

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

(2008 – 2009)



Paribesh Unnayan Parishad (PUPA) (COUNCIL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT)

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Rural Unit

AMARGRAM
Village : Phulbari, P.O. : Sagar Phulbari,
Dist.: South 24 Parganas

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Important Past Activities

- i) **School Programme** : More than ten years' experience of working with the school students of class V to VIII from more than 30 schools of four districts of West Bengal (Kolkata, Hooghly, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas).
- ii) **Paribesh Prahari Prakalpa**: This is a long-term project aimed at educating the school students about the present state of our environment through classroom interactions and after class activities. At present there are nearly 30 schools in our network.
 - **National Environment Education Programme in Schools (NEEPS)** : This is a project of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India, being implemented through CEE, Ahmedabad. WE undertook the programme whenever asked for.
 - **MHRD/EOSE Programme** : This is a programme on environmental orientation to school education supported by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, facilitated by Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad. Attempt has been made to prepare a study material for teachers and students (class VI & VII) of West Bengal incorporating the school syllabuses.
- iii) **National Environment Awareness Campaign Programme (NEAC)** : This national programme is being implemented since 1986 by MOEF. We have been participating with this programme since 1994. The activities were adjudicated in the state of West Bengal by RRA and we are placed in A+ category all along.
- iv) **Biodiversity Conservation Programme** : This programme was sponsored by WWF-India in the year 1997. Socio-economic survey, biological sampling and mass awareness programmes were undertaken in the Sundarban areas on the impact of mass collection of prawn seeds in the canals and rivers of Sagar Island and Gosaba Blocks.
- v) **Environmental Awareness Mapping** : We have undertaken this project supported by West Bengal Pollution Control Board, involving the local clubs of the CMC Ward No. 95, Kolkata in the year 1999.
- vi) **Vermicomposting** : This is a pilot project on the “Survey, Characterisation and Management of domestic organic wastes with emphasis on Vermidecomposition”. The project was undertaken with the financial support from the Department of Environment, Govt. of West Bengal for the period from 1999 to 2001.
- vii) **Rural activities**: Our rural Centre at Sagar Island in the name of **AMARGRAM** (SAGAR UDYOG) has been functioning since 1995 with the assistance of two local clubs (Sundarban Gramin Bikash Kendra and Sagar Recreational Services, both at north Sagar Island). Activities centered on early childhood education, Sanitation scheme, health check-up programme, women awareness programme, medicinal plants survey, etc.

Summary of Activities (2008 – 2009)

All these efforts are sure to help in mitigating the ill effects of intensified farming with inorganic fertilizers and pesticides in the long run. Moreover, the use of organic manures (vermicompost) will also help in building up the soil organic carbon which appears to be most promising low cost strategy to not only mitigate the risk of climate change but also to ensure adaptation against otherwise devastating consequences of shortage of fresh water, drought, nutrient depletion, etc.

1. **Improving the quality of life and livelihood of rural community through sustainable use of local resources** (a project of UNDP/SGP, facilitated by Centre for Environment Education, New Delhi).
2. **Documentation of village level bio-resources for the benefit of local people at Sagar Island, S. 24 Parganas for proper conservation and sustainable use.**(supported by West Bengal Biodiversity Board).
3. **National Environment Awareness Programme (NEAC-2008-09) :**Awareness generation to initiate Capacity Building and developing climate resilient community at Sagar Island, South 24 Paraganas
4. **Environment Education Programme in Schools.**
5. **Vermicomposting Training programme**
 - a. Green Entrepreneurship Development Training Programme for farmers on Vermicomposting at Sagar Island, South 24 Parganas (supported by NABARD)
 - b. Training Programme on Vermicomposting in salt-reclaimed areas of West Bengal, Sagar Island (supported by Sundarban Development Board)

REPORT (in detail)

I. “Improving the quality of life and livelihood of rural community through Sustainable use of local resources” at Sagar Island

This is a small grant programme of UNDP facilitated through Centre for Environment Education, New Delhi, being implemented at 15 villages under two Panchayets (MG-1 & MG-2) of Sagar Island, South 24 Parganas.

Prime Objectives:

- i) **Conservation of biodiversity:** Survey, documentation of local bioresources and its traditional uses; and initiation of conservation activities through creation of livelihood alternatives.
- ii) **Prevention of land degradation:** Propagation of integrated sustainable farming, to physically demonstrate the practice of farming including on farm production of organic inputs thus reducing the use of chemical inputs.
- iii) **Building an Environmentally literate community:** It is to make the local community environmentally literate through awareness and trainings to equip them to tackle compounding environmental issues.

Strategy: Community mobilization, Resource mapping, Resource utilization through establishing Community ownership & Institutional development and mutually agreed Cost-benefit Sharing system. All these activities were undertaken through PRA techniques adopted by the local Boys and Girls after building their capacity through proper training.

