**GIVE THEM A FUTURE**

**Help Educate Poor Tribal Children in India**

**By**

**AGRAGAMEE**

**At/PO. Kashipur, Dist. Rayagada, Odisha, India**

**Project Outline:**

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| **ORGANISATION** |  |
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| Registration | Regd. Under SRA-1860 with No: KPT-289-6/1987-88Date of Registration : 29/04/1987 |
| FCRA Number | 104960035Date of Registration : 27/01/1991 |
| Chief Functionary | Mr. Achyut Das |
| **PROJECT** |  |
| Project Title | Give Them A Future: Tribal Education in India |
| Project Goal | Overall Goal:To help tribal children from the poorest families have a brighter future by facilitating quality and effective education |
| Project Objectives | Objectives: 1. To demonstrate a model of effective and quality education for first generation school goers that can engender a generational change in tribal villages
2. To enable children in remote villages climb out of the cycle of poverty-illiteracy poverty and go for further education and improve their opportunities in life,
3. To develop a teacher training model that can be taken up at a larger scale for promotion of quality education for first generation school children
4. To develop quality workbooks and guides that can enable learning without stress and fear
5. To work with Government Primary Schools for the promotion of the model on a larger scale
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| Project Coverage | Districts of Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nabrangpur and Koraput in Odisha in India |
| Outreach | Outreach:3000 tribal children40 village communities40 Government Primary Schools4 districts of Rayagada, Koraput, Nabrangpur and Kalahandi in the state of Odisha in India |
| Project Budget for 1 year | $249480 |

**Introduction:**

The Give them A Future Project seeks to improve school learning for tribal communities who have faced multiple exclusions for generations. It is located in underdeveloped tribal districts of Odisha, in India and is designed for tribal and other children from economically deprived sections of the population, where a first generation of literates have not yet emerged. These children face multiple exclusions and insecurities, being born to poor parents in some of the most underdeveloped regions of India. They are born to a life of chronic hunger leading to malnutrition, as are their parents, they have almost no opportunities for education, and no exposure to the world beyond their village and immediate community. The lack of education binds them to a life of unskilled labour and exploitation, without even the know how to count their notes when they receive their pay. This project will provide them quality education, and help them for further education so that they can dream of a brighter future for themselves and their community, and the future generations.

The overall dimensions of this problem are alarming. The number of illiterates in just 4 tribal districts of Odisha is more than 2 million as per the national census figures of 2011. If we take into account, the current poor quality of education in the tribal regions, then these numbers can only be predicted to increase, as national studies show that as many as 46% of children in class V are not able to read class 1 text. Detailed micro-studies by Agragamee reveal an even worse picture. As against a census literacy rate of 34.5 in Dasmnatpur Block, Koraput District, an Agragamee sample survey yielded a literacy rate of 8%, in Thuamulrampur Block, Kalahandi District, against 37.16% census figures, Agragamee figures were 12%.

According to the Government reports, the number of drop outs and out of

school children has been significantly reduced. The Government data as per the following table indicated that the percentage of out of school children till 14 years of age has been reduced to less than 1%. However, the question remains, how much of this has translated to increased learning, and literacy. As mentioned above the quality of teaching remains dismal with more than 50% children being unable to read even in class V.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN (Source:OPEPA Website)** |  |
|  |  | **Boys** | **Girls** | **Total** | **Boys** | **Girls** | **Total** | **Boys %** | **Girls %** | **Total %** |
| **15** | **Kalahandi** | **125830** | **119175** | **245005** | **24** | **37** | **61** | **0.02** | **0.03** | **0.02** |
| **20** | **Koraput** | **99242** | **89684** | **188926** | **609** | **491** | **1100** | **0.61** | **0.55** | **0.58** |
| **23** | **Nawarangpur** | **108500** | **102737** | **211237** | **751** | **639** | **1390** | **0.69** | **0.62** | **0.66** |
| **27** | **Rayagada** | **77053** | **69232** | **146285** | **1542** | **1411** | **2953** | **2** | **2.04** | **2.02** |
|  | **Odisha** | **410625** | **380828** | **791453** | **2926** | **2578** | **5504** | **0.39** | **0.36** | **0.38** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Agragamee surveys also indicate extremely low reading abilities even in higher grades in the tribal regions. In a sample survey in 7 Panchayats, Agragamee found only 46% of 14 year olds could read, while 22% of them could not even identify alphabets.

