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# IVDT TRUST

INTEGRATED VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Newsletter No.33

. . . working in India to relieve rural poverty.

This Newsletter comes to you almost hot off an Indian press! I am just back from visiting our projects, for the first time in four years. It has been wonderful to see how things have been going. My days have been spent visiting the work and talking with people about the progress and problems of recent years. And at night I've been writing it up and making the Newsletter so it would be ready to print off immediately I got back home. Here it is. I hope you can feel a waft of warm Indian air as you read it, or catch a hint of Indian spice promising you something interesting to mull over.

This long gap was, of course, necessitated by Covid which imposed serious constraints on travel, but with the wonders of modern technology we have been able to keep in very close touch with the team. Covid kept so many of us apart, but it also fostered a need for people to share and communicate with each other, and, though not the same as being there, IVDT and its partners responded, sharing our concerns, reassuring each other and finding new ways of allowing our relationships to grow.

It also gave us time to look back on our achievements, to be very proud of all the differences we have made. One project we have loved from the beginning is the MANGRO Project (Community-based Mangrove Regeneration In Odisha), now seventeen years old. From small, tentative beginnings, it has built into something so special. And there are a few of our supporters who have been with us all the way. We cannot say how grateful we are to you. This project has brought together so many aspects of development that are dear to our hearts: addressing poverty, of course, enabling communities to do the work themselves, planting trees, making kitchen gardens, developing ways of increasing family incomes, doing creative work with children and in the villages – oh, what more could one want. Because it has been small, and because we have had an open-ended commitment, giving what we could, when we saw a good purpose, we have been able to experiment, ready (though not eager) to make mistakes (though that has been rare). It is an exceptional and unusual model for development, where funding for most projects lasts one or two years, three at most. It shows what is possible with a small(-ish) amount of money, and long-term commitment.

So I have been writing an account of the project. I think it is worth doing. And because it is not just MY story, I have been listening to many of the others who have been involved. I am not sure how I will bring this together – maybe a book, maybe a website, but I think it is a good thing to do, to let the world know that we can all be part of good change. This newsletter brings you a few of those stories.

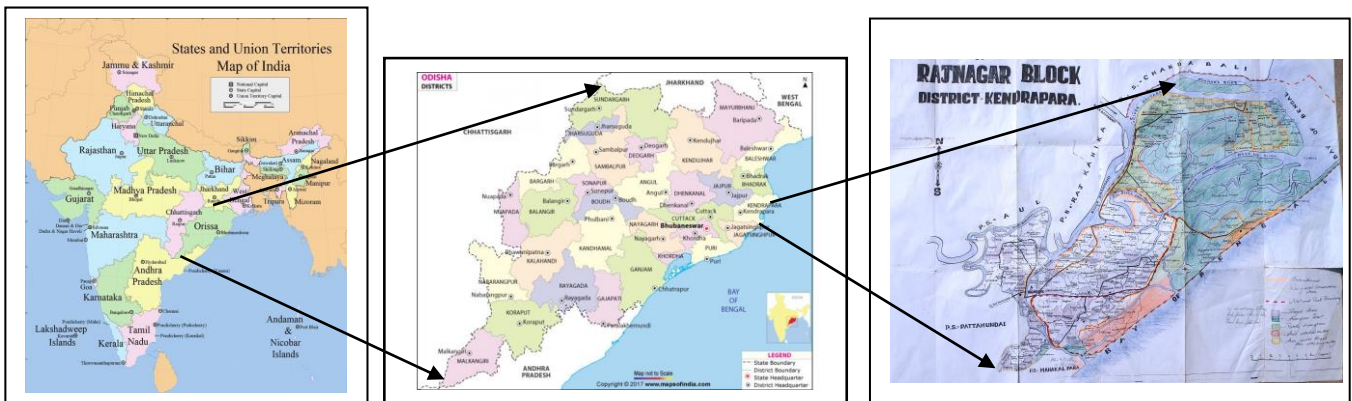
And I also take a look at how Hunger still besets India, a seemingly intractable problem. In our project areas I no longer see the terrible poverty that was once all too clear. There are still needs, and we continue to address some of them. But it is heartbreaking knowing there are countless millions across the country who go to bed hungry each night, millions whom it is impossible for us to help. We do what we can, and that is a considerable amount. Thank you, for all your help.

*We are only able to write briefly about our projects in this newsletter. If you would like to know more about any of our work, please do not hesitate to get in touch at: [helenanightingale@hotmail.com](mailto:helenanightingale@hotmail.com). In the meantime, we are really grateful to you all, and . . .*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

## MANGRO – COMMUNITY-BASED MANGROVE REGENERATION IN ODISHA

It was in the year after the Boxing Day tsunami in the Indian Ocean. We had been able to provide some immediate help to fishermen in Tamil Nadu. In the months following that dreadful event we thought a great deal about why some areas were more affected than others; it appeared that where mangrove forest was in good heart there had been minimal damage. In our research it became apparent that, though Odisha had not been impacted by the tsunami, the coast was regularly hit by major tidal surges during super-cyclones to which the Bay of Bengal is prone, and these events could also be catastrophic.



