

Bala Vikasa : Discussing about Mission kakatiya and Water Grid initiatives of the Telangana Govt with Bala Vikasa Executive Director : Shri Shoury Reddy gaaru

Meeting Summary in a nut shell:

- Bala Vikasa does many other community building activities like
 - Cheruvulu puudika teeyyadam,
 - women's empowerment,
 - Orphan children adoption,
 - Organic farming,
 - school facilities improvement,
 - Model villages creation,
 - People development training centers,
 - Other NGOs development: That trains other NGOs across the globe to understand the rural dynamics and follow the Successful Bala Vikas model in their social development endeavors
 - Corporate giving training centers for Indian corporations that are required now to spend 2% of their revenues on charitable donations,
 - Vikasa International Center: An incubator for Social Entrepreneurship and training
 - apart from Water purification plants
 - Bore wells for rural areas
 - water tanks
 - solar power water pumps

- Many of Bala Vikasa programs and models have been adopted by various Govts in the past and also Telangana Govt. Bala Vikasa strongly urges the Telangana Govt to make every change they are making to be a community involved change so that it is sustainable in the long term by the community itself as they have their skin in the game and own the new developments made.

Detailed Summary points from the discussion:

- Ravi Prakash Mayreddy hosted this conference call with Bala Vikasa Executive Director : Shri Shoury Reddy gaaru and with about 20 to 25 NRIs from all over the world dialing in
- Objective of the conference call:
 - NRIs understand the current situation in Telangana
 - Connect the experienced people with the Govt
 - With Developing Telangana as the objective: How Bala Vikasa together with the NRI community can make some suggestions to the Govt and how NRI can get involved in:
 - Mission Kakatiya: Repair and revival of Cheruvulu and feeder channels
 - Water grid: To supply drinking water to everyone in Telangana
- After introductions of all team members on the conference call with Shoury Reddy, Shoury Reddy gave a brief over view of the extent of Social and Community building work that Bala Vikasa have done so far

- Bala Vikasa was founded by Smt. Bala Theresa who hailed from Warangal and settled in Canada after marrying a Canadian diplomat
- Smt. Bala Theresa wanted to share her strengths to uplift her fellow citizens from Warangal so they can better their lives too and started an org in Canada (SOPAR) which later required an Indian Org to be established to support the expanding operations.. which is Bala Vikas that was started in Warangal
- There are many fields in which Bala Vikas has done tremendous community building work irrespective of the caste or religion of the people but with only the following requirements before they help:
 - The people needing help should show they are poor
 - And the people should show that they are ready to pitch in their part, to receive the help
- Bala Vikasa's is not a welfare org but a development org. They strongly believe in helping people to help themselves. They believe in people building (Jana Nirmanamu) through the unity of the people and creating leaders from them
- Some of the programs they have done are:
 - Water bore wells: in 6000 villages
 - Water tanks: in 440 villages
 - Water purification units: Bala Vikasa designed this community project to fight Flourosis issue in Telangana with Gram Panchayat co-ordination and every family donating Rs 150 to Rs 200 from the village donate 20% of the cost (while Bala Vikasa bares 80% of the cost): which is about 6 lakhs total cost for unit to get operational
 - A side effect of the Water purification plant installation in a village is that the RMP doctors are "complaining" that they are loosing 30% of their business as village citizens are having less ailments after drinking pure water from the plant
 - To provide water to the village citizens through out the summer too (as power cuts interrupt the operation of the RO plant, Bala Vikasa have setup Solar powered motors at an additional cost of 3 to 4 lakhs
 - Women empowerment: Bala Vikasa does not believe women empowerment means only financial empowerment of the rural women.. They believe the empowerment starts with Increasing their knowledge about things (Jgananni penchali) , then increase their service mentality where their donate some of their daily wages, then increase their society strength and then get them loans so that they can become truly empowered. So far 2 lakh women in 1600 villages are benefiting from this
 - Taking care of widows:
 - Sad statistic that 29% widows have attempted suicide as they cannot bare the atrocious approach o the society towards them
 - old rituals that stifle these widows need to be changed
 - 1500 widows helped so far
 - restore dignity to them in society
 - Taking care of Vikasa Children and Vikasa Old aged parents (Vikasa is read orphaned):
 - The Bala Vikasa empowered women from rural areas have adopted these Vikasa children and old parents by donating couple of daily wages they get and have collectively donated 40 lakhs...

