

Annual Report 2007-08

Development Research Communication and Services Centre

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This year, our Prime Minister addressed fortune global forum – the power elite. The Finance minister applauded industry's progress. The sensex touched dizzy heights. We are proud that the world's richest man is our own Mukesh Ambani. Indian companies are buying foreign companies.

As I write the report, the market is high, especially for the poor and marginalized sector. A silent hunger is going to strike us soon. At the end of the year 2007, some 25000 landless farmers and tribals marched to Delhi, barefoot — they wanted their right to land, food and survival. This year we received report of children working in horrible conditions, working for hours without break, dying at times due to accidents in the factory caused by the never-ending lust for more profit. Several agitations raised from various platforms causing violence across the states is taking innocent lives. Farmer's suicides, land acquisition, violation of civil rights are regular issues in newsletter.

Amidst all these confusions, DRCSO grew up to 25 years striving to achieve food and livelihood security for the marginalized sector through sustainable natural resource management. In the crossroads of



corporate feudalism and globalised economy, we found our work very important and difficult. At the same time, we also felt that to get a significant impact, we need to multiply our effort many folds.

Natural Resource Management Division

This phase of our **sustainable food and livelihood security network project** (supported by Christian Aid) is in its second year. We continue to help the resource poor households to form groups and share resources through



community management. These groups are being assisted to develop and manage Area Resource Training Centres to serve as the centre for agro-based development services, information/documents related to natural resources & alternative livelihood etc. in the nearby villages. The ARTCs are due to be owned by the member groups. So far, 19 such ARTCs have been formed in 8 districts with 186 villages and 500 groups.

The approach includes supporting the groups to enhance the production of food, fodder, and firewood through collaborative trial, training, raising school garden for supplying quality food in the mid-day meal, integrating various subsystems for improving production & income and farming in group in the fallows. We could develop 28 school gardens during the year, which created a very good impact on the nutrition status of the children. This year 19000 *bighas* of cultivable land could be brought under IPM practices and 1200 *bighas* of unproductive land under cultivation.

Supporting the groups for disaster preparedness through rainwater conservation in newly excavated storage tanks, grain and seed reserve, plantation of strategic crop and micro-irrigation were some of the very important interventions in the vulnerable areas. The concept of step pond for multiple use gained remarkable popularity in Purulia. The project for setting up **river lift irrigation** (supported by KKS) in Purulia was very effective in terms of extending the farming season and creation of man-days.





Some time back common lands and properties were important sources for fuel and food especially for the landless. These were also used for grazing cattle. Apart from their religious purposes, sacred common groves and water-bodies were maintained by the community as a means of conserving biodiversity. Today, such places have become scarce in the village, and even if you find one, it is degraded to the furthest extent through years of neglect and irresponsible use by the community like continuous grazing etc. Regenerating such common places has been a continuous effort of this division. This year we could do plantation over a 20 km stretch of road embankment and on 250 *bighas* of degraded land. Farmer groups were facilitated to do mixed cropping on 250 *bighas* of common land.

Initiatives were taken to create awareness about farmers' rights, environmental degradation and alternative development through village fair, rally, poster etc. We took initiative to try and popularize **Social Analysis System (SAS)**, a set of participatory monitoring and evaluation tools and ideas developed by Carlton University. The project was assigned to us through ADS – the India partner of Carlton University.

Integrating multi components in farming systems can reduce risk and cost of production; improve soil fertility, provide balanced nutrition and ensure enhanced holistic yield and income. The first phase of our **All India Coordinated Project** (supported by DST) in 14 states to propagate and practice this idea of integrated farming, came to an end this year. As a coordinating body we monitored the activities conducted by the partners by providing training in scientific principles, standardizing the model, developing software, producing IEC materials and by formulating a strategy for impact analysis. At this point of this innovative program with emerging successful BIOFARM models, we now need to consolidate the achievements and expand the scope as well as reach of this program on cluster scale.

Water hyacinth, the trouble making aquatic weed, can be converted into compost with proper management and technology. In the laboratory, we tried to find out a suitable technique for making cost effective quality compost from water hyacinth in a short period. We tried production of compost, applied it in the cultivation of different crops and compared the yield with conventional farming through field trial (supported by Herrschink Municipality, Germany). We want to propagate the idea of having compost from this apparently unusable biomass in future.



Wild mushroom holds a very important place in the food basket of the tribals of West Medinipur. Through a small but very important



project accomplished by the Jhargram unit, ended this year (supported by DST), we documented the edible mushrooms grown in the wild in and around Jhargram and conducted a research to discover their multiplication and preservation techniques. We have plans for domestication of such collected nutritious food items in the near future.