The project area is shown on the right-hand to the south of Bhitarkanika National Park which is coloured green. We also work closely with the Forest Dept and communities living within the National Park.

We had discussions with our partner, CHALE CHALO, still only in its infancy, and visited coastal villages which had been affected by earlier super-cyclones, those best remembered being in 1972 and in 1999. Seared in my memory is the afternoon when Mausi spoke of her experiences with great power. She made a plea there that never again should her community have to face such events.

We were sitting with a group of women talking about the changes that they had seen in the area during their lives, particularly in relation to the mangrove forest. Suddenly Mausi began to speak about the cyclones in her life. These happen regularly, and when there is news of one developing everyone holds their breath. These storms bring torrential rain, terrifying winds, but perhaps most dangerous of all, a tidal surge that can reach up to 25 feet. Imagine that roaring towards you when all you have for protection is your mud walls, a thatch roof, and your feet.

This had happened to Mausi several times in her life, and she told of one instance when the water came surging in. There was nowhere to escape. It just poured across her compound, the flat surrounding fields, getting deeper and deeper. The only thing she could do was climb a tree. Which is what she did, and there she sat, wondering what had happened to her family, and with no idea how long she would be there. Then she saw two small children come floating towards her. What to do? No choice really; she grabbed them, took them up into the tree, and held them there, keeping them warm and safe. Hours went by, and the night, and still no sign of help. At last the water began to go down. They



were all hungry, but everything was gone, washed away. The only thing they could eat was the leaf shoots from a banana tree, and they drank rainwater that had collected in the heart of the plant. There was still too much water to move, and it was another day or more before Mausi could wade through the mud to a village and get help. It took a long time to find where the children had come from; they had lost their parents, but the family took them in, all of them thankful that they at least had survived this terrible experience. It was seared on Mausi's memory, and that of many others, still spoken about by the old people in the villages, and seared in mine.

Mausi, became our “poster-girl” because of her fierce strength and determination, and we used her story to talk about the importance of mangroves in providing protection, and sustainable livelihoods, but also absorbing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions which create the climate change which already impacts people in these vulnerable communities. Mausi has now died, but we remember her story as symbolic of why mangrove regeneration is so important to coastal communities in Odisha.

**Recent funders include:** David Bennett, The Big Lottery Fund, Mike Deeks, The Just Trust, Gillie and Catherine Howarth, Douglas MacIldoon, The Merali family, The Network for Social Change, Religious Society of Friends (Cornwall), Ann Scott, Mary Stephens, and many others

## THE MANGROVE FOREST TREE PLANTATIONS

The purpose of the MANGRO Project was to protect existing forest, repair it where damaged, and plant new mangrove where there was once forest. This work needs to be done slowly. There have been many short-term regeneration projects which have planted mangrove along the Indian coast, and most of them have failed. The main reasons for this are:

- It is essential to work WITH the community, which needs to understand why the work is being done, and that it is for their long-term benefit; it can be a slow process and many projects fail to do this.
- It is essential to choose sites where the conditions are just right, and to plant the right species in the right place; many projects fail to do this.
- Raising awareness is essential, not just about mangrove, but about the broader environmental context; in most projects this is, at best, perfunctory.
- The practical work needs to go hand in hand with concern for the broader issues that affect communities, their economic and social problems which naturally demand most of their attention; without this the mangrove work inevitably takes a lower priority and is at greater risk of failing.
- Regeneration is best done a step at a time, allowing the mangrove to grow and mature; most projects are over before this happens and young plantation is left without the care and protection it needs in order to survive.

We are a small organisation, as is our partner, so our work has always been small-scale. We do not carry out the work directly, but provide a framework in which the work can happen, creating the right conditions, providing training, leadership and enthusiasm, so communities carry out the work themselves with a strong sense of ownership of the project.

During my recent visit to the project I saw what had been done over the past couple of years when I've been unable to visit, but we also spent time reviewing our work over seventeen years. It was extraordinary to look at the old photos, and see how much had changed. It is an incredible transformation. And it isn't just the trees in the mangrove. For every tree planted in the mangrove, another non-mangrove tree has been planted - maybe a fruit-bearing tree, or one providing timber, fuel or fodder - so there has been less need to cut mangrove forest, and indeed people are now fiercely protective of their mangrove.

At one of our earliest sites we have just carried out a third phase of planting. The earliest trees are now mature, tall and dense; the next are coming on nicely; the most recent phase of planting is right in the water. We actually rowed over our plants as we went by boat along the shore at high tide which felt a bit like Alice in Wonderland. The fishermen that we met said the numbers of fish had noticeably increased since the mangrove had been regenerated, so they were happy too. And we saw plenty of evidence of this as huge gleaming fish leapt out of the water alongside us; we should have been carrying a bucket to catch them!

