



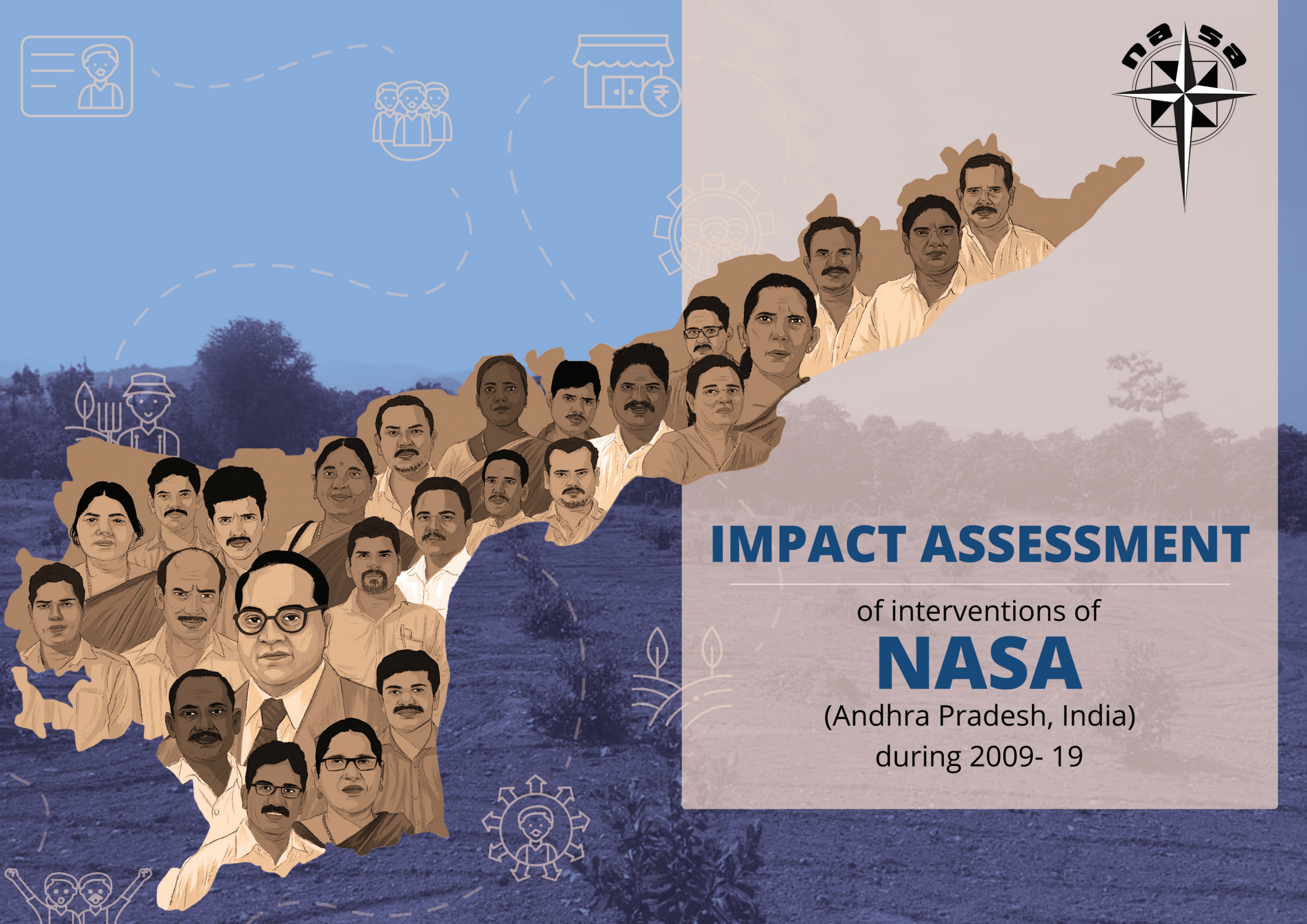
# IMPACT ASSESSMENT

of interventions of

## **NASA**

(Andhra Pradesh, India)

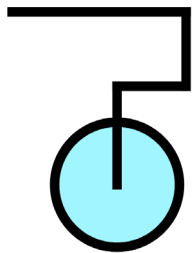
during 2009- 19



**Study period:** August, 2020 – January, 2020

**Study published in:** April, 2021

An impact assessment study by



**THESIS**

Social Innovation Studio

### **Project Region**

East Godavari and Visakhapatnam Districts,  
Andhra Pradesh, India

### **Overall Objective**

To assess and document the impact of NASA's  
interventions during 2009-19

### **Overall Term**

April 2009 – August 2019

### **Executing Agency**

NASA (Nazareth  
Association for Social  
Awareness)

### **Funding Agency**

BftW (Bread for the  
World)

### **Project Target Groups**

Dalits and Adivasis (SCs  
& STs)

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# ABBREVIATIONS

**AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

**BftW:** Bread for the World

**CBOs:** Community Based organisations

**CSOs:** Civil Society Organisations

**DPIS:** Dalit Pragati Ikya Sangam

**FCRA:** Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

**FICSI:** Food Industry Capacity and Skill Initiative

**FIR:** First Information Report

**HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**M&E:** Monitoring and Evaluation

**MACS:** Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies

**MLC:** Member of Legislative Council

**NASA:** Nazareth Association for Social Awareness

**PMKSY:** Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojna

**QPs:** Qualification Packs

**OIO:** Outcome-Impact-Orientation

**SC:** Scheduled Caste

**ST:** Scheduled Tribe

**THESIS:** THE Social Innovation Studio

**ToR:** Terms of Reference



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been made possible due to the co-operation and efforts of various and diverse stakeholders. We would like to thank each participant of this study. We express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Jyothi and Mr. Sujeet for their keen interest in this study. We thank the staff of NASA for their wholehearted co-operation and support throughout. We salute the leaders of DPIS who have stood at the forefront in the struggle against oppression. We are indebted to the respondents for giving us their invaluable time and patiently narrating their stories of change and impact. Needless to say, we thank our constantly evolving ecosystem for nurturing our critical thinking, strategic approach and scientific rigour.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Extreme and widening inequalities are a reality that is hard to ignore. Several structural factors in India have resulted in further widening these inequalities. Among them, the discriminatory caste system has systemically subjugated some castes to an inferior status, denying them of their rightful share of resources and opportunities. While several initiatives aimed at improving the lives and livelihoods of marginalized communities were taken up, both by the state and non-state actors, the situation on-ground still remains grim.

In this context, NASA has been implementing various sustainable development initiatives for Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized communities for over four decades now. These interventions are spread across East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts in Andhra Pradesh, India. Among other initiatives, strong grassroot civil society organizations, enabling access to land, women empowerment, and education are central to NASA's approach to sustainable development.

Despite several decades of work, a comprehensive impact assessment of these interventions in the context of the evolving macro level socio-political changes has not been conducted. Further, the stories of

changemakers has not been documented. This study aims to bridge this gap. Relying on extensive primary and secondary research, this longitudinal impact assessment study aims to assess the relevance, impact and sustainability of NASA's interventions during 2009-19.

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**We have studied the approach and different interventions of NASA to empower some of the most vulnerable sections in India, including, but not limited to, Dalits and Adivasis. We have made an effort in this study to briefly assess the role, relevance, impact, and sustainability of NASA's approach during 2009-19. We have done this in accordance with the OECD-DAC guidelines for evaluation.**

---

## Relevance

While several laws have been enacted by the state to ensure redistribution of land, their implementation remains poor and inadequate.

The various struggles to ensure redistribution have gradually weakened over the years, and in Andhra Pradesh, the last widespread struggle to claim access to land was witnessed only in 2007-08, before the period under study. This means that a civil society based approach adopted by NASA, identifying locally available government, ceiling, barren, and uncultivated land on the hills, and subsequently ensuring its distribution and allocation to the project beneficiaries through a democratic assertion of their right to land is more relevant now than ever before. Robust grassroot civil society organizations have also helped NASA identify specific needs of communities, thereby staying relevant despite the rapidly evolving context.

90.72% of the beneficiaries feel that NASA's interventions cater to their needs.

87.50% feel that NASA's programs are relevant.

88.26% find the programs beneficial.

94.50% respondents expressed overall satisfaction with NASA's interventions.

According to 'The Land and Income Inequalities in Rural Andhra Pradesh (2012)' report, 81.91% of the households in East Godavari district are landless.

## Impact

The widespread network of community based organizations has helped NASA bring about changes in the project area that the communities most desired. The project interventions also complement and build upon each other to achieve the overall objective. Evidence from other studies indicates that the impact is multiplied when women are at the center of development interventions. Women-centricity of different interventions of NASA ensures that the benefits accrued to the beneficiaries also extend to the household level. This only reconfirms the findings of several other studies. This approach also helped NASA to react swiftly to different kinds of emergencies- incidents of violent caste atrocities, and natural calamities and disasters.

**87.88%** of the beneficiaries feel that NASA's interventions have helped improve their material living conditions.

**90.34%** have reported an improvement in their overall wellbeing.

**90.71%** have reported an impact on their quality of life.

**94.50%** are overall satisfied with NASA's interventions.

## Sustainability

Vibrant community based organizations also ensured the sustainability of NASA's interventions. This ensured that legal validity was provided to the land allocated to the project beneficiaries. This also helped resist different attempts by the dominant castes to take away the benefits accrued to the beneficiaries. Strong community ownership of initiatives helped ensure the continuity and sustainability of different interventions.

Over **93%** of the beneficiaries believe that they take ownership of NASA's activities.

Over **87%** of them feel that the benefits accrued to them are sustainable.

Over **84%** of the respondents feel that they are involved in NASA's activities.

### Organization of the report :

The report is broadly organized into the following six chapters:

Chapter 1 provides a succinct introduction to NASA, its approach, and the various development interventions undertaken between 2009 and 2019.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the study, its purpose, objectives and the methodology.

Chapter 3 is based on extensive secondary research carried out to understand the context in which NASA operates, with particular emphasis on the issue of access to land. The research team believes that this background is critical to understanding the relevance of NASA's interventions.

In Chapter 4, the report aims to document the key findings on the relevance, impact and sustainability of NASA's interventions, in accordance with the OECD-DAC criteria for international development evaluation. These findings are based on primary research carried out with 556 respondents, telephonically and physically, over a period of five months from August to December, 2020.

Chapter 5 proposes some of the key recommendations to further advance the work of NASA.

Chapter 6 presents 25 case studies of beneficiaries identified based on a Most Significant Change (MSC) analysis.

# INTRODUCTION



## 1.1 NASA: A Brief Profile

NASA was founded in 1980. It got a fresh start in 1985, thanks to the vision and persistent efforts of Mr. Premdas, a highly respected person in the project area. It first focused on the economic empowerment of Dalits in 10 villages, and from 1991, in further 12 villages, with integrated rural development as its focus. When this was consolidated and had shown clear successes, NASA changed in 1996 to what they call an area-based, issue-oriented approach, rapidly increasing the number of villages NASA worked in. This approach still involves multiple issues, many of which are worked on in an integrated manner. Most of the issues that NASA takes up are interrelated with each other. The strong community ownership and participation of communities through the DPIS, and other CBOs and CSOs helps NASA achieve scale and sustainability.

### Vision

Eradicating caste oppression and fostering a society based on equality, liberty, dignity and fraternity.

### Mission

- To liberate people enslaved in social bondages, bringing about social and economic justice, and breaking social barriers.
- To create a social order based on respect for peoples' dignity and free participation of people in the decision making process.
- To eradicate unjust and oppressive social structures that violate people's dignity and rights and deny them access to vital resources.

### Objectives

- To promote and strengthen unity among project participants through CBOs and CSOs.
- To provide access to critical skills, knowledge and resources for social and economic empowerment of project participants.
- To implement community development programs to provide the project participants with access to vital resources.

NASA was registered under the Registration of Societies Act in 1980. NASA is also registered with FCRA and the Income Tax Act under sections 12A and 80G.





## 1.2 NASA's Approach

NASA motivates villagers to form sanghams or assemblies - for men and women. On issues of common concern, the sanghams meet as the village sangham. These sanghams form committees to execute several tasks, including, but not limited to fact-finding. The sanghams collect membership fees to meet some of their expenses. NASA creates awareness and a common understanding of the injustices against Dalits and of the options they have to improve their situation. When that is created, a number of different activities take place, according to the needs and preferences of the villagers:

- NASA encourages villagers to challenge the still prevalent forms of discrimination and fosters a sense of dignity, pride and assertiveness.
- NASA educates the villagers about the possibilities to get government support. Sangham representatives will then themselves apply for such support, with the guidance of NASA. This can be for land, housing, loans for saving groups etc., but also social amenities like hostels to get children into secondary schools, health facilities, skill development etc.
- NASA encourages women to form saving and credit (self-help) groups. When having saved sufficiently, these will be able to access a government subsidy and loan. When these funds are depleted, NASA might bridge the funding with a smaller subsidy. This makes the women independent of money-lenders and provides a capital base for small business activities.
- NASA campaigns against accepting bonded labour (the paleru system) and for 100% enrollment in schools.
- The sanghams take up atrocities and protect each other in such cases.
- The sanghams play an important role in negotiating about elections for political offices, especially panchayats and their presidents on village and mandal level.
- NASA motivates sanghams now to form federated sanghams at mandal level (about 20 villages each) and to form this into the Ikya Sangham at project area level. These federated sanghams will co-operate and give political and material support in case of atrocities and social and economic boycott by dominant communities.

## Major focus of NASA's approach

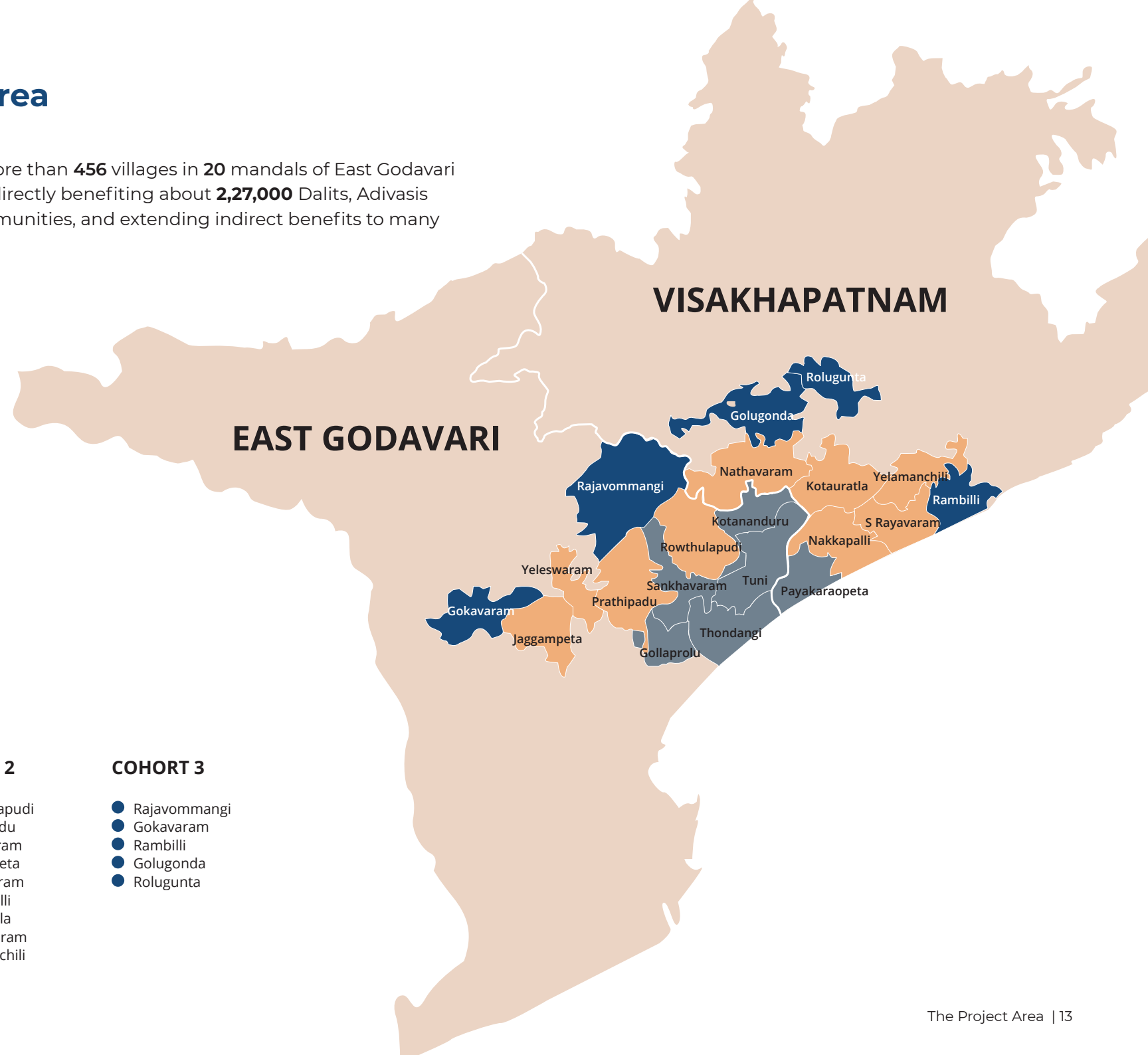
A major focus of NASA's approach is on land acquisition and development. In the project area, there is enough land for every Dalit family to acquire two acres of land which is enough to sustain them. Majority live adjacent to uncultivated hills. The NASA approach is that Dalit communities start cultivating part of it. They will become entitled to receive title deeds (pattas). It takes about three years until the communities begin to reap the first benefits. Until then, NASA also provides financial support to the communities.

In the plains, a similar approach has been undertaken where there is barren land. This is about one third of all communities which acquired land. It will need financing for wells which comes from government schemes, and with additional funds from NASA and community contribution. In other communities, land has been acquired after atrocities happened. Government provided land in compensation. In these cases the land is not sufficient to sustain all families but it gives some guaranteed income as the profit is shared.



