

AGRICULTURE AND ORGANIC FARMING GROUP - INDIA
(AOFG - India)

Annual Report 2004 - 2005

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Agriculture and Organic Farming Group - India (AOFG - India)

ANNUAL REPORT 2004 - 2005

The year started with 35 NGO associating with AOFG India who are location ally spread over North East India, Orissa, Jharkhand, Andhrapradesh, Uttranchal and Kerala States. The focused programs in capacity building, human resource development, organic agriculture in rural development, technical training, documentation of traditional knowledge for validation and technology development has taken centre stage. The participating NGOs has shown considerable in getting training on manpower development in organic agriculture in rural development directly addressing poverty reduction and area development.

2. AOFG India Regional Group Adimali (AOFG India RGA)

AOFG India Regional Group Adimali (AOFG India RGA) has taken up consolidation activities in Women Self Help Groups and income generation activities. The Group is still discussing on Organic Certification assigned to external certification agencies or to promote and work for local certification and local marketing. The WSHGs has grown to 50 with 750 members. The savings and internal credit has grown to Rupees 2,50,000/-. The production and marketing trend is on the rise. The five staff members of AOFG India RGA are working very hard and able to consolidate the activities to own up the development activities by the stakeholders themselves.

3. IFOAM Membership

AOFG India is an associate member of IFOAM. The AOFG India Board has taken a decision to upgrade our membership to a Full Members of IFOAM. It was also decided to send Chairman AOFG India to0 Australia to participate the IFOAM Conference at Australia during September 2005.

4. Publication of the proceedings of Alter Organic workshop

AOFG India and seven associated NGOs attended the Alter Organic Workshop at Bonn, Germany in October 2002. Later, AGRECOL, Marburg, Germany under the leadership of Dr. Johannes Kotschi published the workshop proceedings. During 2003 a reprint of 2,500 Copies was made by AOFG India and was well circulated. Several comments and positive notes from several corners received. Now, several organizations basically from the grassroots level involved in the promotion of organic farming has been requesting AOFG India to make another reprint 3,000 copies for circulation.

5. Study program

AOFG India has commissioned two study programs (1) Shifting cultivation in India and (2) Traditional knowledge and practices followed by the farmers in the mountain slope farming areas. It will study the impact on biodiversity, environment and agriculture in the mountain eco-system and livelihood opportunities and options available for reduction of poverty. The two studies are expected to be completed by early 2006.

6. Biodiversity and environment

AOFG India is working along with 35 NGOs in the difficult regions of India. Shifting cultivation areas (Slash and burn method for crop introduction and production), rain fed farming areas and areas where larger concentration of indigenous communities. The NGOs are working in the Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats and the Himalayan hill ranges, particularly the Eastern Himalayas. Large section of the farmers and the indigenous communities are living with an income of less than Rupees 100/- per day. Out of the 365 days the working and human labour employed days are less than 150 per annum.

The livelihood problems are reflecting largely on the biodiversity and environment. The communities are unable to protect and conserve the environment and biodiversity. Natural resource management is negligible and the result is less productivity and less income from all sources resulting in increasing poverty conditions.

The North East India or to say the Eastern Himalayas is a biodiversity hotspot. It is part of the Indo-Myanmar biosphere. The shrinking shifting cultivation fallow period is creating severe strain on the land, vegetation and the forests. The mega development projects for power generation from big dams are a threat. The forest department is using the forests as a source of revenue and sale of timber coupled with illegal felling of trees has been a course for the biodiversity of the area. All blame on destruction of forests is attributed to the poor jhum cultivators. The reality is other wise. AOFG India and the NGOs from North East India have taken up several measures for the promotion and protection of the environment and biodiversity.