A second phase of new plantation has been carried out at the mouth of the Barunei River, funded by the Network for Social Change, and this is in good heart. We thank them, the Just Trust, and all our other funders who have made it possible to carry out this amazing work. With you, and with all the people on the ground, you have achieved something very special. And it continues.

*From this . . .*



*to this . . . a wonderful achievement; thank you*



## BALARAM, MANGRO ACTIVIST

Ranjit is the Director of our Odisha partner. Rama, known locally as the “Tree Man”, is the Project Manager of MANGRO. And Balaram, one of the MANGRO Activists, exemplifies the heart of our work on the MANGRO Project. He lives very close to the Bhitarkanika National Park. Many visitors from outside drive past on their way to the park, and yet it is curiously remote, a one-mile walk from the road along field paths. He has a deep sense of connection with the land, his home and the area, and, while he is happy to go away to learn new skills, he always wants to return home and invest his time and energy in making lives better for his community and those nearby.

Balaram is 34. When he finished school he worked on the farm, but he also volunteered at the local school, standing in for teachers who would often not turn up. He also had a natural inclination to help people with their problems, demanding officials pay widows’ pensions, getting a birth certificate for someone, and so on, and the villagers began to turn to him for help and advice, a natural sorter-out of people’s problems.



He met Rama through the school Eco-club, and Rama recognised immediately that this was someone who would be a real asset. When a post came free, Balaram applied and was accepted. He had a proper interview, of course, but he had a second interview from Bichitra, the caretaker at the MANGRO Centre, known for his stunning smile. Bichitra said to solemn-faced Balaram “Can you smile?”, at which Balaram gave a smile to match Bichitra’s. “You’ve got the job,” he was told!

So Balaram was taken on to lead the **kitchen garden, compost-making and grafting programme** in his area, and to help with the **Eco-clubs**. He also works with **Women’s Self-Help Groups** which, unlike many WSHGs in today’s political climate, are very vigorous, actively involved in MANGRO’s work, and doing much to address the problems of their communities. We do not do mangrove plantation in this area because it is covered by the Forest Dept. But Balaram and his community played a key role in the campaign to get rid of the **illegal and toxic prawn ponds** along the shoreline which make it so vulnerable to erosion. This campaign was a real victory. On my previous visit I saw the ponds had all been destroyed. Much of the land has been transferred to the Forest Dept and is now planted with mangrove. What a brilliant thing to see, and well done to everyone involved. Even where we are not directly planting mangrove, we are still helping it happen.

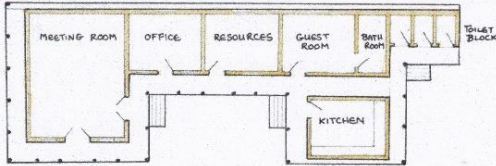


*Four years ago, the illegal prawn ponds were destroyed. They are now planted with mangrove*

Balaram works closely with the Agriculture and Horticulture Depts, and has a special role as a link between them and his local villages. We have long been concerned about **topsoil fertility** in the area, a serious and increasing problem. Just as we were working out details for a project, the Agriculture Dept decided to implement an experimental project in Balaram’s village, supporting five farmers to move from their current practice of growing padi (for rice) year after year, to a three-year rotation system which will include growing green compost and pulses (which fix nitrogen in the soil), pretty much what we were thinking of. We are so delighted that this is happening and are working out a way of using Balaram as a key worker to support the farmers and ensure the success of the scheme so it doesn’t fizzle out like so many government ideas. If it looks like it is going well, we will then be searching for funds to promote an expansion of this to other villages in the area.

## The MANGRO CENTRE – OUR MUCH-LOVED BUILDING

Initially CHALE CHALO used a rented office for its MANGRO work, but it was difficult to find suitable accommodation, and tenure was never secure. As our activities grew, it became clear that the best solution would be to find a piece of land and build our own centre. Our dream was that this would be a hub for mangrove campaigning, research and action at the heart of the area. But it was almost impossible to buy a plot anywhere we wanted. Months went by, and at last we compromised on the position, with a piece of land on the edge of Rajnagar (home of the Block Office, Forest Dept., etc.) and just by the road.



We drew up plans for a simple single-storied thatched building built in the traditional local style. We all know how hard it is to get a builder; it is no different in Rajnagar. The merest hint it was for an NGO, and the price doubled and trebled! In the end, Ranjit and Rama (head of the MANGRO Project) found a small builder, and decided to manage the project themselves – despite never having had anything to do with buildings before. They had to live on site for months, to keep an eye on everything, to make sure the work was done and

nothing was stolen. Three of them lived in a little straw hut they made, away from the building work, and ran the site and the MANGRO Project from there. Without their constant vigilance, quite possibly the Centre would never have been finished.

But finished it was, and it won the hearts of everyone who knew it. Ranjit and Rama did the hard work, and the builder too, of course, but it would not have been possible without the help of many donors, especially ACE, The Funding Network, and the Religious Society of Friends. Thank you to all of them. The building has done us all proud, and stood strongly for the principles of the project.



