

**RISHI VALLEY
SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

JULY 2009

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Rishi Valley Special Development Area

1.0 Background

Rishi Valley is located in Chittoor district in the interior of Andhra Pradesh. The Valley and its environs are part of the Mandals of Kurabalakota, Kottakota and Madanapalle. Geographically the area lies between 13° 37' to 13° 39' of North Latitude and 78° 25.5' to 78° 28.3' of East Longitude.

Rishi Valley and its environs are situated at the edge of the broken hills of the Karnataka Plateau, on an east west axis. Their physical characteristics are unique; at the entrance stands a natural formation of rocks in a lion shape; hence one of its names is '*Simhadwaram*.' Striking rock formations run all along the northern flank while hills covered with veritable forests dominate the western end. These features make for a self-contained geographical unit for the valley. The ancient valley is under the *Rishikonda hill* located on its western side where, according to tradition, a well-known sage used to meditate. The *Rishi* river, a rain-fed stream, that flowed down the hill has since dried up.

Drawn by its atmosphere of peace and serenity, centred around a large banyan tree - one of the oldest in India, the renowned philosopher Sri J Krishnamurti chose Rishi Valley to start an educational institution in 1931 - the Rishi Valley School (RVS). This ongoing dynamic experiment in education founded on Krishnamurthi's insights is dedicated to exploring, in a rural context, his vision for humanity and the Earth.

Rishi Valley School (RVS) has been in existence for more than 75 years and extending services for the growth of human development, rural education, rural health care, organic farming initiatives and ecological and afforestation projects. In what was and is a fragile environment, RVS has dedicated itself to conservation and restoration of nature.

Increasing pressure of unchecked development has been posing a threat to this heritage. There have been proposals from private parties to establish large educational institutions and industries in the valley. Quarrying for granite in the surrounding hills threatens to become an industry. Rishi Valley is part of Rayalaseema, a region that experiences cycles of severe drought. Already underground water levels in the valley have dipped to more than 100 metres and both the percolation tanks and several wells are running dry. A large influx of population will destroy this already fragile ecological region. Recognising the significance of this pressure on the future of the Valley and its inhabitants and to continue to realise Krishnamurthi's vision of a regenerated world, RVS, the idea to declare the Rishi Valley and its immediate environs a Special Development Area was mooted.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh undertook a singular step to declare Rishi Valley and its surrounding area a Special Development Area and constitute the Rishi Valley Special Development Authority (RVSDA) in January 2008 vide G.O. (Government Order) Ms No. 97 MA. The G.O has been issued under the Andhra Pradesh Urban Areas (Development) Act, 1975 (AP UADA).

2.0 Rishi Valley Education Center's Role - Scope

The G.O. Ms No. 97 MA. has been issued under the Andhra Pradesh Urban Areas (Development) Act, 1975 (AP UADA). The objectives of this pioneering initiative are to:

- (a) protect and conserve Rishi Valley's rich and diverse environment from being degraded, through unrestrained growth;
- (b) bring about sustainable development;
- (c) promote inclusive growth to all its stakeholders; and,
- (d) preserve Rishi Valley's sanctity as a heritage site for the future to behold.

The extent of the RVSDA is shown in the table below:

Sl. No.	Name of Gram Panchayat	Total No. of Habitations	Total Survey Numbers	Total Area (area in acre)	Govt. Lands
1	Thettu	30	730	4774.14	2241.81
2	Kurabalakota	3	65	402.83	137.39
Total		33	795	5176.97	2379.20

The Director of Town & Country Planning, Andhra Pradesh has been charged with the responsibility to prepare a draft Master Plan in consultation with the Collector of Chittoor District (Special Officer, RVDA), the Panchayats of Thettu and Kurabalakota, and Rishi Valley Education Center(RVEC) . In terms of Section 6 of the Andhra Pradesh Urban Areas (Development) Act, 1975 (AP UADA), a Master Plan divides the designated development area into various zones for the purpose of development and indicates the manner in which the land in each zone will be used.