Living Farms in Orissa, a sister concern of DRCSC is continuing its work related to food and livelihood security this year also. The group will soon start functioning as a separate organization.

Environment Education Division

During the course of our journey we felt that in order to sustain our work for environment protection, we need to



work with the young force – the future generation. Two major initiatives have been taken in the formal education sectors too – i. initiating eco-clubs in each and every school and ii. introducing environment science as a subject in the curriculum. Environment Education has been an important component

in National Curriculum Framework 2008 also. Obviously, the initial idea was to spread the awareness for protecting our immediate environment – but now it has come to a state where only mugging up of orthodox text books and throwing them up in the examination hall are the only things that matter.

In view of the above, we were trying to improve the quality of **classroom transaction of EVS** by taking regular classes in 7 schools (supported by Shaplaneer and Indienhilfe). A teacher's manual for classes VI to VIII will be published shortly on the basis of our experience gained through these interaction sessions with the students.



Our **Ecology and Natural**

Resource Education Programme (supported by Shaplaneer and Indienhilfe) was extended further to include 65 eco groups from 14 NGOs in 10 districts. 10 senior groups did short projects on Pollinating Insect, Beetle Vine with organic input, unconventional food etc. Water hyacinth has many uses other than a composting material like it can

be used as fodder, for mulching, making handicrafts etc. This was tried out by 5 children groups in 4 districts with scholarship support from GGF. Like the yester years, the different actions conducted with this



group continued to be nature study camp, skill based camp, educators' orientation, exhibition and newsletter for sharing ideas etc.

Livelihood options for the youth are getting limited day by day. Today at both national and state levels, enough importance is being given on vocational education. But these are mainly designed for urban and semi-urban livelihoods and that is also reflected in the course and program designs of the newly formed West Bengal State



Council for Vocational Education & Training (WBSCVET). We are trying to find out and standardize the livelihood options especially for rural school dropouts through our **Prakriti Pather Asor** (supported by OXFAM). This year 18 PPA centres functioned in 3 districts. In most of the cases, after completing a compulsory functional education, children formed groups to start their own business.

Four **Multipurpose Education Centres** (support from WE21, ABA and Ms. Chiba) are running in 3 districts for integrating pre-school education, skill training of adolescents and income generation & gardening activities among adult

women. We are trying to collaborate with ICDS centres for mainstreaming the idea. One centre at Bankura has been handed over to the villagers. This year, basic infrastructure has been made in all the centres and support has been given to the women's group for income generating activities. The groups are making some extra money by making shal leaf plates, khesh (a quilt woven out of old sarees), duckery, piggery etc. and donating money to the centre's fund.



A film and a set of posters on social insects were made with support from NCSTC.

This division is supporting other organizations in organizing camps, fairs, capacity building of formal school teachers in biology/EVS/ NFE etc.



Info Dissemination and Public Education Division

This team works for collection, collation and dissemination of information on various socio economic issues for creating an information-based common platform of multiple actors of civil society that believe and work with alternative courses of development. One of the major activities was information processing from secondary sources and dissemination through news and feature service (**Sambad Parisheba**) for 125 rural newspapers, film shows, seminars, discussion on current topics etc.



Networking with civil societies through ADDA (a platform of resource NGOs), SHGPF, RTI network, WBEN etc. continued this year also for creating a space for continuous dialogue and debates.

18 People's Information Centres in various locations were initiated with the vision

that these centres will act as a storehouse of local information, especially related to agriculture, environment, livelihood, govt. schemes etc for development of the village. The centres act proactively to make people aware of their rights and other



development issues, try to collaborate and help GUS by providing basic information for planning.



Strengthening initiatives for using **RTI** for better governance especially related to the issue of food and livelihood was another major thrust area of this year. In the near future, we have plans to emphasize more on this area.

Our **library**, enriched with books, occasional

papers, quasi-published papers, local-statewise-national-regional-international magazines, videos, posters, journals and recently added e-books, continued to offer services to researchers, organizations and individuals regularly.

In collaboration with National Innovation Foundation, we organized an innovation identification walk in Purulia called

Shodh Yatra for documentation of indigenous technological knowledge and grassroots innovations.

This division took initiative for income generation through popularization of our publications and creation & maintenance of the Centre's website for other NGOs.