It is now surrounded by mature trees and a flourishing kitchen garden which produces fruit and vegetables and acts as a model for training. There is a tree nursery and a pond where fish are kept. We have a library on environmental and mangrove matters, an office, a large meeting room, a guestroom and all the domestic facilities, very simple, but just what was needed. It is in constant use, by the team and other community groups. Eco-clubs visit regularly to learn about the environment and courses are held on grafting and compost-making, income generation and Olive Ridley Turtles, climate change and tree-raising, to name but a few.



We might have wished for a site that was in the heart of the mangrove, but this makes up for it in convenience and accessibility. The one sadness, to all of us, is that the thatch has had to go. When the Centre was built, traditional long-stem rice was grown locally, cut by hand, so there was no shortage of straw for the roof which constantly needed repair and regularly needed replacement. New varieties of rice are now grown, with a shorter stem, and harvested by machine, so there is now no thatch available. Times change. The thatch needed replacing and the difficult decision was made to get

the builders in and make it a flat roof, a sad thing. The Centre has lost a bit of its character, but it will be far less work and nothing to worry about when the next cyclone comes. It is very smart, and I expect we will eventually get used to it. In truth, though, from the road, it can't even be seen because of all the trees, and that is what matters, that, and all the excellent work that goes on there.

## EROSION OF THE SEASHORE AND ESTUARIES

We all know that everything in nature is in a constant state of flux, and this is very apparent along the coastline where we work. The whole east coast of India is prone to erosion and accretion, largely a natural process; it so happens that two of the worst affected stretches are in our project area – Pentha and Satabhaya beaches, where many villages have disappeared into the sea within living memory, where local people see their land being eaten away before their eyes. The coast was once heavily forested with continuous mangrove running from Andhra Pradesh to the Sunderbans, about 750 miles. This didn't provide total protection, but it slowed the process. Once the mangrove went, everything accelerated, and it is difficult to deal with the consequences, let alone reverse it.

From 1990-2020, it is estimated that the shore receded 490 m at Pentha, and 210 m at Satabhaya, the worst in Odisha. Attempts have been made to stabilise the shore. Mangrove plantation has failed because the shore is now just sand, too dry, and mangrove needs a bit of mud to establish itself. Sea walls have been built along various stretches, and are regularly breached. A World Bank-funded 500m wall has



been built at Pentha using geo-tubes encased in caged rock (cost £4 million), but just a couple of years after completion, the rope cages have degraded spilling out the rock. The wall has totally changed the nature of the beach which has completely disappeared where the wall has been built; sand is being eroded from SW of the wall, and deposited to the NE. The sea is now shallower because of sand deposits; and a large sandbank has developed half a mile offshore drying out occasionally at high tide. Fishermen can no longer work this coast because they are liable to go aground on the shifting banks. Meanwhile the villagers live in a constant state of anxiety, with barely concealed rage at the ineptitude of decision-making at state, national and international level and at the lack of consultation.



Satabhaya means seven brothers for its original seven villages, of which it is the only one remaining, though it too is now just a ghost, the school and temple embedded in sand dunes, the houses mostly gone. Many were resettled to a new village 5 km inland, in the forest area. Each family was given a plot for building a house, and a small grant to help

pay for that, but no land, and no work. So this too is a kind of ghost village where the majority of people migrate, many to Kerala where they work in textile and plywood factories.

We are able to do little to help these people, and maybe in the end there is little that can be done; certainly the international professionals have failed so far! The trigger was the destruction of the mangrove sixty years ago; maybe all we can do now is mitigate the impacts.

However, we can do something in other areas. The estuaries have also been subject to erosion, with villages being lost to the rivers, and we have clearly demonstrated that our mangrove plantations have stopped that process. The situation is often just right for re-establishing mangrove which protects the river edge from washing away, and also protects communities against tidal surge and wind damage. Villagers are convinced that the riverside mangrove plantation, backed by an embankment offers them the best possible protection. It isn't perfect: they complain about the increase in wild boars damaging crops, but we spoke to the sarpanch while I was there, and he will support an NREGS scheme where villagers will be paid to fence their forest and keep the wild boar under control. So we continue with our river-mouth, estuary and riverside plantation, one step at a time, getting it right, and making sure it does its job. It saves land, saves lives, and has a whole range of positive benefits.

Just a final note: one of those perverse government measures has been the issuing of a permit for a so-called Eco Retreat on Pentha beach. For £240 a night one can enjoy a night of tented luxury, as long as you don't mind the glaring flood lights. But this area is an Olive Ridley turtle nesting site, protected by law. How did this development ever get the go ahead?

