

# ACADEMY OF ROOT DEVELOPMENT

Newsletter 10

August 2011

## In Australia

Since the last newsletter there have been quite a few presentations, fundraisers and media activities as ARD's profile in Australia continues to grow. During a trip to Melbourne, Graeme and Wendy did a presentation to some members of the Indian community arranged by Alphonse Benoit. It was wonderful to talk with people who understood the context and some shared their experiences of working with underprivileged women as well. Anne Oberins, a Melbourne jeweller kindly donated eight beautiful necklaces, one of which was raffled recently.

Another big night out was held at Goanna Bakery with Parissa Bouas and Carl Cleves of The Hottentots giving a stand out performance to a packed restaurant. Once again Prem, Russell and Ally tickled our taste buds with their delicacies and the Lismore ARD support group decorated the place, made drinks and helped clean up. So many grateful thanks from Graeme and Wendy for making this event one which we could relax at and enjoy as we knew it was all being taken care of. Of course once again a big thanks to Geoff Haycraft for loaning Goanna for the event. The press approached *us* about this event, with the local Echo newspaper and the local ABC inviting us to tell the ARD story!



*Pam, Marie and Bob of Fashionistas for Our Indian Sistas with the Red Book*

The two Lismore Carboot market stalls continue to bring in the cash and help to spread the word, with the clothing stall (Fashionistas for Our Indian Sistas) looking very flash with two donated mannequins showing off the latest stunning items. We are always interested in your quality second hand goods if you are on the North Coast. Please ring Bruce on 66220485 for the Lismore area and Wendy on 0401013333, for Byron Shire for us to relieve you of them.

Marie Makinson gave a wonderful talk about Carl Jung's Red Book at Lismore library recently. Fifty people attended and with the raffle of a kindly donated

copy of the book, the entry fee and sale of food we made over \$1000!

We have also received some wonderful lump sum donations, including one from Michelle Mahrer, who had a big dance event, Dances of Ecstasy in Sydney and donated some of the proceeds. If you or someone you know is doing an event, perhaps you or they would like to do likewise.

Please let us know if we can help you in spreading the ARD word in any way. We can send a copy of the film Wendy made for you to show to friends, or you can invite friends to your home for us to do a presentation.

When we sent our last newsletter in March we had approximately 45 monthly donors, donating between \$10 and \$80 per month. At present we have 62 donors. We have set a goal for 100 donors by the end of this year. If you know of anyone you could send this newsletter to who may be interested in the work of ARD please do so. And a reminder: our website is [www.ard-india.org](http://www.ard-india.org).

## In India

The work of ARD continues to grow and its profile in the surrounding area is being raised by the activities with the women. At the end of the newsletter is a report on a very successful World Environment Day workshop.

In the last newsletter we told you that another 100 Self Help Groups (SHGs) would be formed in the coming year. 50 of these groups are now in operation, adding another approximately 750 women to the programme making a total of approximately 5200 women. At present it is the rainy season and roads out to the field are impassable in many areas. Thankfully the women in the groups have income producing small businesses which are not reliant on long distance travel but are operating in the local villages. Below is the profile of one of the SHG women, Radha Devi, and her success story.

Many of you, our donors and fundraisers are contributing to the employment of 18 Indian staff members to run the programme. In this newsletter we have a table with information about the staff and an interview with Sandeep Kumar, who at 14, envisioned a better life for the poor people of his family's villages and has brought this about and more (with some help from his friends!). Sandeep is now the Convenor of ARD and his story makes a good read and gives insight into the history of ARD and Sandeep's deep and passionate commitment to social justice.