Rishi Valley Education Center is one of many stakeholders in what is essentially a State Government driven program. However, due to RVEC's location and convergence of environmental interests with the State Government, it desires to play the role of facilitator in co-ordinating the activities of several Government Departments and Agencies, elected local bodies and Government approved NGOs like:

1. State Finance Department
2. Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department
3. Directorate of Town and Country Planning
4. Ground Water Department
5. Forest Department
6. Department of Social Forestry
7. District Water Management Agency
8. District Rural Development Agency
9. Irrigation and CAD
10. Zilla Parishad
11. Thettu Gram Panchayat
12. Kurabalakota Gram Panchayat
13. Foundation for Ecological Security
14. Anthra
15. SERP (Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty)

3.0 Program Planning – Stage 1 (Currently underway)

Through a series of meetings chaired by the District Collector, and attended by representatives of the various departments and agencies, the requirements and elements that would constitute the Master Plan were determined. The Director of Town & Country Planning - Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, was given the responsibility to draft the Master Plan, for review and approval of all stakeholders.

Proposed Structure for the RVDA

A three-level hierarchical structure was proposed for the RVDA consisting of:

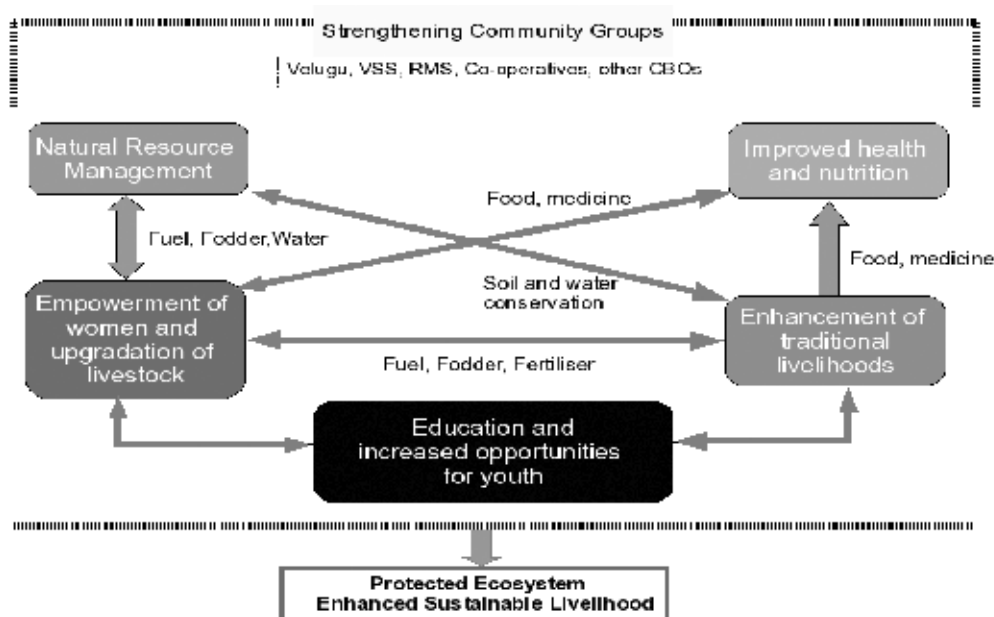
1. A statutory body of the RVDA (to be formed)
2. Executive Committee (formed and functioning)
3. Task groups (formed and functioning)

Task Groups

Five task groups were initially identified, and are currently functional in (i) contributing to the baseline requirements of the Master Plan, (ii) creating an awareness amongst the stakeholders regarding the rationale and intentions of the RVDA, and (iii) implementing preliminary activities that will form the foundations for and eventually support the objectives of the Master Plan.

- (i) Women and Livestock (W&L)
- (ii) Traditional Livelihoods (TL)
- (iii) Natural Resource Management (NRM)
- (iv) Education and Employment of Youth (EEY)
- (v) Health and Nutrition (H&N)

Interlinkages between Project Components



APPENDIX-1 gives an overview of the scope of each Task Group. Each Task Group is headed by a Government Department (except Education and Employment of Youth), and has an RVEC representative on it.

The table in **APPENDIX-2** gives an overview of all the significant field studies, activities and meetings that have contributed to the Program Planning Stage so far.

Funds

In order that the Program is carried out in a more predictable manner and made sustainable over time, most of the funding is envisaged to be sourced from the Government through Departmental and elected body (Panchayat) allocations.

A cost proposal has been prepared on behalf of the RVDA and submitted to the Finance Department for onward transmission to the 13th Finance Commission, Andhra Pradesh.

A second cost proposal has been prepared for select activities in the areas of natural resource management, livelihood training for women, organic farming and seed banking, health and nutrition and education to be undertaken by RVEC. This was submitted to the District Collector in June this year.