The summary of the achievements so far accomplished:

- So far 50 SHGs (more than 700 members) were selected and involved in the project activities. All the members of the 50 groups have fully agreed to share the cost and benefits and cooperate mutually with each other in the activities connected with the project.

This is a precursor for building up of strong Community Institution and its ownership ensuring the sustainability of the project



- ❑ Five Farmers' Clubs were organised at five villages, selected members were practicing cultivation following the Integrated farming system approach.
- ❑ Twenty village-level Eco clubs (210 students) and one Biodiversity Conservation Corps (BCC) involving 16 students were formed. Members of BCC already started helping the coordinators in collecting information related to local Biodiversity. The members of Eco clubs (class VI to VIII standard students) are being trained in activities related to Biodiversity assessment, documentation and conservation.
- ❑ A two-day Strategic planning workshop cum motivation workshop was organized. Forty participants including 10 women candidates were given PRA trainings. Transect mapping, time line, seasonality, economic ladder, etc. were discussed and also practiced. 2 more coordinators were selected from the trained participants.
- ❑ A Biodiversity conservation workshop (5-6 April, 08) was organized and about 30 participants were given Biodiversity conservation training. Biodiversity survey methodology and also the documentation of ITK were discussed in the workshop.
- ❑ One training programme was organized at Sundarban Kalpataru Ashram, Kakdwip (23-24 May,08) for the SHG members. 17 Participants including 10 women learnt the fundamentals of small scale business.
- ❑ Coordinators of the project and farmers are getting the training and on site support related to model farm (2 such Farms finalized) including standardization of farming methodologies.

(Monthly visit to the field by Sri Animesh Bera, DRCSC started since July,08).



- An exposure visit of 7 boys and 3 girls was given at DRCSC during 23rd & 24th October,08. Participants learnt up-to-date meaning of Sustainable Development through participatory discussion method and fundamentals of sustainable farming. They have also learnt techniques for effective communication.



- Information related to wild and cultivated plants (357) and wild and domesticated animals (109) from 7 villages was collected by the Coordinators with the help of BCC. 9 viable local varieties of vegetables and 10 local varieties of paddy have been considered for propagation.

- Village resources (like ponds, lands, community spaces etc.) were identified through the mappings and PRA meets. The baseline data collected is helpful for successful and effective implementation of other project activities. For example some of the resources such as domestic ponds are under utilized in consultation with the community members the excavation of these ponds is being undertaken with an agreement of cost sharing and benefit sharing mechanism. Accordingly an action plan is prepared for interventions.

- SHG members from Sapkhali, Bamankhali and Mandirtala started rainwater harvesting with an agreement to share the cost initially and benefit within one year as per agreement (cost and benefit sharing agreement). Excavation of 3 old silted ponds is already done.

- Vermi pits were constructed in 15 villages. Total 65 vermi pits including earlier 20 and 7 Hatcheries, including earlier 3 were established. 49 pits have faired well. Benefit sharing mechanism in connection with the sharing of earthworms is agreed upon by the community and is in progress (discussed later). The number of worms available with the practitioners have bulged from 12,000 to 80,000 worms within the last 9 months. On an average every farmer harvested not less than 100 kilos of vermicompost.



- Seeds (9 types of traditional varieties and 10 types of high yielding varieties) were supplied for establishing kitchen garden involving nearly 75 SHG members of the locality, with an agreement

of returning seeds after harvesting. The returned seeds are kept in 2 Seed Banks, one at Sapkhali and another at Hendalketki, established for distribution amongst the villagers in next season.

- ❑ 1285 chicks (RIR variety) are purchased jointly by SGP and SHG and distributed among 174 SHG members with a written agreement of sharing the benefits.
- ❑ 15 goat kids were supplied to successful SHG members of Sapkhali and Champatala villages on cost sharing basis, and also with an agreement of benefit sharing after 15 months.
- ❑ Suitable varieties of local species were kept in five locally developed Nurseries and 3105 (1400 were purchased and 1705 were grown in the SHG nurseries) saplings were distributed amongst the students, SHG members and one local club.
- ❑ Plantation programmes organized for local boys, girls and elderly. Students have taken better initiative.
- ❑ One **Biodiversity Conservation Corps** (16 students) and 9 Village-level **Eco-clubs** (66 students) were formed under Environmental Education. Students grouped into BCC have assisted the village coordinators in documenting local bio-resources.
- ❑ Awareness among the general public was created through observation of World Earth Day and World Biodiversity Day and a four day environmental awareness camp during Durga Puja at Bhamankhali.



