



A M R I T A  
S E R V E

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S H O T





**A**mrita SeRVe has projects underway in 21 states across India. Our priorities are health, water & sanitation, education, agriculture, income generation, eco-friendly infrastructure and self empowerment.





## RETURNING TO OUR TRUE NATURE

**R**eal strength should come from within. If we are going to rely only on the external, there is no stability. In the olden days, the people of India's villages knew their inner strength. They were also completely in tune with Nature which lead to a full harmony of being.

With the goal of returning to these traditions in mind, it was in 2013 at Amma's 60th birthday celebrations that she launched *Amrita SeRVe - Self Reliant Village*.

*It is our villages that sustain us by providing those who live in cities with the nourishment needed in order to survive. However, today, we are just exploiting villages and casting them aside. It is time to acknowledge that our villages are our very foundation and move forward with one heart and one mind to protect and serve them.*

– Amma

So, in actual fact, this is a team effort. Both rural and urban people provide for each other. *Amrita SeRVe's* work focuses on joining with India's villagers so that they can understand their inner strength and from that foundation, achieve true self-reliance once again.

For many millennia, a completely self-reliant village was at the centre of life in India. A vibrant culture that evolved over thousands of years guided how to lead prosperous lives from all aspects—physically, mentally and spiritually. To revive this tradition would not only benefit the villagers, but also be a beacon of strength and union around the world.



# BY THE NUMBERS

Government of India 2011 Census Data

# 1,210,854,977

people live in India, the second largest population in the world.

# 833,748,852

people live in rural India, 69% of the population.

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## Drinking Water



35% of rural households have drinking water within the premises. In urban areas, it is 71%.

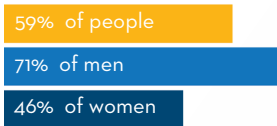
## Sanitation



31% of the households in rural India have latrine facilities within the premises. 81% for urban.

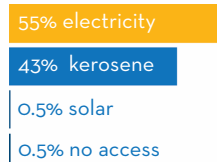
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## Literacy Rates



59% of people said they were literate with a higher percentage for men than women.

## Source of Lighting



55% of people reported electricity for home lighting. Solar energy was slim but it is in development.



# ONE STEP AT A TIME

*Celebrating every success, no matter how small*

*When we see the statistics about rural India from the perspective of numbers only, the size can be overwhelming. However, great social change through the ages often goes one step at a time.*



*Amrita University* students visit villages to give tuition. But they say they learn more from the children, because of the good social discipline.



We assist government health workers to give polio drops to children five and under. Hundreds have been vaccinated and work is ongoing.



We are conducting medical clinics to bring doctors, nurses, pharmacists and community health workers to places where health access is limited.



Our village coordinators visit every household on a regular basis to listen to the villagers' needs as well as ideas. Everyone must be heard.



Women in our self help groups in Odisha and Bihar have received goats. The milk is a good source of income and is very healthy for small children.



We give new mothers bundles of essential items. The baby kits include things like mosquito nets, baby soap and chyawanprash for the mother.







## A RISK REAPS REWARDS

### *Success with Organic Farming*

“We took a chance and tried something different,” explains Rajan, a farmer from the small tribal village of Sadivayal in Tamil Nadu. “The result was selling a new crop for double the price of anything we had grown before. Not only that, but the seeds we planted gave us a double yield.”

A group of 20 marginal farmers came together to form a farmers’ club to grow crops as a team. Working on their own had led to five years of failure. They had faced lack of rainfall and destruction of their fields by wild boar and elephants. Most of the farmers had to become day labourers in the nearby forest.

Then came the big risk.... These farmers decided to grow organic rice. It was the first time anyone in their village had tried for decades, since such practices were abandoned for the use of pesticides and fertilisers. They prepared a field of 35 acres and planted 535 kg of Bhavani Organic Rice.

“At first we were unsure and more than a little tensed,” tells Kaliswami, another member of the farmers’ club. “But once we started to see the first rice sprouts spring from the ground, we knew success was on its way.”

Finally, a harvest of healthy rice began and each member of the farmers’ club made nearly ₹20,000 per acre profit. This success was huge as in previous years, the farmers often still owed money for their loans after harvest. For example, one farmer had a debt of ₹20,000, but thanks to this year’s results, he was able to pay that off and now can move forward.

“We are committed to continuing with organic farming,” says Kaliswami. “It won’t be easy. We know there are challenges. But we have to continue this practice to heal the soil.” For *Amrita SeRVe*, the next step is to start farmers’ clubs in all of our villages.





