ACTIVITY REPORT 2011 - 2012

Rain Drop Organization



SUMMARY

In order to fight poverty, drought and desertification in the villages of Bargarh, in Uttar Pradesh, India, we harvest rain water and plant fruit trees through participative community actions.

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Rain Drop Presentation



Rain Drop's ID

Name: Rain Drop Title: Association loi 1901

Goal : Support developing countries through improved natural resource management and raise awareness on the environment and cultural diversity.

Creation

Created : 2 March 2010 in Paris Published at the official journal of organizations : 3 April 2010

Change of location on: 23 december 2010 in Grasse

Legal rights

Declared of general interest : 25 may 2012 in Nice

Sirene :

Identifiant SIRET : 529 644 502 Code APE : 94 99 Z Identifiant SIREN : 529 644 502 00013

Declared on the 18th January 2011

Chair :

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The President's Observations

"This year has seen important advances. In a constant search for new ideas and techniques to raise awareness of environmental issues and solutions, to empower the local population, and to improve the management of natural resources, we have diversified and modified some of our methods. As the achievements of this year demonstrate, these changes have been for the best.

In addition to the expansion of our activities in India, we have also developed programmes in



France. Convinced that sustainable development requires a common effort, we wish to act in both the developing countries, with the people most in need, and in the developed countries. In order to include these new activities as well as those to come, we have changed the purpose of the NGO: Rain Drop no longer focuses only on "improving the quality of life of rural and indigenous populations through restoration of the ecosystem and management of natural resources", but now acts in a more holistic way, by "supporting developing countries through imprived natural resource management and raising awareness on the environment and cultural diversity."

This objective helps us encompass all our aspirations, whether they are social, economic, environmental or cultural, whether they take place in India, in France or elsewhere.

Rain Drop in numbers

2 years of existence

- 43 members
- 1 permanent volunteer
- 4 temporary volunteers
- 5 villages mobilized
- 3 water harvesting ponds built/ repaired
- 6 250 trees planted

The Rain Drop Team



Visit <u>www.rain-drop.org</u> in "Our Team" for more information.

Partners, sponsors and supports



OUR PROJECTS



PROJECT IN INDIA

Regional Context

Location

The village of Bargarh is situated in the Bundelkhand region (marked in red on the map), India. This region sits across the borders of two states, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The Bundelkhand is known for its lack of infrastructure in the sectors of education, sanitation, health and transportation. Good governance is rarely practised and there is little economic development, thus the region is one of the poorest in India.



Bundelkhand region, India Source : Wikipedia



Bargarh is a village found in the south-eastern zone of Uttar Pradesh between the cities of Chitrakoot (50 km) and Allahabad (60 km). Around Bargarh are 42 smaller villages. It is with these villages that we work.

As seen in the satellite photo above, the green cover has completely disappeared. Our efforts are centered on the areas where deforestation has caused soil erosion, rendering the ground arid and unproductive.

Environment

Just forty years ago, Bargarh was a lush forest with rich biodiversity. A strong rise in population growth, combined with inept government policies accelerated deforestation in the region, transforming it into an arid landscape.

Bargarh today suffers from desertification. Soil erosion has left the ground dry and rocky, making agriculture increasingly difficult. The trees having disappeared, the quantity of organic matter and the porosity of soil were reduced. Rain water hardly percolates through the soil, and in cases of heavy showers, causes soil erosion. In

addition, the monsoon rains have often been delayed in recent years and have varied widely in the amount of water they provide.

The project was initiated at the request of villagers who were suffering from a seven year drought. Bargarh entered into the vicious cycle of environmental degradation, aggravated by mining, the only revenue alternative in the region.

Economy



One of the last testimony of the once dense forest of Bargarh, now transformed into a semi-desert.

The main economic activity in the Bargarh region

is agriculture, with 92% of the villagers depending on subsistence farming. Soil erosion and drought have dramatic impacts on their daily lives. Those who can no longer live off their land are forced to break rocks for up to eight hours per day. Others work in silica mines and suffer from respiratory, joint and other health problems. Many young villagers leave their families in order to find work in the cities. The lack of economic alternative leaves little choice for the development of the region.

<u>Social</u>

A majority of 86% of the population of Bargarh are farmers of low castes. In the past they worked in debt bondage for upper castes villagers. After the declaration of Indian independence and the Ghandian movements of the 50s and 60s, they were given their own land to farm. Despite having obtained physical freedom, the condition of servility remains deeply rooted in their mind. They have no knowledge of entrepreneurship, nor any means to ensure the effectiveness of their rights.