## 1.3 The Project Area

NASA currently operates in more than **456** villages in **20** mandals of East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts directly benefiting about **2,27,000** Dalits, Adivasis and other less privileged communities, and extending indirect benefits to many more.



### COHORT 1

- Tuni
- Thondangi
- Kotananduru
- Gollaprolu
- Sankhavaram
- Payakaraopeta

### COHORT 2

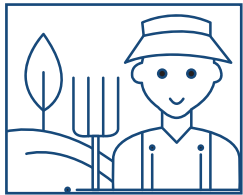
- Rowthulapudi
- Prathipadu
- Yeleswaram
- Jaggampeta
- Nathavaram
- Nakkapalli
- Kotauratla
- S Rayavaram
- Yelamanchili

### COHORT 3

- Rajavommangi
- Gokavaram
- Rambilli
- Golugonda
- Rolugunta

## 1.4 NASA's Development Initiatives

NASA has been striving to create sustainable development and promoting Community Based Organizations (CBOs) such as Dalit Pragati Iyky Sangham – DPIS (Federation for Dalit Development and Unity), Women Self Help Groups and SHG federations. These CBOs have enabled sustaining the impact of various development initiatives. Apart from community mobilization, NASA has also taken up the challenging task of facilitating access to land entitlements to Dalits and Adivasis. A summary of key initiatives being implemented by NASA is provided below.



### Land Development

NASA has been working towards promoting land based livelihoods for the last 15 years and facilitated Dalits and

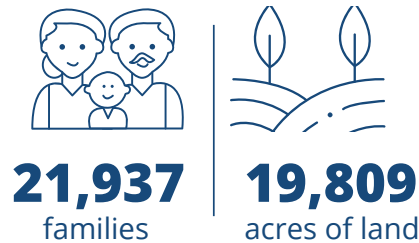
Adivasis to access land rights. As part of the land development activities, NASA facilitates the following.

- Motivating community to claim land rights.
- Mobilizing the community to identify barren lands.
- Supporting the Dalit and Adivasi families to take up land development activities such as bush clearing, stone removal, fencing, trenching, land levelling etc.

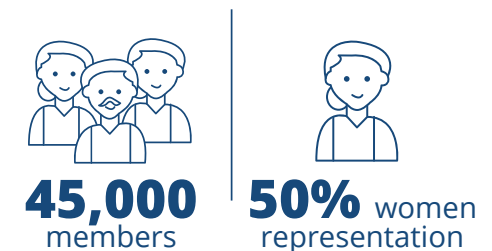
- Facilitating the project participants to access Government schemes for land development.
- Facilitating plantation of cashew, mango and cultivation of vegetables and other food and cash crops.
- Providing necessary training and capacity building.
- Facilitating access to land enjoyment certificates and title deeds from the Government etc.

NASA has enabled 21,937 families to access almost 20,000 acres of land and helped them to take up sustainable land development activities by promoting horticulture and sustainable agriculture.

### IMPACT



### IMPACT



### Dalit Pragati Iky Sangham (DPIS)

NASA has been putting sustained

and concentrated efforts to unite Dalits and Adivasis in the fight for dignity and access to rights and entitlements. In this direction, NASA has been promoting and nurturing Dalit Pragati Iky Sangham – DPIS (Federation for Dalit Development and Unity). Both men and women from the project area are the members of DPIS and play an equal and critical role in ensuring the sustainability of various initiatives of NASA at the village, mandal and district levels. As of August 2019, DPIS has around 45,000 members actively functioning at all levels. DPIS has been working through social mobilization, dissemination of information, and protecting the rights of Dalits and Adivasis in the project area by actively supporting atrocity victims and providing psychosocial support, legal and financial aid



### Promotion of Nano Enterprises & Engagement

NASA has been facilitating the project participants to take up nano/ micro

enterprises and helping them access institutional finance for setting up of small enterprises.

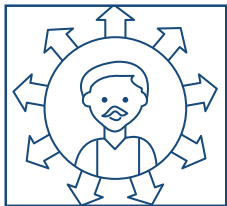
#### IMPACT



**1,880**  
units



**3,700**  
families benefitted

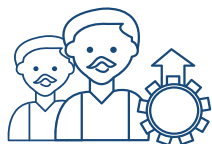


### Engagement with Youth

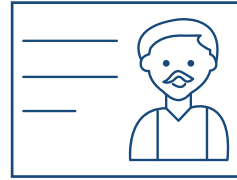
During the project phase April 2016 – August 2019, NASA has worked with around 1,200 unemployed youth and facilitated their

upskilling and pursued them to take up wage and self-employment opportunities.

#### IMPACT



**1200**  
youth upskilled



### Access to Entitlements

NASA has been helping the project participants access various government schemes such as MGNREGA job

cards, housing and social security benefits, scholarships etc.



### Community Development Activities

NASA has been focusing on other community development activities such as ensuring 100%

enrolment of children in schools, and through the DPIS, monitoring the quality of education imparted and the quality of food and essentials at social welfare hostels, undertaking social audits, facilitation of active participation of community in the Gram Sabha etc.



### Women Empowerment

NASA has been promoting women

empowerment in all its programmes and women play a central role in the planning, monitoring and implementation of various project initiatives. For instance, DPIS has around 50% of women representation.



### Creation of Community Assets

By virtue of the economic and social status of Dalit and Adivasi communities in the project area,

most of the habitations with majority Dalits and Adivasis don't have basic infrastructural facilities such as roads, drinking water, toilets, community halls, burial grounds etc. As part of various development project initiatives, NASA has been enabling the communities to build and maintain community assets.

#### IMPACT



### Community Halls

**125** | **6,509**  
villages | families benefitted



### Concrete Cement Roads

**290** | **12,395**  
villages | families benefitted



### Individual Household Latrines

**163** | **5,736**  
villages | families benefitted



### Drinking Water

**175** | **1,292**  
villages | families benefitted

# STUDY DESIGN





## 2.1 Purpose and Scope of the Study

Though NASA has brought tangible and Sustainable development among the project participants, the stories of change and change makers is not fully documented. Further, the impact created by NASA has not been comprehensively assessed and documented in the context of the complex circumstances of operation and the evolving macro socio-political environment. For an organization that has been in existence for four decades now, it is also very helpful to assess its ability to adapt to volatile externalities while still staying true to its vision and mission. The purpose of this study is to assess the relevance, impact and sustainability NASA's interventions during 2009-19. The study is both forward and backward looking, and focused on providing recommendations and lessons learned while also assessing the role of NASA in the larger context of Dalits and Adivasis struggle for land rights and dignity. Further, the stories of change and change makers is to be encapsulated in a compendium of case studies.

## 2.2 Objectives of the Study

- Encapsulate both the internal and external factors of change with reference to NASA's land interventions.
- Explore the larger issues around land rights and entitlements and the role played by NASA in this debate.
- Evaluate the role played by NASA in pioneering the concept of small groups/ self-help groups.
- Study the dynamics of various socio-economic indicators achieved in the project area and the impact of key interventions at all levels, i.e., individual, household and community level.
- Capture household level impact of various development activities implemented by NASA and see type, quality and quantum of assets created/ accessed by the sample households and debt redemption if any
- Assess overall wellbeing of households, impact on children education, employability, change in the social and economic status.
- Assess the knowledge and awareness of project participants on various legal provisions pertaining SC/ST atrocity Act, remedies available for the atrocity victims etc., and the role played by the community in the reduction of atrocities on Dalits and building social harmony etc.
- Capture stories of change and change makers and their journey in the last 10 years.
- Suggest innovative and potential areas of interventions that can be layered to deepen the project impact.
- Assess the ability of NASA to stay true to its mission for several decades.

## 2.3 Methodology

Given the wide scope of the study, we adopted a 'multilevel mixed-method' approach. The mixed-method approach comprised qualitative, quantitative and secondary research methods and used participatory approaches.

Different approaches for impact assessment were used depending on the stage and objectives of the study. In the initial stages of managing, defining and framing the study, semi-structured stakeholder interviews were conducted with key project functionaries. These interviews were useful in understanding the perspectives of key project functionaries and also gave direction to the evaluators. Further, a workshop was conducted with NASA staff. In this workshop, we assessed the staff's understanding of the vision and mission of NASA, and through collaborative and participatory approaches, evaluated the programme theory of change.

Subsequently, we assessed the relevance, impact and sustainability of the programs using the following approaches:

- **Qualitative Impact Assessment Protocol (QuIP):** The study team has designed a QuIP questionnaire that included open ended questions with supplementary prompts as well as closed questions. The questionnaire was designed so as to understand those areas of life that we assumed to be affected from NASA's interventions. The narrative statements from the respondents helped understand various intended and unintended outcomes of NASA's interventions.
- **Most Significant Change:** This approach involved analyzing personal accounts of change of all respondents, and then deciding which of those accounts is the most significant. This has helped the study

team understand 'how' and 'when' change comes about. As assessed and presented in subsequent chapters, we conclude that access to land is a necessary precondition for empowering the target communities.

- **Beneficiary Assessment:** Using this approach, the study team tried to understand the value of NASA's interventions as perceived by the beneficiaries with an aim to give voice to their priorities and concerns.



## Framework for OECD wellbeing indicators

The framework for OECD wellbeing indicators has been used to assess the wellbeing of individual households and communities. This involved assessing three broad parameters, viz., quality of life, material living conditions and their ability to preserve different types of accumulated capital (natural, economic, human and social) over time. Under quality of life, we have studied the status of their health, education and skills, social connections and civic engagement, and subjective wellbeing. Under material living conditions, we have assessed their income and wealth, and assets and debt. Since legal validation of land allocated to beneficiaries ensures protection, and thereby sustainability, we have also studied the extent to which legal guarantee was provided to the beneficiaries' land.

## Relevance

Most often, development projects falter because they are planned and evaluated top-down and are not grounded in communities' needs. Therefore, in order to assess the relevance of NASA's interventions, we have studied the respondents perceived needs, and their perceptions on the relevance and benefits of NASA's programmes. Further, secondary

research was conducted to assess the relevance of NASA's interventions in the context of their space and time.

## Impact

We have assessed the impact of NASA's interventions as a composite of their impact on material living conditions and quality of life of project beneficiaries, and the sustainability of the benefits accrued to them. Material living conditions are a key criteria in the OECD framework for wellbeing indicators in impact assessment. They are the most tangible and measurable impact assessment areas. To assess the impact on respondents' material living conditions, we have analyzed their income, wealth, assets and debt. Similarly, the impact on quality of life was assessed by analyzing the respondents' education, skills, health, civic engagement, social connectedness and subjective wellbeing.

## Sustainability

Development programmes are sustainable if they demonstrate lasting impact, have adequate resources, plans and processes, and most importantly, if the communities actively participate in the programmes. As part of this study, we have assessed the ability of various

interventions to demonstrate lasting impact, and the level of community participation. Lastly, the case study approach has been used to understand different project beneficiaries in the context of their time and space.

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**We have adopted a multi-level mixed method study comprising various qualitative and quantitative approaches, and was participatory at each stage of the study. Key informant interviews with key project functionaries helped guide the initial study design. Subsequently, a workshop with NASA's staff helped understand the theory of change. Primary and secondary research helped assess the relevance, impact and sustainability of NASA's interventions. The framework for OECD wellbeing indicators was used to assess the overall wellbeing of the project beneficiaries.**

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## 2.4 Data Collection



Data was collected in six phases. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key project functionaries. In the second phase, the field instruments were tested on 30 respondents. After this phase, telephonic interviews were conducted with 315 respondents. The interviews were transcribed and responses were summarized in a CAPI tool. The telephonic interviews were conducted because of the prevailing pandemic situation. As mutually agreed, our field teams have travelled to the field to conduct physical interviews in the fourth and fifth phases of data collection. These interviews were conducted by following all guidelines and norms of the governing agencies and extra precautions were taken to ensure safety of all stakeholders. The interviews were conducted outdoors, and in spaces where there was ample ventilation. All field staff wore masks and gloves throughout the data collection process. Masks were also distributed to the respondents in lieu of our collective safety. Field teams and the respondents were made to sanitize their hands before and after each interview. A total of 183 interviews

were conducted physically and administered face-to-face. A further 26 interviews were conducted with identified respondents for building case studies. 25 of these interviews were conducted physically while 1 was conducted telephonically. The fieldwork concluded in the sixth phase with interviews with 3 lawyers.

The data collection tools were designed in English and translated into Telugu. Data was collected by trained enumerators.

### Summary of data collection

Telephonic interviews with beneficiaries	345
Face-to-face interviews with beneficiaries	183
Face-to-face interviews for case studies	26
Telephonic interviews with lawyers	3
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>557</b>

Table 1: Summary of the sample

## 2.5 Quality Control

We adopted three main strategies to ensure highest standards of the data collection process and the quality of data collected. First, there was a constant and random back-checking of field enumerators' work by the internal quality control team to make sure that the quality of the data is not compromised in any way. 5% of all interviews conducted by each interviewer were 'back-checked'. This involved returning to a respondent who will have been interviewed in order to re-interview and verify key points of the questionnaires, and to check that the standard protocol had been correctly applied.

Secondly, we also had a monitoring team to review the work of the supervisors and the interviewers to ensure their adherence to protocols in the field. This ensured that enumerators were

collecting data according to laid down standards and quality assurance mechanisms. Since the CAPI system allowed the Principal Investigator to have access to the data to review whilst interviewers are still on the field, cases with issues were rectified through interviewers' call-backs.

The third and most significant is the role of the quality control assistants. The quality control assistants provided further quality control as they randomly selected a percentage of each field enumerator's output and re-interviewed 15 respondents on selected screener questions for the purpose of cross-validation and to provide feedback to the field enumerators. The entire quality control process was supervised by the Principal Investigator.

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## 2.6 Data Analysis

Data collected through the digital questionnaire was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. By using qualitative indicators like Likert Scale, Selection Lists etc., we quantified the qualitative responses of sampled beneficiaries. Indicators at the household level were collected, and analyzed at both the household and community levels. Qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and in-depth interviews with project beneficiaries was analyzed using NVIVO 11.0 software. Quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS software package. Extensive secondary research was carried out to contextualize NASA's impact in the backdrop of the historical denial of land rights and other manifestations of Dalit and Adivasi oppression. The impact

of NASA's interventions was analyzed through this lens, and in relation to the evolving macro socio-political landscape. The same lens was applied to assessing the ability of NASA to adapt to the changing landscape and stay aligned to its mission. A scorecard was developed to assess the relevance, impact and sustainability of NASA's programs. Each key question of the discussion guide had several predetermined scoring parameters and the cumulative score indicates the level of relevance, impact and sustainability of the programs. The average of the three key questions (relevance, impact and sustainability) indicates the overall performance of the programs.

## 2.7 Sampling

Purposive and stratified random sampling was adopted for selecting the respondents. The beneficiaries were divided into smaller sub-groups, depending on the type of benefits availed by them. Each of these sub-groups were further sub-divided into three cohorts, depending on their level of involvement with NASA.

26 respondents were identified based on the Most Significant Change approach. Respondents that have benefited greatly due to NASA's efforts during the last decade were identified. 3 lawyers were selected randomly from the pool of NASA's lawyers.

### Key characteristics of sample cohorts:

- **Cohort 1:** These are the mentoring mandals. NASA has worked for the longest time in these mandals and the CBOs have taken responsibility of running affairs on their own. These mandals received no project funding during the 2016-19 phase.
- **Cohort 2:** These are mandals with focused implementation of development activities in the last decade. Maximum number of land development activities were taken up in these mandals and the CBOs are vibrant.
- **Cohort 3:** These are new mandals where implementation has started only recently. The CBOs are still nascent and the DPIS leaders from mentoring mandals have taken lead in community-mobilizing. There was only limited land development activity.