### SHG Member Profile

I am Radha Devi aged 33 years. I am a Hindu from Kiore community residing in Malpa village. Our family has 2 oxen and 2 acres of land. I faced huge financial constraints and I had immense problems in running my family. I have 6 members in my family. My family profile is as follows:

Seri al No.	Name of the family member	Relationship to Kumara	Age	Education status	Occupation
1.	Gaya Prasad	Father-in-law	60	Intermediate	Farming
2.	Ganga Devi	Mother-in-law	52	Illiterate	Farming
3.	Sanjay Kumar Barmo	Husband	36	Intermediate	Farming
4.	Ankita Bama	Daughter	13	Class v	School
5.	Ankit	Son	10	Class IV	School
6.	Akansha	Daughter	7	Class I	School

Having 6 members in the family, it was extremely difficult for me to run the family. Multiple things kept me worrying as how to manage the financial matters of the family and the different health and education needs of the family. If I needed some extra money, then we had to borrow it from the landlords and they charge very high interest. We had to mortgage our belongings to borrow this money. This made things very difficult for us and we suffered financially.

I was searching for some alternate mechanism of income but I didn't have any capital to start a new business, neither was I skilled at any other jobs. This kept me worrying all the time.

Suddenly I met with Ashok and Usha from ARD. They gave me a small introduction about ARD and said that they have started the work in my village. I was very inquisitive to know about the organisation. He explained to me the concept of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and how through the formation of collectives it is possible to save money. He also told me how in other parts of India women are doing this. I was inspired by the stories but not totally convinced. He invited me to a meeting.

I went to the meeting and there discussion was made about the SHGs. In it I came to know about the entire process of the formation of an SHG and the loaning procedures and the bigger objectives of SHG. 20 other women who were like me formed a group. With joint consensus we named the group Sita Group and selected the leader and secretary and treasurer of the group.

After the formation of the group, each of the women deposited Rs. 20 into a group savings kitty. After that when our savings reached Rs. 500 an account was opened in the bank. After 1 year an amount of Rs. 2400 was saved. We applied for a loan from the Punjab National Bank. When the group got the first term loan, I received Rs. 3000.

With that amount I managed to open a small shop in the area. After opening a shop I felt relieved because to some extent my financial worries ended by having my own asset. My husband also became very happy as our income level rose to a certain extent. Our thoughts were centralised around the shop and we began to think how we can develop our shop more. I was also now a bit more focussed on the education of my children.

In 2007, I took a loan of 5000 from PNB. I bought raw materials for my shop. I buy various new stuff and edibles from Gaya and bring it to my shop and sell as profit. My sales increased to a considerable level. This amount has been used to extend the shop.

Now my shop is running full fledgedly and I am earning good amount of profit from it. I am happy that I am a part of the SHG and my financial status has improved a lot over time. Now I am planning to open one more shop near it.

"I am much indebted to ARD for its support and work in our villages. Through the formation of these SHGs we are not only able to earn and extend our livelihood opportunities but also we have learnt how to make bank transactions and have interactions with other officials. Now I see myself as a woman who has decision making abilities and a say in family matters regarding education and other issues. Thank you ARD." Radha Devi



### Staff Currently Employed by ARD

S.No	Name of the Staff	Post	Age	Educational Qualification	Work Experience	Association with ARD
01	Sandeep Kr Pathak	Convenor	24 Years	B.B.A	9 Yrs	From Inception
02	Nairita RoyChowdhary	Programme Manager	25 Years	Masters Social Work	2 Yrs	10 Months
03	Sudhir Kumar	Accountant cum MIS Officer	27 Years	B.Com)	4 Yrs	3 months
04	Sharawan Kumar	Coordinator	35 Years	B.A	8 Yrs	4 Years
05	Anil Kr Pathak	Project Coordinator	36 Years	B.A	7 Yrs	6 Years
06	Ashok Kr Singh	Asst Project Coordinator	46 Years	B.A	5 Yrs	6 Years
07	Kumari Sarika Sinha	Field Animator	34 Years	Inter	2 years	6 Years
08	Rita Kumari	Field Animator	36 Years	Matric	1 Year	1 Year
09	Madhuri Sinha	Field Animator	36 Years	Matric	1 Year	1 Year
10	Suman Devi	Field Animator	45 Years	Matric	5 Years	5 Years
11	Sunita Devi	Field Animator	38 Years	Matric	11 Months	11 months
12	Premlata Devi	Field Animator	39 Years	Matric	2 years	2 Years
13	Indu Devi	Field Animator	40 Years	Matric	1 Year	4 Years
14	Dinesh Rishiyasan	Field Animator	40 Years	Matric	1 Year	6 Months
15	Naresh Singh	Field Animator	56 Years	Matric	1 Year	6 Months
16	Lalmani Devi	Field Animator	40 Years	Matric	11 Months	1 Year



