

Annual Report 2023-24



**VOC RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
(VOCRDC)**

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Annual Report – 2023-24

Executive Summary

The fiscal year 2023-2024 marked a significant period of growth and impact for VOC Rural Development Centre (VOC RDC). Our organization continued to drive positive change in rural communities through diverse programs focusing on infrastructure development, water management, agriculture, health, and women's empowerment.

Key Achievements:

1. **International Collaborations:** We successfully partnered with organizations from seven countries, including Chile, Australia, Switzerland, Japan, USA, and the UK, bringing global expertise to local challenges.
2. **Water and Sanitation:** Through the Reece Foundation and Japan Water Forum Fund projects, we improved water access and sanitation in rural areas, including drilling boreholes, installing water purification systems, and conducting community workshops on water management.
3. **Infrastructure Development:** The SELAVIP Foundation project allowed us to significantly improve rural housing conditions, utilizing local materials and labor.
4. **Health Initiatives:** Our Basler Leprophilfe project conducted extensive health screenings, awareness campaigns, and commemorated World Leprosy Day, reaching numerous villages and educational institutions.
5. **Women's Empowerment:** The Women First International Fund - USA program provided vocational training, distributed livestock, and offered seed money to beneficiaries, promoting economic independence among rural women.
6. **Agricultural Development:** We conducted training programs and distributed resources to local farmers, enhancing agricultural practices and productivity.
7. **Education Support:** Our other programs provided educational materials and fee support to underprivileged students, promoting access to education.

Challenges and Future Directions: While we've made significant strides, challenges remain in reaching the most remote communities and ensuring the sustainability of our initiatives. In the coming year, we aim to expand our reach, enhance the sustainability of our projects, and strengthen our partnerships with local government agencies and international organizations.

VOC Rural Development Centre remains committed to its mission of holistic rural development. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our donors, partners, and the communities we serve for their continued support and trust in our work.

Mrs. S. Latha,
President
VOC RDC



Introduction

About VOC Rural Development Centre (VOC RDC)

Founded in 1996, VOC RDC is a women-led non-governmental organization committed to improving lives in rural Tamilnadu. Led by Mrs. S.Latha, President, and Mr. R.S. Ramasamy, Secretary, we focus on women's rights, child welfare, education, health, and sustainable development across Madurai, Dindigul, Theni, and Cuddalore Districts.

Mrs. S.Latha, with her extensive experience in social work, provides strategic leadership, while Mr.R.S.Ramasamy brings his grassroots expertise to program implementation. Their collaborative approach ensures a strong gender perspective in all our initiatives.

In addition to our core social development work, VOC RDC operates the EARTH (Environmental Action and Rural Transformation Hub) wing, which specializes in environmental stewardship and sustainable rural development. This specialized division focuses on terrestrial and coastal ecosystem conservation, climate action, natural resource management, and clean energy solutions. Through scientific excellence and community partnership, the EARTH wing integrates traditional wisdom with modern approaches to create lasting environmental and social impact.

Mission: Fostering a new social order enabling individuals, especially women and children, to live life fully. Vision: Ensuring freedom, rights, equity, social justice, education, health, and prosperity for disadvantaged women and children. Our work focused on protecting women's rights, combating violence, promoting child welfare, and advancing sustainable practices. We value knowledge creation, social change, sustainable livelihoods, and community empowerment.

Key focus areas:

- 1. Women's and Child Empowerment**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Health and Sanitation**
- 4. Environmental Conservation**
- 5. Sustainable Agriculture**

Through strategic partnerships and dedicated efforts, we continue to create positive change in rural communities, with a strong emphasis on women's leadership and empowerment.



Programs and Activities

3.1 SELAVIP Foundation Project

The SELAVIP Foundation Project, completed on August 31, 2023, was a transformative initiative aimed at providing housing for the poorest of poor slum dwellers in Vadipatti and Sholavandan Town Panchayats, Madurai District, Tamilnadu, India.



Key aspects of the project include:

1. Scope: Construction of 50 new dwellings for impoverished families living in slum conditions.
2. Beneficiaries: 50 families, totalling 300 individuals, primarily focusing on women-headed households and vulnerable groups.
3. Implementation: VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) led the project, collaborating with Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and local Panchayat Administration.
4. Community Involvement: Beneficiaries actively participated in the construction process, fostering a sense of ownership.
5. Impact: The project significantly improved living conditions, providing safe and dignified housing to families previously residing in dilapidated huts.
6. Sustainability: Beneficiaries committed not to sell their new houses at higher rates for at least ten years, ensuring long-term impact.