### Cohort-wise Respondent Type Overview

Beneficiary Type	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3
Land Development	31	112	29
DPIS	89	93	26
Women Empowerment	18	27	8
Youth Skill Development	2	21	3
Micro/ Nano Entrepreneurs	7	31	6
Others	4	1	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>92</b>

Table 2: Overview of respondents of different interventions in each cohort





### Cohort-wise & mandal-wise number of respondents

1	Cohort 1	Tuni	48
2		Thondangi	34
3		Kotananduru	2
4		Sankavaram	28
5		Payakaraopeta	30
6		Gollaprolu	9
7	Cohort 2	Rowtulapudi	45
8		Prathipadu	39
9		Yeleswaram	29
10		Jaggampeta	35
11		Nathavaram	32
12		Nakkapalli	35
13		Kotavuratla	31
14		S. Rayavaram	29
15	Yelamanchili	10	
16	Cohort 3	Gokavaram	29
17		Golugonda	13
18		Rajavommangi	9
19		Rambilli	22
20		Rolugunta	19
	<b>Total</b>		<b>528</b>

Table 3: Cohort-wise & mandal-wise number of respondents

## Educational Qualification Overview

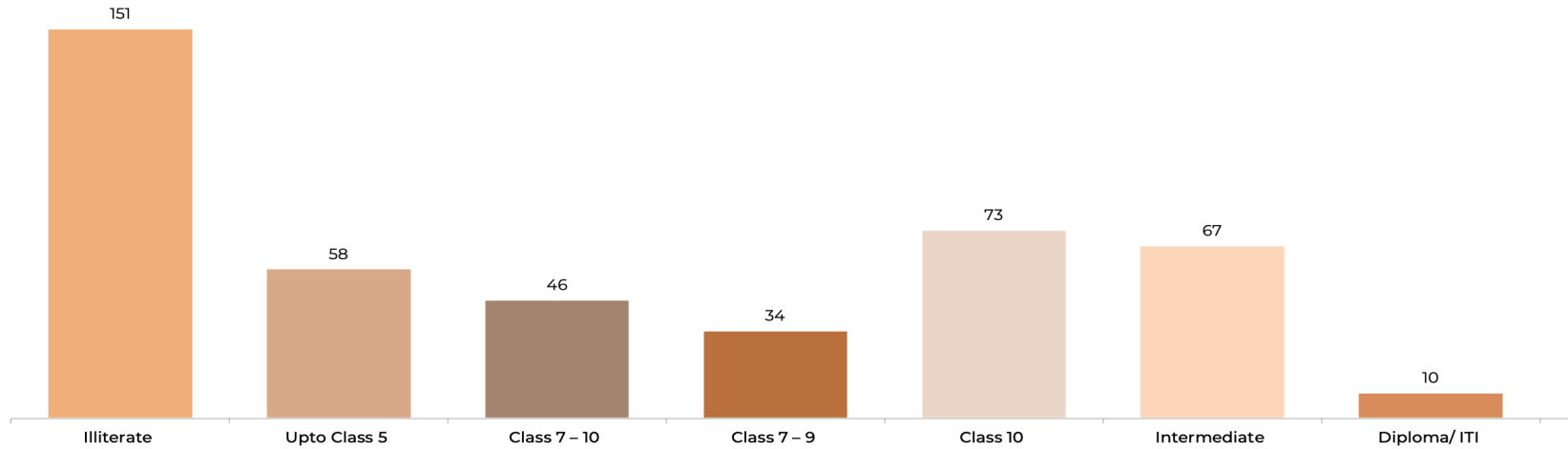


Chart 1: Breakdown of respondents by educational qualification

## Caste Overview

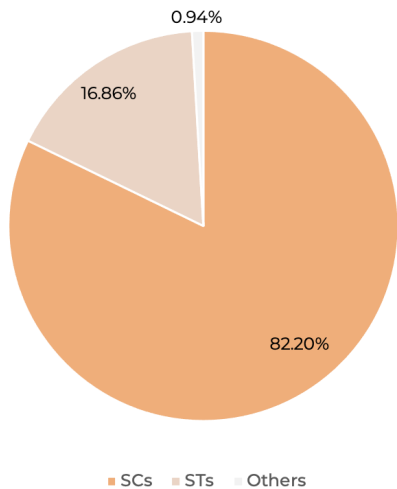


Chart 2: Breakdown of respondents by caste

## Gender Overview

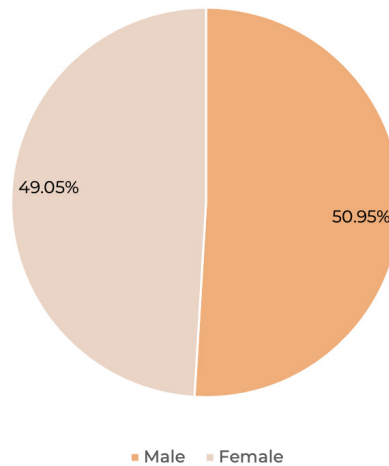


Chart 3: Breakdown of respondents by gender

## Age Overview

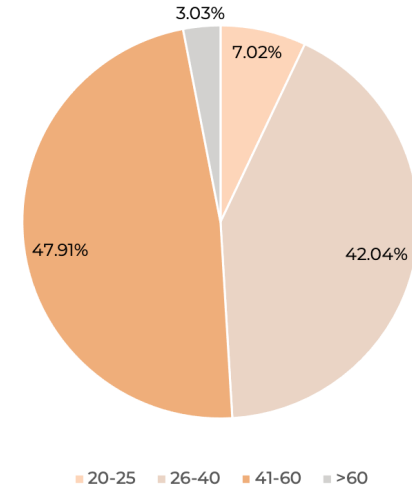


Chart 4: Breakdown of respondents by age

## 2.8 Ethics

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before collecting data from them. Specific permissions were taken from them for audio or video recording the discussions. All names as they appear in this report are aliased to keep their personal data confidential.

# BACKGROUND & CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT AREA



EDUCATE  
బోధించు

ORGANISE  
సమీకరించు

AGITATE  
పాఠిరాడు

దళిత ప్రగతి విక్ర సంఘం

ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్

దళిత హక్కుల సమాఖ్య

రిజిస్టర్డ్ 413/2000

DPIS  
A.P.

తూర్పుగోదావరి జిల్లా విభాగం

DL PRINTS 2448824348903

EDUCATE  
బోధించు

ORGANISE  
సమీకరించు

AGITATE  
పాఠిరాడు

దళిత ప్రగతి విక్ర సంఘం

ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్

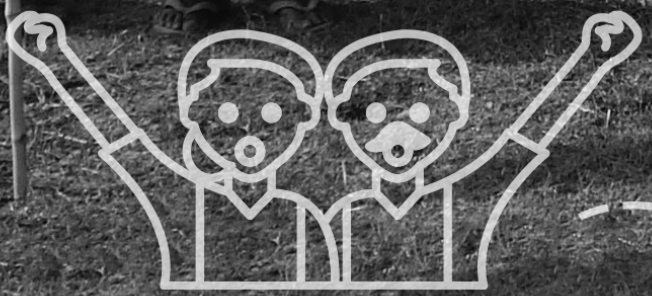
దళిత హక్కుల సమాఖ్య

రిజిస్టర్డ్ 413/2000

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తూర్పుగోదావరి జిల్లా విభాగం

DL PRINTS 2448824348903



### 3.1 The fight against all odds

Dalits and Adivasis are among the most marginalized communities in India and are subjected to some of the worst forms of oppression and denial of access to resources. They have historically and systemically been compelled to be involved in some of the most menial jobs and confined to live in some of the most unhygienic conditions. Although India banned caste-based discrimination in 1955, centuries old attitudes still persist and lower-caste groups including Dalits and Adivasis are subjected to discrimination in varying forms and intensities. As both theory and practice of our collective history indicates, this injustice is closely related to landlessness.

The British government, based on an 1891 report on the sub-human living conditions of 'pariahs' by James H. A. Tremenheere, the then Acting Collector of Chenglpeput, assigned 12 lakh acres of land for distribution to the "depressed classes" of the Madras Presidency to empower them socially and economically. When Tremenheere's report came up for discussion in the British Parliament on May 16, 1892, George Nathaniel Curzon, the then Undersecretary of State for India in England, informed the House that "both the Secretary of State and the Government of Madras are anxious to do all that is practicable to improve the condition of the Pariahs". Subsequently, the British government issued a Government Order (1010/1010A of Revenue Department, dated 30-9-1892), passing the Depressed Class Land Act 1892. This historic

move, earmarked lands known as Depressed Class conditional lands for untouchables such as Pariahs and Pallars in the Madras Presidency comprising present-day Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and parts of present-day Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana and Odisha. These later came to be known as "panchami" lands (land belonging to "Panchamars"—"the deprived"). Around 130 years later, today, much of this land is still in the possession of non-Dalits and the struggle to reclaim them is work in progress.

"When you are landless, you have no power and are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violence," said Karimi Prasanth, a 46-year-old graduate from Tetagunta village in Tuni mandal. He, along with thousands of other members of the DPIS and beneficiaries of NASA's activities are carrying forward the legacy and ideas of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and numerous other Dalit scholars and activists. Ambedkar argued that rural Dalits should be given cultivable land controlled by the government and commons, such as grazing land. He urged Dalits to capture public land in villages and cultivate it. By doing so, he said, they could become self-sufficient farmers.

Years have passed, and times have changed, but access to land continues to elude Dalits and Adivasis. According to the India Land and Livestock Holding Survey, almost 60% of Dalit households did not own any farmland in 2013. According to the 2011 Census of India, nearly 70% of Dalit farmers are labourers on farms owned by others. There have been several attempts and



approaches to gulf this divide.

During the struggle for independence, freedom fighters believed that British colonialism was the sole cause of poverty in India. Nehru pronounced that land would be justifiably distributed after attaining independence. After Independence, Indian states, which alone have the right to pass land legislation, introduced laws aimed at breaking down large landholdings of zamindars or feudal landlords. The plan was to distribute the surplus land generated to the landless, including Dalits. However, evidence indicates that the enactment of these laws did little to cause a dent in the landholding patterns.



### 3.2 Land rights elude Dalits

Bharat Dogra in his detailed report argues that, “Despite all the rhetoric about land reforms, Dalits have been able to acquire only very small plots of cultivable land. According to estimates, just 44 per cent of Scheduled Castes own land as compared to 74 per cent of upper caste households in rural areas. Fields owned by Dalits are also extremely small.”

“Very few Dalits are able to acquire non-land assets. For instance, 96 per cent of Dalits do not even own a tubewell as compared to 86 per cent of upper caste households. And 52 per cent of Dalits do not even own a buffalo. It is also well known that Dalit women are the worst-off when it comes to land ownership,” he adds.

He further points out that, “access to cultivable land is one of the most critical factors in mitigating poverty and hunger. When a family does not own land, they are forced to migrate to cities to earn a living. Ownership of land also encourages parents to send their children to school. It also enables poor families to grow some of their food and get better nutrition. When the government allots small parcels of land to Dalit households, they are prevented from taking actual possession of the land by upper castes in villages. The Dalit households face habitual discrimination. They live in fear of powerful households in their villages and are not able to challenge them.”

He also reports on the arbitrary methods employed to prevent Dalits from acquiring land. “Ram Karan Adarshi, a senior activist of Gramin and Khetihar Workers Union (Rural and Farm Labour Union) said that efforts were recently made to enact legislation in Uttar Pradesh which would have facilitated transfer of Dalit land to others by removing the curbs that had been placed on such transfers. He said that, due to resistance to such a law, voiced by Dalit organizations, such legislation has not been passed yet. But Dalit organizations need to be vigilant,” he warns.

“The implementation of land reform laws has been poor because no government is willing to antagonize landowners, who are from dominant castes,” said T Vincent Manoharan, chairperson of the National Federation of Dalit Land Rights Movement, an umbrella group of more than 100

grassroots movements.

“Politicians blame bureaucrats for not implementing the laws properly, while bureaucrats allege interference from politicians, who are, often, large landowners themselves. But when a mega project is proposed, they easily acquire land, no matter who it belongs to,” said Nukaratnam, a middle-aged Mala woman from Tangedu village in Kotauratla mandal of Visakhapatnam district.

“Watan and Panchami land grants were a landmark in history as Dalits had been historically denied the right to purchase or own land,” explains Sukhadeo Thorat, professor emeritus at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and a former chairperson of the University Grants Commission (UGC). “After Independence, the state government of Bombay (the precursor to Maharashtra state) promised ownership title to all Watan land grantees. But few got the titles, even as the government reportedly took over the lands for public projects or individuals grabbed them.”

Researchers of the National Federation for Dalit Land Rights Movements (NFDRM) estimate that about two lakh hectares of land grants — roughly seven times the area of Visakhapatnam city — were taken away in present-day Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. As their research indicates, there are offices, shopping malls, and farmhouses on these lands today, while people like Nukaratnam are forced to participate in some of the most drudgerous and exploitative jobs to make their ends meet.

### 3.3 Denied in life, Dalits fight for land in death

As per a report published by Thomson Reuters Foundation, Dalits in India are increasingly asserting their rights over land to bury their dead. In 2019, a video of Dalit men lowering a dead body by a rope from a bridge after an upper-caste community in the southern state of Tamil Nadu refused to allow the funeral procession to pass through their land, went viral and sparked a public uproar.

The incident captured in the video has striking resemblances to several narratives the research team has heard from the respondents in the project area.

“Dalits sometimes have to keep their deceased relatives for several days until they can resolve where to bury or cremate them, said Nookaraju, a frail old man from the ‘Mala’ community. He resides in the ‘SC Colony’ located on the margins of AK Mallavarapu village.

“We do not have land for housing or for livelihoods. Now, we are being denied land for dying,” he says. For Nookaraju and several other Dalits living in AK Mallavarapu and several other villages, access to burial grounds too, remains elusive.

“That man has betrayed us,” says Nookaraju, pointing towards a big mansion a few hundred meters away from where we stood. “He blocked access to the road that passes by his house.

That is the only entry point we have to our burial ground, and he has blocked it.” he laments as his eyes swelled up.

However, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, there was only one registered case of prevention or denial or obstruction of usage of public place or passage in Andhra Pradesh.

“We went to that man’s house. We asked him. He didn’t pay heed. We will now go to the authorities,” Nookaraju says, taking solace in the support he receives from a strong community organization.

Nookaraju and his neighbours, all Dalits, seek NASA’s support in solving this problem. “We will request NASA’s support. We are sure they will help,” he says. “Yes! They will definitely help,” the others echo in unison.

### 3.4 Systematic thwarting of moves to assign land to Dalits

Many factors, among them the caste system, are behind the systematic thwarting of moves to assign land to Dalits. “One key factor was the way land records were kept. Land record-keeping was a practice traditionally performed by ‘karanams’ (custodians of village records) and was handed down from one generation to the next in their families, and they favoured the landed class. In many villages, old land documents were either altered or obliterated. Revenue officials had to depend on them for

any land-oriented issue,” says Samuel Raj, coordinator of the Untouchability Eradication Committee in Tamil Nadu.

“As Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.G. Ramachandran abolished this traditional system of land administration by appointing village administrative officers (VAOs) in the Revenue Department who replaced the karnams. Though it changed the power equations at the political and administrative levels, it did not help in land reforms, which remain elusive even today. I blame it on the lack of conviction of those in power. The landless languish in poverty,” says Samuel Raj.

The situation is similar across the country with land reforms eluding the marginalized majority. The State’s measures for land classification and redistribution remain half-hearted even today. Dalit activists claim that even the “jamabandhi” exercise (settlement of village assets), which every district administration has to conduct once a year, is futile because the administration is not serious about updating the panchami land records in the respective districts.

Several cases narrated by the respondents during our field visit reveal the extent to which justice has been repeatedly denied to Dalits. Lawyers pointed out how various intricately planned methods are adopted by the upper castes to deny justice to Dalits.

### 3.5 Atrocities continue

According to NCRB data, Andhra Pradesh's Rate of Crime against SCs is 24.5 in 2019. This is 1.4 points more than the national rate (23.1). In 2019, Andhra Pradesh had witnessed 2071 crimes against Dalits. With 2000 pending cases from the previous year, the combined tally of cases to be investigated stood at 4071. Crimes against SCs is also witnessing an upward trend. In 2018, there were 1836 cases, suggesting an increase of about 13% in 2019.

Women are the victims of a large number of these atrocities. There were 112 reported cases of rape and 205 cases of assault on women in 2019.

During our field investigation, several

respondents have narrated stories of horrendous crimes against Dalit women. "An upper caste youth lured a young Dalit girl. He sexually exploited her repeatedly, and suddenly refused to marry her," says Satyavathi, a fifty year old Madiga woman from Donkada village in Nakkapalli mandal of Visakhapatnam district. Lawyers that the investigators have spoken to have revealed in detail the various rape cases that have occurred in the project area and the role played by NASA in supporting and ensuring justice to the victims and their families.

Although not statistically significant, another form of crime that caught the investigators attention was riots. According to NCRB, 9 cases of riots were reported against the SCs in 2019.

The investigators visited Mangavaram village in Payakaraopeta mandal, Visakhapatnam district. It is a fairly large village of about 1200 families. As was our experience throughout the fieldwork, the Dalits lived only on the margins of the village, cut-off from the areas where the upper castes reside or otherwise utilize. As we walked through the narrow walkways in the densely populated Dalit colony, we noticed the charred remains of a few houses.

We ask a local Dalit youth, Bhim, pointing towards the ruins, "What happened to those houses?"

"Ah, sir, they burnt some of our houses down," he says, unmoved and unshaken while it took a while for us to digest and process the heinousness of the crime.

"How could they just burn down the houses?" asked a junior investigator in our team. "They do it, sir," Bhim retorted. "But NASA was quick to offer help. It provided immediate relief to the victims. It is also helping us in the legal battle," he adds.

According to activists of the Kula Vivaksha Porata Samiti (KVPS), over 150 cases of atrocities on Dalits have occurred in Andhra Pradesh in the first four months after the central Government announced a complete lockdown to curtail the Covid-19 pandemic.



Picture: Captured during our field visit- charred remains of a house burned down in a suspected case of caste atrocity.

### 3.6 India's unequal land ownership at the root of caste violence

As Bharat Dogra notes, despite all the rhetoric, Dalits have only been able to acquire very small plots of cultivable land.

According to estimates, only 44 percent of Scheduled Castes in India own land as compared to 74 percent of upper castes.

The size of lands owned by Scheduled Castes is also very low and Scheduled Castes constitute a great majority of agricultural labourers, tenant farmers and small and marginal farmers. Very few Dalits are able to acquire non-land assets. For instance, only 4% of Dalits own a tubewell. And, as several scholars and activists alike argue, India's unequal land ownership is at the root of caste violence.

The agriculture Census of India categorizes operational holdings into five types:

Category	Size-class
1 Marginal	Less than 1 hectare
2 Small	1 – 2 hectares
3 Semi- medium	2 – 4 hectares
4 Medium	4 – 10 hectares
5 Large	10 hectares

Table 5. Categorisation of land holdings in India

#### Average size of landholding

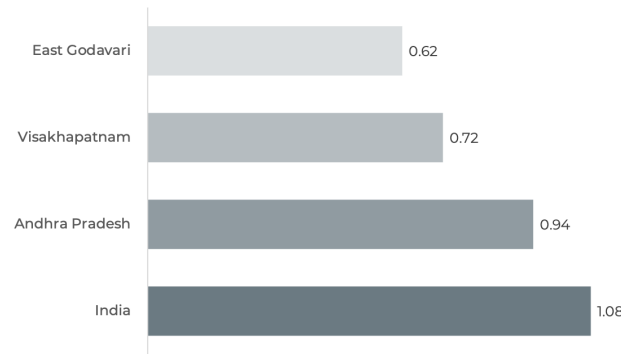


Chart 5: Average size of landholding

Both the districts in which the project area lies have a very high percentage of marginal farmers. East Godavari (83.76%) has the second highest percentage of marginal farmers in Andhra Pradesh. Visakhapatnam (80.21%) stands close at fourth place.