All these efforts are sure to help in mitigating the ill effects of intensified farming with inorganic fertilizers and pesticides in the long run. Moreover, the use of organic manures (vermicompost) will also help in building up the soil organic carbon which appears to be most promising low cost strategy to not only mitigate the risk of climate change but also to ensure adaptation against otherwise devastating consequences of shortage of fresh water, drought, nutrient depletion, etc.

II. Documentation of village level bio-resources for the benefit of local people at Sagar Island, S. 24 Parganas for proper conservation and sustainable use.

This is a biodiversity documentation programme of West Bengal Biodiversity Board being implemented at seven villages of Sagar Island, S. 24 Parganas, W.B.

Objectives : The primary objectives of the proposed project are the **preparation of People's Biodiversity Register (PBR), Awareness generation for Conservation & Sustainable utilization of Bio-resources and formation of Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) with the help of local Panchayet Samity.** More specifically, these objectives are directed towards the conservation of biodiversity through sustainable use of the natural resources with the help of the local people.



It will pay attention towards the Survey, inventorisation and initiation of conservation activities of endangered fauna and flora, with special attention to freshwater fish fauna of Sagar Island

Activities: A two-days biodiversity conservation training workshop was organized on 5th & 6th April, 08 at Bamankhali, Sagar Island.



Dr. Soumyen Ghosh, Sr. Project Officer, W.B. Biodiversity Board supervised the entire programme. Sri Milan Parua, local MLA was also graced the second day function and took part in the mock interview.

Village resources, like ponds, lands, community spaces etc. were identified through the listed mappings and PRA meets. The baseline data collected is helpful for successful and effective implementation of other project activities. For example some of the resources such as domestic ponds are under utilized in consultation with the community members the excavation of these ponds is being undertaken with an agreement of cost sharing and benefit sharing mechanism. Accordingly an action plan is prepared for interventions.

Important Findings:

Village resource mapping (for six villages), survey of local plants and animals, documentation of traditional knowledge with reference to the use and **conservation of biotic resources are in progress.**

So far, 46 varieties (37 local variety) of paddy, 112 species/varieties of vegetables, 6 species of pulses, 4 species of oil seeds, 256 species of wild plants (including medicinal ones) 41 species of weeds, 15 species of aquatic plants, 23 species of fruit plants, 42 species of flowering plants, etc. are recorded

In summary, Information related to wild and cultivated plants (357 species) and wild and domesticated animals (109 species) from 7 villages was collected by the Coordinators with the help of BCC (Biodiversity Conservation Corps).

III. National Environment Awareness Programme (NEAC-2008-09): *Awareness generation to initiate Capacity Building and developing climate resilient community at Sagar Island, South 24 Paraganas.*

This is a national programme of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India. We



received support from the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India and Regional Museum of Natural History. This year's theme was CLIMATE CHANGE. We organized four public meetings, one sit & Draw contest, one



exhibition, rally, one Camp at Nimpith Ashram Women Technology Park, Gangasagar and one workshop at Garia office of PUPA (190 Sreerampur North, Kolkata 700 084).

Colourful posters on Global warming was prepared and distributed amongst the schools of Sagar island.

IV. Environment Education Programme in Schools

Sulekha Raichaudhuri Memorial EE Programme and P.K.Ray Memorial Environmental Leadership programmes were conducted in selected schools in our network (nearly 15 schools are in our network).

This year we recognized two schools with **GREEN SCHOOL** award [Sakhawat Memorial Govt. Girls



High school (Kolkata) and Dhablat Lakshman Parabesh High school (Sagar Island)], and the **Green Girl** award was given to four students of Sakhawat Memorial Govt. Girls High School, one students of Ananda Ashram Balika Vidyapith, Naktala and one student of Dhablat Lakshman Parabesh High School of Sagar Island, and **Green Boy** award was given to a student of Dhablat Lakshman Parabesh High School

V. Vermicomposting Training programme

i) **Green Entrepreneurship Development Training Programme for farmers on Vermicomposting at Sagar Island, South 24 Parganas (supported by NABARD).**

This is basically a Green Entrepreneurship Development Training Programme for farmers on Vermicomposting at Sagar Island, South 24 Parganas, supported by NABARD. The training programme was organised in two phases (27-28 December, 08 and 21-22 February, 09) with long-term implication. **Sri Ashim Das Adhikari** and Sri Animesh Bera from Service Centre (DRCSC), acted as an expert in the first phase and Sri Prodyut Nayek, Project Director (Organic Farming), THREAD, Orissa acted as an expert in the second phase. The overall programme was coordinated by Dr. A. Misra, Secretary, Paribesh Unnayan Parishad. On the fourth day we visited the fields of eight interested farmers with the idea of developing village-level integrated farms with organic inputs.