This project exemplified VOCRDC's commitment to addressing homelessness and inadequate housing, contributing to the empowerment and well-being of the most vulnerable residents in the target areas.

3.2 Reece Foundation Projects (Australia)

Water Management and Sanitation:

The Reece Foundation, in collaboration with VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC), implemented a crucial project titled "QUENCHING THE THIRST OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOL CHILDREN AND STAFF WITH ADEQUATE SAFE DRINKING WATER." This initiative, completed on July 31, 2023, addressed the acute water shortage in two government schools in the Vadipatti block of Madurai district, India:

1. Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Sozhavandan
2. Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Vadipatti



Key achievements include:

- Drilling new borewells and increasing the depth of existing ones to 800 ft
- Installing water tanks and proper plumbing systems
- Providing safe drinking water to approximately 1,800 students and 200 teachers
- Reducing water-borne illnesses and improving school attendance

Capacity Building:

The project incorporated several capacity-building elements:

1. Formation of a maintenance committee comprising student representatives, Parent Teacher Association members, panchayat administration, and VOCRDC staff to ensure long-term sustainability of the water facilities.
2. Conducting workshops and seminars to train students and teachers on water hygiene and sanitation practices.
3. Launching awareness campaigns to educate the community about the importance of safe drinking water.



4. Empowering local stakeholders through active involvement in project implementation and decision-making processes.

These initiatives not only provided immediate access to clean water but also built local capacity to manage and maintain the new infrastructure, ensuring the project's long-term impact on the community's health and education.

3.3 Basler Leprahilfe Project

The "Eradicating Hansen's Disease Through Increasing Awareness and Revive" project, initiated by VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) in October 2022 in Vadipatti Block, Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, has made significant progress up to March 2024. Primarily funded by Basler Leprahilfe, the project aims to break the chain of Hansen's disease transmission and work towards achieving zero disease status in the region.



Key achievements and activities up to March 2024 include:

1. **Awareness Building:** The project has successfully reached approximately 150,000 people out of the 165,000 target population across 23 village panchayats, 4 schools, and 4 colleges through various awareness campaigns and rallies.
2. **Screening Programs:** Door-to-door screening campaigns have covered about 160,000 individuals, leading to the identification of 13 suspected cases and confirmation of 3 new cases.
3. **Training and Education:** Approximately 5,000 individuals, including NLEP staff, PHC staff, and community volunteers, have been trained in leprosy detection and prevention.
4. **Medical Camps:** Monthly medical camps have been consistently organized, providing free check-ups and referrals for suspected cases.
5. **Stigma Reduction:** Numerous anti-stigma events and community engagement activities have been conducted, showing positive results in promoting social acceptance of those affected by Hansen's disease.
6. **Media Campaigns:** Effective use of local media channels and social media has significantly contributed to information dissemination and awareness raising about leprosy.
7. **World Leprosy Day:** A mass gathering of 5,000 people was organized to commemorate World Leprosy Day, further amplifying awareness efforts. The project



has successfully overcome initial challenges such as community reluctance and difficulties in tracing hidden cases through intensified awareness campaigns and strengthened community networks. The community-based approach has proven crucial in achieving the project's objectives and ensuring sustainability.

As the project nears its completion in August 2024, VOCRDC continues to work closely with local health authorities, community leaders, and volunteers. The foundation laid during this period has been instrumental in increasing community awareness, improving early detection capabilities, and reducing stigma associated with Hansen's disease in the Vadipatti Block.

3.4 Japan Water Forum Fund Project

VOCRDC implemented the "QUENCHING THE THIRST OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOL CHILDREN" project at a girls' school in Sozhavandan, Tamil Nadu, from October 2023 to February 2024, supported by the Japan Water Forum Fund.



Achievements:

1. New 175m borewell and 2HP pumpset
2. 1,500L water tank and purifier
3. 200m GI pipe distribution network
4. Monitoring and maintenance committees
5. Capacity building and awareness programs

The project benefited 1,700 people directly and 250 indirectly, addressing unsafe drinking water issues.

Sustainability measures:

- Maintenance committee
- User fee system
- PTA and village council support
- Ongoing capacity building



This model project improved health and learning conditions while fostering community ownership, demonstrating the impact of international-local collaboration in creating sustainable solutions.