A closer look at previous census data reveals that the share of small and marginal landholdings in the total landholdings has increased since the 1980s. Likewise, the area cultivated by small and marginal farmers also increased over the years.

The Land and Income Inequalities in Rural Andhra Pradesh (2012) report presents the findings of village surveys covering 21,657 households in 88 villages of Andhra Pradesh. According to the survey, there are about 56% landless households among agricultural workers in Andhra Pradesh. The survey also reveals

that the percentage of landless households is highest in East Godavari (81.91%).

#### Percentage of landholdings that are marginal or small

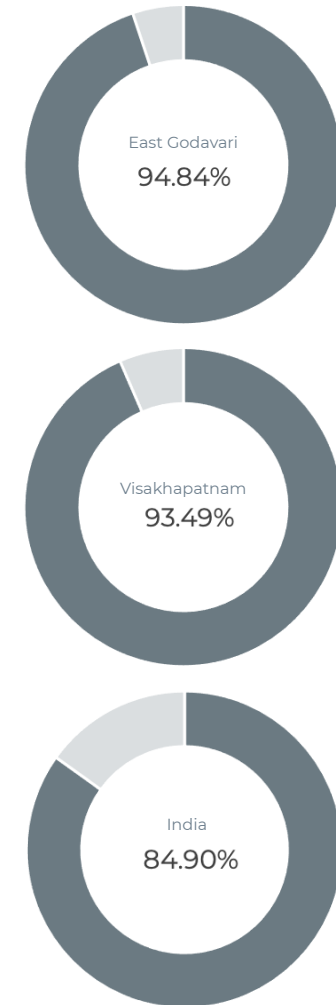


Chart 6: Percentage of landholdings that are marginal or small

### 3.7 Democratic assertion of the right to land

It seemed inappropriate for the investigators to look at the question of Dalits' access to land only from an economic lens. It is multilayered and extremely complex. It is as much a social issue as it is economic. It is as much a question of their dignity and existence as it is social and economic. And in so far as it is about their existence and dignity, it is about their social participation, civic engagement and democratic assertion. History of the land rights movement in India indicates that democratic assertion of right to land yields results in varying degrees. After Independence, Indian states introduced laws aimed at breaking down large landholdings of zamindars or feudal landlords. These laws are again a consequence of sustained and prolonged democratic assertion of the right to land.

As Nihar Gokhale (IndiaSpend) reports, "Rambhau Kamble was five years old when he first saw Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. On that February morning in 1941, Ambedkar – eight years away from framing India's Constitution but already the most prominent Dalit leader of his time – addressed a public rally in Marathwada, now a part of Maharashtra in Western India.

As recalled by Kamble, "Every Dalit from the region was there." Kamble is among the nearly one lakh Dalit farmers who heeded Ambedkar's call and occupied grazing land, termed 'gairan', across Marathwada. At its peak in 1991, the

movement occupied one lakh hectares of land, the equivalent area of today's Pune and Bengaluru put together."

In 2019, the movement is as real as it was in 1941 for Rambhau and 11,000 other Dalit families in Marathwada, a region of 64,590 sq km, more than half the geographical area of Andhra Pradesh. These families still occupy government land because seven decades of land reforms and government programmes aimed at providing land to Dalits and other historically oppressed communities haven't quite worked. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who belonged to a Dalit community from Western Maharashtra, argued that rural Dalits should be given cultivable land controlled by the government and commons, such as grazing land. At the Marathwada rally in 1941, he urged Dalits to capture public land in villages and cultivate it. By doing so, he said, they could become self-sufficient farmers.

Manu Moudgil reports on how a Dalit movement for land rights is sweeping across southern Punjab and how the Scheduled Castes decided to fight for the rightful due when they weren't given 33% of agricultural village common land, as required by an old regulation. This campaign, sweeping across 70 villages of southern Punjab, has been upsetting the deeply-entrenched power equations between upper-caste farmers and Scheduled Caste labourers. The campaign also aims to protect village commons from encroachment, ensure food security and uphold women's safety.

In Andhra Pradesh too, as with several other states in India, there have been efforts to entitle Dalits with land and homesteads. The state has enacted several laws as a result of a prolonged, persistent and democratic assertion of the right to land. However, data suggests that these attempts did little to cause any dent in the landholding pattern.

Successive governments have only tried to declare the question of land reform to be dead. However, they failed to realize that the unfinished and betrayed promise of land reform will keep haunting them in the form of resistance and struggles by Dalits and Adivasis. Andhra Pradesh has witnessed vigorous land struggles at different junctures in history. Relentless land struggles were waged in the region since 1926. Acharya NG Ranga played a key role in the formation of 'Andhra Rashtra Rythu Sangham' in 1928. Between 1938 and 1984, communists and the Rythu Sangam fought for the distribution of surplus land that belonged to Chellapalli zamindar. The Telangana armed revolt is historic and continues to inspire generations of activists till date. During the period of this movement, over 12 lakh acres of land was distributed to tenants and peasant poor. In 1969, the Vyavasaya Karmika Sangham (the agricultural workers union) and other people's and civil society organizations occupied and distributed over one lakh acres of land to the landless poor.

Several decades later, after a change in government at the state level in 2004, the

question of land took centerstage once again. Within a couple of years, a state-wide land struggle was launched, initially in the big cities and towns for house sites for the urban poor and then in rural areas. This phase of the land movement was widespread and received enthusiastic response. However, it centred predominantly on house sites in urban areas and government, forest and assigned lands in rural areas, and avoided confrontation with feudal forces. At the peak of this phase of the movement, on July 28, 2007, the government resorted to tactics of brutal repression and gunned down eight unarmed persons, including a woman, in Mudigonda village of Khammam district. It is worthwhile to note that there have been no significant and large-scale movements or people's struggles for access to land after 2007-08. This can be attributed to several reasons, and the study team does not wish to engage on these reasons in this report. What is important to note, however, is that during the period under study (2009-19), there have been no major or significant struggles.

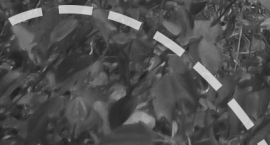
History shows us that the Dalits' and Adivasis' organized and democratic assertions of their right to land have only been met with brutal repression and assault by the state. While this in itself indicates the state's lack of intent to redistribute land, the same may also be understood from the lackadaisical implementation of existing laws. At the same time, history also shows us that without organized resistance and democratic assertion, the state would do nothing to alleviate the

situation. Unfortunately, there has been no concerted and active state-wide movement during the last decade. This is largely due to the rapidly evolving situation and the resultant change in priorities of those forces that have previously led the movement. Several scholars, researchers and activists argue that access to land is a necessary precondition for the individual, social and economic empowerment of Dalits and Adivasis. The role of democratic assertion of the right to land is key to ensure equitable access. In fact, democratic assertion by Dalits, Adivasis and other indigenous communities has, as several scholars, researchers and activists argue, played a significant role in ensuring land redistribution. "The founding fathers of India envisioned a just and equal society free of all discrimination. Premdas Sir had the same dream. I too have the same dream. I wish every family has access to land so they may stand empowered," hopes Nookaraju. He is 72 years old and shares this dream with NASA for over fourteen years now. Sadly, over 70 years after independence, for Nookaraju and millions of Dalits and other marginalized communities in India and Andhra Pradesh, it still remains a pipe dream. The evaluators consider it important to assess the longitudinal impact of NASA's approach and interventions in this context.





# STUDY FINDINGS



## Relevance

As part of the study, we have assessed the relevance of NASA's interventions through two approaches.

- We have directly interviewed beneficiaries and captured their perceived needs, perceived benefits and perceived relevance through various qualitative and open-ended questions.
- We have conducted literature review to understand the evolving macro socio-political landscape, and have subsequently looked at the role and relevance of NASA in this perspective.

## Key Findings

- The respondents find NASA's interventions extremely relevant, beneficial and are seen to cater to their immediate and long-term needs.
- While the pattern is fairly same across the three cohorts for perceived needs and relevance, significant variation has been observed in cohort-3 for perceived benefits. This variation could be explained by the fact that they're all newly adopted mandals and their association with NASA is very short. Before various critical program interventions could be implemented, the pandemic struck and brought about massive disruptions.
- NASA's initiatives brought about a



qualitative change in the lives of the communities (more in Impact).

- Land still remains inaccessible to Dalits and Adivasis: As already indicated in the Context chapter, access to land still remains a pipedream to millions of Dalits and Adivasis. The level of land inequality in the project region is among the highest in the country. The evaluators studied three predominant approaches that granted Dalits and Adivasis access to land, namely, people's struggles and movements, government policies, and a CBO driven approach that leverages the former two (adopted by NASA). During the period under study (2009-19), there were no significant people's movements or struggles for access to land. The last major struggle

ended in 2007-08. As noted in the context chapter, without democratic assertion, governments have not taken up the issue of land inequalities. In this context, the relevance of NASA's approach becomes all the more important. In the absence of large scale democratic assertions for the right to land, a strong community based approach that worked in tandem with the government seemed to have worked. This is also a least harm approach that does not antagonize the state unlike large scale people's struggles led by various political entities.

- Atrocities continue: Upper castes trigger response to Dalit and Adivasi empowerment often manifests itself in violence. Discrimination and denial of access

to resources is still prevalent, the latter more remarkably so. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are a source of great strength for the communities.

- NASA's work in promoting CBOs and CSOs through DPIS and MACS is extremely relevant in this rapidly evolving context. If any, our recommendation to NASA would be to further nurture and strengthen the CBOs.

We have also conducted extensive secondary research to understand the changing context and accordingly, assess the relevance of NASA's interventions. The same has been summarized in the context chapter. Despite persisting land inequalities, concerted struggles for access to land in Andhra Pradesh were not waged during 2009-19. Under these circumstances, NASA's approach of leveraging their strong network of CBOs to tap into various existing government schemes to promote land development have yielded results. We arrive at the conclusion that NASA's programs are extremely relevant to targeted communities in the project area.

We also find that the area-based and issue-oriented approach facilitated by a robust network of CBOs and CSOs is very relevant. This approach helps NASA to provide sustainable solutions to specific problems in specific areas.

### Perceived Relevance

% respondents who find the programmes relevant



Chart 7: Perceived relevance

### Perceived Needs

% respondents who feel that NASA's activities are catering to their needs



Chart 8: Perceived needs

### Perceived benefits

% respondents feel that NASA's programmes are beneficial to them and their families



Chart 9: Perceived benefits

While understanding the relevance, the investigators also felt it appropriate to understand the communities needs and aspirations. Below, we attempt to present their needs through their own voices.

*“STs in hill areas should be provided with borewells for drinking water and Siripuram village should also be provided with water.”*

**Konda Babu**

*“Our habitation doesn't have proper road facilities. Road facilities should be improved.”*

**Buji Babu**

*“We need help to construct a toilet.”*

**Appa Ravu**

*“I lost 1.7 acres of land, I seek NASA's help. I also wish we receive registration for our lands.”*

**Ramulamma**

The multi-pronged, community-centric, area-based and issue-oriented approach of NASA is relevant, and also helps it stay true to its vision and mission. Land still remains inaccessible to millions of Dalits and Adivasis. As long as the question of land is not addressed, economic and social empowerment of Dalits is not possible. Since the project area is home to some of the most unequal landholding patterns in India, NASA's role becomes all the more relevant.

**Overall score on relevance: 4.43/5**



## Impact

NASA's interventions have produced a multi-layered impact at various levels. At the micro and macro levels, they have brought about social, economic and political empowerment of some of the most marginalized and oppressed communities. The project beneficiaries have demonstrated improvements in material living conditions and quality of life.

### Material living conditions

% respondents who feel that NASA has made an impact on their material living conditions



Chart 10: Material living conditions

### Overall wellbeing

% respondents who feel that NASA has made an impact on their overall wellbeing

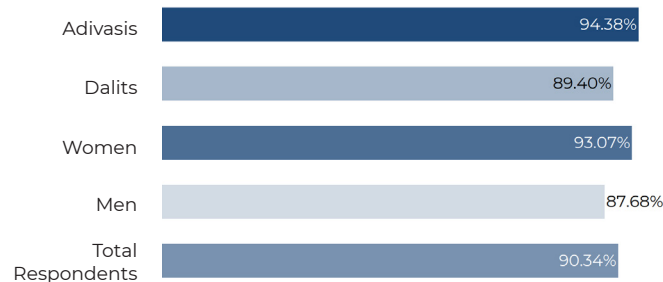


Chart 11: Overall wellbeing

### Quality of life

% respondents who feel that NASA has made an impact on their quality of life



Chart 12: Quality of life

## Key Findings

### Social:

- While cases of discrimination are still prevalent, Dalit and Adivasi communities are relatively more integrated socially with other castes.
- CBOs and CSOs, and constant availability of NASA leadership team instilled confidence among the beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries have very strong sense of belonging at NASA, and with its staff.
- Confidence, social-connectedness, civic engagement and the collective strength to claim access to resources improves with longer association with NASA.
- NASA's efforts have contributed to improvement in access to education and healthcare facilities and various government schemes and services.
- NASA has produced a generation of Dalits that are aware of their rights and entitlements.
- Despite lack of formal education, about a quarter of the respondents are aware of the SC/ ST Atrocities Act, and have practical, on-ground and real-life experience in filing cases under the various provisions of the act and using it to prevent and seek justice in cases of atrocities.

### Sense of Belonging

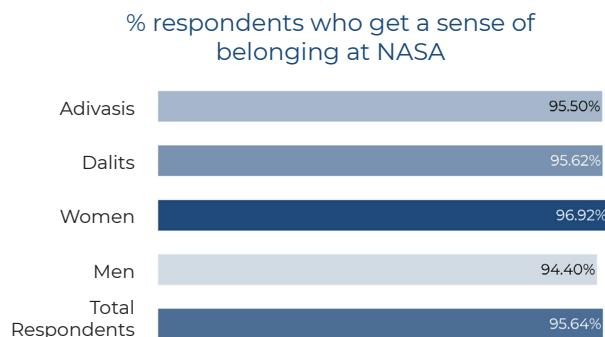


Chart 13: Sense of belonging

### Civic Engagement

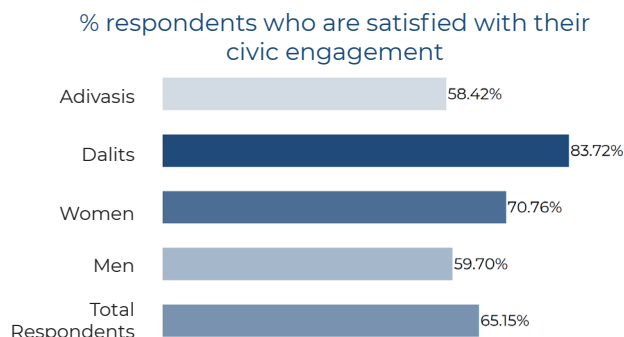


Chart 14: Civic engagement

### Awareness on SC/ ST Atrocities Act

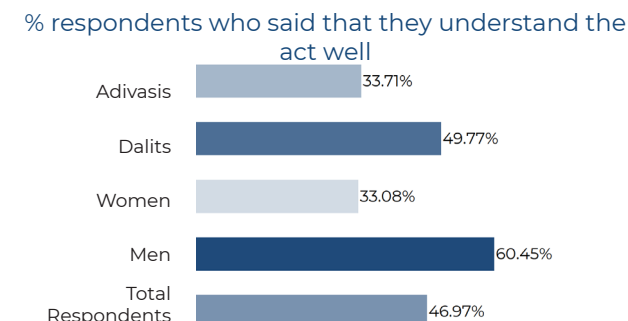


Chart 15: Awareness on SC/ ST atrocities act

### Social Connectedness

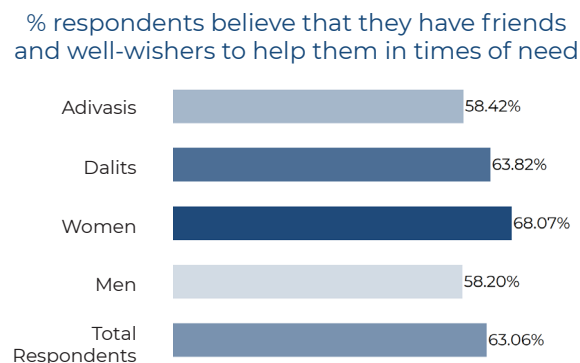


Chart 16 (a): Sense of belonging

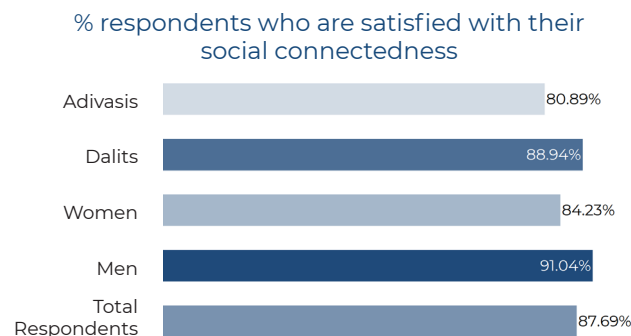


Chart 16 (b): Sense of belonging

### Comfort level in availing various government schemes

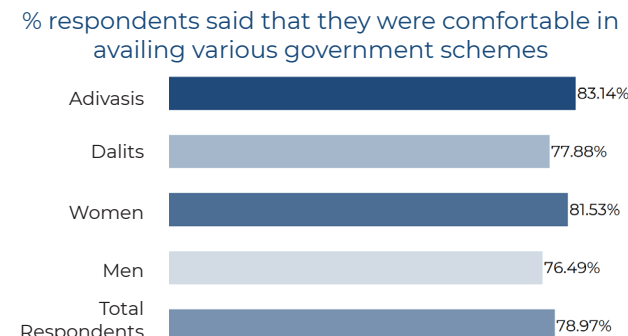


Chart 17: Comfort level in availing government schemes

While a cursory glance at these percentages may indicate relatively lower levels of understanding of the atrocities act, a cohort-wise analysis reveals an interesting insight. Only about 18% of the respondents from mandals

in Cohort-3 said that they understand the act well. While the percentage of respondents who said that they understand the act well is significantly higher in Cohorts 1 and 2, this low percentage of respondents from Cohort-3

brought the overall average down. This further reveals what has already been indicated under 'Key Findings' in this section: that longer the association with NASA, the greater is the impact.