Sixty eight farmers from 13 villages participated on 27th December, 08. However, 30 of them attended the second day (28th December, 09) and were considered for final group of farmers for yearlong intervention in their agricultural fields. In addition to training on vermicomposting, emphasis was also put on various aspects of organic farming. A survey format was designed for recording farmers' profile, which was filled up on second day. In addition, a cultivation calendar was also prepared on second day for knowing the vegetables cultivated in the area at a glance.

The second phase of the training was started on 21st February, 09 with expert support from Sri Prodyut Nayek from THREAD, Orissa. In the



second phase emphasis was put on the practical aspect of farming by visiting farmers' field on 22nd February,09 along with the expert. On 23rd February,09, an exposure visit was arranged with the selected farmers, 15 in number, by visiting a large scale Vermicomposting unit (**Das Biotech & Consultant**) at Mahendraganj village, Sagar Island. We have procured selected species of earthworms from the above-mentioned Farm for distribution amongst the farmers.

Subsequently, 69 farmers were selected from the target villages and organised into **eight Farmers' Club** with the idea of raising at least eight model integrated farms in the long run. These model farms are expected to be the precursor of several integrated farms in the area.

ii) Training Programme on Vermicomposting in salt-reclaimed areas of West Bengal, Sagar Island (supported by Sundarban Development Board)

We organised two short training programmes on vermicomposting, one on 23 February, 09 at Mandirtala Bharatmata Seva Samity and the second one in the premises of SAGAR MANGAL, Chowringhee, Rudranagar, on 24 February,09 involving selected farmers from north and south Sagar Island. Nearly 50 farmers were involved during the programme, of which eight farmers, four from north and four from south, received composting worms through lottery, as an immediate benefit just to start with the vermicomposting activities in their farms. Sri Subal Das, local Panchayet member graced the programme. They have agreed to form **farmers' Club** in their locality and will exchange within themselves after five or six months. A farmer's profile was filled up so as to monitor their activities in future if possible.



VI. Environmental awareness programme

A) **World Wetland Day (2nd February,08)** : This day was organised in collaboration with Ananda Ashram Balika Vidyapith, SEBA and Tarakeswar Science Club. Prof. Sunil Raichaudhuri, Retd. Principal, Presidency College graced the function. On that day, **GREEN GIRL AWARD** was delivered to five girls.



B) **Earth Day** (22nd April, 08): The Earth day was observed at Sagar Recreational Service involving their school students with the idea of raising their knowledge as well as voice for the conservation of nature.

C) **World Biodiversity Day (22nd May,2008)** : A meeting involving Coordinators and SHG members was organized on World Biodiversity Day (23rd May 2008) at Sagar Recreational service Bamankhali.

D) **Forest Week** (14 –20 July, 08) : We observe this week at Sagar Island involving local clubs and members of SHGs , and distributed locally suitable plants. SHG members were motivated to establish Nursery, one at Sapkhali village, one at Mandirtala and the other one at Companirchar village.

E) One four days **camp** to create environmental awareness with special reference to hazards and risks to island ecosystems due to climate change was made from 6th to 9th October 2008 at Bamankhali High School Durga Puja Mandap.

F) With the request received from Mr Ganesh Iier Radio Mirchi, Bangalore, and Mr Daya Gupta, Programme Head, Radio Mirchi, Kolkata, we took the responsibility of judging the contest on “**Eco-Friendly Puja Mandap** ” of Tata Green within Kolkata on 5th & 6th October,2008. **Suruchi Sangha** was placed in the top of the successful Puja Mandaps.



G) An exhibition was organised on 26 -29 January,2009 at Mandirtala in association with Netaji Club with the idea of raising mass awareness on Climate Change. Another exhibition was held on 31st January, 2009 to 2nd Feb.,09 in association with Sagar Recreational service at Bamankhali, Sagar Island

VII. Capacity Building programme :

A) One **training programme** on promotion of integrated farming with high input of organic manure was organized at Sundarban Kalpataru Ashram, Kakdwip during 23 to 24 May,08 involving 7 coordinators and 11 members of targeted SHGs. Shri. Ansuman Das and Shri



Animesh Bera of Service Centre and Dr. Krishnendu Archaya, Reader, Dept., of Botany, Calcutta University acted as resource persons.

B) On 25th May, 08 a **training programme on entrepreneurship development** was organized by the teachers of Gnan Chandra Ghosh polytechnic with emphasis on hands on activities.

C) Seven young boys and three girls (coordinators of the project) from Sagar Island visited DRCSC for a two-days exposé visit-cum-training from 23rd to 24th October,08 on integrated farming.

D) Prof. S. Mitra & Dr. A. Misra visited Patharpratima field of DRCSC on 28.09.08 for selecting the area for future exposure-visit of the village coordinators. Mr Animesh Bera of Indraprastha Srijan Welfare Society, Ganger Bazar, Patharpratima guided us in the field. We were satisfied with the progress of work on integrated farming with organic input in the fields visited and thought of sending our workers in future.



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