and writing material |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|---|---|
| Aase            | 35                 | 300/-                                       | 100/-   | 150/-                                   |
| Chas            | 50                 | 190/-                                       | 100/-   | 200/-                                   |
| Hirve           | 75                 | 310/-                                       | 100/-   | 200/-                                   |
| Palsunda        | 24                 | 128/-                                       | 100/-   | 150/-                                   |
| Khodala         | 0                  | 370/-                                       | 100/-   | 150/-                                   |
| Jhap            | 15 – 20            | 340/-                                       | 100/-   | 150/-                                   |
| Winval          | 30                 | 250/-                                       | 100/-   | 150/-                                   |
| Sakra           | 20                 | 300/-                                       | 100/-   | 150/-                                   |
| Nehale          | 50                 | 260/-                                       | 100/-   | 200/-                                   |
| Dabhosa         | 20                 | 420/-                                       | 100/-   | 150/-                                   |

#### Approximate expenses for the year (30 weeks)

**Total = Travel + Food + Stationery = Rs. 117,740/- (Approx. 1962 Euros)**

| PROSPETTO FINANZIAMENTI ALLE MISSIONI – 2009 |                       |              |                    |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|
|  | IMPORTO DA FINANZIARE | EROGATI      | FONDI DA DESTINARE |
| CINA   | 1.000                 | 1.000        | 0.000              |
| <b>INDIA</b>                                 | <b>1.000</b>          | <b>0.000</b> | <b>1.000</b>       |
| VIETNAM                                      | 5.000                 | 5.000        | 0.000              |
|  |                       |              |                    |
| PROSPETTO                                    | FINANZIAMENTI         | ALLEMISSIONI | 2010               |
|  | IMPORTO DA FINANZIARE | EROGATI      | FONDI DA DESTINARE |
| CINA   | 5.000                 | 0.000        | 0.000              |
| INDIA  | 2.000                 | 0.000        | 0.000              |
| VIETNAM                                      | 3000                  | 0.000        | 0.000              |