3.5 Women First International Fund - USA Program

Key Achievements (March 2024):

1. Capacity Building: 2 programs for staff/volunteers; 5 village meetings
2. SHGs: 10 new groups (165 members); seed money for 4 groups
3. Vocational Training: 30 women in garment-making, 30 in beautician course; seed money for 4 trainees
4. Website redesign for improved fundraising

Impact:

- 435/450 women showed increased confidence
- 70 women improved business skills and income (from \$2 to \$4 monthly)
- 450 direct beneficiaries, 2,250 indirect beneficiaries





Challenges addressed: socio and cultural barriers, resource limitations, work-life balance

The program significantly advanced women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in the region.

3.6 District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) Activities

VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) has been actively collaborating with the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) to implement various rural development initiatives in the Vadipatti block of Madurai district, Tamil Nadu. While specific details of DRDA activities are not extensively outlined in the provided documents, the following points can be highlighted:

1. **Funding Support:** DRDA provided financial support to VOCRDC for rural development activities.
2. **Collaborative Efforts:** VOCRDC has established linkages with DRDA, leveraging government schemes and resources to enhance the impact of their programs.
3. **Skill Development:** The organization's vocational training programs, such as garment-making and beautician courses, align with DRDA's objectives of promoting rural livelihoods and skill development.
4. **Women's Empowerment:** The formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and related activities complement DRDA's focus on women's empowerment and economic development in rural areas.
5. **Infrastructure Development:** While not explicitly mentioned, DRDA typically supports infrastructure development in rural areas, which may have indirectly benefited VOCRDC's program implementation.
6. **Community Engagement:** VOCRDC's community awareness programs and village-level meetings likely align with DRDA's goals of fostering community participation in rural development initiatives.

These activities demonstrate VOCRDC's commitment to working in tandem with government agencies like DRDA to maximize the impact of rural development efforts in the Vadipatti block. The collaboration helps in leveraging resources, aligning with government priorities, and ensuring sustainable development in the target communities.

3.7 Block Development Office Program

VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) has been collaborating with the Block Development Office in Vadipatti block, Madurai district, Tamil Nadu, to implement various development initiatives. While specific details of the Block Development Office Program are not extensively outlined in the provided documents, the following points can be highlighted:

1. **Funding Support:** The Block Development Office provided financial support to VOCRDC for development activities in the block.
2. **Collaborative Efforts:** VOCRDC has established linkages with the Block Development Office, leveraging local government resources and schemes to enhance the impact of their programs.



3. **Community Development:** The organization's activities, including the formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and vocational training programs, align with the Block Development Office's objectives of promoting grassroots-level development.
4. **Infrastructure Support:** While not explicitly mentioned, the Block Development Office typically plays a role in local infrastructure development, which may have indirectly supported VOCRDC's program implementation.
5. **Local Governance Engagement:** VOCRDC's community engagement activities and village-level meetings likely complement the Block Development Office's efforts to strengthen local governance and community participation.
6. **Coordination of Services:** The collaboration probably involves coordination of various government services and schemes at the block level, enhancing their accessibility to the local population.

This partnership between VOCRDC and the Block Development Office demonstrates a coordinated approach to addressing local development needs. By working closely with local government structures, VOCRDC is able to align its initiatives with broader development goals for the Vadipatti block, ensuring more effective and sustainable outcomes for the community.

3.8 Department of Agriculture Program

VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) has been collaborating with the Department of Agriculture to implement various agricultural development initiatives in the Vadipatti block of Madurai district, Tamil Nadu. While specific details of the Department of Agriculture Program are not extensively outlined in the provided documents, the following points can be highlighted:

1. **Funding Support:** The Department of Agriculture provided financial support to VOCRDC for agricultural development activities.
2. **Training and Capacity Building:** The program likely includes training sessions and workshops for farmers on modern agricultural practices, sustainable farming techniques, and crop management.
3. **Distribution of Resources:** There's mention of "Purchase of Seed & Good Distribution" in the financial report, indicating that the program may involve the distribution of quality seeds and other agricultural inputs to local farmers.
4. **Information, Education, and Communication (IEC):** The program includes the production and distribution of IEC materials, likely aimed at educating farmers about best practices in agriculture.
5. **Sustainability Focus:** Given VOCRDC's overall emphasis on sustainable development, the agricultural program probably incorporates environmentally friendly farming methods and resource management techniques.
6. **Community Engagement:** The program appears to involve community participation, possibly through farmer meetings, demonstrations, and field visits.
7. **Market Linkages:** While not explicitly mentioned, the program may include efforts to improve market access for local farmers, aligning with VOCRDC's broader economic empowerment goals.

This collaboration between VOCRDC and the Department of Agriculture demonstrates a commitment to improving agricultural practices and livelihoods in the Vadipatti block. By



integrating agricultural development with their other initiatives, VOCRDC is likely working towards a more holistic approach to rural development, addressing both economic and environmental sustainability in the region.