7. Shifting cultivation

Shifting cultivation is one of the traditional methods of crop introduction and crop production practiced by the indigenous communities living in India. The practice was good when the fallow period was longer to over 25 to 30 years. This practice is still prevailing in North East India parts of Orissa and Andhrapradesh States. Due to political reasons, the areas of shifting cultivation in Orissa and Andhrapradesh have not been listed by Government for support to farmers and the cultivating communities. These indigenous communities do not

wield political leadership and political power to move the Government for their benefit. NGOs are one group working for the betterment and poverty reduction activities in these areas. The actions are limited to few villages and do not benefit large sections of shifting cultivation communities. Issues relating to desertification and loss of biodiversity are major issues in these areas. AOFG India associated with ICIMOD, Katmandu and few organizations in promoting policies and programs.

8. Forests and Forest management

The forests of North East India are very precious. The forests are part of the rainforests of the Indo-Myanmar bio-sphere spread over 200,000 square kilometers. The area is a biodiversity hot spot as per Conservation international and National Forest Research Institute, India. Vital importance has been accorded by Government of India and a Moist Rainforest Research Institute has been established at Jorhat, Assam State by Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests. The area is populated by 200 odd numerous indigenous tribal communities and the land rights are protected under Indian Constitution. However, unfortunately, the State Forests Department of the Seven NEI States has given least importance to the Constitutional rights of the tribal communities by using the forests as revenue to the Department by timber trading and taxing on the NTFP. This has given a lot of resentment among the tribal communities. The much promoted and largely funded Joint Forest Management (JFM) is in the hands of the Forest Department and communities who are protecting and preserving the forests has not given any importance nor support and involvement in forest conservation and protection of the forests. Community management of forests has been a good opportunity since the forests are not physically and legally owned by the Department. The destruction of forests are blamed on to Jhumias (Shifting cultivators), but the fact is otherwise. AOFG India is educating the communities for better management of the forests, NTFP directly and through the Net Working NGOs.

One of the important areas in India for AOFG India is the Jharkhand, Tribal Orissa, Tribal West Bengal, Tribal Madhyapradesh, Tribal Andhrapradesh and Chattisgarh States. Majority population is the indigenous tribals. Some of these areas and the land rights are protected under the Indian Constitutions. Promotion of village owned community forestry is a wonderful opportunity in promoting biodiversity, conservation and use of NTFP for poverty reduction among the indigenous population.

9. Rain-fed Farming Areas

The un-irrigated, rain-fed regions were largely by-passed by the Indian Green revolution. Out of the 142 Million Ha cultivated land in India, 34% land area are covered by conventional farming with irrigation facilities and produces 55% of total food production whereas, 66% of land areas are classed under rain-fed

region which produces 45% of total food production. The area is 90 Million Ha and majority of farmers living in these areas are small and marginal farmers and indigenous communities. Cultivation and farming activities are the only means of livelihood to these people. Compounded issues of desertification, loss of biodiversity and environment, non conservation and lack of management of natural resources, increasing poverty conditions are on the increase in these areas. AOFG India and its associated NGOs are vigorously promoting local organizations and capacity building measures for promoting NRM activities in the rain-fed farming areas.

10. AOFG India Networking NGOs

The year 2003-04 has seen a lot of changes taking place. AOFG India and Community Development Organization, Manipur jointly visited Both End Office, Amsterdam, Misereor Office Aachen and Siemenpuu Foundation Office at Helsinki. 9 Projects were assisted to get funding from Government of India Ministries. The current members/ associate NGOs under the net work are:

1. MATA Foundation
2. Jhumia Farmers Society (JAFAS)
3. Diocesan Social Service Society (DSSS)
4. Catholic Medical Center (CMC)
5. Community builders Society (CBS)
6. Women Union for Prosperity (WUFP)
7. Tamei Organic Farmers Association (TAOFA)
8. Senapati Tribal Farmers Association (STFA)
9. North East Development Association (NEDA)
10. Community Development Organization (CDO)
11. Social Upliftment & Resource Dev, Agency (SURDA)
12. North East Welfare Society
13. Valley Welfare Association (VWA)
14. Development Association of Nagaland (DAN)
15. Charity Multi Purpose Society
16. Jorsong Asong
17. Tezpur Social Service Society (TSSS)
18. Bongaigaon Gana Seva Samity (BGSS)
19. North East Social Forum
20. Mendipathar Multi Purpose Society (MMPS)
21. Bosco Reach Out (BRO)
22. St. Johnes Society Mangaldai
23. Dev Bhumi Vikas Sansthan (DBVS)
24. Shri Jagadamba Samity
25. Social Trust for Empowering People (STEP)
26. Peoples Development Trust
27. Chaitanya Welfare Institute
28. Pragati Mahial Mandali