## **POVERTY and HUNGER IN INDIA – A TALE of YESTERDAY and TODAY**

Anyone arriving today in Delhi from Europe might feel reassured. The airport is amazingly modern and efficient, cleaner and fresher perhaps (certainly) than Heathrow. On your ride into the city centre, accompanied by large numbers of smart new cars, each window tinted so as to only allow a hint of the occupant, you will pass swanky hotels, large gated developments, the impressive grandeur of the Department for Defence, and Power, tree-lined roads. There will be only the occasional person in tired clothes, or wearily pedalling a heavily laden bike, and any hint of a slum or squalor is hidden behind 20-foot high corrugated iron sheeting, freshly painted white and green. The road is smooth, if a little congested. There are traffic lights (which everyone obeys) and no cattle. And there is the thick pall of ochrous pollution (only a week after my arrival all schools were closed for a few days because of the dreadful air quality, and alternate driving days was introduced). Where is the India that many of us will remember of ten years ago – when the air had become miraculously clean because public transport converted to LPG? Or further back to twenty years ago, when one descended from the plane into a wall of heat perfumed with wood smoke, cooking spices and a hint of sulphur in the air. The roads were pot-holed then, the cars all battered and ramshackle. There were people camping out on traffic islands, beggars, precariously piled bikes and autos, over-loaded lorries bringing goods in from the countryside. It felt then as though all India, as though both India's past and its present, were coming together in one time and one place. It would be easy now to think that India has "moved on", that it is a modern country that has largely said "Goodbye" to poverty.

I am not nostalgic for the memories of those days. One thing I regret though, and that is the fact that what you saw was pretty much what you got. On today's drive into Delhi, and possibly for the whole of a visitor's stay, you might well unwittingly pass a hidden world where people continue the struggle to find enough food for their families, to get access to a roof over their head, to water, to health care, to education. At a superficial glance it seems as though everything has changed, and yet much in India has not.

Infrastructure has definitely improved, not just in Delhi, but right across the country, and that brings many advantages: ease of travel increases mobility and access, even in remote rural areas. More houses are connected to electricity, and fewer people have to walk more than thirty minutes to fetch water for daily use. There are more schools, and more children attending them for more years; in fact it is now rare to see child labour which not long ago was commonplace. And health care has improved, child mortality down, and life expectancy up.

So everything in the garden is rosy. And yet, and yet . . .

That is not the whole story. Real progress had been made, but some things remain the same, and one of those things, perhaps the most important of all to those who are affected is HUNGER.

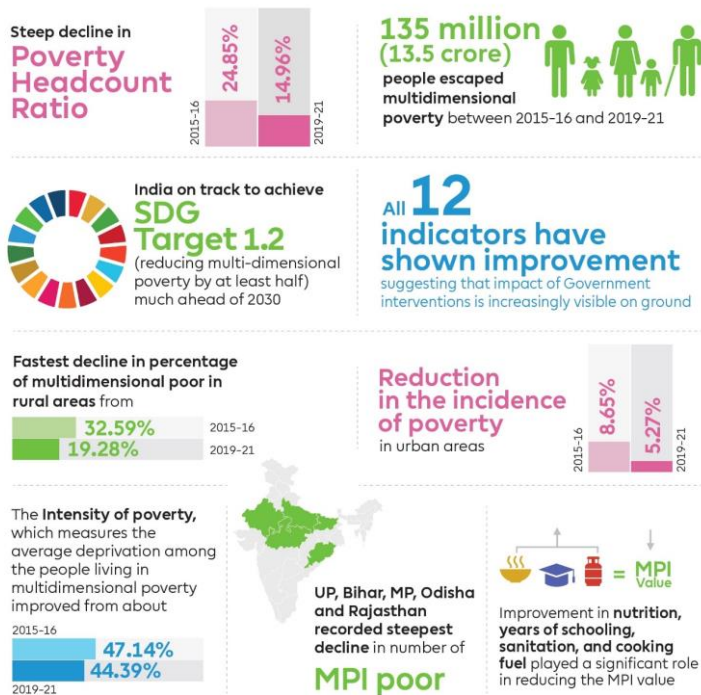
Poverty figures are baffling. There is a multiplicity of ways, not just of defining poverty, but of measuring it. Various approaches have been applied over the years: assessing how much it costs to provide a person with the necessary calories; or a simple percentage of the median national household income (OECD and Europe); or complex systems balancing out a variety of significant criteria. The World Bank defines poverty in absolute terms. It defines *extreme* poverty as living on less than US\$1.90 per day, and *moderate* poverty as less than \$3.10 a day. The UNDP has adopted the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) which considers not just income but a variety of indicators and factors contributing to poverty and deprivation. It aims overall to offer a more complex understanding of poverty than traditional income-based measurements. Using this model, the following are taken into account: nutrition (who in the family is malnourished), child/adolescent mortality (has anyone under 18 died in the past 5 years?), maternal health, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, housing, electricity, assets, bank accounts. Each of these has a weighting, and when added up, the total determines whether a household is above or below the poverty line. According to this model,

multi-faceted poverty has reduced over the past 5 years from 24.85% to 14.96%, an achievement hailed with great pride by India's premier, Narendra Modi.

What this approach fails to recognise is that, at the bottom end of the economic scale, a family's absolute priority, before anything else, is to feed itself, to put enough food on the plates and get through until tomorrow. Of course everything else matters, and the lack of health care, or education or electricity, all in themselves jeopardise a family's ability to feed itself. But the thing that comes before anything else, the absolute priority, is the ability to feed oneself, and few of the poverty indicators contribute directly to that.