Landless villagers or those who can no longer live from their land, are forced to work in open mines. On the right : a woman and her daughter break rocks by hand to make silica sand.

Assessment of the pilot project 2010/2011

Summary of achievements in the village of Chetteni

- Construction of two water retention ponds
- Planting of 250 fruit trees
- Request by the villagers to the government authorities for the construction of a well

Current status of the project

- The water retention ponds remain intact and children continue to play in them
- Despite our efforts, most of the trees didn't survive the drought and the summer heat.
- According to the authorities, the application for the well was accepted several months ago. Construction should have begun in February, but so far, nothing has been done.



In the villages around Bargarh live the Kol, a tribal people spread through north central India. Traditionally, they are nomads, living from forest products. As this lifestyle became impossible, they started working as bonded labor, until they regained access to some of their land. On the left: a Kol woman of the Chetteni village

Explanation for the drying of the trees

- **Distance of water source** other than the water retention ponds that dry up by February, there is no source of water nearby.
- Lack of community mobilization despite the distance of the nearest source of water, villagers regularly travel much greater distances when it is necessary. There was not sufficient community involvement and understanding to consider this effort worthwhile.
- Lack of government support despite the promises of local authorities for the construction of a well near the plantations, the construction work has not begun.
- **Climatic difficulties** The two summer months, May and June, during which the temperatures soar from 50 ° C to 55 ° C during the day without a single drop of rain, were prolonged by another month due to the delayed monsoon.

Project 2011/2012

This year, Rain Drop continued and extended its activities in India.

The results of the pilot project, which ended in August 2011, prompted us to expand our activities to five new villages. The difficulties we faced in the maintenance of trees made us realise the crucial need for better community mobilization. On the other hand, the support given by our various partners encourages us to proceed with our endeavours.

Field Study and Village Identification

September to October 2011

The new Rain Drop team in India, consisting of Alexis Roman, Ashok Sarwade and Bablu Prasad, began the second year on September 1, 2011. We visited several villages in the area of Bargarh, studied the needs of villagers and surveyed the available natural (water, land, resources plantations, minerals). Villager involvement, and the presence of natural resource potential and accessibility are the main criteria for the project. We identified seven villages with which to work.



In India, the Rain Drop Team is composed of Ashok Sarwode (left), Bablu Prasad (center) and Alexis Roman (right).

November to december 2011

The year's objective was to work with five villages and plant at least 5 000 trees. From November to December, we held regular meetings with the seven villages identified, to test the motivation of the people to implement the projects. It quickly became obvious that the villages of Kolahai and Lakshmipurva would not carry out the activities.

Indeed, although the villagers of Kolahai expressed some interest in the project, they rarely came to the meetings and hardly participated in them. On the contrary, the villagers of Lakshmipurva were highly motivated and actively involved in our meetings. However, this village is too far from the centre of our activities: for reasons of time, visibility and impact, we preferred to focus our actions around the centre of Bargarh.

During community meetings with the other five villages, we determined with greater precision their natural resource related needs. We decided on a new

strategy. The villagers, with our guidance, would conceive the projects. As a result, each village has a project tailored to its specific needs.



Results of the meetings

<u>Usri</u>

Meeting in the village of Usri

- 9 meetings
- Main problem: desertification of land due to drought
- Solution: rehabilitation of 18 hectares of land
- Strategy:
 - Build a stone wall to protect the plantations
 - Seek government grants to build the wells
 - Plant fruit trees, vegetables and food crops

Bharatpurva & Ajadpurva

Bharatpurva & Ajadpurva are two neighbouring villages. Because they are so close, we worked with the villagers of both villages together.

- 8 meetings
- Main problem: desertification of land due to lack of water
- Solution: Rehabilitation of 4.5 hectares of land
- Strategy:
 - Build stone walls to protect land
 - Seek government grants to build wells
 - Plant fruit trees, vegetable gardens and crops

<u>Charerha</u>

- 10 meetings
- Main problem: leakage of the water retention pond
- Solution: Repair the leak
- Strategy:
 - Dig a trench
 - \circ $\;$ Fill the trench with a water proof material

Jamira Colony

- 9 meetings
- Main problem: desertification of land due to lack of water
- Solution: Rehabilitate 9 hectares of land
- Strategy:
 - Build stone walls to protect the land
 - Seek government grants to build wells
 - Plant fruit trees, vegetables and food crops

<u>Kotwa</u>

- 8 meetings
- Main problem: desertification of land due to drought
- Solution: rehabilitate 5 hectares of land
- Strategy:
 - Dig a water retention pond (subsidized by government aid)
 - Construct a stone wall to protect the land from animals
 - o Plant fruit trees
- Despite the enthusiasm of the village chief, our actions have not been successful. Administrative delays have stalled the project for the moment.