29. B.Palam Harijan Women Welfare Society
30. Siddartha Youth Welfare Society
31. Sumer Memorial Rural Welfare Society
32. Aadi Cultural Center
33. Peoples' Community Health Care Services
34. Munda Development Association
35. AOFG India Regional Group Adimali

The 35 NGOs meet together once in every year and the AOFG India staff and Executive Members visit these NGOs during various joint programs at their respective places. There is no membership fees but are aligned together for the cause of empowerment, organic agriculture in rural development and conservation and protection of biodiversity and environment.

11. Education, training and HRD program to NGOs

Technical training on human resource development social organizations, project management, and technology dissemination were imparted to all the 35 NGOs during the current year. 140 Staff members are trained by AOFG India. 105 Executive Members of 35 NGOs are trained in organization management, fund raising and lobby activities. Regular informative circulars are sent to all the 35 NGOs on funding support and various schemes of the Government.

12. Training on organic agriculture in rural development

AOFG India Technical Team on Organic visited all the 35 NGOs to conduct on the spot training program on organic agriculture in rural development. OARD is a focal theme of AOFG India. Capacity building and human resource development in OARD is vigorously taken and the NGOs are fully geared up to promote such activities in the villages. State level seminars have been conducted at Imphal, Kohima, Guwahaty, Shillong, Bhubaneswar, Vijawada and Ernakulam. The inspiration of OARD has been seeded by Agrecol, Marberg, Germany. We appreciate the support of Dr. Johannes Kotschi and Dr. Garbrielle Stoll. However, we are not fully able to interact with these experts and raise sufficient funds to demonstrate few innovative activities. The current programs are the off shoot of Government funded projects.

13. Farmers training program

35 NGOs are assisted to conduct farmers training program in their respective areas. The target was to train 100 farmers by each of the NGOs in OARD. 3,500 farmers are trained. The farmers training program includes use of local manuring, preparation of farm yard manure, compost, vermin compost, vermin culture, use of local plant based pesticides and input production and distribution. The training programs are conducted with an object to build them up as progressive and front line farmers who can train their fellow farmers.

14. Women's Self Help Groups (WSHGs)

All the Associated NGOs are encouraged to promote and set up Women Self Help Groups. In many cases, the SHGs are a mixed group with over 75% members is women. The current numbers of WSHGs are 450 with a membership of 6,750 Members. 5,035 Members are women. They are promoting savings, credit, production, packing and marketing activities for income generation. Wonderful achievement has been made by many of the SHGs is in income generation and poverty reduction activities. Marketing is one of the important area and serious capacity building and trainings are required. Local market development and local marketing will be promoted with adequate training and promotional activities. Value addition and processing is yet another important are which requires attention.

15. Management of community forests

The North east India is peculiar in land ownership and land use. Most of the land is owned by the individuals and Government do not own land at all. As per the guarantee of the Indian Constitution, tribal land in the North East India cannot be alienated. All villages have their own forested areas. The area is with more than 33% forests. Lot of scope is available for the promotion of community forests and forest conservation activities by the local communities. This is one area where AOFG India wanted to promote community forest conservation, biodiversity and environment management.

16. National conference

AOFG India decided to conduct a National Conference on "Shifting cultivation and sustainable development in the hill and mountain ecosystem" focusing North East India. Ten specific studies in the field and a film on shifting cultivation and mountain ecology are decided as integral to the National conference. The program is proposed for November 2005.