## Economic:

- Land is a useful economic resource for the project communities. Those with access to land demonstrate visibly better progress and social integration.
- Beneficiaries have access to additional income generating opportunities through microfinance and loans for small businesses or nano enterprises, skill development etc.
- Increased incomes resulted in increase in household assets, consumables and durables and access to better infrastructure-houses, roads, electricity, mobile, and other assets.
- 100% of the sample households have lights and fans.
- 93.75% of the respondents have mobile phones.
- 31.25% of the respondents use the internet, of which 96.96% access internet on their own mobile phone.
- 89.20% of the sample households own a television.

## Perceived financial position

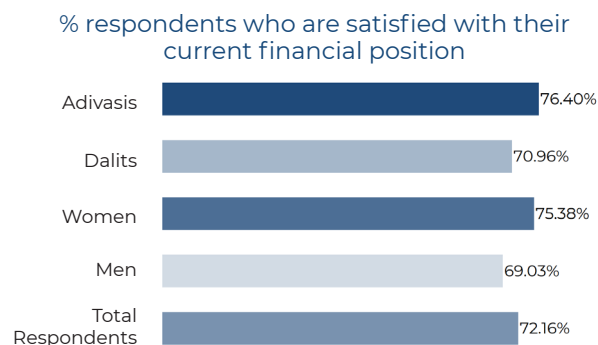


Chart 18: Perceived financial position

## Pucca house

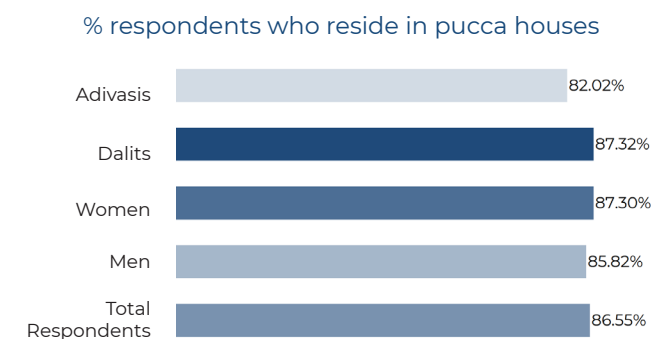


Chart 20: Pucca house

## Own house

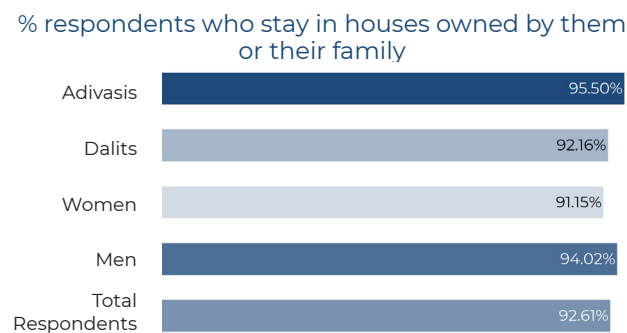


Chart 19: Own house

## Access to toilets at home

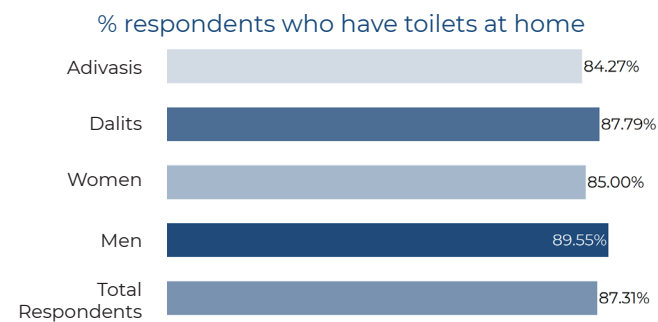


Chart 21: Access to toilets at home

### Access to running water tap

% respondents who have running water taps at home

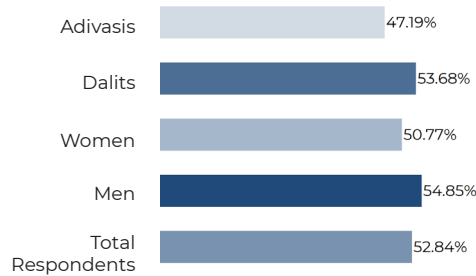


Chart 22: Access to running water taps

### Land ownership

% respondents or members of their household who own land

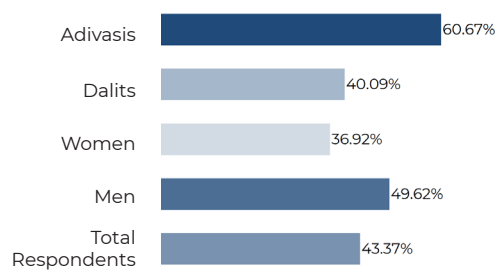


Chart 24: Land ownership

56.63% of total respondents are landless. When compared to the estimated landlessness in East Godavari in 2011 (81%), this is significantly better. The part played by NASA in providing access to land to the project communities is commendable. That more than half of the respondents do not own land only indicates that there's still miles to go.

### Indebtedness

% respondents who have debts



Chart 23: Indebtedness

That 70.64% of the respondents have some kind of debt, whether institutional or otherwise indicates the level of indebtedness of the respondents. The interest rates on these debts in some cases are as high as 10% per month or 120% per annum. As is evident, indebtedness is significantly higher among women than among men and among Dalits than Adivasis. The comparatively higher proportion of debts among female respondents can largely be attributed to the credits given to them through small-help groups by NASA. While these loans are used to support various micro/ nano enterprises and other income generating activities, there are other loans given by moneylenders with obscenely high interest rates that make it is very difficult for the beneficiaries to repay their debt.

## Overall wellbeing & Quality of life:

### Perceived wellbeing

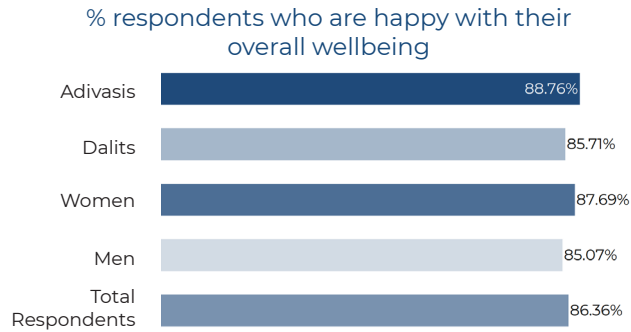


Chart 25: Perceived wellbeing

### Educational attainment

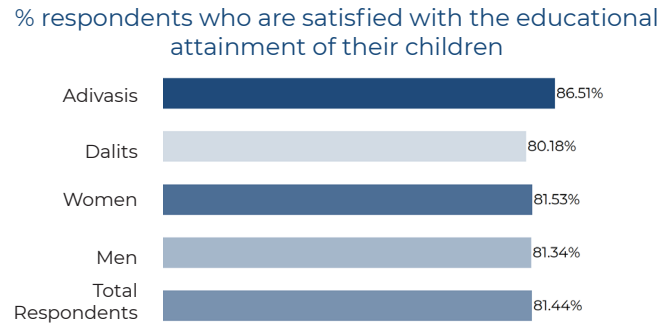


Chart 26: Educational attainment

### Access to healthcare

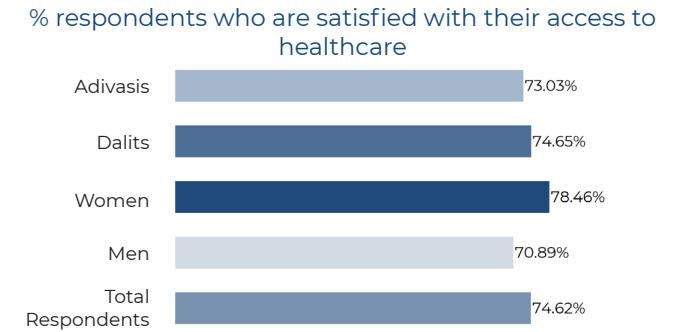


Chart 27: Access to healthcare

### Financial wellbeing

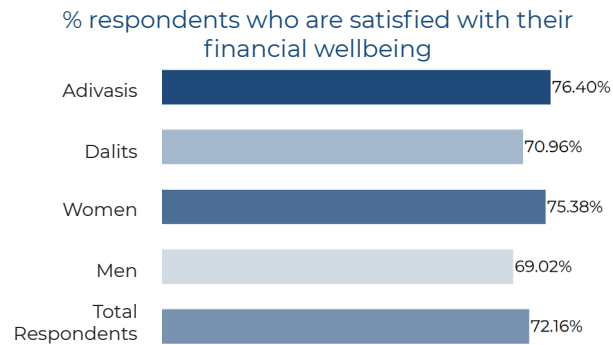


Chart 28: Financial wellbeing

### Overall satisfaction

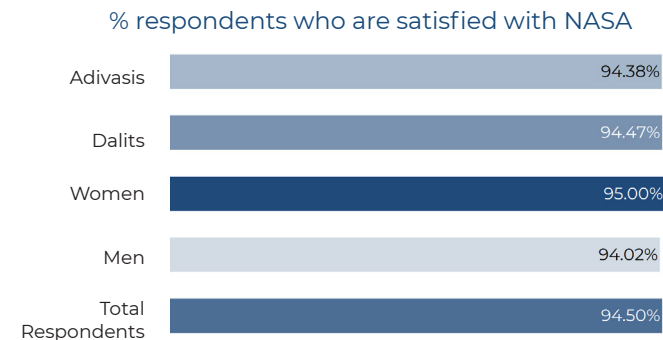


Chart 29: Overall satisfaction

Narrative statements of some beneficiaries are translated into English and presented below. They offer a glimpse into the kind of impact NASA has had on their lives.

*"I like the motive of NASA to work among the downtrodden. It is working for the development of my community, and I feel that the organization is mine."*

**G. Annavaram**

*"NASA helped ensure a better future for me and my family. It helped our development in all aspects."*

**Raju Babu**

*"I can't just say any one thing in particular. NASA has helped us in many aspects. After its interventions, we learned many new things. So, it is a part of us."*

**Nookaraju**

*"The thing that connects me to NASA is that they work for my community. Since years, we have been deprived of many things. NASA came to the fore and worked for our development."*

**Nagulapalli**

*"I get a strong feeling of equality here. NASA looks at everyone as equals and treats them as equals."*

**Chatta Rani**

*"NASA offers help in any situation. It solves any kind of problem for us."*

**Mahalakshmi**

### **Democratic Assertion:**

NASA's approach has helped Dalits assert themselves and their rights democratically. While several beneficiaries were elected as Village Sarpanch, MPTC and ZPTC members, at least a couple of them were also nominated to high-profile political appointments like Chairperson of SC Corporation and Member of Legislative Council. Several surveyed respondents are active in civic life and are recognized by members of their community.

**Overall score on Impact: 4.09/5**



## Sustainability

NASA has evolved and stayed relevant for the past 40 years. Over the years, it has built a fairly robust network of CBOs and CSOs. These community-led organizations play a key role in ensuring sustainability of NASA's interventions. A large number of respondents believe that the benefits accrued to them through NASA's efforts are sustainable. It should be understood that the kind of holistic and comprehensive socio economic changes envisioned by NASA are very long-term, and require patience, dedication, and commitment to the cause. Strong and robust community-driven organizations are critical to keep the communities engaged, motivated and driven. One of the biggest achievements of NASA over the years has been its ability to cultivate a culture of strong community-participation and ownership\*.

### Sense of ownership

% respondents who felt that they take ownership of NASA's activities



Chart 30: Sense of ownership of NASA's activities

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 \*The investigators would like to refer to a very specific case of collective ownership at the highest level. Mr. Premdas was a charismatic leader, who was able to charm, inspire and motivate a generation of activists. The respondents recall their experiences with Mr. Premdas fondly and vividly. The void left by the demise of such a key pillar of the organization can only be strengthened through strong collective leadership. Signs of such a strong collective leadership emerging at the top level are visible and the investigators hope that this process will be nurtured.

### Level of involvement

% respondents who felt that they are involved with NASA and its activities

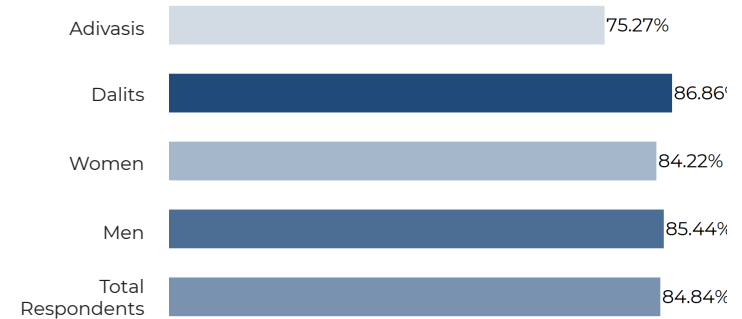


Chart 31: Level of involvement in NASA's activities

### Perceived sustainability

% respondents who are confident that the benefits accrued to them due to NASA's efforts are sustainable



Chart 32: Perceived sustainability of benefits accrued

Land plays a key role in the empowerment of Dalits and Adivasis. While some beneficiaries received pattadhar passbooks/ documents for the land they received, few expressed concern. Here's what they think should be done or was already done to make their entitlement to land permanent and lasting:

*"Documents with strong evidences and proofs. Registration is compulsory."*

**Rajubabu**

*"They gave us the passbook."*

**Nookaratnam**

*"My land is already registered."*

**Abbulu**

*"By paying taxes to the government."*

**Dhanalaxmi**

*"I didn't receive registration certificate to my land. I hope NASA solves this problem."*

**Ramulamma**

The researchers arrive at the conclusion that the social and economic benefits accrued to the project communities are sustainable. There are, however, issues that threaten the sustainability of these benefits. Often, these are only dubious means adopted by the state and upper castes to deny Dalits and Adivasis their rightful due. In a particular village in Visakhapatnam district, a few minutes away from the highway, and a few kilometres away from the bustling port city of Visakhapatnam, there was a Dalit plumber called Raju. As is the case with several other Dalit colonies in the project area, their colony too, didn't have access to water until recently.

"Water is very important for us. We use this land here to grow some vegetables," he says, pointing towards a small piece of land by the hill slope. "We use water in our homes."

The water supply system in that colony is a design masterpiece in itself. It had an intricately laid out network of pipelines that supplied water to the land they were now cultivating on along with the Dalit houses in their colony. Households had makeshift sumps, motors and overhead tanks. It was definitely not perfectly finished, but it seemed to work just fine.

"They have cut the connections," Raju continues. "And now, there's no water. Not to the land, not to our homes." For household consumption, they now carry water from a common borewell in their colony. However, the gourds and greens they were cultivating looked thirsty for a few drops of water.

"Who has cut the connections?" asked our investigator.

"They. The dominant castes."

The researchers recommend NASA to be wary of and resist such attempts by upper castes to deny Dalits and Adivasis their rightful due.

**Overall score on sustainability: 4.49/5**



**Overall performance score: 4.33/5**



# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



## The road ahead

Over the last 40 years in general, and in the last decade in particular, NASA has helped Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized communities attain social, economic and democratic empowerment. As the organization rightly acknowledges, much has changed in the last few decades. We have already assessed and discussed the ability of NASA to stay true to its vision and mission through these changing times. We would also like to indicate the road ahead in the context of some of these emerging changes.

These statements by the respondents indicate some of the changes NASA may consider in its strategic approach to development of marginalized communities. Firstly, there is a need to strengthen CBOs. As few respondents opined, this strengthening is also in terms of their efficiency or effectiveness.

### Further strengthen the CBOs

The CBOs could be strengthened in their orientation to cater to the next generation of Dalit activists. As a respondent says, “NASA should help the rural SC youth.” A lot of young

respondents also expressed their willingness to participate more actively in NASA’s activities. NASA should therefore think of, and implement ways to organize and empower the rural SC youth. This group is significantly different from the majority of beneficiaries of NASA. They are better educated, have had better access to resources, more aware of their rights and are better empowered. However, joblessness, unemployment and underemployment are on the rise. Most jobs are also only contractual, and offer neither job security nor decent income. With stagnant wages and high costs of living in urban areas, most educated youth are preferring to return to their villages.

### Equipping the next generation of Dalit activists

We believe that co-operatives and producer companies are potential ways of achieving this objective. The researchers also see value in food processing for further economic growth and prosperity. Majority of the beneficiaries of land development initiatives grow mango and cashew. Processing mango and cashew will help derive greater value from the market. Setting up a collective form of conducting this economic activity is one potential way to organize the Dalit youth. The Food Industry Capacity and Skill Initiative (FICSI), widely known as the Food Processing Sector Skill Council has enlisted several job roles in this sector. It has also developed occupational standards and Qualification Packs (QPs) for various job roles. Existing schemes of the central and state governments may be leveraged to facilitate

#### RESPONDENTS SPEAK

*“Sanghams should be strengthened.”*

**Apparao**

*“I want to participate actively in the activities of NASA.”*

**Chanti Babu**

*“NASA should form coalitions and take up joint and united struggles against oppression.”*

**Ramanamma**

skill development of youth in this sector. After completion of these skill development courses, the youth may be provided with the required support and handholding to set up small food processing units in their villages, either as collectives, or as individuals. The investigators believe that engaging in collective economic activities become more relevant now in the context of the new farm laws that have been passed in India. There are various government schemes, again designed by both the central and state governments to provide required support for setting up these units. For instance, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (Govt. of India) is implementing its flagship scheme, 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojna (PMKSY)', through which it aims to create modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm to fork. This scheme aims to not only provide a big boost to the growth of food processing sector in the country (currently only 1% of the produce is processed in India), but also to provide better returns to farmers, create huge employment opportunities in rural areas, reduce wastage of agricultural produce, increase the processing level and enhance the export of processed foods.