After the passing of the Right to Education Act, repeating of grades by students has been prohibited. This along with removal of traditional evaluation systems in terms of strict tests and marking has affected the educational system negatively according to many teachers. National studies have also found that learning levels have decreased after the passing of the RTE Act in 2009. In the tribal regions, it has been Agragamee’s experience that a complex set of factors affects learning, and continuity in schools. Poverty combined with the culture of complete self-reliance necessitates apprenticeship of the children from an early age into the adult routines and jobs for developing the basic skill. Despite this, parents increasingly realize the need for school education and send their children to the Government primary schools. However the poor quality of schooling makes this a costly investment in terms of time, and other basics that are needed to send the child to school, including things like notebooks, pen, pencils, etc. On the other hand, being by and large unfamiliar with the scripted world, parents are little able to monitor the progress of the child. Finding at the end of a year or two that the offspring has little to show for the long hours spent in the class room, parents have little qualms about pulling them out from time to time to lend a helping hand in the family works. All this reinforces the irrelevance of school education in its current form to the child, which eventually results in drop outs. More often than not, the child is not isolated but is part of a larger peer group of irregular students.

On the other hand, poor educational levels also results in very few teachers from the tribal regions in the schools. There is thus a large gap between the teacher and her students in terms of language and cultural affinity. Teachers find them selves unable to reach out to the children, have an engaged class room, with children involved in the lessons. They often find excuses in the poor abilities of the children, or in language differences, seek escape routes through labelling tribal children in general as poor learners etc. Also to blame are contemporary methods and techniques for which appropriate pedagogy has not been developed. Thus, the Grade I language book, which has been developed for a child centred, and activity based learning method, provides the first obstacle, as most teachers are not able to comprehend how to teach it, being more used to the ‘Barno Bodh’ which is the traditional class 1 primer. Things are even more complicated as the book combines language and mathematics teaching, for which the teachers are even more ill-equipped. The Right to Education Act is further blamed by teachers as also other functionaries at the district and Block level for abolishing punishment in class. Teachers feel that they have no means of control, or enforcing learning. Even though teachers go through several trainings, beginning with professional teacher training courses, and then periodic in-service sessions, by and large the pedagogical understanding is that without fear, and control, learning is inadequate. The ban on punishments is often broken covertly in the class rooms, as reported by many a student, yet, the overall feeling is that the complete ban on corporal punishment hampers teaching and learning, leading to poor student achievements.

Reading is the foundational skill on which much of all further learning depends. Children without fluent reading abilities cannot understand their textbooks, and are more likely to drop out of school. In the tribal regions, the implications of this are enormous, as entire village communities of children continue with poor reading abilities. Not being able to read also in effect disempowers a person in several ways. Thus, in the tribal regions, with dismal literacy rates, the entire community is disempowered, and unable to participate effectively in any development process. The problem is complex as poor quality school education is not questioned by the parent community. Nor is a tribal family able to take any form of remedial action for their child, being themselves illiterate, and too poor to afford any form of tuition. Low performance in education and poor socio-economic standards are thus self-reinforcing characteristics that tie communities across the world to low income and poverty. It is also the repeated finding in the Internationally acclaimed PISA (Programme of International Student Assessment) Surveys that school education tends to perpetuate existing socio-economic patterns, rather than create a more equitable distribution of learning opportunities and outcomes. This is more apparent in a large and diverse country like India, where class, caste and geographical divides enable a few to access the best education in the world, while a staggeringly large majority of children struggle with basic learning

**2. Agragamee’s Experience In Education:**

**2.1. The Beginning:**

Agragamee has been involved in the implementation of Programs of primary education in the tribal regions for the last 25 years. It has been supported in these programs by the Ministry of Human Resource Development for Programs of Non-formal and Innovative Education, covering 200 villages, in 5 tribal districts, Ministry of Tribal Welfare for a Residential Complex for Tribal Girls, providing primary education to 50 tribal girls, and International Funding agencies including Action Aid, and Terre Des Homes covering 70 schools in two tribal districts.

The efforts provided holistic and all round education in some of the remotest and most underdeveloped tribal regions where schools either did not exist, or did not function. Initially, the schools ran during the night, when working children as well adults had free time for the pursuit of literacy and learning. Subsequently the teachers were encouraged to take up the schools in two shifts, to cater to different age groups. These schools were based on the felt need of the community, keen that their children learn to read and write. Thus these Programs had immense participation of the community, wherein they provided a space and a school building, as also participated in the schooling process. Initially, this participation was in the forms of silent observation. Subsequently, many adults and adolescents also brought their slates and chalk to these learning centres to pick the basics of literacy. In course of time, these centres also became active and vibrant places for discussions on socio-economic issues affecting the village, including alcoholism, wage work, and other government Programs, etc. Essentially, the major highlights of these efforts can be outlined as follows:

* Historical and social analysis of the tribal identity
* Total self-expression of the students through co-curricular activities
* Development of value-based curriculum
* Experiments on child to child development
* Development of teaching aids with locally available material
* Teachers as an Activist for social change
* Inculcation of attitudes promoting common endeavour and critical thinking

The schools taken up with the above mentioned innovative approaches have thus been part of Agragamee’s holistic and integrated development efforts. From just places in the centre of village lit with a lantern, the schools blossomed into lively dynamic centres of collective growth with shared learnings where the development history of the village unfolded.