# HEALTH

## PRIORITY TASKS

### CHECKLIST

- Visit all households to establish records for family health details, distribute health cards and continue ongoing visits to homes
- Priority tracking of immunisation records for children under age 5 and encourage completion when not done
- Keep care records for pregnant women, ensure they are getting monthly check-ups and required vaccinations, and give them sessions on how to prepare for delivery
- SHG meetings once per week with a 30-minute health awareness session
- Monthly awareness rallies on key subjects for good health
- Teach kitchen gardening for awareness of proper nutrition
- Yoga class instruction for children and adults
- Organise the resources for regular medical clinics when doctors visit to see patients



## AN ESSENTIAL NEED

### COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

The importance of community health in India's villages is clearly demonstrated by how *Amrita SeRVe* trains one woman from each place to become a health worker. The women focus on teaching good health practices before ailments can take their toll.

The health workers visit homes daily to gather information from families about their health histories and needs. Their work includes things like checking blood pressure, sugar levels, and haemoglobin on a regular basis. There is an emphasis on children and pregnant women.



*Our work is oriented towards preventive measures and home remedies as well as continuous health education.*

*We give the villagers awareness about their actions, so every day they can realise what is missing. This can directly increase the curve of their health status.*

*Ultimately, it can bring the changes needed so all in the community will have better health.*

- Brahmacharini Swati  
Amrita SeRve Health Coordinator

Health workers help villagers arrange ways to see the doctor when it is necessary, as in many villages, the nearest doctor is hours away.

Another way the health workers maintain communication is to connect with the village self help groups. One woman from each SHG is made the health leader for that group.

She then becomes a contact person for the health worker to be able to stay aware of what is happening with people's health throughout the village.



Villagers are given family health cards to better track their health histories and have info ready for health professionals.





### BEST INNOVATIVE PRODUCT

The National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) awarded us the title *Best Innovative Product* for the reusable cloth pads because they support the environment and village income.

## STITCHING TO EMPOWER

*Reusable cloth pads are a new source of income*

In our world at this time, something unique is beginning to unfold. The age-old practices of honouring the woman's body as divine are joining together with the modern need to protect the environment.

One of the remedies that has come about is reusable cloth menstrual pads, as disposable plastic pads are a huge pollutant. With a high potential for income generation, we have started training women in our villages how to produce the pads so they have another way to earn money.

The pads have been given the brand name *Saukhyam*—Sanskrit for happiness and well-being—and have many advantages. They are good for health because the cotton allows skin to breathe. They are good for wallets because they can be used over and over again for several years. They are good for the environment because they are eco-friendly. Finally, they are good for our village women because they are creating income and self empowerment. Basically, it's a win-win situation for all.

*To find out more, contact [saukhyampads@gmail.com](mailto:saukhyampads@gmail.com)*



# CREATIVITY MANIFESTS

Self help groups find new ways to earn

*Our self-help groups (SHGs) across India join together to find new and creative ways to earn. The possibilities are endless when one is given the freedom to think in new ways....*



In Sarai Nuruddinpur, Uttar Pradesh, they are experimenting with the crochet of bags and weaving of baskets—and orders have soared.



Beautiful handmade jhumka are bringing success to women in Sadivayil, Tamil Nadu. High sales at a nearby festival resulted in backorders.



Women in Ransai, Maharashtra are selling handmade spices made at home. During festivals and special occasions, there is a huge demand.



Mushroom cultivation has started in Guptapada, Odisha. Investment per bed is ₹30 and the mushrooms are sold at ₹50-60 per kg.



In Kalinagar, West Bengal, women are learning how to make large batches of papadum at home. They sell them in the local markets.



In Dunda, Uttarakhand, women are upcycling used paper to make bags. Something that was waste now has a new purpose.





*In today's world, people experience two types of poverty:  
the poverty caused by lack of food, clothing and shelter,  
and the poverty caused by lack of*

# love and compassion.

*Of these two, the second type  
needs to be considered first  
because if we have*

# love and compassion

*in our hearts, then we will wholeheartedly serve  
those who suffer from lack of food, clothing and shelter.*

- Amma



# WATER & SANITATION

## CLEAN AND SAFE CHECKLIST

- Ensure access to constant and clean piped water supply, 24 hours a day
- Establish hygienic, sanitary conditions in villages to prevent disease
- India is threatened by rapidly depleting groundwater supplies, so encourage methods for groundwater recharge
- Revive rainwater harvesting techniques
- Construct borewells to improve water access
- Address the risks of open defecation through AMMACHI Labs project to instruct women on how to build toilets
- Educate community members on the steps for proper and regular hand, face and body washing



## IMPROVING ACCESS DRINKABLE WATER IN OUR VILLAGES

We set out to determine which villages were in deepest need of access to clean and safe drinking water. A team of engineers from the *Civil Engineering Department of Amrita University* also worked with the villagers to find solutions. After consultations with local government officials, the *Amrita Centre for Wireless Networks and Applications* got to work.