17. International convention and program to promote MDG

The UN has given focus to three international conventions and the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The three conventions are:

1. UNCCD (UN Convention to combat desertification)
2. UNCBD (UN Convention on biological diversity)
3. UNFCCC (UN Frame work convention on climate change)
4. Millennium development goals.

AOFG India is assisting the 35 NGOs in understanding this important works on global development concerns. Regional level consultations were held at Imphal.

Kohima, Guwahaty and Adimali. 140 numbers of awareness cum workshop has been conducted by 35 NGOs on Un Conventions and MDG. All background materials were supplied by AOFG India.

18. NGOs and business development

A new thinking is being promoted by AOFG India. This is optional for the associated NGOs in promoting technology application for local production, processing and marketing. Rural development can be achieved only by institutionalizing marketing of local produces at the farmers place itself. The bulk of the profits in commodities are pocketed by the middleman. Therefore, promotion of business development is one of the important concepts promoted by AOFG India and 11 NGOs from the group are getting involved. However, the SHGs are being promoted by all the 35 NGOs and the respective SHGs are implementing savings, credit, production and local marketing activities. These efforts are gaining momentum and getting wider acceptance in the rural villages. AOFG India is assisting the NGOs to work with Government of India through the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The 42 Research Laboratories of CSIR is developing technologies and the AOFG India and the Net Working NGOs are eligible to get and obtain suitable technologies for income generation, production and development activities.

19. NGO Resource Support Center, New Delhi

AOFG India is being an NGO networking organization and placed at New Delhi. The member NGOs are frequently coming down to Delhi for various purposes, submissions of projects to Government of India Ministries including consultations. Fund raising for the promotion of field projects are very important to demonstrate most of the activities promoted by the NGOs and AOFG India. The Central Government Ministries are one of the sources of project funds. Therefore to discuss, submit and negotiate for projects, NGO Officials and representatives has to come to Delhi as and when required. The NGOs does not have own accommodation and support facilities at New Delhi and have to depend upon hotels and private facilities and is very expensive. The present Office of the AOFG India is not sufficiently spaced to accommodate the people for overstay and office works. Accommodations at Hotels are very expensive. Further, a news letter on funding opportunities from Government Ministries and Departments are very useful to our NGOs. After a project submitted, follow up actions are required to get a project approved and funded. Support services in the form a liaison works for NGO projects are required. To meet all these needs, an NGO Resource Support Center is proposed at New Delhi with minimum office facility, liaison support, support services of expert consultants, and accommodation for three persons at a time with a vehicle for movement in Delhi and a quarterly funding news letter. Efforts are continuing to search a one time fund for this purpose. In spite of all

constraints, AOFG India could facilitate the sanctioning of 21 Projects during the current year with an overall outlay of Rupees 51.00 Million from Government Ministries. AOFG India is working hard to find a suitable funding agency to support a project for this purpose.

20. [Board members of AOFG India 2004-05](#)

1. Mr.E.M. Koshy, Chairman
2. Dr.(Ms)Lily Gangmei, Secretary
3. Mr. Sudhir Bahuguna, Treasurer
4. Mr.B. Rath, Member
5. Ms. Rachel John, Member
6. Ms. Jely Gangmei, Member
7. Mr. Manuwarudin, Member

21. [Financial auditors of AOFG India](#)

M/S Sandeep Jain & Company are the auditing firm for AOFG India. The financial audit is carried for one calendar year from April to March every year. The current budgeted program expenditure for the year 2004-05 is Rupees 10,51,550.

22. [Bankers to AOFG India](#)

Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) Janpath Branch, New Delhi - 110 001 are the bankers to AOFG India. [The AOFG India Bank Account with IOB, Janpath is: S/B A/C No. 31771. SWIFT Code: IOBA IN BBA 065 Fax: 91+11+ 23321868.](#)

E.M. Koshy
Chairman - AOFG India