Arid landscape in the village of Charerha.

This land, though fertile, is unused by the villagers due to the lack of water. Deforestation led to soil erosion, leaving stones at the surface. It is therefore difficult to practice agriculture. Fruit tree plantations such as amla, are perfectly suited to such terrain, as the root system is shallow, the tree requires little water and the fruits have great nutritive and medicinal value.

By planting those trees, we revitalize the local environment while developing additional sources of revenues for the villagers.

Awareness Campaigns

January to March 2012

Our campaigns are designed to raise awareness on how the ecosystem functions and on the bond between human activities and the environment. Our goal is to teach the villagers the respect and care for the nature they will need if they want to depend on it for water, food and shelter. This year, in addition to the traditional training methods we implemented last year, we incorporated more modern ones like films.

Tree puja (tree ceremony)

As we implemented our various activities, we performed "tree puja's", a traditional practice to show one's respect for nature. These ceremonies usually took place before constructing the stone walls and planting the trees, to remind the villagers of the sacred bond that links them with nature. They were performed to initiate the

construction of the stone walls and the tree planting.



Food and incent is given as offering to the deities.



Street play

We wrote the script for a play based on the story of Bargarh. While the forest was lush, businessmen encouraged villagers to cut their trees. Lured by the easy money, the villagers soon realized they were left without vegetation and facing drought. The play increased the enthusiasm of those who saw it.

Danse

In the culture of the Bundelkhand (the region where Bargarh is located), dancing is a way to commune with nature. Dance movements represent water, land, culture, fields, etc. During his performance, the dancer moves closer to nature. By imitating the movements, he expresses his respect for nature.

Films and image presentations

Having noted the interest of the villagers in movie screens, we innovated communicating by our message through films and cartoons. Picture presentations were also used to explain natural functions such as the and soil cycles. We water, air conducted five presentations on the themes of water, air, soil, animals and human beings in the four project villages.¹



Children are particularly fond of the projections.

Presentations	Usri	Bharatpurva	Charerha	Jamira Colony	
Water	120	125	113	167	
Soil life	73	76	73	101	
Air & plants	111	120	145	168	
Animals	75	90	131	157	
Human being	106	132	99	166	

Number of participants at the presentations

Children environmental camp

We organized a camp to spread awareness on environmental protection with forty-six children from ten different villages. During this two-day activity, they drew, painted and performed dances on the themes of nature. We also pushed



them to reflect on the environmental issues of Bargarh. Finally we dug holes and planted trees with the children to put into practice what they had learned.

Children put into practice what they learnt by digging holes for the trees.

Natural resource management workshops

March to July 2012

To put into practice the information conveyed during the awareness campaigns, we set up workshops on natural resource management. These included practical activities and training by experts.

Workshops on vermicompost

Vermicompost produces an inexpensive high-quality compost that allows farmers to reduce their use of chemical fertilizers. We showed the villagers how to make vermicompost.

Three vermicompost tanks were built in the villages of Jamira Colony, Usri and Bargarh.



Vermicompost tank in the village of Usri

Tree planting workshops

We also set up workshops to teach the villagers how to plant several different tree species. It is crucial to plant trees at the proper distance apart to ensure their survival and especially to ensure that they will bear fruit.

- 2 main workshops in the villages of Usri and Jamira Colony
- Several smaller workshops were organized as requested



A common problem is that the trees are planted too close to one another. In such cases, the trees grow but do not bear fruit. We therefore implemented workshops on tree planting and closely watched the digging of holes to ensure the minimum distance was respected.

Villagers mesure the distance between the holes with a rope.

Visits of experts

We invited several experts to speak at our workshops to strengthen the knowledge of the villagers and of the Rain Drop team itself:

- Dr. Tunira Bhaduria, expert in soil microbiology and vermicompost
- Dr. Anil Kumar, expert in natural resource management and tribal culture
- Dr. Ram Bajhan, specialist of traditional Bundeli culture
- Prithi Sharma, expert in nutrition and gardening
- Neha Singh and Niraj Kumar, specialists in soil and forests
- Ramesh Kumar, local expert in tree planting and maintenance



Ramesh Kumar gives instructions to villagers on tree planting.



A woman waters her amla sapling

Tree maintenance workshops

In order to ensure the survival of the young trees, regular attention is vital. The major difficulty is drought. It is necessary to train villagers from the start to water the trees and to use water harvesting techniques such as mulching. We also help the villagers detect and fight tree diseases.