- 1600 Vikasa children have been educated now
- Vikasa children are anyone who do not have a mom or dad, no love, no respect...
- When Rural women with their meager earnings can donate such huge amount, this is a good impetus for the corporate and other citizens to donate some of their earnings as well
- Vidya Vikasa Pathakam:
 - To upgrade the schools that do not have proper class rooms, bathroom facilities, school environment
- Jana Vikasa Pathakam:
 - Cheruvula poodika teeyyadam
 - the run off soil deposited in the cheruvulu is very good for crops and the farmers put that in their fields
 - Bala Vikasa provides money for the earth movers like proclainers, etc.. which is about 30% of the cost
 - farmers pay for the rent of the tractor to take the soil to their fields : 70% of the cost
- Model villages creation: Model villages created by Bala Vikasa are being recognized by PM Modi as a model to follow for the development of other villages in India
- People Development Training Center (Warangal) :
 - To train and develop other NGOs to follow Bala Vikasa way of doing things and model so that they are also effective and are able to progress in their endeavors
- Corporate community Charity giving development:
 - New law in India stipulates that corporations should mandatorily spend at least 2% of their revenue on corporate charity giving back to the community activities
 - Bala Vikasa has come forward to help train the corporates on how best they can spend these 2% of their revenue funds on charity organizations and programs, etc..
- Vikasa International Center (Ghatkaser, Hyderabad : 20 acre campus under construction now, to be operational in 2016):
 - To promote entrepreneurship in rural areas and also act as an incubator for them to get VC funding etc...

Bala Vikasa and Mission Kakatiya and Water Grid:

- Bala Vikasa went to all political parties and have asked them to include cheruvu repair as a point in their manifesto
- Bala Vikasa is happy Telangana Govt is taking the cheruvula repair through Mission Kakatiya
- Cheruvu repair has multiple advantages
- Bala Vikasa has closely worked with Shri Harish Rao so that the Cheruvu repair works taken up by bala Vikasa's experience can be used effectively in Mission Kakatiya
- Feeder channels also have to be repaired, as Cheruvulu gets their water from feeder channels
- Gates seepage (which accounts for 10 to 15% of water lost) needs to be repaired
- Cheruvu bunds are weak some places and they need to be repaired

- Mathadlu and tuumulu need to be repaired too.. and it should be seen that they are not intentionally damaged
- Fisheries need to be improved
- Lot of people are having pattalu on the cheruvu land.. Govt should relocate those farmers with land some where else so that they do not stop the repair works
- in some cheruvulu, only the cheruvu gattu is the official govt land and almost all of the cheruvu is distributed with land rights pattalu...

Summary points of Q and A:

- De-siltation of dams need to be taken up as well by Govt where needed
- Funding for the activities of the Bala Vikasa are from international (70%) as well as local donors (30%) and due to community involved efforts, the community provides some of the required funds too
- Bala Vikasa is a registered 503 (c) organization in USA to accept tax deductible donations from NRIs in USA
- Bala Vikasa is ramping up it's presence in Social media like Facebook etc..
- If NRIs sponsor a water purification plant, then they can name that plant as a dedication of some one they like
- A social entrepreneur example: is the rural industry that manufactures feminine hygienic products with a very little/ reasonable profit margin and making sure the affordability of the products is maintained for rural citizens
- Another example for Social enterprise: Organic farming and creating organic soil enriching products
- Caste barriers eradication in villages is not something that happens in a day but it needs right approach and right motivation.. and it needs to be done in a long term basis
- farmers are now demanding Govt to give free power to the water purification plants as the govt has anyways failed in giving pure water to it's citizens, it should at least give the power to run these water purification plants for free instead... Current charges are the biggest expenses now to run a water purification plant.
- Bala Vikasa will also look into sharing the events that they do in a real time live way so that NRIs can also participate in them and also in the Q and A sessions etc... and follow any summary/ conclusions from the meetings etc...
- The Indian Corporate, sector if they donate 2% as required by law now, will be donating 25000 to 35000 crores...
- Bala Vikasa works with all Govts but not with Govt money as that usually comes with strings attached and also higher chances of mis appropriation of funds
- May be a structure should be put in place in this power vacuum where things do not work smoothly anymore... before the cheruvulu etc are repaired.. because if this structure of taking care of the surroundings and our schools is not in place.. even a repaired cheruvu and school will fall into disrepair very easily
- may be a small tax has to be re-brought so that people respect and value the good maintenance of cheruvuku will bring multiple benefits to them..
- mandatory study hours for all children in all grades of a village school, overseen and enforced by an un-employed youth has greatly shown good progress in the development of students with good knowledge
- Youth energies (apart from the 2 or 3 hrs they work on a part time job) being wasted in the villages need to be utilized : may be under 100 day rural citizens employment

guarantee scheme and use them to protect trees planted under afforestation drives, teaching lower grade kids etc... like NSS