In Dunda, Uttarakhand there were problems in the water distribution system, so not everyone in the village could easily access drinking water. The team built new buffer tanks at the source and the pipe system was modified to reduce leakage.





We are teaching the steps of proper and regular self-cleanliness, especially in schools. Diarrhoea remains a leading killer of young children in rural India, 10% of those under five years old according to *UNICEF* numbers from 2015.

In Gudipati Cheruvu, Andhra Pradesh the dry climate often means no groundwater recharge. The team built a new distribution system with one main tank and eight small ones. There are borewells connected to the network and thirty taps throughout the village.

In Ratanpur, Bihar there was only one working handpump. Four new handpumps were installed and the existing two maintained. Now the whole village has easy access to clean and healthy water.

Over the last years, we have also installed new water systems in Kerala, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Odisha and Maharashtra.





## BUILDING EMPOWERMENT

Toilet construction leads to sanitation, income and women's rights

*AMMACHI Labs* continues to lead toilet construction in our villages. The *Rural Toilet Builder Course* teaches women the basics of plumbing, masonry, construction and maintenance. So far more than 200 toilets have been built and are managed by women. More construction is underway.

The programme aims at providing women with skills training for a new means of income along with education regarding sanitation and hygiene. The most recent Indian census recorded that 67% of the rural population—56,00,00,000 people—practised open defecation. The risk is that it can lead to severe and sometimes life-threatening illness.

Another aspect of *AMMACHI Lab's* work is to emphasise women's empowerment. Poor sanitation, lack of access to proper infrastructure, and limited awareness of good practices can hamper women's rights. This is because the level of well-being needed to effectively participate in the democratic processes of their communities is crippled by their home responsibilities to care for the health of others and to manage their own.

*AMMACHI Labs* is working with the *United Nations Democracy Fund* to address this, and in February 2017 they launched *Women Empowerment: Community Sanitation through Democratic Participation* (WE: CSDP).



## ANCIENT WISDOM

### MODERN PRACTICE

Using yoga to transform village life

We are teaching daily yoga asana practice in our villages and it is clear that the return to this ancient tradition of India's heritage is awakening a passion in the people.

The practice of yoga brings, of course, many health benefits. But in the grander scheme, it instills a sense of calm and peace. This opportunity arrives in a time of great challenges at the base of daily life in the villages—things like food, water supply and income.

Upon calling people to class, be they women, men or school children, the students come quickly. For them, they do not need trendy off-the-shelf “yoga clothes”. They simply begin in saris, suits, school uniforms and pants alike.

In one village, the students, in fact, arrived every morning all ready-to-go even before the teacher!





# EDUCATION

## READY TO TEACH CHECKLIST

- Use tablet technology to support education in places with low electricity and limited internet access
- Incorporate tablet-based apps, videos, and other interactive materials for health issues such as child and adolescent nutrition and social issues like substance abuse
- Teach weekly yoga and daily meditation classes
- Actively promote awareness for girls' education and delayed age for marriage for adolescent girls
- Encourage active community involvement in education to make village education sustainable and self-reliant
- Teach adult literacy and bring dropouts back to school



## NEW TEACHING METHODS

### DIGITAL TOOLS LEAD THE WAY

The *Amrita Center for Research in Advanced Technologies for Education* (AmritaCREATE) applies innovative technology solutions to make education accessible to everyone in all *Amrita SeRVe's* villages through the *Amrita Rural India Tablet Education* (AmritaRITE) project.

*AmritaRITE* has established 48 centres across 21 states and teaches more than 5,000 children, 1,500 adults, and 1,000 tribal people. The programme uses tablet-based technology to target the learning needs of multi-grade students and helps establish skills in basic literacy, language learning, science, and mathematics.





## FINALLY A CHANCE TO LEARN

We run a programme for women in Guptapada, Odisha—a semi-tribal village—where nearly every woman is illiterate. They are studying their local language, Odhia. Learning starts with basic letters and moves on up to simple words.

The women are gaining confidence and now feel determined to share the importance of education with their children, especially their daughters.

Thanks to the natural curiosity children have for new hands-on technology, tablets provide the support that rural students need to stay in school. The programme is also designed to work where there is little or no internet connectivity.

*AmritaRITE*'s approach is community-based and sustainable and incorporates human values, health and social awareness in its curriculum.