Achievements:

* The Program has enabled a learner achievement at the primary level much more than that facilitated by the qualified teachers in formal Government Schools.
* It has helped children develop a critical understanding of the socio-economic situation in the villages and make active interventions to fight exploitation and corruption.
* Techniques of improved farming and cultivation were also developed in the villages where AIE schools were located since that has been a part of the curriculum.
* Children also begun to ask questions of their adults, and checked social evils like illicit liquor brewing, and excessive alcoholism, as also begun to question child marriages, which frequently take place within the community.
* The Program had also able to help tribal children join the mainstream educational processes to a significant extent.

**2.2. Mukta Gyana Kutira**

Seeking to build on and consolidate its past experience in education, Agragamee started the series of schools called “Mukta Gyana Kutira” or Centres For Learning With Freedom, in some of the remotest regions of the tribal districts in Odisha. These schools focused on girls as a necessary effort to address the huge gender gap in education in the tribal regions. This vibrant Program of primary education located in some of the remotest regions, of the state including Adri and Padepadar in Kalahandi District, and Kashipur in Rayagada District has helped produce matriculates and graduates in villages with almost zero literacy a few years back. The interventions include primary schools for tribal girls, teacher training, teaching and learning material that help teachers take their training forward through fun and stress free methods, and sustained teacher mentoring. These efforts have helped establish child centred processes, where learning, fun and play merge into one another, helping teachers enjoy their work almost as much as the children. These schools have also been centres for innovation and creative efforts, leading to the development of the model of language and literacy teaching described under the current project. This project thus offers the opportunity for up-scaling this unique model which have helped its students make significant progress in a short time.

Over the decade of their existence, these schools have been able to prove their worth, and develop a keen interest for education in the villages. Taking into consideration, the extremely low level of education of girls and women in the tribal districts of Odisha, the Agragamee Schools have been able to break the taboos and barriers to girls education in the tribal villages. They provide education to 350 girl children from 15 villages, and have been greatly appreciated by the local village community for the learning levels achieved by the students.

Some of the achievements of these schools can be outlined as follows:

* Production of the newsletter, ‘Dangar Katha’ or Stories from the Hills written completely by the children for last 5 years,
* Children’s Monthly Wall Magazines: 3 wall magazines with illustrated stories and essays and art by the children of all classes are put up every month,
* 260 children have passed out of Agragamee Schools, and gone for further education
* 65 children have passed matriculation. Out of them, several are pursuing higher studies,
* In 2014 parents of Kumbharasila village admitted 43 children between grades 5 to 8 who were studying in Government school because of they could not even write their own names. In 2016, 10 of them will pass out of Class V in Agragamee School.
* Agragamee’s special workbooks and text books for grades 1 and 2 have helped children pick up reading and writing with ease
* Agragamee’s methods have also helped slow learners catch up and take keen interest in their studies by grades 2 and 3,
* Students from Agragamee School teach their parents and sibling at home.
* Children in classes IV and V read newspaper regularly improving their world view and general knowledge
* The Agragamee Schools have created a demand in the villages for better quality education from the Government Schools and regular teacher attendance
* In addition to academic learning, children of Agragamee Schools have won several prizes in inter school cultural competitions.

This initiative has generated a sense of right to education that has started a process of reforming the state school system. This is clearly visible from the sudden waking up of the state school teachers from their long hibernation, and this has brought at least one change: They have become more regular in attending the school which has resulted in enhancement of attendance of the children (as there was no teacher, children would also not come).

Apart from exerting a direct impact on the overall education scenario of the area the achievement of the Agragamee School has created among the students a sense of empowerment that has been applied for larger good: the higher class children (4 and 5) have involved themselves in their respective villages in playing a monitoring role. For example, they have been instrumental in checking the muster rolls for MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act), generating awareness about the right wage rates and ensuring due benefits under Programs like public distribution system, the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme), etc.