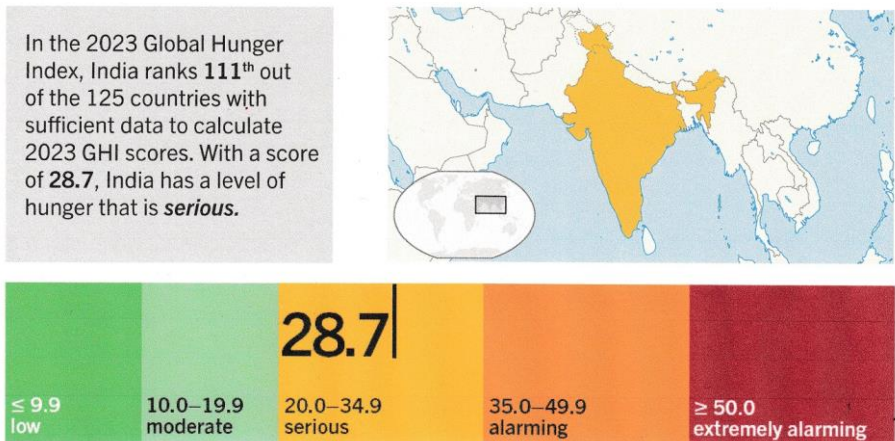
So, even though Modi and his supporters claim that India is well on the way to meeting the Sustainable Development Goal 1 – Zero Poverty – by 2030 (based on the UNDP measures), he is a very long way from meeting the SDG 2 – Zero Hunger.

A very large number of people in India are very hungry. According to India Today (July '23), quoting a joint report by the FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 74.1% of Indians cannot afford to buy sufficient food. That is about one billion people. Of all the world's hungry people, 25% live in India. Of children under five, 36% are stunted, 19% wasted, and 32% underweight (Indian Govt. figures); 67% have anaemia, as do 57% of married women. Amongst pregnant women, 52% are anaemic, and of those breast-feeding, 61%. Figures may vary according to date and source, but these are broadly accurate. India is 111 out of 125 on the Global Hunger Index – i.e. very near the bottom. One of the ironies, is that those most affected are those who live in the villages, the very places where all India's food is produced.



### UNDP MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX: A PROGRESS REVIEW 2023

## GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX 2023: INDIA



This matters for all sorts of reasons. People who have been conceived and raised and live in hunger suffer, and so does their country. It matters for all sorts of reasons:

- because it leads to poorer health, shortened life expectancy, reduced resilience;
- because it reduces earning capacity, and the ability to learn;
- because it reduces productivity.
- because it fails to realise the full potential of each individual, not only for themselves but for society as a whole;
- because it leads to a sense of injustice, unfairness.



## **What does India do to address this situation, and what can be done to improve things?**

The Indian state provides a range of schemes and services to address some of the problems arising from inadequate nutrition. A pregnant woman is under the care of an **Anganwadi Worker** who will weigh her and keep records throughout her pregnancy. Pregnant and lactating mothers are entitled to food supplements to boost the quantity and quality of their intake. Once the child is born, it too will come under the care of the Anganwadi Worker, weighed regularly, and, in theory, referred to the local **Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre** should it be deemed necessary. They will help the child regain some weight, but then return it to its previous situation, for the cycle to repeat itself. This system is fine in theory, but in practice, centres may be ill-equipped, staff inadequately trained, and recording poor or non-existent. How else would so many women and children fall through the net?

There is also a **Public Distribution System (PDS)** which provides a certain amount of subsidised food each month – up to 15-35 kilos of rice or wheat per family for one rupee a kilo (= £0.01), depending on one's economic status, and a small amount of other items - cooking oil, etc. When this works well, it is a great help, but it is prey to corruption and ineptitude, and it has been estimated that the 800 million people eligible receive on average only 1 kg of grain per household per month.



*Women on CHALE CHALO'S PHF-funded DIDI Water Management Project in Western Odisha work on improving access to water in a drought-prone area, and, under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, earn while they work, thus improving water security and increasing family income at the same time*

The greatest need is perhaps to increase the family income, and there is little opportunity for this in rural areas. However, we have spoken before in our newsletters about the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)** which can provide a certain amount of work on useful infrastructure projects in rural areas, paid at the Minimum Wage (about £3 a day, what the World Bank calls “moderate poverty”). We often use this scheme to implement important infrastructure projects. When it works well, it makes a real difference, putting money into the hands of men and women, and enabling them to address their greatest needs. However, the scheme is rife with corruption and maladministration, and, with the government reducing its funding, its effectiveness makes a real difference to only a fortunate few.

