

PROJECT PROPOSAL

VIKAS Project Goals and Objectives:

Shree Nityananda Education Trust (SNET) in partnership with Om Gagangiri Maharaj Trust (GMT) proposes the VIKAS PROJECT (Villages Invigorating Knowledge Activities & Solutions) that GMT will purchase 6.5 acres land centered within the tribal area surrounding Nandani Village upon which it will establish a vocational training and mentorship institute.

This vocational training and mentorship institute will:

- empowering individuals through education, self-reliance and financial independence.
- providing hands-on vocational training in skills and technologies appropriate for improving the quality of village life.
- Through mentorship and internships, link tribal members with sustainable livelihood opportunities, nurturing them till they step up on the ladder out of poverty and begin enjoying a decent quality of life.
- Address and inspire psychological healing from the cultural biases of the predominant culture and teach tribal members to develop their own sense of cultural pride. Address the co-existing issues of depression and apathy among tribal people.
- supporting development of tribal members in becoming leaders in their communities.

Background and Need of People in Catchment Area:

In the 10 km surrounding Ganeshpuri of Thane District, Maharashtra, India, there are approximately 20,000 families or 120,000 people. Although it is only 100 km from Mumbai, the financial capital of India, this area is undeveloped and the people suffer from lack of work, education, transportation, and government facilities and resources. About 48% of these families are illiterate, unskilled, landless and live below poverty level. They are suffering from easily treatable diseases and lack of food. The majority of hamlets are situated in inaccessible areas that are devoid of electricity and fresh water. They mainly depend upon daily wages to provide for their family's needs, often taking the most difficult work to be found, brick making.

These unfortunates suffer from the many problems of poverty: malnutrition, poor health due to lack of clean water, poor hygiene practices, lack of education, and lack of access to medicine and medical care. There is lack of awareness or access to government programs, banks and other financial situations. This leads to a dependency upon opportunistic and unscrupulous money lenders. The communities lack a sense of unity and working on problems together. Individuals and communities are unaware of their own strengths and thus have a sense of helplessness.

In rural Maharashtra, especially in the tribal belt of Taluka Wada in Palgher District, agriculture, often at the subsistence level, is the predominant economic activity. The farmers cannot access water except during monsoon, and thus only grow one crop a year. They are left with little food for the major part of the year which leads to malnutrition. Six months of the year, they must migrate to other areas for work to augment their income and food supply.

Villages such as Nimboli, Nandani, Gaygotha, etc., provide very limited opportunities for non-farm employment. Therefore, the male youth from these villages migrate to the "gateways of prosperity," such as Mumbai, Nagpur, Nashik, in search of job opportunities. Migration to the cities often results

in destitution when the youth are unable to find employment and are exposed to the expensive harsh realities of urban life, such as menial low-wage jobs, pimping and prostitution. These young men represent a group with serious vulnerabilities: low educational levels, poor learning outcomes, limited post school skills training, a growing deficit of non-farm opportunities and high levels of economic uncertainty.

In this outback of rural India, the women are neglected by Indian society. Because there is no infrastructure for water delivery to their homes, these village women must walk to the wells or rivers five to eight times a day to carry water to their homes balanced upon their heads. By middle age, women have chronic back and neck complaints. The water they can access is not clean but usually contaminated with pathogens and chemicals. Women in our area have very few opportunities to improve their lives and those of their family members. They are not encouraged to attend school, a high percentage of women are illiterate in their local language and simple math. Too many women cannot even sign their own names on a document. They are discouraged from going outside the home. They suffer from poor health, poor nutrition, family difficulties, and all the problems of poverty.

The VIKAS Project partners' goal is to bring the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families above the poverty line. The core belief is that the poor have a strong desire and innate capabilities to come out of poverty. They are entrepreneurial. The challenge is to unleash their innate capabilities to generate meaningful livelihoods, which will enable them to raise up the ladder out of poverty.

The Implementing Agencies:

Shree Nityananda Education Trust is a Bombay Registered NGO working in the tribal area of Wada Taluka, Palgher District, Maharashtra. Over the past eleven years SNET has identified 31 village in which it concentrates its seva:

Education: Health education, Nutritional education, Water hygiene & purification education, Early Pregnancy Health Education, tuitions for students who failed passing tenth and twelfth exams, and Marathi literacy. SNET fund raises and provides for financial scholarships for tribal girls.

Vocational training: in a wide variety of topics such as sewing & embroidery, computer classes, solar construction and repair, organic farming, guest services, and Ayurveda therapies. Yoga teacher training scholarships, Water shed development and water harvesting.

Employment: SNET maintains five facilities offering employment to 90+ tribal people - Fire Mountain Retreat Center, Padukas Women's Handicrafts Workshops, Hand Incense Rolling Workshop, Men's Alternative Technology Workshop and Fire Mountain Ayurveda Spa. (www.firemountainretreat.com, www.Padukaseboutique.com, www.firemountainayurveda.com)

SNET benefits from a continuing relationship with professors and students of IIT, Mumbai for survey, research and implementing of village-appropriate alternative technology (<https://youtu.be/G9sG4A3ovy>).