- New source of water is being considered for Water grid project : new sources being Krishna and Godavari rivers
- A lot of NRI participants have adopted many villages/ children and making continuous difference in their lives
- NRIs who are deeply interested in Bala Vikasa projects can go ahead and be in touch with more of Bala Vikasa developments , help them and also share the details with the rest of the NRI communities... and act as a bridge to promote more awareness and encourage donations to Bala Vikasa
- 40 children have been adopted from 7th to 10 class and financial help provided to everyone who wants to complete their graduation
- 10 class students have competitions being conducted for them
- FORE: Friends Of Rural Empowerment is a wonderful organization providing great services
- Quality of the teachers need to be improved
- Only qualified teachers even if they are appointed through affirmative action, should be employed in schools as teachers are the people that lay strong educational foundation for the children and they should not be part of ruining that foundation when they lack the required abilities, inspiration, motivation or dedication
- the Rural communities should unite to put pressure on the teacher's unions so that proper education is imparted to their children and the teacher's unions do not black mail the govt that bring good educational reforms that may seem bitter to the teacher's union
- If a 20 acre cheruvu is excavated (puudika teeyadamu) then it's excavated to about 2 meters depth usually... the costs work out to be: 2 lakhs for Bala Vikasa now for the earth digging proclainer equipment rental.. and the farmers collectively will be spending about 4 lakhs to get that soil to their fields through tractor hiring rental charges
- the govt's estimates for the same cheruvu excavation (and repairs) will be in multiple of this estimates as it's all done by a contractor who also should make some profit and Farmer's involvement if it will be there has to be seen ahead when Mission Kakatiya starts to get implemented
- when a cheruvu gets repaired, at least about 50 families under it will benefit apart from the recharge of ground water in a radius of 2 kilometers
- Farmers are now tending to pay taxes only when : they want to register to vote, to get them bailed out of court cases or to obtain loans... this has to be improved so that Farmers get more benefits of being a tax paying citizen
- RTI training needs to be encouraged more by Bala Vikasa
- Rakesh Reddy Dubbudu is a veteran in RTI and would be glad to help out with RTI details... and so is Sadik Ali from Janagaum
- Rain water harvesting : Hydrological surveys need to be done for all places where govt plans to build a check dam as only in some soils does the rain water percolate and govt need to make this hydrological survey a must before building any check dams
- Failed bores in a farmer's land can be used for rain water harvesting by diverting the rain water to these bores

- Budgets for schools need to be increased so that teachers can not only buy chalks etc with the money but also be able to fund the mandatory field trips for the rural school children
- Shoury Reddy joined Bala Vikas org at the behest of his attamma who is Bala Theresa after seeing the selfless work she and her husband do when her husband was posted to New Delhi as the Canadian diplomat... Unlike what we see in corporate businesses run by families, Shoury Reddy started at the grass roots level position in Bala Vikasa and worked in every capacity and lower position and after about 8 promotions over many many years has now reached the Executive Director position that he is in now..
- Operation expenses of Bala Vikasa: The donors are requested to provide 4% of their donation for administrative expenses of Bala Vikasa and supporting its 280 employees.. while all the rest of their donation directly goes to the Community building projects that Bala Vikasa takes up
- Bala Vikasa, if possible, should create some You tube videos and multi media material that explains and shows how to organize community meetings in rural areas etc.... and Bala Vikasa with its latest Bala Vikasa International project plans to do the same and even provide online training facilities
- Under Aarogya shree etc... lot of rural women were subjected to un-necessary uterus removal (hysterectomy) operations as the bill was born by the govt.. the hospitals conducted these un-necessary operations... Such cruel practices by hospitals need to be stopped and also Bala Vikasa should take this up with Govt and also educate the Women empowerment groups that they run
- Organic product export from India do not usually pass tests that check if they are really organic, primarily because organic farming needs to be taken up a large number of farmers who have their fields adjacent to each other as even if 1 farmer strictly does everything organic by the book, when his neighbors spray pesticides in their fields, that contaminates the organic crop as well
- Grow local and eat local needs to be encouraged by the govt
- Govt should also provide subsidies for water purification plant building etc..
- All the NRIs need to create a consortium and represent their views through a single unified platform (rather than individual small platforms). Govt will listen to a big consortium of NRI orgs, something like a Telangana NRIs Joint Action Committee or something like that, which will carry a lot of weight when representations go to the govt from it, and when they want to be most effective as a STRONG PLATFORM and also a single platform any social activist will be able to quote when approaching the govt about any proposed suggestions... And also the learned Shoury Reddy bhai observed: "Mere large numbers is not strength... but strong bonds between all NRI orgs and all NRIs is the Real strength as everyone will stand on ONE WORD in the interest of the cause and the impact that they want to achieve will be possible easily"
- May be the presidents, directors and the key people of all the various NRI orgs can be joined into this consortium of NRI Orgs so that all orgs are represented in it and also all Orgs have their skin in the game with their membership
- More of these interactions between NRI community and Shoury Reddy will be planned in future and all of NRI community will be informed of them when they are finalized
- A email group containing the people who attended this call will be created so that everyone can be in the loop and also interact with Shoury Reddy and each other easily about the developmental activities they are planning and doing in Telanagana

- Shri Shoury Reddy was thanked for sharing his time, experience and expertise with us, by all NRIs.... and also thanks given to all who could make time for this call, even when it was beyond midnight in east coast by the time the Conference call concluded
- Jai Telangana!!!