Children have also taken their learnings in school to their homes. According to Dr. Kumar Rana of Pratichi Trust (A non-profit founded by Professor Amartya Sen), “Some of the children have already started teaching their mothers alphabets. As a mother shares, ‘my child has been after my life. She has a vow that she won’t relax without teaching me how to read and write’. The visible pride in her daughter is tinged with just a little bit of exasperation as this a difficult skill to learn at this age”.

The initiatives has established itself as a model for expanding primary education among the disadvantaged girl children in a way which is at the same time highly attractive and joyful for the children and also immensely effective in building up a bridge for eliminating the gaps that prevents these girls from acquiring education and place finding in the mainstream milieu with equality and dignity.

The Program, has not only had multidimensional impacts on the socio-cultural and economic settings of the localities where the schools are set up but also has tremendous potential of replication and policy modifications.

**2.3. State Resource Centre Adult and Continuing Education:**

Agragamee is also supported for a State Resource Centre for Adult Literacy and Continuing Education by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. They are also developing a model based on the principles outlined in the current approach for adult literacy. The objectives of SRC are to provide academic and technical resource support to adult education Programs mainly through organization of training Programs, material development, innovative projects, research studies and evaluation in 8 districts of Odisha.

In the past, Agragamee has included many Alternative Education Centres (AECs) and District Resource Units (DRUs) as part of its Adult literacy Programs. The Village Education Committees (VECs) too took up advocacy projects on education in tribal areas. Political literacy has always been an inherent aspect of the training at the AECs. Income Generation Programs (IGP) and their training have been facilitated in over 9 districts through the AECs. This also attempts at making the schools a self-sustainable initiative.

Agragamee has constantly focused on the capacity building of progressive youth and women for their socio-economic development. Over the last three decades, many workshops and training have been conducted to impart education on different vocations, government schemes and Programs and health and hygiene. The training Programs have also focused on leadership, communication skills, use of land, water and forest. The trainings emphasise on the villagers' role in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, forest protection, education in tribal areas, credit groups and entrepreneurship development, health and improved agriculture.

From the 1990s to the present, Agragamee has conducted various camps around issues like voter awareness, women's rights, environment protection, legal aid, safe motherhood and child literacy amongst others. It has stretched across all of Agragamee's outreach areas in Rayagada, Kalahandi, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Mayurbhanj,Agragamee has made sustained efforts to address these complex problems by primarily ensuring an open and liberal ambience of learning. This encourages a healthy and constructive relationship of friendship and camaraderie between teacher and student, rather than one of fear, and submission. Even though few of the teachers in Agragamee Schools have received professional teacher training, in service training has been taken up on a sustained basis, exposing them to the basic concept and understanding of good teaching methods and processes of keeping students engaged and involved in the classroom processes, increasing keenness and enthusiasm of the students in their lessons, a fundamental necessity for good quality teaching. Sustained effort has also been made in a concerted and systematic manner for developing a pedagogy of early grade teaching for first generation school children through dialogue with linguists and educationists at various levels. This has helped develop teaching and learning material, and primers and story and song books, that facilitates easy and fun learning for the children. This enables stress free, and relaxed classroom processes for the teacher as well as the child. Frequent discussion and dialogue, engaging tribal language teachers for early classes, removing the element of fear has helped to address learning, and even more teaching issues increasing the efficacy of the whole processes. As against the minimum of four to five years taken in Government Schools for the children to begin to read, Agragamee has been able to ensure that all children are able to read comfortably by the time they cross Grade II. By the time, children are in Grade IV, they are able to write small stories and essays, with beautiful and excellent illustrations as well. This has given rise to a newsletter called Dangar Katha written and illustrated by the children.

**3. The Current Project:**

3.1. Beneficiaries:

The current project will be taken up for tribal children in the districts of Rayagada and Kalahandi, for girls, who would otherwise have joined their mothers for rice transplanting or transporting headloads of mud on construction sites, and stared at child birth by 14 years of age due to early marriage and for boys, who would otherwise have taken to distress migration to faraway states adding to the numbers of exploited and underpaid unskilled manual labour in the country.