Om Gagangiri Maharaj Trust (GMT) is a Bombay Registered NGO working in the tribal area of Wada Taluka, Palgher District, Maharashtra since 2005. Its seva activities have been providing lodging and food to pilgrims visiting holy sites in Palgher District, holding medical camps and addressing

educational needs of tribal people, and co-sponsoring group weddings for families lacking the necessary funds for wedding expenses.

Om Gagangiri Maharaj Trust is guided by a board of trustees that include three engineers (from IIT), two Adivasi social workers, and two non-Adivasi social workers. GMT has 12A and 80G and is ready to issue tax certificates to Indian donors.

Project Strategy is Education, Practicum and Mentorship:

Education is regarded as a key instrument for the empowerment of disenfranchised people. Education can help individuals change their worldview, overcome income barriers, make better career choices, inspire personal growth, build confidence, and develop a sense of well-being. An educated person is capable of collectively bringing in significant changes and improving the whole community. Implementing effective education, practicum and mentoring for the tribal community will bring immediate changes in their state of living and improve their future.

Upon entering the vocational institute, the students will be required to form small groups with their fellow students, A Community Based Organization (CBO) modelled after the Self-Help Group (SHG). CBOs or SHGs have been recognized as an effective strategy for mobilization and empowerment of rural people, particularly the poor and marginalized groups. Over the course of the first year of classes, each student will have personal experience of being a part of small SHG group, and thus learn first-hand the benefit and challenges. Based upon successful participation in CBO for one year, group members can avail themselves of micro-financing via banks and financial institutions.

The VIKAS project proposes to provide a variety of skill development programs. The true potentials of disenfranchised people are realized when they are provided sufficient training to manage the external environment, have easy access to finance, and are enabled to expand their skills and assets and then convert them into meaningful livelihoods. This can require continuous handhold support by an outside institution. An external dedicated, sensitive support structure is required to induce such personal development, livelihood promotion and social mobilization. These two NGOs, SNET and GMT are choosing to be and offer this kind of external support.

VIKAS PROJECT STEPS

Step One: V for Village.

Create a Positive Foot Print in a central Village. Purchase of 6.5 acres of land within the Nandani tribal area for creating a vocational training institute. Construct Vocational Training Institute buildings. (Donor has already been identified for construction of infrastructure). **Formation of CBOS** among the students of Vocational Training Institute. Introduce & oversee methods and benefit of Group Savings Program. Instruction in record keeping, group dynamics and dealing with group obstacles.

Step Two: I for Invigorating, K for Knowledge. Invigorating Knowledge

Transfer knowledge and Skill Development. Provide vocational education and training in skills that will empower students to be self-sustaining in villages and bring expertise to the villages that are missing.

- Organic Farming-identifying low cost solutions to small acreage farming, including home - made herbal extracts for pest control, seed processing, fertilizers, manufacture and repair of low tech water pumps, low cost irrigation systems
- Watershed Development and Water Harvesting
- Solar Construction and Repair.

- Plumbing and Well Construction and Repair
- Marathi Literacy and Computer Literacy
- Bird and Plant Identification and Eco Tourism
- Entrepreneurship.
- Community Development and Leadership Training. Learning to use group membership as a force and strength to make changes in one's life and changes in village.
- Encouraging Students dreaming of a Compelling Future. Empower students through education about cultural biases and how to make creative responses to dominant culture's acts of prejudice and limitations.

Step Three: A for Activities and S for Solutions

Activities and Solutions through Practicum, Internships, and Mentorship. After completion of education and training program, students will engage in practicum programs designed by the Institute which includes on-campus workshop experience and off-campus internships with professionals in their area of study. After completion of the practicum, the students will begin their careers as entrepreneurs and business owners in the location of their choice. The Institute will match each student with a mentor who will guide them for six months to creating a self-sustaining business. Graduates of outside vocational training programs, such as Rama Krishna Mission, or the Wada Taluka Vocational Training Program can apply to this Entrepreneurship program.

Wealth building activities will be encouraged among groups of students. Students will be required to set a goal for themselves that embodies what they learned through their experience at the institute. The students' mentors will assist in the executing of their project. After one-year completion of CBO group savings program, the students qualifies for mini-loans from banks or financial institutions. This money can be used to execute their project. For example, Students might engage in collective farming, vegetable marketing and distribution. Farming students might come together to supply organic vegetables to Five Star Hotels in Mumbai. Water Shed Development students could work with their own villages to inspire collective methods to recharge their water table. Graduates of the Eco-tourism might market themselves as Home Stays and Guides to naturalists wanting introduction to the local environment.

The graduates of the Institute will be encouraged to go beyond developing their own successful businesses, but also to impart their experience and successes to other individuals and groups within and outside of their own hamlets, thus setting themselves up as leaders and change agents.

Resources Needed:

36 Lakh for purchase of 6.5 acres of land in Nandani.

One Institute Director.

One Institute Administration.

Six full time teachers for classrooms and workshop.

Honorariums for mentors.

On-going supplies for various workshops.

Transportation costs

A donor has already offered to pay for building costs, and individual costs for workshops.

Budget Requirements:

Depending upon interest of donors and available grants, we can scale the project and create a budget somewhere from 80,000 a month to 4 Lakh per month.