Moreover, it strengthens and empowers youth, especially girls, by bringing awareness about substance abuse, child marriage, human trafficking, mobile and internet misuse, gender equality and adolescent health.



In Ratanpur, Bihar, women started literacy training by learning how to sign their names. This was to open their SHG's bank account. Such simple actions are bringing about big change.



## WORLDWIDE CONNECTIONS

The purpose of *Live-in-Labs* is to join *Amrita University* students and faculty with students and faculty from foreign universities. They unite their varying perspectives and fields of knowledge in order to understand the challenges of life in rural India and then develop sustainable solutions.

The international students spend from one to six months as a member of a team working in one of our villages. Upon arriving, the first task is just to *live* in the village and get to know the people there.

Next, the team tries to figure out some possible solutions for the issues with which they are dealing. For example, a mechanical engineering student with



*École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland* travelled to Dunda, Uttarakhand. There, he came up with a device that would assist the women in carrying heavy loads upon their heads and backs.

Lemongrass is being cultivated for distillation projects that use solar power to extract the essential oil. In the tribal village of Wayanad, Kerala, students from *Delft University of Science and Technology, Netherlands* joined the *Chemical Engineering Department of Amrita University* to develop the system. It would provide local jobs for the tribal people who now commute for daily wage jobs.







## FROM NO ELECTRICITY TO A CHOICE OF SOURCE

In Komalikudi, Kerala, villagers went from having no available electricity to being able to choose a source—solar, hydro, or the state grid. The villagers' decisions will depend on availability of the renewable energy.

First, the *MA Math* established an integrated off-grid system of hydro and solar power. Then *Electrical and Electronics Engineering* students from *Amrita University* helped connect Komalikudi to the state grid through a modified wiring network.

## ALIGNING WITH MOTHER NATURE



CSIR-CIMAP is guiding us on how to cultivate medicinal and aromatic plants. CSIR-CIMAP is the *Council for Scientific and Industrial Research-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants*, one of India's premier publicly funded research centres. The first project was lemongrass in Chhattisgarh and next is tulsi in Mathura, UP.

Villagers are getting together on a regular basis to clean the streets in their communities. They sweep public areas and pick up waste, especially plastics. The actions are part of *Amala Bharatam*, *MA Math's* project aimed at cleaning India's public places.



# TO CHANGE WE MUST TRY

*In unity and cooperation we can achieve a brighter future*

*Our vision is to empower villagers so they can live in communities that are prosperous and self-reliant. These are places where people are healthy and educated. People lead lives of dignity in a pollution-free environment.*



More than 1,500 people rallied in their villages for girls' rights to health and education. *Swastha Kanya Sakshar Kanya* begins new work to achieve this.



Villagers, especially school children, are planting trees around their communities. They wish to express their gratitude to Mother Nature.



Through *Big Brother-Big Sister*, school students are taking on the responsibility of monitoring the attendance of their classmates.



*Amrita University* organises internships in the villages so students can educate themselves about life in rural India through volunteer work.



A gravel road was constructed by *Amrita University* students in Harirampura, Rajasthan to replace the dangerous mud there.



For people in villages who are in the most need, *Amrita SeRVe* is organising the construction of houses. They finally have true homes.





# Our Team

Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences  
(Amrita Hospital)  
[amritahospital.org](http://amritahospital.org)

AMMACHI Labs  
[ammachilabs.org](http://ammachilabs.org)

Amrita CREATE  
[amrita.edu/center/create](http://amrita.edu/center/create)

Amrita Centre for International Programmes  
[amrita.edu/international](http://amrita.edu/international)

Amrita Centre for Nanosciences  
[amrita.edu/center/nanosciences](http://amrita.edu/center/nanosciences)

Corporate and Industry Relations  
Department, Amrita University  
[amrita.edu/department/cir](http://amrita.edu/department/cir)


The Centre for Wireless Networks  
and Applications and the  
Department of Civil Engineering,  
Amrita University  
[amrita.edu/center/awna](http://amrita.edu/center/awna)

Amrita Centre for Cybersecurity  
[amrita.edu/center/cyber-security](http://amrita.edu/center/cyber-security)

Embracing the World  
[embracingtheworld.org](http://embracingtheworld.org)







*Everyone in the world should be able to sleep without fear, at least for one night. Everyone should be able to eat to his fill, at least for one day. There should be at least one day when hospitals see no one admitted due to violence. By doing selfless service for at least one day, everyone should help the poor and needy. It is Amma's prayer that at least this small dream be realised.*

**- Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi**

**AMRITA**  
**SeRve**  
SELF RELIANT VILLAGE

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