4.0 Program Implementation through Master Plan – Stage 2

The Directorate of Town and Country Planning , Hyderabad, has been working on a draft copy of the Master Plan. In addition, the various participating Government Departments are currently preparing sub-plans forming part of the Master Plan, aimed at realising the vision of the RVDA.

Finalising the Master Plan and Notification

The Master Plan, comprising the Land Use Plan and Departmental Sub-Plans (Annual and 5-year), will subsequently be forwarded to the Government so that its final notification could be considered. Prior to notification, the Land Use Plan and pertinent details will be displayed for public review and feedback from the stakeholders.

An overview of the land use in the area is provided below:

Existing Land use patterns of the RVSDA:

Land use	Area in Acres	% total area
Residential	154.15	2.97 %
Institutaional	362.36	7.0 %
Agricultural	2576.80	49.77 %
Hillocks	1974.72	38.14 %
Wasteland	108.94	2.10 %
Total	5176.97	100.00%

Proposed Land Use patterns of the RVSDA:

Land use	Area in Acres	% total area
Residential	236.25	4.56%
Institutional	362.36	7.0 %
Conservation zone-1 (Hillocks)	1974.72	38.14%
Conservation zone-2 (Agr., Soc.For.)	2603.64	50.29%
Total	5176.97	100.00%

Implementation Arrangements

The implementation and execution of all activities envisaged under the Master Plan (various conservation projects, schemes, etc.) will be carried out by t Community Based Organisations (e.g., Sanghas, VSS, Velugu), Panchayat and village committees, since the participatory approach will ensure ownership and therefore enduring benefits. Where required, practical experience and expertise from Government identified NGOs experienced in rural development and natural resource management are being sought for institutional processes, stakeholder motivation and participation, local group formation and involvement, training, guidance, promotion of ownership role and of sustainable development among the villagers. Although

NGOs will not undertake execution or implementation of project works, to commence works on a project, services of ,s Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) and Anthra who have extensive experience and expertise in the area are being used.

Implementation Considerations

The strategy and implementation considerations of all activities under the Master Plan must be carried out taking into account the following objectives:

- Implementation through a process of consultation with the stakeholders;
- adopting a process oriented participatory development approach involving a wide range of stakeholders including gram panchayats, community based organisations, self-help groups, NGOs, and the Rishi Valley School so that all activities implemented in the RVSDA are driven by the needs /demands of the community;
- empowering the stakeholders through developing and strengthening community owned and managed organizations;
- facilitating/providing access to technical and financial resources in order to enhance the livelihood opportunities of the stakeholders while ensuring sustainability of resources;

Proposed Activities

Activities for implementation in the RVSDA are being developed through engagement with the community and Government Departments in the form of Annual and 5-year Plans. Both set of Plans are being prepared by the Department of Town & Country Planning, Andhra Pradesh, and various Government Departments.

APPENDIX-1: Scope of Task Group Activities

Women and Livestock

The existing SHGs will be strengthened and empowered through training and financial decision making capabilities. Some of the broad areas that this task group will focus on include:

- enhancement of womens' current sources of livelihood by determining avenues for employment. These may include agriculture based activities such as grain, vegetables and fruit processing in preparation for external markets; preparation of natural, herbal remedies by the womens' groups for management of livestock etc.;
- providing skills to women in composting and bio-pesticidal preparation techniques so they can take manage these operations in the community to improve health and nutrition as well as enhance the livelihood generated from agriculture;
- empowering women to make financial decisions pertaining to purchase and management of livestock;
- providing women with skills in establishing and maintaining community seed banks so they have control over the community's food security;
- identification of alternative fuel sources such as solar, biogas etc., thereby ensuring improvement in womens' health as well as effective usage of livestock by-products;
- promoting kitchen gardens (food as well as herbs) and diversification of grains grown as a source of nutrition and medicinal value;

Traditional Livelihoods

Closely linked with the women and livestock task group, this task group will focus on enhancing and adding value to the traditional livelihoods in the area. The focus will be on:

- establishing baseline conditions of demographics, traditional livelihoods, craft, trade etc. Based on this the associated issues, weak links and gaps in the system will be identified so that mechanisms that need to be put in place to enhance these livelihoods can be determined;
- converting farming practices from chemical based to sustainable agriculture and establishing avenues and schemes required for value addition such as market linkages, infrastructure for processing crops/vegetables/fruits, storage, transportation etc.;
- promoting diversification of crops to include traditional, hardy and nutritive varieties of millets, pulses and vegetables;
- ensuring the linkages between the sustainable agriculture initiatives made here with the seed banks, composting and bio-pesticide formulation units established under the women and livestock task group;
- promoting the hardy indigenous breeds of cattle, sheep and goats as a means of livelihood improvement;
- ensuring that traditional communities indigenous to the area such as shepherds and goatherds are integrated into the planning and implementation of the various

components particularly in the selection of vegetation for the natural re-vegetation programmes;

- improving access to and management of micro-credit and insurance facilities in the promotion of and value addition to traditional livelihoods.