**3.2. Outreach:**

* 3000 tribal children
* 40 village communities
* 40 Government Primary Schools
* 4 districts of Rayagada, Koraput, Nabrangpur and Kalahandi in the state of Odisha in India

**3.3. Goal:**

**Overall Goal:**

To help tribal children from the poorest families have a brighter future by facilitating quality and effective education

**Objectives:**

1. To demonstrate a model of effective and quality education for first generation school goers that can engender a generational change in tribal villages
2. To enable children in remote villages climb out of the cycle of poverty-illiteracy poverty and go for further education and improve their opportunities in life,
3. To develop a teacher training model that can be taken up at a larger scale for promotion of quality education for first generation school children
4. To develop quality workbooks and guides that can enable learning without stress and fear
5. To work with Government Primary Schools for the promotion of the model on a larger scale

**3.4. Specific early grade reading challenges that the program will address:**

* **First generation school goers who get little support from their parents in studies:** According to UNICEF, children whose parents have had primary school education or less, were more than three times as likely to have low test scores and grade repetition than children whose parents had at least some secondary schooling. While educated parents can monitor their child's progress and address poor teaching problems, children with parents having no school education are severely handicapped in this regard. The latest Education For All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) by UNESCO, reports that India has the largest population of illiterate adults in the world at 287 million. This population also constitutes the majority of the poor, unable to afford any private schooling for their children.
* **Inadequate Curriculum and Material Development:** The curriculum is poorly developed, with little training for the teachers to take it forward. Specially for early grades, teachers have little understanding of the underlying concepts and approach of the teaching material, specially those for the early grades. Little is provided for these classes apart from poorly conceived text books. Teachers are also provided poor training for executing the curriculum for the first 2 years. With the result that the foundational years for the majority of students are spoilt. As they enter into the higher classes, they are unable to follow the lessons, and soon completely give up.
* **Poorly Trained Teachers:** This is the biggest challenge which has to begin with ‘de-schooling’ teachers to give up the repetitive, memorizing approach for a more child-centered approach
* **Lack of skills in Children from Grades III to V:** Most Grade V children of Government Schools have poor reading abilities. The project will seek to address needs of these children as well
* **Cycle of illiteracy and poverty:** PISA (Program of International Student Assessment) 2012 reports that the current school education does little to address socio-economic disparities. Increasing reading competencies is fundamental to changing this situation
	1. **Core Concept Of The Intervention**

The Concept, called the Creative Language Development Efforts (CLDE) focuses on three main ideas:

* 1. **Building on Basic language and learning ability of the Child:**

Every child begins school with the full knowledge of at least one language. To enumerate just a few of the skills involved in this, it means that a child has the ability to understand at least 1000 or more words, complex sentences and sets of sentences which would make a story, or even help her relate an event to another individual. She can also remember names of family members and villages, and relate to these to identify the place or individual, including in the abstract, that is even when the person is not there, or when she is away from her village. In addition, most children enjoy rhymes and songs, easily memorising them even when they do not fully comprehend the meaning.

These are skills are far more complex than those required for basic literacy or reading and writing. And yet, much of early school learning is hampered by poor literacy primarily because literacy teaching begins with forced memorising of alphabets, and does not engage the cognitive faculties of a child. Developing reading and language skills in a child through alphabets or alphabet centric methods is a negative and uphill task, as the alphabet symbols relate to nothing the child knows. The process of teaching through the first letter method is even more confusing, as the child cannot make sense of the rest of the symbols that make up the words.

If this process is abandoned for a more child-centred approach, whereby the learning is through words and objects familiar to the children, playful rhymes and songs, which the child can remember, and names of people close to her, the learning is more organic, and so quicker and much less stressful for the child and the teacher.

b. **Re-Schooling Support Teachers:** the second core concept is de-schooling teachers versed in traditional teaching methods and approaches, and helping them understand the core concept as outlined above in point a. This is the more challenging task, as teachers have themselves learnt through alphabet-based methods and have received further training to use these same methods to teach reading and writing. Such traditional pedagogy more often than not turns children into readers who decode without comprehension and writers who can copy but cannot express themselves. The de-schooling of teachers and re-skilling them to adopt more constructive approaches is thus a major challenge. This challenge will be partially addressed by recruiting fresh youth as “Shiksha Sathies” or Support teachers. The selection will also ensure that at least half the Shiksha Sathies are women, as a step towards addressing gender issues.

During orientation and training of the teachers, the attempt will be to help build conceptual understanding as well as pedagogical skills. The training program will be premised on idea that becoming literate means being able to think independently, to make meaning of what one sees, hears or reads and being able to communicate ideas, thoughts or feelings through spoken, pictorial, written or other forms. The following underlying principles of reading will form the basis on which teacher training for this program will be organized:

* Skilled reading is constructive
* Skilled reading is fluent
* Skilled reading is strategic
* Skilled reading is motivated
* Skilled reading is a lifelong pursuit

 The orientation training will be experiential in the Agragamee Schools, where the current approach and method of literacy teaching has been developed. The training will thus combine class room sessions, demonstration classes, and hands on teaching experience. It will involve experts with wide experience in teaching and teacher training and link up with educational institutions and Universities for the same. It will also ensure that the teachers understand the principles behind the teaching and learning material provided, to facilitate the CLDE method and approach completely. This training and exposure will also address gender and class and caste biases in the teacher, helping them understand the importance, concept and practice of equal opportunities. Inevitably, youth in tribal areas leave high school with significant biases, especially in terms of gender, which have been inadvertently internalized from their teachers. The Shiksha Sathies will be sensitised to be conscious of discriminatory practices and attitudes, and ensure that they pay equal attention to each child.