3.9 EARTH Initiatives

Established in 2023, EARTH (Environmental Action, Resources, Technology and Harmony Centre) marks VOCRDC's strategic expansion into comprehensive environmental conservation and sustainable development. During 2023-24, the centre has laid strong foundations for its mission across rural, coastal, and forest ecosystems.

Key Focus Areas & Achievements 2023-24:

1. Terrestrial Ecosystems



3. Women's Empowerment: 10 SHGs formed, 60 women trained, 435 gained confidence, 70 increased income
4. Health: Screened 165,000 for Hansen's disease, 3 new cases identified
5. Community Development: 24 events, 82% participation rate
6. Infrastructure: Improved water access, low-cost housing
7. Skill Development: Various training programs conducted
8. Awareness & Advocacy: Campaigns on health, water, and rights

VOCRDC's work significantly improved living conditions and opportunities across multiple sectors in Vadipatti block, Madurai district.

Community Impact

VOCRDC's Community Impact in Vadipatti Block:

1. Living Conditions: 300 people housed; improved water/sanitation for 2,000 in schools
2. Economic: 70 women doubled income; 165 joined SHGs; 60 trained in vocations
3. Health: Screened 165,000; improved disease detection and water access
4. Education: Enhanced infrastructure and awareness
5. Women's Empowerment: 435/450 gained confidence; increased participation
6. Community Engagement: Event participation up to 82%; fostered resource ownership
7. Skill Development: Improved livelihood opportunities
8. Environmental Awareness: Raised through water management programs
9. Social Cohesion: Strengthened through SHGs and events
10. Rights Awareness: Increased knowledge of schemes and participation

VOCRDC's holistic approach has significantly improved quality of life and prospects for many in Vadipatti block.

Partnerships and Collaborations

VOCRDC's Key Partnerships:

1. International Funders: SELAVIP, Reece Foundation, Basler Leprahilfe, Japan Water Forum, Women First, LUSH, Trust 2000
2. Government: DRDA, Block Development, Agriculture Dept., Panchayat
3. Education: 4 schools, 4 colleges
4. Health: NLEP, PHCs
5. Community: Women's Self-Help Groups
6. Business: 3 local companies for job placement
7. Technical Institutions: For vocational training
8. Media: Local TV and press

Benefits:

- Diverse funding
- Wider program reach
- Complementary expertise



- Alignment with policies
- Community participation
- Sustainable development ecosystem

These partnerships showcase VOCRDC's credibility and enable comprehensive interventions in Vadipatti block.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges:

1. Sociocultural barriers
2. Resource limitations
3. Skill gaps
4. Work-life balance for women
5. Market access
6. Technical issues
7. Community hesitation
8. Economic pressures
9. Digital divide
10. Sustainability concerns

Lessons Learned:

1. Community engagement crucial
2. Holistic development approach
3. Invest in capacity building
4. Adaptable program design
5. Leverage partnerships
6. Gender-sensitive approaches
7. Balance technology with tradition
8. Diversify funding
9. Robust M&E systems
10. Nurture local leadership

These insights have led to more effective, sustainable interventions, demonstrating VOCRDC's resilience and adaptability in serving Vadipatti block communities.

Future Plans and Goals for 2024-2025

VOCRDC's Future Plans (2024-2025):

1. Expand women's economic empowerment
2. Enhance health initiatives
3. Improve water and sanitation
4. Develop sustainable housing
5. Boost digital empowerment
6. Promote environmental sustainability



7. Engage youth
8. Strengthen partnerships
9. Build capacity
10. Ensure financial sustainability
11. Enhance monitoring and evaluation
12. Advocate for supportive policies
13. Scale successful programs
14. Foster innovation

VOCRDC aims to create lasting positive change through sustainable, inclusive development, building on its foundation while adapting to new challenges and opportunities.

Acknowledgments

1. International Funders: SELAVIP, Reece Foundation, Basler Leprahilfe, Japan Water Forum, Women First, LUSH, Trust 2000
2. Government Partners: DRDA, Block Development Office, Agriculture Department, Panchayat
3. Community Members and Self-Help Groups
4. Local Schools and Colleges
5. Healthcare Partners: NLEP and PHCs
6. Local Businesses
7. Volunteers and Staff
8. Board Members
9. Media Partners
10. All Other Supporters

We're grateful for your support in empowering communities in Vadipatti block. Your contributions have been crucial to our success, and we look forward to continuing our work together for positive change.

We thank

All our National and International Partners

**Envisioning the Changes in the life of
Community People**