Repairing a water retention pond

In the village of Charerha, the primary need was to repair a leaking water retention pond. According to the villagers, a trench had to be dug and filled with a water proof material, such as black soil. After discussions with experts from the irrigation department of the Indian government and with hydraulic engineers, this solution proved the most appropriate, as we did not want to install a large plastic sheet.

To check the motivation and support of the villagers, we organized two days of *sramdan* (communal work). On the first day, fifty-six villagers participated, and on the second day there were sixty-one.



Following the traditional organization of labour, men break the stones while women cary them away. Though they are used to such work, it is long and difficult.



The obvious motivation of villagers encouraged us to speed up the implementation of the project. The ground being rocky, the villagers spent a lot of time breaking stones. So we made it easier by using dynamite and a bulldozer.



The stone has so many stones that even the bulldozer couldn't take the rocks out. We had to use dynamite.

We filled the trench with back soil to prevent water from seeping.



Villagers put black soil in the trench and compact it.

When the first rains came, the tank filled up.



The pond after the first rains

Tree planting

In the villages of Jamira Colony, Usri and Bharatpurva, the villagers expressed their interest in planting fruit trees.

The first step was to build stone walls to protect their plantations from domestic animals (cows, goats and sheep) and from wild animals (nilgai - a species of deer).

This long and difficult work was done by the villagers. After we provided them with stones, they built the walls.



With the first rains, hole digging started

Depending on the number of holes dug, we asked each villager what species of trees he wanted and how many he wanted to plant.



Transportation of trees with a rickshaw



Santosh and his wife finish the construction of their wall.

We had to wait for the first rains of the monsoon to dig the holes for the trees. The land is too hard to dig during the dry season.

Finally, the monsoon arrived, more than a month late.



Suresh collects the trees he ordered

Transporting the trees was generally a family activity. The transport arrangements were bicycle, rickshaw, by hand, in bags ...

... or on the head !

The villagers were thus able to dig holes and plant trees of guava, amla, mango, lemon, carissas, jujube, bael, ber, jackfruit and jambul. These were all local varieties.

In addition to the plantations on villagers land, we also organized tree planting programs in schools, to raise awareness amongst children.





Villagers find innovative and original ways to transport the trees.

In total, 5 994 fruit trees were planted, well beyond our goal of 5 000!

Planting a guava tree in the village of Jamira Colony

Name of villages	Number of trees	Number of trees alive			
	planted	on 11/08/2012			
Usri	3428	3351			
Bharatpurva & Ajadpurva	327	294			
Jamira Colony	1943	1908			
Charerha	296	309			
Total	5994	5862			

Tree species and quality

	amla	manguier	goyavier	citronnier	ber	bael	jujube	carissas	Jacquiers	ber
Planted	2797	339	252	79	30	78	47	2178	30	29
Lost	162	50	39	4	2	13	8	117	0	(

We planted mainly on project land. However, in order not to exclude any villagers, we also provided trees for planting in family gardens.



Un child plants a tree with his mother



A young man plants a tree in his garden

PROJECT IN FRANCE

Inspired by its experience in India and conscious that real change in our way of life cannot be achieved without the participation and awareness of other countries, Rain Drop started to reach out to the French public.

<u>Preparation of communication material for awareness</u> <u>campaigns in France</u>

Media:

To prepare for our first year of operations in France, we developed several means of communication aimed at increasing public awareness of environment and cultural diversity issues. Drawings, photos, videos and interviews were collected. These various media serve as the basis for our activities, which include photo exhibitions, film screenings, debates and projects in schools and colleges.



Shooting at Ganesh Bagh

In particular, we filmed and edited a documentary on the life of a boy (6 years old) and a girl (8 years old) from the village of Chetteni. We followed both for a typical day: waking up, going to school, eating meals, playing games and being with family. We sought to convey the uniqueness and diversity of human beings. Our days are built the same way, but they differ in the way they materialize.

We would now like to make a documentary on the life of a boy and a girl in France, in order to show it to the Indian villagers.



Planned Projects

Training of coordinators from recreation centers in Grasse

On the 11th, 12th and 14th of September, we trained the coordinators of recreation centers in sustainable development and cultural diversity. Our deep knowledge of rural India and our privileged integration into the lives of its people have given us unique understanding. Drawing from the actual case of Bargarh, an ancient forest, which due to mismanagement became a semi-desert region, we will be able to throw light on the essence of environmental issues. Through our teaching methods and games, the children will open their minds to the world that surrounds them. They will discover other cultures and learn about the natural resources which allow them to live. Thus, they will understand that sustainable development does not stop at their doorstep, but encompasses the entire planet and all its inhabitants. More than just creating awareness, this develops a real exchange with the village children of India

Conferences and lectures for schools and the general public

Following the same reasoning of raising awareness of both the environment and wonder of human diversity, we will outreach to the French public. Beginning in the region of Grasse, we will organize conferences and lectures in schools, colleges and other meeting places. We will use the materials that we have accumulated (images, testimonials, videos) of Indian rural life in order to launch a debate on environment and cultural diversity issues.