What can **we** do? There is little difference that any of us can make to the huge overall picture, but, in the areas where we work, we have empowered communities and individuals to demand the rights to which they are entitled, ensure access to income-generating schemes, and hold duty-bearers to account. This does improve services; we have seen the evidence of that, and each of these improvements makes a substantial difference to the men, women and children in our project areas. Where we are able to exercise our small influence, we can at least make it possible for things to be the best they can be under the circumstances. The main problem in the areas where we work is to ensure the quality of food so that people are receiving all the minerals and vitamins that they need. They are mostly receiving enough calories, but many still show that they are short of iron and other nutrients. This applies to the women and children especially.

India is now an increasingly wealthy country, and the evidence of that is all around especially on the main streets of the major cities, but also in improvements to infrastructure, things which do make a difference to many people. It may well be that India is on a fast track to becoming a flourishing modern industrial economy, but that is not the whole story. On behalf of the many millions of Indians who will go to bed tonight without having had sufficient food today, PLEASE DO NOT LISTEN TO NARENDRA MODI'S LIES ABOUT THE END OF HUNGER IN INDIA. There has been progress, but, whatever he says, there is still a very, very long way to go.

## AN EXAMPLE OF HOW IT IS POSSIBLE TO BRING CHANGE

In the past IVDT has, on occasions when there is very extreme need, provided help to stave off starvation, but we prefer to invest in enabling people to produce sufficient food for themselves and to access government schemes and benefits wherever possible. During Covid we provided an emergency lump sum to each of our two partners, the Baliga Trust and CHALE CHALO, so that they could carry the extra burden of the pandemic, and our main concern was to ensure that nobody went short of food. This was a one-off.

However, our partner, CHALE CHALO, runs a project funded by CRY (Child Rights and You) which is primarily concerned with improving access to Health and Nutrition services. This project operates in Western Odisha, focusing on children and adolescent girls, and



pregnant and lactating women. It raises awareness about the health and nutrition issues of these groups, and the services that are available. It ensures that services are functioning properly, and encourages people to use them. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of a nutritious diet, especially for these groups. Women are encouraged to keep their own kitchen gardens to supplement the cereals and pulses which they consume, which might produce sufficient calories but are lacking in essential micro-nutrients. With the numbers affected (see \* below), it is clear that this matters. Undernourished mothers often produce under-

weight children, and children born underweight carry lifelong health risks. The programme aims to stop this cycle, and also to reduce the very high rates of anaemia. It covers a population of 13,000 (2,850 households) in 28 villages, including 3,500 children under 18 working directly with the women, but also through volunteers, health workers, and other related providers.

\* Of children under five, 36% are stunted, 19% wasted, and 32% underweight (Indian Govt. figures) ; 77% have anaemia, as do 57% of married women. Amongst pregnant women, 52% are anaemic, and of those breast-feeding, 61%. Figures may vary according to date and source, but these are broadly accurate. (repeated from p.5)

## IVDT, POVERTY and HUNGER

One of IVDT's main purposes is "the reduction of poverty, especially in rural India". We address this in many ways, largely by raising awareness about various government benefits and schemes, and empowering people to access them. It is not an absolute solution, but it helps stave off the worst impacts of poverty, and it buys time during which we can provide support and guidance about longer term solutions.

During and after Covid we provided much-needed support to our partners so people could access emergency government food. But we also invested in developing kitchen gardens and on my recent visit I heard time and again about the enormous difference this had made at a time when very many families were struggling to keep going. I love my kitchen garden, and am delighted that so many other women do too, that they rejoice in the fresh and nutritious food they produce for their families. It was moving to hear how important our help had been. I met one Women's Self-Help Group which set up a fish pond between them and were making a good profit raising fish for sale. There are many other similar examples of enterprise and working together to combat poverty.

But it was a real delight when Balam rode into the centre with a plastic crate, and called me over to see the "docs" – which turned out to be twenty-five lovely little ducklings collected from the Agriculture Dept, along with Rs1,000 (£10 for food). It was the first batch of many destined for the WSHGs in his area, another income-generating project which will help improve incomes and keep families properly fed.



## **HOW CHALE CHALO IS STEPPING FORWARD**

We have long been aware that it is important to enable our partners to reach a position where they are no longer dependent on us, and can find funding for their work without having to go through us. It is a question of dignity as much as anything, of self-respect. We, of course, will continue to provide funding when we are able, and we have always done everything we can to help them in this transition: passing on possible funders, helping polish funding applications, acting as a referee, and so on. CHALE CHALO now operates several projects which have nothing to do with us, though we do know quite a few of the staff, having had the privilege to work with them on our own projects over the years. I have already written briefly about their CRY-funded Nutrition and Health Project in Western Odisha. The following describes some of the other work with which they are now involved:

### **DIDI Project – Women Leading Development Planning and Governance for water security**

This initiative is supported by **Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) – UK**, and covers 25 villages and 24,000 people in Nuapada district (W. Odisha). It focuses on community water conservation, management and utilization, and is led by women who have carried out water resource mapping and produced five-year Household, Village and Gram Panchayat Development Plans. Using government schemes and mobilizing the community, elected representatives, government officials and other community bodies, the Didi groups have been demanding and monitoring programs for the supply of safe drinking water, digging, repairing & maintenance of tube wells, pipe lines & sanitary wells, renovation of existing water bodies and construction of new water harvesting structures. Group leaders and key people in the community have been trained on rain water harvesting, storage and management, and on facilitating the implementation of their plans. **PHF** provides outstanding support and training to the team, and this is proving a most fruitful partnership for the people in the area.