### **Interventions in the backyard poultry value chain**

Further, the researchers see great potential in interventions in the backyard poultry value chain. Only 14.77% respondents have at least one poultry. Only 3.22% respondents have more than 10 poultry. The Indian poultry market, consisting of broilers and eggs is

projected to reach INR 3,775 billion by 2023. This offers tremendous potential for economic empowerment. Success stories are also existing within NASA's own beneficiaries. In one of the villages our field teams visited, some members of a Dalit colony got together to start an enterprising poultry business. We suggest NASA to consider interventions in the backyard poultry value chain to foster economic empowerment of Dalits, Adivasis and other backward communities.

### **Promoting legal literacy**

As already mentioned under 'Key Findings' in social impact (Chapter 4.b), only about 18% of the respondents from Cohort-3 said that they understand the SC/ ST Atrocities Act well. Therefore, promoting legal literacy and awareness on the SC/ ST Atrocities Act need priority.

### **Leverage emerging communication technologies**

Communication is undergoing radical transformation. Mobile phone access and internet penetration are increasing rapidly. Over 93% of the respondents reportedly have mobile phones and over 31% of them reportedly use the internet, of which almost 97% use the internet on their own mobile phones. They are using it to learn new techniques in cultivation, for online education, job opportunities, news, social media and entertainment. We see great potential in these emerging technologies to engage with the project communities. We also see great potential in using these communication

technologies to engage with other stakeholders in the ecosystem.

### **Capacity building**

Learning is a lifelong and continuous process. While capacity building of staff and activists/ leaders should be a continuous process too, implementing changes require additional investment of time, energy and resources. With the evolving context and strategic priorities, capacity building requirements need be listed and implemented.

### **Advocacy and joint platforms**

Most important of all, however, is the urgent need for NASA to align with like-minded people and organizations to build coalitions or forums for joint action to keep the issue of access to land alive. Engaging in advocacy efforts and waging joint struggles is the only way forward. This is all the more important because of the absence of concerted efforts in this direction during the last decade. The investigators hope to see efforts in this direction take shape.

# CASE STUDIES

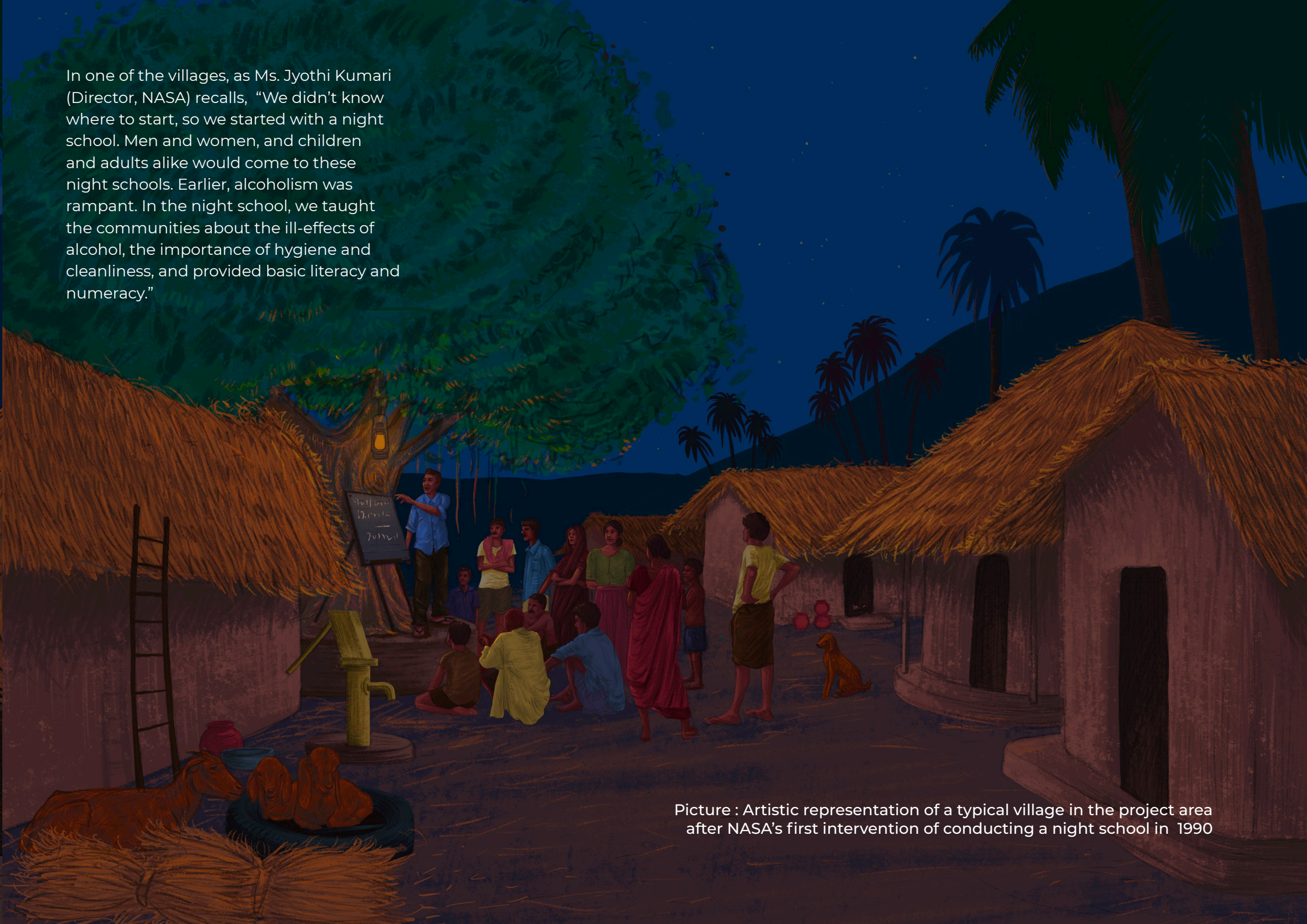


In the early 1980s, villages in the project area were extremely backward and marginalized in every sense. There were no roads or connectivity, no access to electricity, water and education and healthcare facilities. Caste discrimination was rampant, and Dalits were subjected to various kinds of atrocities. Alcoholism, too, was a major cause of concern, and women were compelled to engage in sex work for livelihood as a result of which the incidence of HIV-AIDS cases was also high.



Picture: Artistic illustration of a typical village in the project area in 1985 (before NASA's interventions)

In one of the villages, as Ms. Jyothi Kumari (Director, NASA) recalls, "We didn't know where to start, so we started with a night school. Men and women, and children and adults alike would come to these night schools. Earlier, alcoholism was rampant. In the night school, we taught the communities about the ill-effects of alcohol, the importance of hygiene and cleanliness, and provided basic literacy and numeracy."



Picture : Artistic representation of a typical village in the project area after NASA's first intervention of conducting a night school in 1990

Gradually, the communities came out of alcoholism, engaged in economic activities, sent their children to schools and there was progress all around.



Picture : Artistic representation of a typical village in the project area after NASA's interventions for around a decade

In the following pages, we present 25 case studies of different kinds of beneficiaries of NASA. Through these case studies, we hope to qualitatively assess the impact of NASA's interventions over the last decade. Each of these case studies speaks of social and economic empowerment, community mobilization and democratic empowerment. They speak of NASA's impact, in the beneficiaries own words.



Picture : Artistic representation of a typical village after successful implementation of NASA's interventions.

## A.L.S. Kumari

Village: A. Mallavaram  
Mandal: Rowtulapudi  
District: East Godavari

Kumari's story is a true story of grit, determination and political empowerment. Her association with NASA goes back 25-30 years and is one that will stand as evidence and proof to the work NASA is doing with the communities in the project area.

25 years ago, Kumar lived in a thatched roof hut. She would eat if there was food in the house, else she would go hungry for days together. There was no connectivity, transportation, healthcare facilities. Basic transportation amenities were not available, making their legs their mode of transport. Dalits and Adivasis were not allowed to have homes of their own.

When NASA first approached the community, there was suspicion. The association was rejected by those belonging to upper castes. But slowly, they made in-roads to the community and set up 'sanghams' or communities for the scheduled tribes and castes to abolish the concept of 'untouchability'. These sanghams started saving finances for emergencies and this when Kumari really realised the power of an organisation looking to empower the underserved.



The biggest challenge to the empowerment program by NASA was the resistance of the upper caste community. NASA was looked at in suspicion and faced many obstacles. But over time, and with patience, NASA overcame these obstacles. As a result of NASA's work, members of different castes slowly started mingling with each other. They started visiting each other's houses. NASA meetings became a place of rejoice - there was song, dance and drama, and everybody was happy.

Change didn't take too long once NASA intervened. Ambulances were provided to cater to medical emergencies along with

financial aid for treatments. Kumari exclaims with exasperation that people in the village used to pass away with something as simple as a common cold. After NASA's interventions, everyone have homes, all children have access to free education and the government officials respond well to their demands.

Kumari's oratory skills, and performance on stage fetched her a lot attention. The then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhar Reddy took notice of her ability to charm people, and nominated her as a Member of Legislative Council (MLC).

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***"It felt as though God himself has come down to Earth to help us. They held meetings once a week with the communities to educate, empower and build consciousness about caste discrimination. They distributed sarees to the women. Cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation was improved in the area. Land was distributed and developed and teak and cashew saplings were nurtured by the community."***

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## Ammaji Pedapati

Village: Payakaraopeta

Mandal: Payakaraopeta

District: Visakhapatnam

Ammaji starts her interview by explaining how NASA has impacted her life personally: “We would have been in the same position, leading the same life of poverty and unawareness if it was not for NASA’s help here.” Over the years of her involvement with NASA, she had witnessed lives of several people in her community transform..

Before Ammaji’s involvement with NASA, she was a housewife locked inside the four walls of her home, looking after the immediate needs of her family. But NASA’s entry in the village got her curious. At first she noticed the self-help groups for women, the awareness camps that ran in the village and the increasing number of children getting educated. Noticing a positive change in the community, she started to step out of her comfort zone slowly. NASA also allocated and built designated areas for borewells and hand pumps. She was impressed with the way NASA taught the community a better way of life and began developing self-respect and confidence in her capabilities.

NASA helped the entire village community with short-term and long-term loans and financial aid. She says, “Financial aid was very



crucial for us at that time. NASA helped improve our lives economically, socially and politically. NASA’s interventions also ensured that our next generations lead good lives. Today, my son is a Diploma holder and daughter is completed her DSC.”

In 2006, Ammaji was elected as the District President of the political party that is currently



in government at the state level. During her involvement with NASA, she raised awareness and built knowledge about the rights of her community members through street and stage plays. Recently she was promoted as the Chairperson of the Scheduled Castes Commission. With the political capital she acquired, she has been instrumental in setting up a hospital for medical aid and has mandated the legal process of filing First Information Report’s in police stations in cases of atrocities and crimes against Dalits and Adivasis.

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***“Financial aid was very crucial for us at that time. NASA helped improve our lives economically, socially and politically. NASA’s interventions also ensured that our next generations lead good lives. Today, my son is a Diploma holder and daughter is completed her DSC.”***

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## M. Lovaraju

Village: Allipudi  
Mandal: Kotananduru  
District: East Godavari

Lovaraju has been associated with NASA for around 10 years now. “During the past decade, I have witnessed my life, village and community transform after NASA’s interventions on the ground. The interventions focussed on creating better livelihoods for rural communities, and in this endeavour, NASA took up several activities,” he says.

Lovaraju himself stands testimony to the effectiveness of the intervention. With the financial support he received from NASA, he has been successfully running a small ‘paan’ shop, providing provisions to the local community in addition to his famous ‘paan’- a highly popular local delicacy made of betel leaves and other condiments.

But how did this transformation occur, you ask? NASA has been responsible for distributing and helping develop land for farming. The distribution of land and houses has ensured the community’s economic independence and has ensured a fresh start for the wholly self-sustaining growth of Allipudi.

What Lovaraju feels most grateful for, is the intervention of NASA at such a personal level.



“When the recent cyclones hit, a distribution drive was supported by NASA, where food, clothing, and blankets were distributed to those in need,” he says. The personalisation of interventions and relationship building shows the deep-connect that NASA has with the target beneficiaries.

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***“During the past decade, I have witnessed my life, village and community transform after NASA’s interventions on the ground. The interventions focussed on creating better livelihoods for rural communities, and in this endeavour, NASA took up several activities,”***

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## N. Nukaraju

Village: Srungavruksham

Mandal: Thondangi

District: East Godavari

Nukaraju has a long-standing association with NASA, one that spans over 29 years. His story is one of hope, inspiration, and real transformation. Nukaraju is testimony to the work NASA has done over the years in the Thondangi Mandal.

Before his acquaintance with NASA, Nukaraju led a life that was underserved in many ways. With NASA's opportunities for better livelihoods and access to a decent standard of living, it is truly a wonder to see his life transform. Today, his two sons are well settled in good jobs - one as an employee in a steel plant and the other as an electrical engineer with the government. His daughter is married, with the son-in-law holding a job in the forest department. His children have houses of their own and drive their father around the village in their own cars!

He says, "NASA's intervention in the village enabled community living and a mutual relationship with the government for land development. Nearly 86 acres of the temple land was allocated to Dalits and Adivasis. NASA has also been instrumental in settling a lot of caste disputes and ensured a zero-tolerance policy for casteism. Further, in their efforts to nurture a self-sustaining community, NASA



provided buffaloes and fishing nets to the community."

In nearly 30 years of association, Nukaraju witnessed a number of people educated in the village. Nearly all of them are well-educated. Nukaraju was one of the chosen few to be sent to America by NASA as he was seen as a great role model for the others. Today he is still driving his rickshaw, but leading a life independent

of his children. He pays his taxes, owns 1 acre of land on which he grows paddy, and is self-sufficient. That NASA's programs are sustainable is evident from the transformation they have brought about in not only Nukaraju's life but also his children's!

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***"NASA's intervention in the village enabled community living and a mutual relationship with the government for land development. Nearly 86 acres of the temple land was allocated to Dalits and Adivasis. NASA has also been instrumental in settling a lot of caste disputes and ensured a zero-tolerance policy for casteism. Further, in their efforts to nurture a self-sustaining community, NASA provided buffaloes and fishing nets to the community."***

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## B. Suribabu

Village: Lingaparathi  
Mandal: Yeleswaram  
District: East Godavari

Suribabu is a farmer and a car driver. He says, “Over 10 years, my relationship with NASA has helped me grow my understanding of agriculture and food cultivation. My livelihood has changed drastically – I am now growing different kinds of crops and am entirely self-sufficient.”

Not only did NASA help Suribabu procure land, but they also gave him saplings to start his agricultural journey. Today he is growing paddy, cotton, and plantain! He planted the saplings on the side of an uncultivated hill, and the sale of the crops generates additional income every month. Although he is yet to receive the documents for his land, he is hopeful of receiving the same. “The DPIS leaders will ensure that we receive the documents,” he remarks.

When the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic struck, Suribabu’s income dwindled as a result of fewer people engaging him as a car driver. However, NASA provided dry rations and distributed masks and sanitizers to the whole community. Suribabu acknowledges the support extended by NASA, especially in times of crisis like now. Their efforts to create equal opportunities



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***“Over 10 years, my relationship with NASA has helped me grow my understanding of agriculture and food cultivation. My livelihood has changed drastically – I am now growing different kinds of crops and am entirely self-sufficient.”***

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are evident, showing the importance of these interventions, associations, and relationships.

## B. Appa Rao

Village: Lachireddy Palem  
Mandal: Rowtulapudi  
District: East Godavari

“Dalits and Adivasis were never respected around here. There was no equality in any field, be it agriculture, profession, marriage, or politics. We were nobodies in the village till NASA came in,” exclaims Appa Rao. Today, Appa Rao is the president of the Dalit Pragati Ikya Sangham. “After NASA’s intervention, our lives improved by at least 20%,” he adds.

Appa Rao probably has had the longest association with NASA.. With over 32 years of relationship, he has seen NASA develop rapidly, especially during the '80s and '90s. His strongest, and most touching recollection of this association is during the 1996 cyclone - food, clothing and relief measures were taken almost immediately. “Premdas Sir, the founder of NASA, has been with us throughout the crisis,” he says as he sings praises about NASA’s work in crises. “The then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi also recognised the quick and active involvement of NASA to help the beneficiaries. Likewise, NASA’s relief and rehabilitation work was also appreciated by Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi who had also served as the Speaker of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly,” he adds.

NASA has helped the community in



Rowtulapudi improve incomes, face situations head-on, cultivate barren and ‘bheed’ land, and educate the people. They also provided the community with saplings and fertilizers to start cultivating in the lands allocated to them. In addition, and as an added measure, NASA built awareness on government schemes available to them for their benefits. “Most importantly, none of their work underlined any sort of bias,” he



remarks

Appa Rao reached out to NASA to ask for support in conducting workshops for the heads of Panchayats and other Dalit officials. He even helped NASA form ‘sanghams’ or collectives to provide leadership and guidance on solving problems pertaining to caste atrocities. Thanks to NASA’s support, they are on the path to development and upward mobility. Here’s to creating lasting impact!

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***“The then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi also recognised the quick and active involvement of NASA to help the beneficiaries. Likewise, NASA’s relief and rehabilitation work was also appreciated by Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi who had also served as the Speaker of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly,”***

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## J. Rajababu

Village: Govindapuram  
Mandal: Jaggampeta

Rajababu is an agricultural land labourer and has been associated with NASA for 5 years. He says “NASA has enabled me to take charge of my livelihood, helped me make ends meet and transform the agricultural practices on my land. I feel empowered, thanks to NASA.”