## **Interview with Sandeep Kumar, Convenor of ARD**

### **1. Can you tell me how Academy of Root Development started? When and how did it all begin?**

I hailed from a village of Guraru named Mahuyaine and there I found severe problems of health. I was much stressed and wanted desperately to do something for the people of my village. But I had no idea as to how can I help. In the year, 1999 when I was of 14 years of age, I met a person from Australia named Graeme Batterbury. I discussed with him my vision and the problems that my village people were facing. He showed interest in my problems and he visited Mahuyaine with me.

After that he went to Australia and he had some correspondence with me from there. We planned for some systematic and planned intervention that could bring about changes in the village condition. It was understood that skill development is a must for taking such initiative. So he arranged for some funding and a training and exposure visit was organised by Academy of Development Science, Karjat in 2002. After coming from Karjat, we legally registered the organization in September, 2002 and then onwards we began exploring the different needs and the problems that are faced by the people. We started it with our village since we knew the scenario of the village well.

### **2. What were the first few years like? What were the important moments during the early times?**

In the first few years since 2002, there was a lack of funds and so we started with some small charity based activities like donating blankets to the poor etc. At that juncture, Graeme came to India and we discussed developing an organisation. Luckily at this instance another person from New Zealand named Gary Griffiths also came to be associated with ARD and he committed to fund the programmes of ARD. After some years Gary died and the funding from him ended.

There were immense problems in the first few years due to paucity of funds. The organisation was new and there was no experience and knowledge as how to manage an organisation and to effectively implement its programmes. There was lack of infrastructure and no manpower. I used to roam the villages and talk with different people and used to work for the people. These were the learning years of my life which was the foundation stone for ARD.

### **3. What does your role as Convenor entail? What jobs do you mainly do for ARD?**

Below is my job description from our Staff Manual. Some of these tasks I do alone, and some in conjunction with the Program Officer.

1. Convene all camps, meetings and trainings i.e. village camps, staff meeting, Board meetings etc. at the central office, field office & village level in consultation with Program Officers & Field Animators through written notice or phone conversations;
2. Deliver introductory speeches at the camps, meetings and trainings as a resource person as suits and as and when required;
3. Tasks related exclusively to men and boys i.e. camp with them, individual counselling, skill training, IGP with them as and when required as a resource person.
4. Manage the central office with systems in place, bank operations, manage the finance, monitor the accounts records etc. etc.
5. Liaise with Govt. Departments, NABARD, DRDA, KVK, JSS and other resources & technical organizations for fund raising/tapping local projects.

6. Meet with Donor agencies, Corporate Houses, Indian Foundations/Trusts for tapping resources.
7. Organise skills training on cattle rearing, agriculture and vocation based work.
8. Monitor the activities at the field level from time to time & feedback to the Program Officer
9. Prepare yearly Audit, FCRA report, renewal of Income Tax exemption (80G, 12A), TAN, PAN, deposit of income tax of the staff as applicable etc.
9. Support the Program Officer to prepare Annual Report at the end of year in tune with audited statement.
10. Meet with Women MLAs, Bidhan Parishad Members & MPs for Policy Advocacy in favour of women.
11. Prepare Concept Notes, project proposal preparation & Documentation.
12. Liase with Fundraisers in Australia.