### **Improving Quality Education in Government Primary Schools in Disaster Prone Rajnagar Block of Kendrapara District, Odisha**

This project has been running since Sept 2021, and is funded by the WIPRO Foundation – Bangalore. Having developed a relationship with WIPRO through a project implemented in W. Odisha, they have set up a programme in Rajnagar block of Kendrapara district. CHALE CHALO has established a core education team of 4 with support from the Director and a voluntary core group of retired school teachers, headmasters, and resource persons, and during the past year CHALE CHALO has set up 3 remedial centres to provide support to 105 Class 1-5 pupils who have had serious problems with their schoolwork, largely because of Covid. Besides ensuring quality learning experience in the remedial centres the team works closely with parents, teachers, education officials, School Management Committees, community members, and other stakeholders for improving the general quality of education in schools. So much damage was done to the education of the most vulnerable children during Covid when schools were closed, and this is a chance for that gap to be remedied and for primary education generally to receive a boost.

**During and after Covid**, grants were available to help with the survival and recovery of communities. **IVDT** was able to help by providing support in Golamunda, Kalahandi, and the **India Covid Relief and Recovery Fund** provided support in Nuapada.

In about 40 villages 2230 families with food insecurity were helped set up kitchen gardens which enabled them to grow cereals, pulses and vegetables, and to sell the surpluses to boost their income. They were provided with seed kits of varieties which would lend themselves to high yield and future preservation and rotation through village seed banks. Schooling had been seriously disrupted and 1830 children Class 1-5 were helped by the provision of learning kits and materials. Staff and volunteers ensured 100% sustained access to government schemes and benefits such as PDS, cash relief and welfare programmes, employment & wages under MGNREGS and economic packages for income generation and livelihoods. This one-off emergency help from IVDT and the government made a great difference to needy people.

**SUMMARY of IVDTrust accounts for 01.04.22 to 31.03.23**

**Balance on 01.04.2022**

Nat. West Bank	17,317.68
COIF	<u>231.15</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>17,548.83</u></b>

**Income for the year**

Covenants & donations	15,216.02
The Just Trust	2,000.00
HMRC Gift Aid Refund (for 2 years)	4,106.51
COIF Interest	<u>8.51</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>21,331.04</u></b>

**Expenditure for the year**

CHALE CHALO, projects	13,096.00 *
The BALIGA TRUST	3,544.00 *
CC Core Costs	9,632.00 *
UK admin., memberships, etc.	0
Fundraising costs	<u>0</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>26,272.00</u></b>

**Balance on 31.03.2023**

Nat. West Bank	12,368.21
CAF	<u>239.66</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>12,607.87</u></b>

\* These payments to our Indian partners include UK bank charges

The accounts have been independently examined and we are very grateful to Mike Deeks for carrying that out. They have been submitted to the Charity Commission.

**GIVING to IVDT**

Without your help it would be impossible for us to continue with our work, so all donations are always very welcome.

**GIFT AID** - If you are a taxpayer, then you can make it possible for us to reclaim the tax on your gift – it gives us an extra 25% on top of your donation, and that can make a tremendous difference.

**REGULAR GIVING** by Direct Debit – Regular giving makes it much easier for us to plan our work. If you feel that you could manage to give in this way, we would be especially grateful.

**DONATIONS** can be made online using Paypal through our website: **[www.ivdtrust.org](http://www.ivdtrust.org)**

or by post to:

**47 Brome Place, OXFORD OX3 9LR** or  
**7a Rosewin Row, TRURO TR1 1HG**  
with cheques made out to 'IVDT'.

Gift Aid and Direct Debit forms are included with the newsletter. Thank you.

We will continue to send out newsletters by post to those on our mailing list, but we are trying to reduce our costs, so if any of you would be happy to receive the newsletter by email, please do let us know, and we can make sure that that happens in future.

Contact us at:

**[helenanightingale@hotmail.com](mailto:helenanightingale@hotmail.com)**

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoy reading about our work and all that our projects are achieving with your generosity. We feel very proud of what we help happen, bringing positive change to the lives of so many people, and it would not be possible without your help. The need for support continues – there are always more ways to spend money than raise it! Please help if you can. Your donations make a tremendous difference to the lives of people and communities. Details for making a donation are given on the last page. Thank you to everyone.



*And greetings from everyone in Odisha who benefits from your generosity.*

*This Tree of Life painting/collage on the veranda wall was made by Eco-club members at our MANGRO Centre in Madanpur.*

IVD Trust, Charity No. 1013316. Registered Address: 47 Brome Place, Oxford OX3 9LR

Trustees: Zinat Bennett, Zara Bieler, Kim Devenish, Gabriel Grouas, Erskine Holmes, Helena Nightingale

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