NASA has been instrumental in land development and agricultural transformation in Govindapuram. They made it a practice to deposit money in every agricultural labourers account that could be used to buy the necessary tools for developing their land. Cashew tree saplings were distributed and borewells were dug and placed when the monsoons failed. Additionally, NASA ensured equal access to healthcare and medical facilities and education. They operated holistically to develop the village. While the primary focus for Rajababu was a better livelihood, they also took care of medical and educational expenses of his family, lifting a huge burden off his shoulders.

With the onset of the pandemic, NASA ensured that every person in the community was provided with Covid kits and masks.

Most importantly, NASA ensured equal



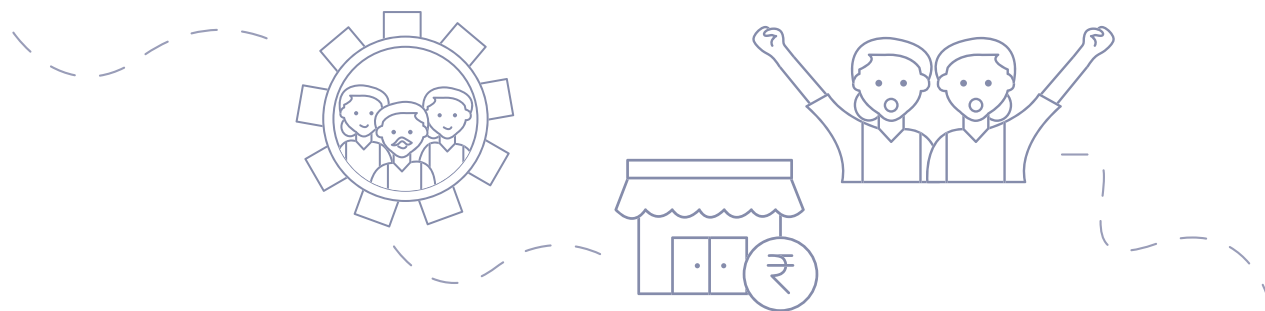
opportunities to people from Scheduled Castes and Tribes. It was ensured that all Dalits and Adivasis were helped with land development and the distribution of saplings. Nearly 700 of them were benefitted due to this initiative. They raised awareness on caste discrimination and their rights. When caste based atrocities occurred, legal action was taken. In some cases, the cases were even taken to the High Court

for further action and the perpetrators were appropriately punished.

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***“NASA has enabled me to take charge of my livelihood, helped me make ends meet and transform the agricultural practices on my land. I feel empowered, thanks to NASA.”***

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## K. Gangaraju

Village: Thotapalli  
Mandal: Prathipadu  
District: East Godavari

Gangaraju, the ex-Sarpanch (village head) of Thotapalli says, “Ten years ago, the dominant castes of our village were completely against Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Today, it is almost unrecognisable, after the community mobilisation and work done towards transformation.”

Gangaraju when recalling his village 10 years ago, says that they faced a severe water problem. Access to clean and safe drinking water was a major challenge. The local community ran on a limited, shared amount of drinking water through a hand pump.

It was in these tough conditions that NASA intervened and started a reformation program. Land was developed, saplings were distributed, financial aid was provided and government schemes were leveraged. These benefits were extended to everyone, including Dalits and Adivasis, automatically creating an ecosystem of equal opportunities for all and leaving behind the caste discrimination that prevailed.

To create better opportunities for those belonging to backward classes, NASA intervened to resolve the caste certificate



problems that prevailed. Clean, working toilets were constructed under the MGNREGA and Swachh Bharat schemes.

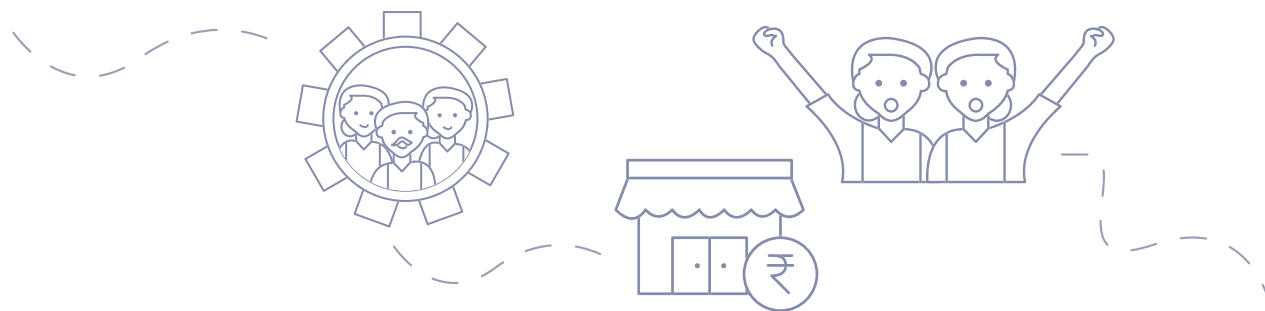
Due to his work with the community, Gangaraju was unanimously elected as the Sarpanch of their village. He recounts the support provided by the DPIS during his election. Together, they built awareness in the village on land, marriage

and caste atrocities. He says that NASA was always there to solve any problems of the people including roads and transportation.

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***“Ten years ago, the dominant castes of our village were completely against Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Today, it is almost unrecognisable, after the community mobilisation and work done towards transformation.”***

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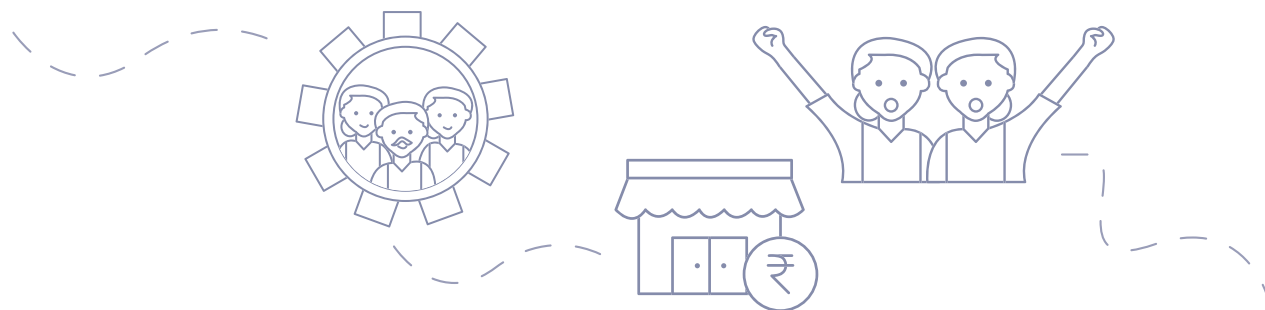
## M. Rambabu

Village: Govindapuram  
Mandal: Jaggampeta  
District: East Godavari

Rambabu has been working closely with NASA for nearly 26 years. In the beginning of his association with NASA, they looked at land development and crop cultivation to transform the village. These livelihood opportunities were offered to everyone in the village, regardless of caste. Cashew tree saplings were distributed to plant on over 75 acres of land.

In 2014, they ventured into skill development, something the youth took to very quickly. They began knowledge exchange on mechanical engineering, insulation and plumbing. These skills were able to fetch him over INR 18,000 a month, something he could never even have imagined before. Rambabu says, "I am ever so grateful for NASA's work in our village. I never imagined in my wildest thoughts that I could earn this much to fend for my family. Moreover, hands-on career counselling and motivation sessions were conducted to ensure that the skills acquired were put into practice."

NASA's major emphasis was on raising awareness on the rights of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, thereby ensuring that atrocities were dealt with appropriately.



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***"I am ever so grateful for NASA's work in our village. I never imagined in my wildest thoughts that I could earn this much to fend for my family. Moreover, hands-on career counselling and motivation sessions were conducted to ensure that the skills acquired were put into practice."***

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## M. Adinarayana

Village: Jagannadhapuram

Mandal: Prathipadu

District: East Godavari

Adinarayana is the president of the Dalit Pragati Ikya Sangham in Jagannadhapuram. He finds it hard to explain in words the kind of transformation his village has had over the years of his association with NASA. He recalls his younger days over there when 'untouchability' was still prevalent. He says, "People belonging to upper castes completely isolated us, and didn't even look at us as humans. Today, with NASA's intervention they sit around the same tree, and share meals together. "When I think about it, earlier, we, the Dalits and Adivasis were so scared of those belonging to upper castes. We were so submissive. But today, we all work at the same level."

Other than tackling the evil of caste discrimination at Jagannadhapuram, NASA was also instrumental in ensuring free and equal education to all children. They helped construct homes and provided mopeds and scooters to people who relied on selling their agricultural or fish produce in the markets. They started awareness camps and ran alcohol de-addiction programs to those who needed it.

When Adinarayana looks back, he can see how livelihoods, income and standards of life have



drastically improved in his community. He is grateful for NASA's interventions and only looks onwards and upwards.

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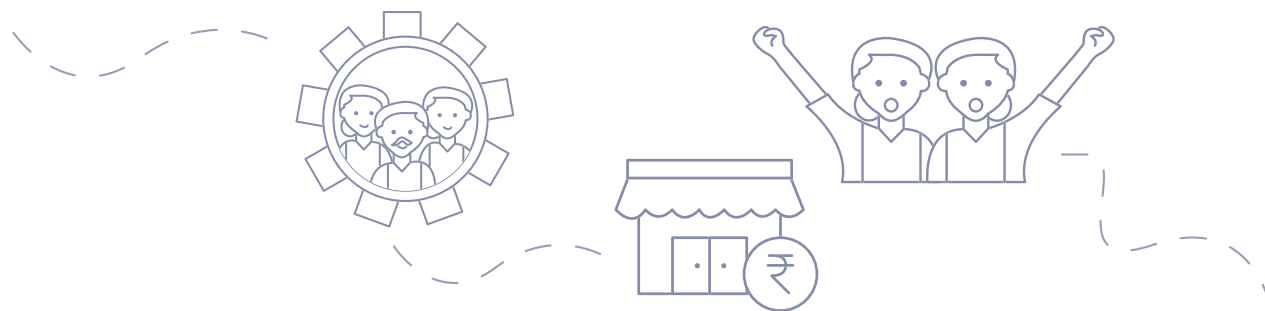
## B. Veerababu

Village: Mandapam  
Mandal: Sankavaram  
District: East Godavari

Veerababu has been associated with NASA for about 11 years now. He has studied till the intermediate level, but the kind of transformation that NASA has helped bring to his life and the community around him by improving livelihoods is unrecognisable.

In Mandapam, NASA, along with people like Veerababu fought relentlessly for equal rights and opportunities for Dalits and Adivasis. He says, "NASA facilitated access to land, distributed saplings for land development, and coordinated with government officials to ensure that our rights were upheld. They built hospitals and guaranteed basic healthcare facilities for all."

With land development, he earned enough to save up to buy a rickshaw. Now, on top of the income from selling crops cultivated in his land, he also earns additional income by driving his rickshaw. NASA has been instrumental in getting Veerababu and his community invested in democratic assertion, civic engagement, and striving for equal opportunities. It's not just about changing lives, but changing mindsets too!



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***"NASA facilitated access to land, distributed saplings for land development, and coordinated with government officials to ensure that our rights were upheld. They built hospitals and guaranteed basic healthcare facilities for all."***

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## K. Satyavati

Village: Donkada

Mandal: Nakkapalli

District: Visakhapatnam

K. Satyavati's association with NASA goes back more than 20 years. She was working as an agricultural labourer in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, earning a meagre salary as she had only completed her 10th standard.

She learned about NASA's intervention through some relatives that were being supported by the organisation. Through NASA, she learned the importance of education and creating better livelihoods for her family and community. She understood the importance of collectivism through MACS groups. Subsequently, she started a MACS group in her village. This intervention allowed buying cattle to sell milk - her current source of income.

She further says, "Over the last decade or so, NASA also provided financial support for land development, as well as for the construction of bathrooms in our village. Before, we had to walk 3 kilometres to get water, but now NASA helped us build a water tank. This nullified the community's fear of drinking water scarcity completely."

A mother to four children, she provided them education up to 5th standard from home until she decided to send them to a hostel on the



advice of Mr. Premdas. Her sons have completed their Bachelors in Education (B.Ed) with one of them completing their Masters in Science (MSc). Her first daughter is a nurse in Kakinada and her other daughter runs a 'kirana store' (a convenience shop that sells daily provisions) earning more than her siblings.

With the help of those in town, she started a self-help group giving loans for vegetable

farming, buying cattle, setting up 'kirana stores', and healthcare infrastructure.

Satyavati may have been immersed in feelings of hopelessness, but to build confidence in her village and financially and morally support her people and help build respect for the untouchables in the community might just bring a tear to your eye. And with the personal support from NASA, who has also been able to support her community during the period of the lockdown with rice and other local groceries.

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***"Over the last decade or so, NASA also provided financial support for land development, as well as for the construction of bathrooms in our village. Before, we had to walk 3 kilometres to get water, but now NASA helped us build a water tank. This nullified the community's fear of drinking water scarcity completely."***

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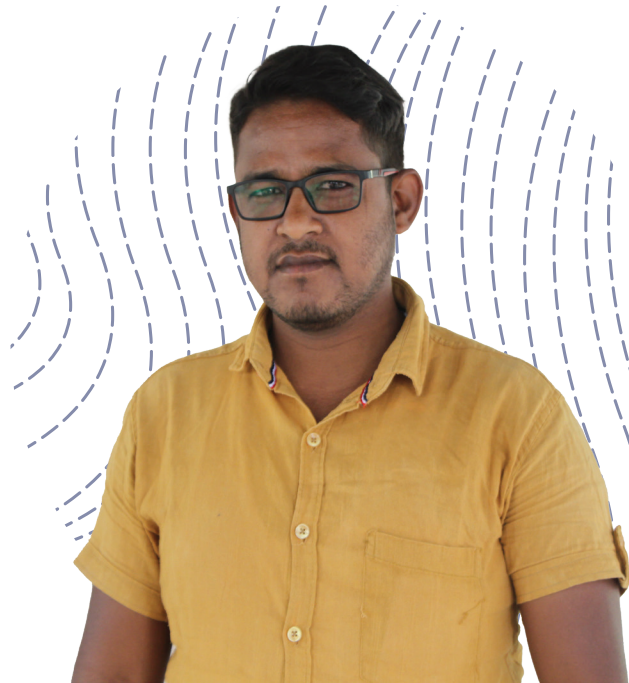
## B. Ravikumar

Village: Gummidigonda  
Mandal: Nathavaram  
District: Visakhapatnam

After B. Ravikumar completed his D.Ed in 2015, he began working at the MDO's office. It was in the same year when NASA intervened and coordinated to support the employees at MDO in updating details online. That was the beginning of their interaction. He was further offered financial support by NASA to complete his B.Ed.. And for B. Ravikumar six years ago, it was only the beginning.

Soon he began to take interest in the activities that were held by NASA and he decided to introduce them to his village. He says, "From a situation where atrocities were rampant, over the course of time, victims of SC/ST atrocity cases were morally and financially being supported by NASA. The organization has also extended further help to our community by providing education and financial support to the underserved."

B. Ravikumar soon got involved in land development and even earned an enjoyment certificate from the VRO. He further helped start JSM Academy, a study center for 10th, post-graduate and private education at considerable prices. He has been able to help his village during the pandemic by providing



rice and groceries to his people. He also took the initiative to create an awareness campaign at the Mandal level around the same time. He feels grateful about how much NASA has been able to support his community and he wishes the organization to further enhance their livelihood opportunities so that they do not have to migrate from their villages for work.

*"From a situation where atrocities were rampant, over the course of time, victims of SC/ST atrocity cases were morally and financially being supported by NASA. The organization has also extended further help to our community by providing education and financial support to the underserved."*

## M. Mariamma

Village: VV Peta

Mandal: Tuni

District: Visakhapatnam

For Mariamma, life never existed in the outside world. Change seemed unthinkable as she was restricted to her house most of the time. But when she learned about NASA, she learned that she can achieve the impossible. Now a house owner and a mother of two daughters, she has been in association with NASA for the last 16 years.

M. Mariamma recalls, "Before I joined NASA, I did not know what a market was. But with the help of the coordinators at NASA and the support of my mother-in-law, I was taught to empower myself." She soon joined the Mahila Sangam, which is a program set to encourage women members of the community to save a minimum amount of money per month.

Over the following years, Mariamma decided to take a loan from the SC Corporation for buying buffaloes but instead, she started a clothing business. She started with a minimum amount to establish her business and it is now running successfully. She was able to buy a tailoring machine as well as a zig-zag machine with her first and second loans consecutively.

She also helped her father purchase two



tractors, and has been involved in discussions with NASA and the SC Corporation about land development in her village. With the support of NASA, her family was also provided land by the SC Corporation, to maintain plantations and enhance their livelihood opportunities. With the help of members from the NASA community, Mariamma has grown to be a strong independent woman and she concludes



by saying, "I was nothing before NASA. The sole reason why I am leading a happy and transformed life today doing what I love is only because of NASA."

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***"Before I joined NASA, I did not know what a market was. But with the help of the coordinators at NASA and the support of my mother-in-law, I was taught to empower myself."***

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## P. Dorababu

Village: Tatiparathi  
Mandal: Gollaprolu  
District: East Godavari

Dorababu was an unskilled compounder till he came in contact with NASA. As he hadn't completed his schooling, he found it difficult finding employment and ended up being a compounder without training.

Dorababu says, "NASA was critical to creating equality in my community. NASA coordinators constantly raised awareness about caste atrocities and available government schemes." And in case an incident of violence against the backward classes occurred, NASA saw the legal process through till justice was delivered. In his case, NASA's founder Mr. Premdas helped ensure that justice was delivered. This instance had a profound impact on creating an equal playing field for everyone in the village.