#### **4. What is your vision of the future for ARD?**

I want that ARD should be instrumental in reaching out to a wide number of people and will work with humility towards ensuring a peaceful environment for the whole of humankind.

I visualise ARD as a national level organisation. I want to expand the working arenas in the field of child rights, women's empowerment and work for environmental equity and justice. We want to work with rights based approach and would like to expand our work in the areas of lobbying and advocacy.



#### **5. You are a young man. Why are you working in Women's Empowerment?**

Women serve as mothers in the society who shape the lives of the children. It is for this reason that it is said that once a child is educated, we educate a family and hence a society. So for reaching out to a wide number of people it is necessary that we work with the issue of women empowerment.

#### **6. Tell us about your feelings towards ARD. This a very big project you have undertaken at such a young age? What does ARD mean to you?**

I am interested in social work. ARD is the vision of my life. I would like to devote my entire life working for ARD.

## Report on World Environment Day

### Objectives of the Programme:

1. To sensitise, educate and motivate the people towards environmentally friendly practices and hence secure a sound living standard.
2. To create effective liasing with various stakeholders like government officials for better networking and linkages.
3. To effectively promote environment friendly practices among the Self Help Group women.

**Activity:** The programme was held at Mahuyine village of Guraru Block. Six hundred women from ARD Self Help Groups, who will serve as a resource base for promoting environmentally friendly practices to the other SHGs in the villages were present. In addition to this, there were 100 farmers who participated in the workshop.



The workshop began with the welcome speech given by Shrawan Kumar, the field co ordinator of ARD. The chief guests were garlanded and there was the lighting of the candle by the chief guest. Shrawan Kumar spoke about the importance of World Environment Day and the various initiatives that can be taken. A song was sung by a school student Bindi Kumar of Tineri village. It was much appreciated by the guests and the SHG members. The theme of environment conservation and the importance of environment preservation were presented beautifully through the song. Next the leader of Shweta self help group, Madhuri Devi sung a song on environment day, preservation and conservation. She also spoke of the importance of planting trees.

The participants were educated about the following:

- Adverse impacts of deforestation and the increasing rate of pollution through use of non biodegradable products.
- Rampant use of chemical fertilizers leads to decrease in productivity of crops and danger to the people consuming them.
- Use of plastic bags causes pollution of waterways and the countryside.
- The importance of plantations in rural areas which supply oxygen and prevent soil pollution.
- The impact of air conditioners and chloro flouro carbons in air pollution.
- The adverse impact of water pollution, due to washing of clothes and bathing in the riverside.
- Effluents and chemicals released into the water by industries near the villages causing several health hazards to the people.
- The importance of rain harvesting to reduce the problems associated with drought.

The next session was taken by Mr. Sandeep Kumar, the Convenor of ARD. He briefly outlined the work of ARD and several environmental initiatives that have been undertaken by ARD to date:

- Training was imparted to the SHG members about the importance of vermi (worm) compost and the way it nourishes the quality of soil, and 25 compost pits were built.
- Women are informed about organic farming practices and positive and negative impacts people can make on the environment.
- Planting of trees on previous World Environment Days.

After that the chief guest, Mrs. Jyoti Singha talked about the various types of pollution and ways to safeguard the environment.

### Output of the training

The SHG members were very interested and highly enthusiastic in the workshop.

- It was decided that small groups will be created in each village to disseminate information about the environment to other people.
- The SHG members shared successful case studies of ARD in relation to environmental issues and this also resulted in people knowing more about ARD's work.
- The event was a successful platform for liaising with different government agencies, and proved to be a good learning experience for many of the Village Council members and the government officials. Strong networking was created between the government officials and ARD in which the government officials committed that they will refer to ARD in implementing any environment related work in Guraru Block.
- The government officers committed their assistance for the planting program of ARD which is to be held in July.
- A road map was designed in which the Panchayati Raj (Village Council) members together decided that a maximum number of schemes will be designed for environment purposes with the allocated money.