NRM (Natural Resource Management) and Horticulture

Natural resource management will include management of water and soil resources through a community-based natural re-vegetation programme. Building on the re-vegetation work already carried out in the area it will broadly include:

- natural re-vegetation of revenue lands along the ridge. The selection of plant species (including grasses and herbs) will be governed by those indigenous to the area taking into consideration the feed/fodder requirements of the community which links directly to the objectives of the women and livestock and traditional livelihoods task groups. Management of the re-vegetation process will be the responsibility of the community effected through SHGs / co-operatives / other community based groups;
- management of afforestation programme in forest lands including generation of livelihood from non-timber forest produce through the Joint Forest Management(JFM) programme and strengthening of VSSs;
- soil and water conservation in the Valley through maintenance and management of water harvesting structures by community based groups;
- soil and water conservation through crop planning which will be promoted as part of the activities under the traditional livelihoods and women and livestock task groups.

Education and Employment of Youth

The RVDA recognises that quality education is the key to development. Without quality education, it would be impossible for the stakeholders to take advantage of the available opportunities. In order to ensure that education is targeted at addressing the specific needs of the community and that it generates employment opportunities for youth it is proposed to use Rishi Valley School's expertise and experience in this area through the rural education outreach programme.

The task group will establish a baseline status of the students in the area to identify issues, lacunae, resource requirements etc. based on which remedial measures will identified and an action plan prepared. The objective of the action plan will be to enhance literacy and education levels through training and capacity building of teachers, where required, and improve coverage and access to education with the following intent:

- provide the concepts, knowledge, and skills needed to tackle the job of land restoration and sustainable management while ensuring sustainable livelihood means and quality of life;
- equips the youth with skills that will enable them to enhance their economic status while ensuring sustainable job opportunities and sources of income.

Health and Nutrition

Health and nutrition status is a function of the food source, water and soil quality, livelihood practices and access to basic facilities such as clean water, sanitation and health care. While the activities proposed to be undertaken in the other task groups will significantly impact health and nutrition, identification and establishment of sanitation requirements including waste management will form a significant part of this task group.

Based on a survey of the population the baseline health and nutritional status of the area will be established and the issues and gaps in the system identified. This will result in the generation of an action plan to be implemented in a phased manner. By building in linkages between waste management, livestock and the fertiliser requirements of the agricultural activities an integrated strategy will be developed and implemented.

APPENDIX-2 : Completed Task Group Activities

Month/Yr	Description of Activity, Meetings	Task Group
Feb '08	Field Study Report submitted by VRV Consultants, Chennai on Thettuvanka Watershed Development.	NRM
Feb '08	Report submitted by Ground Water Department, Chittoor.	NRM
July '08	First RVDA Meeting convened by District Collector	
Aug '08	Second RVDA Meeting convened by District Collector	
Sept. -08	Visit by Claude Alvares and Sultan Ismael – meetings with farmers	TL, NRM
Dec '08	Exposure visit to Timbaktu organised by the DWMA to understand the natural resource management efforts successfully undertaken by the Collective;	NRM, TL
Dec '08	Visit to Mandemvaripalle, Poojarivaripalle and Thettu Dalitwada with the Anthra team to identify livelihood issues pertaining to women and livestock. Two community meetings were held with men and women at Mandemvaripalle.	W&L, TL, NRM
Dec '09	Meeting held with Mr. Dattatri, Urban Planner in Chennai regarding the RVSDA Master Plan.	
Dec '09	Meeting held with MSS Foundation, Chennai to understand potential opportunities for value addition to organic farming.	TL
Jan '09	Field study and report of 'A Preliminary Study Of Livestock And Livelihoods In RVSDA' , - Anthra, Secunderabad, AP.	TL, NRM
Feb '09	Meeting at Thettu Village to initiate implementation of first phase of works for restoration of water bodies	NRM
Feb '09	Meeting with DT&CP and Mr. Dattatri at RVEC to discuss the proposed land use plan and Master Plan for the RVSDA	
March '09	Meeting with Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), to discuss the RVSDA project, FES's role and avenues for collaboration.	NRM
May -09	Meeting held with Mr. Ramesh Kumar, Mr. S.P. Tucker, Directorate of Town & Country Planning (DT&CP) and Ms. Poonam Malakondaiah, Agriculture Commissioner in Hyderabad to discuss RVSDA budget issues;	
May -09	Meeting with Mr. Suryanarayana, Asst. Director, DRDA to discuss possible introduction of the Non Chemical Pesticide Management programme into the RVSDA.	TL, NRM, H&N