NASA kept emphasising the importance of education as a prerequisite for equality. Dorababu ensured that his children were well educated, as he missed out on his golden opportunity. His son holds a Bachelor's degree in Engineering (B.E.) and currently works in a private company. His daughter on the other hand holds a Master's degree in Pharmaceuticals and has moved abroad for better job opportunities and financial stability.



It makes him immensely proud to see his children well educated and having a great standard of living. Now, Dorababu teaches non-formal education to students who don't have access to education. With the money he got from the Scheduled Castes loan, he bought himself an auto-rickshaw to make additional income. Additionally, he helped NASA distribute masks, gloves, and sanitizers to everyone in his

community. All this and more because of NASA's efforts!

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***"NASA was critical to creating equality in my community. NASA coordinators constantly raised awareness about caste atrocities and available government schemes."***

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## E. Yerrayya

Village: Mangavaram

Mandal: Payakaraopeta

District: Visakhapatnam

A pastor by profession, Yerrayya has been a member and a leader of Dalit Pragati Ikya Sangham since 2015. His journey with DPIS is an inspiring story of community mobilization. "The upper castes of our village discriminated against the Dalits. There were frequent cases of violence and atrocities. Dalits were socially and economically very backward and were deprived of their rightful share," he says as we begin the interview.

After NASA's interventions, they were able to claim access to 10 acres of government land, and started engaging in agricultural activities. At the same time, women were also provided small loans to start micro/ nano enterprises. These measures have helped their community make significant economic gains and also empowered the women. The community members also organized themselves under the DPIS. "This empowered the community socially and politically. Due to my active involvement in several of these activities, I have been elected leader of the DPIS," he says as he now inspires those around him. In 2017, he led the community in fighting several legal battles against caste-based discriminatory practices and navigating the complex bureaucratic



procedures, and to claim 8.5 acres of land allotted for houses. What's interesting here is that they have helped not only members of their caste but also all castes receive their rightful house sites.

He is thankful to NASA for its role in helping build his stature in the community and the resultant social empowerment. He says, "we

derive our confidence from NASA."

While the community members of Mangavaram have progressed significantly during the last decade, caste discrimination still prevails. Only recently, a couple of days before our field teams visited, several houses in his village were burnt down in a suspected caste atrocity. While NASA quickly sprung to action with relief measures, incidents like this only highlight how relevant the work of NASA still is.

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***"The upper castes of our village discriminated against the Dalits. There were frequent cases of violence and atrocities. Dalits were socially and economically very backward and were deprived of their rightful share,"***

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## P. Yerrinamma

Village: BK Palli

Mandal: Kotauratla

District: Visakhapatnam

Yerrinamma has been actively associated with NASA since 2010. He was one of the beneficiaries of NASA's land development initiatives. He got access to a small farmland where he now grows cashew. His relationship with NASA has been one of constant engagement. In 2011, he joined the DPIS and has been an active member ever since.

NASA helped him with not just access to land, but also provided him with the resources and training required to develop the farm land and cultivate cashew. Yerrinamma has been able to sell the produce and earn a decent living. Despite dropping out of school in Class V, he says, "NASA has taught me the importance of education," and he has used the income from her cashew farm to educate his children. One of his sons is now studying to be an engineer while another one is pursuing his masters in pharmaceutical science. He is grateful to NASA for also providing financial assistance to pay his children's school fee.

He also fondly recalls various instances where NASA had provided their community with moral, legal and organizational support. NASA has been helping Yerrinamma and the Dalit



community in his village fight a legal battle for years on a case related to the allocation of 10 acres of land. "Despite the legal case dragging for several years now, NASA has stood by our side and extended all sorts of support. In addition to this, NASA also provides support in fighting various cases of atrocities on Dalits," he concludes.

***"Despite the legal case dragging for several years now, NASA has stood by our side and extended all sorts of support. In addition to this, NASA also provides support in fighting various cases of atrocities on Dalits,"***

## K. Ramanamma

Village: Ramachandrapalem

Mandal: Kotauratla

District: Visakhapatnam

Ramanamma belonged to a family that traditionally chopped the stems of palm trees for a living. "In 2010-11, I heard Mr. Premdas address a large gathering. I got so intrigued and mesmerized that I just stood there for an hour, listening to all that was said patiently," she says. She later went up to Mr. Premdas and invited him to visit their village to understand their problems. The team of NASA obliged with glee, and later made a visit. Like most other villages in the project area, Ramachandrapalem too was very backward, and caste discrimination was rampant. The 'two-glass system' was commonplace.

She joined the DPIS in 2011, and now recalls the role played by the community-led groups (sanghams) in her community's overall development and wellbeing. As she recalls, "not only did NASA help us organize into a sangham, it also gave us access to land, provided us with passbooks and financial assistance for developing the beed land." NASA also helped with relief and rehabilitation during natural calamities like floods. It provided their village with access to water by digging a borewell.

These measures brought about a significant



transformation in her life. Her active involvement in NASA's activities got her attention. She was sent to New Delhi in 2013 to meet Ms. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of the then ruling coalition government in India. She was also felicitated for her active role in women self-help groups. Her youngest son has completed his Masters in Business Administration, and during his free time now, helps the villagers



fill up tedious application forms for availing various government schemes. With social and economic progress, the two-glass system is no longer practiced in their village.

She acknowledges the role of sanghams in her journey, and believes that, "more united (and joint) community organizations/ platforms need to be formed."

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***"In 2010-11, I heard Mr. Premdas address a large gathering. I got so intrigued and mesmerized that I just stood there for an hour, listening to all that was said patiently,"***

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## V. Appa Rao

Village: Timmapuram

Mandal: S. Rayavaram

District: Visakhapatnam

Appa Rao's primary occupation is agriculture, and he cultivates paddy. He is an active member of the DPIS, and has been associated with NASA for the past 10 years. He vividly recalls the efforts made by NASA to help Dalits and Adivasis come out of their economic backwardness through land development, and to improve their access to education.

In the year 2017, a burial ground that historically belonged to the Dalits was used as a dumping yard. "We only had a very small burial ground for all the Dalits in our area," he says. "And the dominant castes did not allow us to continue using it. They insisted that it be used as their dumping yard, and even resorted to physically assaulting the members of our community," he adds as the interviewer clearly observed the palpitations in his heart.

Subsequently, the Dalits met their District Collector who had asked ordered the dominant castes to stop using it as their dumping yard. However, the dominant castes were enraged with this, and again resorted to physical assault. The Dalits then went to the Circle Inspector of Police to file a complaint. "He refused to file the complaint. It was at this point that we decided



to approach NASA for their intervention." After NASA's intervention, they successfully filed a complaint, and a case was also registered in the court, and is progressing successfully.

Just on the day before he was interviewed, at the peak of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, he narrates another case of exploitation of Dalit youth belonging to

the Relli community. Several youth were taken to Karnataka by an employer with the promise of giving work, before the onset of the pandemic. However, after completion of work, the employer had refused to make payment, and abused the youth when they had asked for the payment that they were rightfully entitled to. Upon NASA's intervention, an FIR (First Information Report) was filed, and action against the employer was initiated.

"With NASA's help, we were able to do great service in 28 villages. They say that mother's love knows no bounds, but I say that NASA's love is even greater," he concludes.

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***"With NASA's help, we were able to do great service in 28 villages. They say that mother's love knows no bounds, but I say that NASA's love is even greater,"***

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## Kakara Varaprasad

Village: Chinagummuluru

Mandal: S. Rayavaram

District: Visakhapatnam

Kakara Varaprasad, fondly referred to as Varahaalu by near and dear, is the President of DPIS. He is an auto driver by profession, and thanks NASA for the support it extended to him in settling down professionally.

In 2009, NASA surveyed ten backward villages, and came up with a three-pronged approach to empower the communities. Firstly, MACS groups were started in the villages and small loans at low interest rates were given to the members to start their own micro enterprises. Secondly, a DPIS committee was formed to mobilize communities in their fight against atrocities. Thirdly, land was distributed, and support was extended to develop this land, thereby liberating the communities from vassalage.

Recalling an instance of a caste atrocity, he says, "A boy from a dominant caste promised to marry a 'Relli' girl and sexually exploited her for a long time. Later, he cheated her, and refused to marry. We then staged a protest at the police station, and unitedly exerted pressure on the police to act. We ensured that justice was served."



Similarly, in 2016, a person from a dominant caste who worked in the military had cheated an SC girl. Under the aegis of DPIS, they had staged protests in front of the police station, and compelled him to return to their village and marry that girl.

In the same year, Ms. Jyothi Premdas also inaugurated new autos that were purchased



with the financial assistance provided by NASA to empower the Dalit youth.

The most successful initiative however, according to him, was the tremendous success they'd achieved in land distribution and development. "We have identified about 100 acres of land in the reserve forest and fought alongside Dalits to ensure that this land was distributed to 66 families. Each family received about 30 to 50 cents of land, and they now cultivate cashew and mango in this land. In 2019, none of us had land. Today, there is no landless person." he concludes.

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***"We have identified about 100 acres of land in the reserve forest and fought alongside Dalits to ensure that land was distributed to 66 families. Each family received about 30 to 50 cents of land, and they now cultivate cashew and mango in this land. In 2019, none of us had land. Today, there is no landless person."***

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## P. Achutamani

Village: Kodavali  
Mandal: Gollaprolu

Have you heard the saying 'From rags to riches'? Achutamani's story isn't just a rags to riches story, but it is a story about equal opportunities. Not everyone is born with equal access to opportunities. Achutamani is one of them. Her conditions of poverty in and around her, were extreme. It was life as she knew.

NASA stepped in to create equal opportunities for women like Achutamani by forming MACS groups. Her long-standing association with NASA, nearly 20 years, has really changed her life and livelihood.

Achutamani speaks highly of her life transformation, highlighting the role NASA had to play. She says, "NASA's constant encouragement, guidance and support over the years has been the North Star for our family, village and community to grow. Their personal efforts to look after our wellbeing and the education of our children has enabled our future generations too, to lead better lives than we ever did."

Over the years, she went from no land to owning an acre of land, in which she cultivates different seasonal vegetables and cotton - her



vegetables earning her a steady weekly income till the month of May and cotton giving her nearly 200 kgs a week. Her daughters too, have steady and secure jobs, one working with the government and the other working with a Grama Sachivalayam (Village Secretariat).

What Achutamani feels most grateful for, however, is how her village transformed from



conditions of extreme poverty to a wholly self-sustaining village community. Oh, the joy of not having to migrate for a livelihood!

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***"NASA's constant encouragement, guidance and support over the years has been the North Star for our family, village and community to grow. Their personal efforts to look after our wellbeing and the education of our children has enabled our future generations too, to lead better lives than we ever did."***

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## L. Chinnatalli

Village: Talluru

Mandal: Tuni

District: East Godavari

L. Chinnatalli is an enterprising woman. While received formal education only till Class V, she acknowledges the role of NASA and their meetings in educating her on life and livelihood. She talks highly of not only the benefits she received due to NASA's interventions, but also of their overall impact on her village and the region.

"Before NASA started working in our village, we were very backward economically. Child labour was rampant, and children were often found rearing cattle. Many of us were engaged in bonded labour, and we would always bend down in front of the dominant castes," she recalls.

As a first step, NASA identified 43 child labourers and paid for their education. As the school was located far away from their village, cycles were also distributed to the children to make their commute to and from school easier. Orphaned children were also joined in hostels, and their expenses taken care of. "When we were in financial troubles, NASA also helped our grandson pursue higher education by paying his fees," she says, teary-eyed.



In addition to this, MACS groups were formed and strengthened, and land was distributed and its development facilitated. Further, other appropriate economic opportunities were provided to the Dalits. Several community members started micro enterprises, and have been successfully running them. NASA also provided borewells to their village to solve their water woes.



"I am proud that NASA is in East Godavari, and that it provided me with the support required to be self-reliant. I was able to buy buffaloes, and now milch them and sell the milk for a living," she says about her own experience with NASA. Further, due to her active involvement in the MACS group, she was elected as the President of their DW CRA group, and is now proud of the fact that despite being uneducated, she toured the entire state to give trainings to thousands of women self-help groups.

"Today, all of us are able to eat nutritious food, be independent and self-reliant. 100% of our children are going to school. The people of our region are ready to die for NASA," she says about how much they appreciate the work of NASA.

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***"Today, all of us are able to eat nutritious food, be independent and self-reliant. 100% of our children are going to school. The people of our region are ready to die for NASA,"***

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## P. Veerayamma

Village: Mirakasomaram

Mandal: Routulapudi

District: East Godavari

“I didn’t know anything about the outside world until I came contact with NASA,” Veerayamma says, even as we prepare to start the interview. “NASA taught me how to talk and how to be civilized,” she adds, as she reminisces her memories of NASA.

As a first step, NASA formed a ‘sangham’ in their village. The first achievement of the ‘sangham’ according to her, was getting a member of a dominant caste punished for raping an SC girl. “We took the issue to the District Collector, and got the culprit punished. Subsequently, we also got the girl married,” she recalls. In another such incident, few members of a particular dominant caste raped an SC girl.

“We took the issue to the notice of our local Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), but he didn’t respond to our plea. Instead, several members of the dominant community attacked our colony,” she says. At this juncture, NASA had intervened. “Premdas sir had come to our village. He sat in our colony with us, and this forced the District Collector to come to our village and resolve the issue to our satisfaction,” she concludes.



About 15 years ago, they were completely dependent on the dominant castes for their life and livelihood. While the men toiled as agricultural labour in the farms of dominant castes, the women were engaged as domestic workers in their households. Discrimination was rampant. They were not allowed to drink water from the same well. Untouchability was practiced, and in schools, their children were not



allowed to sit next to the dominant castes.

To help overcome these problems and empower the communities, NASA formed a ‘sangham’. Subsequently, it formed MACS groups, and offered loans at low interest rates to establish microenterprises. Veerayamma herself started a ‘kirana’ store (grocery store) with the loan she received and is now an enterprising and independent woman. NASA also provided some of her community members with buffaloes so they could milch them for a living.

She attributes their upliftment to NASA, and says,

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***“Until recently, we were scared of government officials and the police. Because of NASA, we are no longer scared of them. Today, if there’s light in our lives today, it is only because of NASA and the love showered on us by Premdas sir. Food, shelter, clothing, jobs- all happiness is because of NASA.”***

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## K. Nukaraju

Village: Kotananduru  
Mandal: Kotananduru  
District: East Godavari

Nukaraju's association with NASA goes back over fifteen years. As president of the Dalit Pragati Ikya Sangham, his story is one of inspiration and hope, not just at a personal level, but also one that involves community mobilisation and transformation.

Nukaraju, disadvantaged from the beginning because of his caste identity, struggled to make ends meet. He starts his interview by explaining the variance in caste identities in the Kotananduru Mandal. While the situation has dramatically changed since NASA's interventions, caste discrimination is still prevalent in a non-exponential manner.

Over the years, interventions and financial aid from NASA helped Nukaraju set up a small shop, one that caters the daily provisions for the local community. Since 2011 and the opening of his shop, Nukaraju has had no financial stress. NASA has been instrumental in supporting the education of his three young children, ensuring a better livelihood for his future generations as well. He says, "I didn't expect NASA to be involved with our problems at such a personal level. In a natural process, we learned self-development, family and community



sustainability and for that, I am ever so grateful."

Nukaraju explains that NASA has been instrumental in improving the living conditions in Kotananduru, mainly through land development. Nearly 50-100 land documents were procured and distributed to Dalits, and extensive awareness campaigns were conducted on the different government

schemes that could work in their favour for a better livelihood. In their endeavours to motivate and educate, NASA set up a Legal Advisory Committee, to promote legal literacy and reduce the instances of atrocities and crimes against Dalits and Adivasis.

The proof is always in the pudding. In the last 4 years, no major cases of atrocities have taken place and those that did resulted in a fair settlement. Moreover, quite an honourable achievement for NASA – over 50% of the 200 shops in the Mandal belong to people of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

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***“Despite the legal case dragging for several years now, NASA has stood by our side and extended all sorts of support. In addition to this, NASA also provides support in fighting various cases of atrocities on Dalits,”***

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## Emmilli Veerababu

Village: Miraka Chamavaram

Mandal: Rowtulapudi

District: East Godavari

Yemmilli Veerababu has been in association with NASA since 1983. He recalls his association with NASA in the beginning and says, "Right around the time NASA started its work here, social injustices like slavery, untouchability and caste discrimination were rampant in the area. When I look at life now, it's almost unrecognisable with the work and effort put in by NASA."

Over 38 years, NASA has worked to improve the livelihoods of the community by ensuring equal access to opportunities. NASA has been assisting the community with education, financial aid through loans and moral support. They have also been working with governments to ensure that their voices are heard, and to secure government schemes for Dalits and other underserved beneficiaries. Cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation were enhanced in the community. NASA was instrumental in putting an end to the vassalage.

Veerababu exclaims with excitement that NASA helped him become a jewel of the nation. He fondly remembers an incident at one of the NASA meetings where he was mesmerized by Mr. Premdas' speech. "I was very young when



I heard Mr. Premdas speak at a community meeting. I tried to meet him and say something to him as he got into his car (the Ambassador). Despite hundreds of people being present there, he spotted me trying to say something to him. He ordered his car to be stopped and asked me to get in. He heard all my problems out, and tried to help me find a solution. I was left with tears at the end." Veerababu says that his

community acquired inner strength because of NASA.

The demise of Mr. Premdas is still felt deeply by Veerababu. While today he is in a position to buy his own car, he will always claim that NASA bought him his first cycle. Veerababu is truly a transformed man!

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***"Right around the time NASA started its work here, social injustices like slavery, untouchability and caste discrimination were rampant in the area. When I look at life now, it's almost unrecognisable with the work and effort put in by NASA."***

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