 Ongoing support for teachers will be offered both on site and through regular review meetings and discussion fora. Teachers interested in learning further will be supported through provisioning of literature and reference materials. Teachers will be encouraged to form professional associations to share innovations and exchange ideas, solutions and learning resources. The professional development of teachers through this program will be documented as a case study research undertaken in collaboration with the Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.

1. **Production of Quality Material:** Shiksha Sathies will be supported in their work with material that will help them follow the CLDE approach, as also provide series of activities, rhymes and games for the children that will make learning fun and interesting. This is most crucial for the success of the process. The importance of appropriate supportive material in early grade teaching cannot be emphasised enough. However, it is often overlooked. The material provided lacks detailed guidelines for the teacher, making it difficult to understand and use. The majority of teachers thus fall back on easy methods, which include repeated writing of alphabets, then repeating of monosyllabic words, many of which do not have meaning for the child, making the language class a mere ritualistic exercise. The material developed under this project will have multiple functions as outlined below:
* **Providing Content:** It will provide the teacher with the content for day-to-day teaching. This will be in the form of work books in two stages for children of grades I and II respectively.
* **Explaining the current Concept:** A simple, easy to understand teaching guide will be developed, providing detailed explanation of the CLDE concept of teaching early grade reading and literacy, its importance and relevance, the different stages involved, and how to put it into practice using the material provided, and how to go beyond the material. This guide will give the teacher instructions and ideas on literacy teaching for Grades I and II of first generation school goers, helping her to plan the lessons on a day to day basis, work with different learning speeds, as also multi-level learning, and working with more than one language groups in a class.
* **Supportive Teaching Aids to facilitate class-room teaching**: Supportive picture cards, flip charts, poem and story sheets to facilitate the teachers’ classroom teaching.

The series of approaches outlined above draw from the constructivist approach. This approach perceives learning as a cognitive experience unique to each learner’s own perspective and prior knowledge, helping creation of new knowledge. This concept recognizes that learning occurs through dialogical processes, which can only occur if the learner is able to make sense of what is being taught. For a first grade child, this meaning is essential to help it connect with the classroom process in creative and positive ways. When this does not happen, as in the alphabet centric way, where the child is either made to repeatedly write the alphabets, which she does not understand at all, or when she has to write monosyllabic words, with no particular discernible context, to connect with first letter phonetics of the words, chosen with the focus on the alphabet, rather than on the child, the child is unable to connect emotionally and cognitively to classroom processes.

On the other hand, when the child writes her own name, and that of her family members, or writes the names of every day objects or animals, she establishes immediate connections with what she is doing. When this exercise is taken forward to writing sentences, and known rhymes, and the child is encouraged to read what she has written, the child is able to increasingly comprehend the purpose of reading, and becomes self-motivated to decipher text, and enter into the world of print and writing. The process also creates a whole range of opportunities for children to read, as also express themselves in different ways, either independently or with other children in small guided reading groups.

Playful processes adopted in the course of teaching, including learning and reciting of action songs, drawing and coloring, taking the finger across the text of these rhymes in the imitation of reading even if the actual ability has not yet developed, playing with picture cards, etc. All of this help to acquaint the child with the text and commit to memory with the least effort. It is well recognized now that play actually facilitates cognitive development. Children not only practice what they already know-they also learn new things.

It is envisaged that the reading ability thus developed will provide positive associations for the child to exercise her curiosity and read further.

**3.6. Methods, tools, techniques for the Project:**

The method of helping children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds learn through meaningful words, and ideas is not new, it has been used by several teachers earlier, the most notable being Sylvia Ashton Warner. However, the challenge has been to take this constructivist approach to teachers who may not be oriented like Dr. Warner. Agragamee has been working with this approach for the last 6 years, and has been able to develop teacher training methods, as well as supportive material, which have shown remarkable results in terms of reading and writing skills, and basic literacy. The work with children from disadvantaged backgrounds, more than 90 % of whom have parents with no school education has been extremely rewarding, as within the first few months, there is visible improvement in children's literacy, and they are able read and write within one academic year. This method and approach results in a visible improvement in children's abilities in a few months.