We also plan conferences for senior citizens in clubs and rest homes.

Activities at the French Academy in Delhi

With aid from several teachers from the French Academy of Delhi, we plan to develop additional educational activities that will help young people understand the environmental, social and cultural realities of the country in which they live.

Partnerships

In order to increase the potential and the impact of our efforts, we have worked to develop new partnerships.

<u>In India</u>

After several appointments with the Attaché of Decentralized Cooperation, the Counselor for Cooperation and Cultural Action and the French Ambassador, we obtained the support of the Embassy of France in India for our project.

We are also preparing a project proposal with the well-known organization, TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute), to be submitted to the Government of India.

In France

Rain Drop has been recognized in the general interest by the Directorate General of Taxes and can therefore provide tax receipts for its donors

During this year, various partnerships have been formed, with schools and

summer camps in the city of Grasse, of the PACA region to conduct awareness campaigns.

Three members of the Cannes Orchestra organized a concert on June 15, 2012, as a fundraiser for Rain Drop.

Moreover, Rain Drop has been asked to participate in a number of events in the city including the festival of the Canal de Siagne in September 2012. We talked to the participants about major environmental issues, and organized fun and educational activities for children.



Conclusion

Remarks and observations

The second year of the project has been extremely rewarding: In India, the progress we made in implementing our activities, in strengthening our local presence, in training our local team, and also in understanding the hazards encountered in the field have helped us make quick adjustments to our strategy.

We have extended the activities of Year 1 to four new villages and planted 20 times more trees. Our knowledge of the field has made the implementation more efficient. This was also helped by the arrival of Ashok Sarwade, who has been working in the area for two years, and Bablu Prasad, who was born in a village of Bargarh and worked as a social worker for the last four years. The Indian team is thus made up of a foreigner, an Indian from a more developed state in the south, and a local, thus providing complementary skills and understanding.

Mobilizing villagers, although much better than in the previous year, is a task that still needs improvement. Although they understand environmental issues, it is sometimes difficult to adjust coordination for the projects. Dr. Bhajan, a Bundeli cultural expert, explained that this is mainly due to the repetitive destruction of the local culture by invasions. In addition, the precarious living conditions of the villagers make risk taking and change difficult. Activities are regularly interrupted or slowed down by illness, death, problems between villagers and financial difficulties.

From September 2012, which marks the beginning of the third year of the project, we will change our village identification and awareness building strategy. We will first help the villagers with the legal, health and financial difficulties they face. This will benefit in two ways: to solve urgent and short term problems first, and then to gradually build a relationship of trust and mutual support. The villagers will therefore be more responsive to the subtle issues of natural resources, which require a long term engagement.

Despite the inherent difficulties of the region, the positive results, new perspectives and the motivation of villagers encourage us to continue our efforts to support the local inhabitants and fight against desertification, drought and poverty.

In addition, we have a new orientation for the association. We now wish to reach the people of developed countries. This year we started developing activities in France, and opened new areas for action. Our preparation of communication materials on the environment and cultural diversity, relayed by motivated volunteers, will help us obtain outstanding results.

Prospective

<u>In India</u>



2013 will have four main goals:

- Extend the project to five new villages
- Plant at least 5 000 trees and build/repair water harvesting bodies
- Construct a village managed tree nursery to render tree planting autonomous
- Consolidate the local team

In France:

To arrive at a sustainable development, an evolution of mentalities and behavior is required in developed countries. Rain Drop will therefore organize awareness campaigns and trainings in France. These activities will be adapted to the target audience:

- Discovering the environment and teaching of eco-gestures to children of 5-12 years: through fun and participative thematic modules, we will teach school children eco-friendly habits they can observe in everyday life. Exchanges with schools in India will be established to enable children to learn about and respect different cultures and ways of living.
- Creation of environmental clubs for high school students: these clubs will deal with developing the commitment of eco-citizenship and solidarity among the students between the ages of 12 to 18 years, by helping them

implement projects on sustainable development and through exchanges.

- Creating awareness among the general public: meetings, debates and various events will be organized to inform, train and accompany citizens, and encourage them to act in eco-friendly ways.
- Training leaders, municipal heads and the teaching staff: training will take place so as to build the capacities of actors playing an important role in changing the habits of the population as a whole.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