Month/Yr	Description of Activity, Meetings	Task Group
	Management programme into the RVSDA.	
May -09	A Workshop was conducted for 75 high school students from the surrounding villages in english, computer skills, drama, music, creative writing, creative handwork.	EEY
May -09	A field visit was organised to a seed bank and organic farms in Thalli about 60 kms form Bangalore. These initiatives were set up by Sahaja Samrudha and Green Foundation. Five farmers were taken on this exposure visit.	TL
May -09	Field Study and Report by Suresh Jones – LORIS on Village-level planning process and documentation for Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation, Traditional Agricultural Practices, Livestock Rearing Practices, etc.	NRM, TL
May -09	Resource persons from Sahaja Samrudha conducted a 2 day workshop at Thettu and Murthinayanapalle on seed conservation and organic farming	TL
June '09	Meeting held with Foundation for Ecological Security, to discuss collaborative efforts on the program.	NRM
June '09	Monthly farmers' meeting conducted to discuss and share with the team, the lessons learnt from the visit to Thalli.	TL
June '09	Meeting with Mr. Sivaiah, Zilla Parishad High School (ZPHS) to discuss the timetable, logistics etc., for the enrichment programme at the school.	EEY
June '09	Parent teacher meeting held at Thettu ZPHS	EEY
June '09	Meeting with Thettu Sarpanch held to discuss all RVEC initiatives underway in the RVSDA.	
June '09	Meeting with community - alternate livelihood training programme at RVEC (i) work orders from Ariveni Handicrafts, Madanapalle (ii) submitting a proposal to the Mahila Mandal Samakhya and DRDA for a 3-4 month training programme in tailoring.	W&L, TL
June '09	Vegetable seeds distributed at Murthinayanapalle to various women in the community to set up vegetable gardens. Recipes of organic pesticides and fertilisers prepared in Telugu and provided to the community.	W&L, TL, H&N
June '09	Alternate livelihood training programme including stitching and tailoring for 20 women at Gurupeetam, RVEC	TL
June '09	Pilot study with goatherds/shepherds at Mandemvaripalle . Detailed house-to-house survey conducted to obtain baseline data on livestock, grazing patterns, disease etc. 4-5 community meetings held on a weekly basis to discuss priority issues, possible solutions, formation of Sangha etc.	TL, NRM

Month/Yr	Description of Activity, Meetings	Task Group
	(free of cost per Government requirements) through facilitation by Anthra (NGO)resource person with the Veterinary Dept.	
June '09	Sangha created by goatherds/shepherds – <i>Sri Gopi Gorralu Mekalu Sangham</i> . 15 of the 23 goatherds/shepherds have become members contributing Rs. 100 each. Motivation by the community for the others to join the Sangham is underway;	TL, NRM
June '09	At the RVEC resource centre, heap composting set up has been prepared using slurry, leaves etc. C	TL
June '09	Mamma, resident of Murthinayanapalle has been provided earthworms from RVEC to set up her own vermicomposting unit;	TL
June '09	Vermicompost is being used by the vegetable garden, estate and by a local organic farmer (Subbramaniam)	TL
June '09	All arrangements for commencement of the teaching support to ZPHS finalised.	EEY
July '09	Teaching support to ZPHS, Thettu commenced with volunteer RVEC teachers	
July '09	Meetings of RVEC senior administration, with the new District Collector, DFO etc.	
July '09	Gram Sabha held at Mandemvaripalle to (i) discuss the livelihood issues facing the goatherd/shepherd community and (ii) identify possible ways forward to address these issues so that resources are used in a sustainable manner	TL, NRM
July '09	Meeting with Sub-DFO, Chittoor District, to discuss 1.Selection of species for re-vegetation in the RVSDA 2.Grazing in the RVSDA 3.Forest Department's plan proposed for the RVSDA	NRM
July '09	Review of Regulatory Land-Use Plan	NRM