The innovation proposes multiple levels of intervention to address the complex, pervasive, and sustained problem of poor learning levels:

1. Drawing and colouring: This catches the child’s interest and helps develop writing skills
2. Identifying pictures of familiar objects: Word-Pictures charts of objects from daily life, as also of animals, flowers, vegetables will be used to increase the child’s interest. Once she is able to remembers the names of these objects, she will be encouraged to write the names, to initiate phonetic connections
3. Learning to write their own names, and that of their friends, family members, village, school, and any other proper nouns that the child knows, like her teacher’s name, etc.: this helps reinforce learning at home. Children are also taught to write the names of all their classmates, which helps them make strong positive connections with the classroom process, while helping them familiarise with the phonetics with least effort,
4. Writing names of familiar objects from labelled picture cards: All this enables reading writing skills becomes intuitive, as the child begins to learn with interest and enthusiasm
5. Learning folk songs and rhymes: songs and nursery rhymes have multiple functions, including fun with words and sounds, a sense of rhythm, aiding memory, learning tunes and helping speech development,
6. Writing key words from the songs and rhymes: This helps to reinforce the phonetics
7. Reading out songs and nursery rhymes from their text books: Many children recite from memory when they see the right page. This is a stage in reading skills development which helps the child connect with the printed word,
8. Writing out songs and rhymes: This will further reinforce the phonetics of words letters and sentences.
9. Write small sentences: Describing animals or objects in the nursery rhymes, and the student’s and her family members’ activities
10. Reading small stories: This will help create interest in reading. Reading them initially aloud, and then on their own, and then talking about them in class, facilitated by the teacher will help develop reading comprehension. This will be facilitated by exercises provided at the end of the stories.
11. Library time: Libraries in school will expose children to different kinds of books. Specially older children will be encouraged to use the library space to read, and pursue their interests, apart from text book learning.

This series of activities is not a linear progression, but, a guide for the teacher to plan out her classes. The teacher is supported with sufficient material, including rhyme and song books, and appropriate training and helped to learn and improvise her own games with alphabets and word and picture cards, and other devices she can think of.

Drawing, writing, use of colours, chalk, pen, pencil is an integral part of this effort. It helps the child develop the motor coordination needed for writing, and later on helps her make the phonetic connections to the letters and words intuitively, as the same sound is symbolised by the same alphabet in different words. There is no effort to take the child from simple to difficult words in terms of phonetic complexity, as is often the effort in the teaching of reading and literacy. On the other hand, the child is encouraged to recognise written words that are familiar to her, like the names of her parents, and siblings, the name of her village, the names of her classmates. This recognition is facilitated by encouraging her to write these names, and then progress to writing small sentences that she understands. Along with, children are also taught to ‘read’ nursery rhymes from their rhyme books, and then copy these rhymes to their notebooks. Initially, as the child takes her finger along the lines, she only repeats what the teacher says and then begins to recite from memory. Then as they progress to writing the rhymes, the phonetic connections are initiated, and the reading gradually begins. The text book for this stage will contain small stories and essays and rhymes, interspersed with comprehension exercises, helping the child improve her reading.

This will be further facilitated with the help of the library, as also newspaper reading, where children will be encouraged to read books of their choice. The library periods seek to encourage interest in books, and develop reading habit in children. These are essential to help children familiarise with and feel comfortable in the ambience of a literate world, something which is quite absent in their village surroundings. Each school will have a library, as a crucial part of this project. The library would encouraged reading for all the people in the village, and the Shiksha Sathi would be encouraged to have evening classes with the community for literacy, where the community facilitates with support for lighting.

**3.7. How funds will be utilised:**

The funds will be used for effective and qualitative education of children who are mostly first generation school goers, and lack opportunities in life because they cannot access good teaching. The specific use for the funds is detailed below:

1. **Support for Model Schools:** Model Schools established by Agragamee demonstrate in practise the Creative Language development approach. The funds for model schools wold support teacher salaries, mid-day meals for the children, teaching and learning material, co-curricular activities, health check ups and libraries for the children and the teachers,
2. **Support to Villages and Government Primary Schools:** 40 Government Schools will be supported for improved teaching through placement of trained support teachers in these schools. Agragamee’s established experience and expertise in education is well recognised, and Government Education Departments in the different districts welcome trained support teachers, and the supportive teaching learning material that will be provided to improve children’s learning outcomes in the village primary schools. The effort will be backed by regular teacher training, supportive teaching learning material, linkages, and workshops with Government School functionaries for promotions of the idea, library, and onsite mentoring, and handholding to the support teachers.