Training and Capacity Building Division

This division has proved their capacity of sustaining themselves by generating local funds by offering training to other organizations. Apart from in-house training, this year we did training on

natural resource management for organizations like LWS, DRDC, WIF, Asutosh College and several organizations in Orissa. Group **capacity building**

assignments were completed with TdH, P&RD WB, WDU, DRDC etc. A

challenging pilot initiative had been taken to enhance income of SHG members by providing necessary counseling and facilitation support in 5 blocks of Bankura in collaboration with WDU.

Non Formal and environment education related training given by this division is also getting popular recently. This year it completed two long term assignments of training educators from the partners of Save the Children,UK.

We try to help students from state, national and international level students to do field based research through collaboration with institutions and universities.

New Publications

Our publication and production division generates income by giving service to other teams as well as providing outside service. Some new in-house publications are listed below.



Regular Publications

- Debate (2 issues) – the quarterly English magazine on debates on development
- Chaser Katha (4 issues) – the Bengali quarterly on sustainable agriculture
- Sambad Paisheba (12 issues) – monthly news and feature service for local newspapers
- Chaser Katha Supplement (6 issues) – the monthly supplement on sustainable agriculture
- Vegetable – creative lesson plan for educators
- Kaktarua (1 Issue) – Bengali quarterly with creative writings from children
- BIOFARM newsletter (1 issue)
- Library news (12 issues) – news of new arrivals at our library



Occasional Publications

- Tathya Adhikar – hand book on RTI
- Tathya Janar Adhikar – booklet on RTI
- Krishir Bikalpa Path – booklet on alternative agriculture
- Jana Tathya Kendra Sangathan Sahaika – manual for running a people's information centre
- Swanivar daler khata patra rakhar sahaj nirdeshika – a manual for book keeping for SHGs
- Farm Design – booklet on integrated farm design in various agro climatic zone



- Fireflies – case studies on integrated farms from all over India
- Mahasangha gathaner Ruporekha – A manual for forming cluster federation
- Lakhya Swanirvarata – A manual for SHGs



- Pusti bagan keno o kibhabe – manual for raising kitchen garden
- Set of posters/flex on impact of globalization on agriculture, DRCSC activities, RTI, use of water hyacinth

- Pamphlet on organic practices of Taro, Brinjal, paddy and sesame.



Films

- **The Journey** - Intervention done as part of the BIOFARM project on an Integrated Farm in Patharpratima, a block in the coastal area of Sundarban.



- **The World of Social Insects** - A film on the life of 4 social insects viz. Bees, Ants, Termites and Wasps as a supplementary study material for children in the age group of 12 – 14.

- **Aranyak** - This is the Bengali version of the film 'The Old Man and His Jungle' on the impact of JFM in 11 forest fringe villages of South West Bengal.

Bengal.



- **Global Warming** - A 7 minute short for general awareness about the crisis and possible interventions.

Snippets

- **Kothay phale sonar phasal** - A series of 3 snippets on case studies of genetic diversity conservation, cultivation of poison-free vegetables in home garden and culture of indigenous varieties of fish.



AV Report

- **Looking Back** - Compilation of AV Documentation of 17 BIOFARMS in different states of India
- **Ranga Matir Pathe Pathe** - Compilation of AV Documentation of activities of Birbhum
- **Experience of Saldiha** - A film on community rainwater harvesting for irrigation of fallows in Saldiha, a drought prone village of Purulia. The programme was implemented with support from KKS.



Status Reports/Research Papers published from DRCS

1. Integrating Ecology in Education: A system Pedagogy, A. Das and D. Raychoudhury (ISI), 12th International and 43rd National Conference of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology, 2008
2. Agri-biodiversity erosion in post Green Revolution Era: A Restorative Effort Across Different Agro-ecological Regions of India, P. Basu & A. Das, Asian Biodiversity convention 2007
3. Identification of wild edible mushroom as an alternative food resource in Eastern India: Implications

in health nutrition and immunity, Sudip Das, Manas Mahato, Sanjay Singha, AS Chatterjee, Parthiba Basu, Anshuman Das and Subhasis Chatterjee Published in ELEMNTS, USA.

4. Status Report of Eco Clubs in and around Kolkata.
5. A set of write up/awareness materials by Subrata Kundu on RTI has been published in various newspapers/magazines.
6. A study on growth of Azolla Pinnata in various bio-inputs with and without single super phosphate, Pulak Gharai.
7. A study on the status of NREGA schemes in two blocks of Purulia, Rajkrishna Mukherjee.

We are getting noticed in the peer groups and more requests for capacity building from grass root as well as senior level is coming from state, national and international levels. Even our publications and reports have been applauded by many during this year.

We remain thankful to our donors, supporters, volunteers and well wishers.