In addition, the Support teachers, who will be encouraged to stay in the villages where they teach will also be encouraged to take adult literacy classes during the evening hours. This will help adolescents, drop outs and semi-literate adults also to pick up the basics of literacy and reading. They pattern of teaching will be the same as that used in the schools, but, the content will vary.

1. **Advocacy Efforts:** The efforts and stories from these efforts will be shared with the media for wide understanding of the concept and outcome of the programme. In addition, state level seminars with planners and policy makers will be organised to emphasise the need for alternate paradigms in early grade education.
2. Administrative Costs and Non-recurring: The overheads will provide for a project coordinator, and other management staff to manage and monitor the project to ensure quality, and effective implementation.

**3.8. Outcome:**

The project is envisaged for a minimum of 3 years to have demonstrable impact in the tribal regions, and acceptance by the Government, in terms of pedagogy, TLM, training.

Over the first year, the outcome envisaged is as follows:

1. 3000 children, most of them first generation school goers will – reading, writing and arithmetic through quality teaching efforts in Agragamee Schools
2. Publication of the Children’s Newsletter: Dangar Kathha (Stories from the hills)
3. 40 village communities will improve their literacy and reading levels,
4. 40 support teachers trained teachers trained
5. 4 Districts Education Departments will come to know of the Creative Language Development Efforts approach, and accept the method and approach in selected schools,
6. 80 Government Primary School teachers will become familiar with the approach and method of the CLDE, demand text books and other TLM to put it in practice;
7. Spread of the idea and concept to 50 other schools,

Over a period of 3 years, the expected outcome would be as follows:

1. 100 Govt. Schools take up the CLDE Model
2. Vast improvement of learning and reading in 100 villages as above,
3. 10000
4. Generational change initiated.
5. The Odisha State Government accepts teacher training, and material for the up-scaling of the model in the tribal districts.

**Detailed Budge Break Down for 1 year:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure** | **Description** | Costs |
| **1 Model Primary School** |  |   |
| 1.1. Salary to five teachers  | 5 teachers @4416 per annum | 22080 |
| 1.2.Mid-day meals for 200 days for 150 children | $53 per child per year for 150 children | 7950 |
| 1.3.Teaching material | $2200 per year | 2200 |
| 1.4.Learning Material and stationary for children  | $7per child for 150 children | 1050 |
| 1.5.Co-curricular Activities  | $7per child for 150 children | 1050 |
| 1.6. Health Check up  | $15 per child for 150 children | 2250 |
| 1.7. Library support for children and teachers |  | 500 |
|   |  |   |
| **2 Working with Government Schools** |  |   |
| 2.1. Preparatory work and liaising with Government  | $1000 per district for 4 districts | 4000 |
| 2.2. Salary to 40 Support Teachers  | $1800 per annum for 40 support teachers | 72000 |
| 2.3. Base-line survey of schools and children in 40 villages  | Investigator@440 per month\*6months+1300 for survey and reporting in 40 villages | 4000 |
| 2.5. Text books, workbooks, learning cards and charts (design workshop, hiring of artist, design finalisation, consultation, proofing and printing) | To reach 3000 children | 6700 |
| 2.7.Teacher Training | $450 per teacher for 40 teachers | 18000 |
| 2.9. Learning material and stationary for children | $300 per school for 40 schools | 12000 |
| 2.9. Library for children | $125 per school  | 5000 |
| 2.10. Monitoring and onsite supportss | $55 per school | 2200 |
| 2.11. Reporting, and documentation | 1 researcher for 7100+travel support for 1200 | 8300 |
|   |  |   |
| **3. Advocacy**  |  |   |
| 3.1. Media Advocacy | $147 for liaising with the media, reporting best practices, etc.  | 1800 |
| 3.2. State level Seminar | $5900 for state level workshop with legilators, and planners | 5900 |
|   |  |   |
| **4. Administrative Costs** |  |   |
| 4.1. Project Coordinator | $9800 for one project coordinator | 10000 |
| 4.2. Dean of Schools | $8000 for one Dean of School | 8000 |
| 4.3. District Coordinators | $5300 per district Coordinator for 4 district coordinators | 21200 |
| 4.2. Accounts and Office Support | $8000 for Accountant | 8000 |
| 4.3. Rentals and Consumables | $1100 per district for 4 districts | 4400 |
| 4.4. Travel  |  | 4400 |
|   |  |   |
| **5. Non-recurring Costs** |  |   |
| 5.1. Office Furnitures |  | 1500 |
| 5.2. Office equipment(Computer, Printer, LCD and camera) |  | 15000 |
| **GRAND TOTAL**  |   | **249480** |