

From Anita Reddy

Every day, there is a harvest of love.

As Kannamma, 73 years old, and Vellachiamma, 80 years old, clapped their hands in joy and pranced up the stairs of their new homes, being constructed in Sanyasikunte slum, I knew that over 16 years of struggles for a secure shelter for these families was worth all the challenges faced by me and my team. For the first time in many years, Nabeesa, an aged woman at CSI slum, saw the world, not as a blur of moving images but sharp and clear as could be. Our work had helped her to regain her vision after an eye operation. As Nabeesa, hugged me, overcome with emotion, her happiness and gratitude, love and blessings, could all be felt at the same time. It is these intense experiences day after day, month after month, year after year that have been the greatest awards of working with poorer communities and families. For, every day, I meet a Nabeesa. At times she is by the water taps that we put in thirsty and dry communities, at other times she is the child whose life was saved after being afflicted by a life threatening disease. At times, she can be found sleeping under the comfort of a secure roof, owned by her, her mind no longer traumatized with fear of impending demolitions. I have tried to be there whenever i heard a cry for help and support. Cries of communities that had been mercilessly demolished and shabbily rehabilitated; and cries of families who had no access even to drinking water.

Having worked to eradicate the suffering of so many that each project implemented became a self motivating desire to do more. This desire took shape in many ways. It also gave rise to many more challenges, one's vision had to be redefined in a larger perspective and yet I could not lose sight of how it was as important to comfort a single family in need. Striking the balance between these needs, gradually, and one step at a time, foundations were laid for institutions one after another, bringing linkages between urban slums and villages, linkages between states, between communities and between families. At times, I know the journey has just begun. A journey that sees new foundations being laid, new milestones being crossed, replacing despair with hope and desolation with courage. Helping me make this journey even more special are my co-travellers, journeying with me, in spirit and thought and action. Some began the journey with me, others have joined me midway. A family that stoically stood by me, friends who believe in me and share my dreams, and associates who give those dreams a shape. The journey over 40 years to touch the lives of those who had not been as privileged was not a path of rose petals. But then it's the thorns that reminded me of the beauty of the rose. Accepting brickbats and bouquets with equal grace was my humble offering to the people of India.

And above all, to all you beautiful people living in villages and urban poor communities in cities from whom I draw my inspiration, I pledge to continue my journey for you.

1978

Floods

Fires

Demolitions

Threats

Violence

Poverty

Hunger

These were but some of the realities that had scarred the lives of the people living in slums such as Lakshmipuram, Someshwara and Sudhamanagar. In 1978, Anita entered these areas for the first time, and she saw pain and exploitation in the eyes of the people. For generations, people living in the slums had been marginalized from mainstream development, and denied even the basic needs for survival.

They lived not just in poverty but also in indignity. Women and children were the worst affected.

After that first visit, life was never the same for Anita. She came back possessed with the resolve to strive for change - a change that would replace oppression with hope in the people, especially in the children.

The seed had taken root.

Initially, Anita just spent time with people in the community, learning from them. They were her teachers, she says. They all sat together, united in their vision and determined to improve their lives. Together, they identified and prioritized the needs of the community.

The initial days saw her working with the community; helping them get ration cards, pensions, water and electricity connections, and getting children access to government funded nutrition programmes.

Emerging from these initial experiences, and as the learning grew, there was a paradigm shift in the approach of Anita's work from one of just service to one of activism and struggle. In addition to crisis management, she and the community established systems that were proactive and self reliant. In the midst of all this, Association For Voluntary Action and Services (AVAS) was born. Anita was one of its Founding Trustees.

That was 1980.

In the meantime, the work in the slums was growing from micro level welfare activities to macro level projects. The community was being mobilized to resolve issues related

to land ownership for the poor, slum community shelter projects, leadership development, empowerment programmes for women, youth, and children among other things.

Years passed by and a lot was achieved. Still, a lot more needed to be done. Journeys lay ahead.

1996.

Dwaraknath Reddy Ramanarpanam Trust (DRRT) was established, at times walking hand in hand with AVAS and at other times, forging new paths on its own. Life began to change - for thousands of the poor.

ANITA REDDY LIFE & WORK PROFILE

Background

Anita was born on 14th October 1954. She did her schooling at Rishi Valley India, her B.A English Literature in Chennai and joined Masters of Social Work, in 1974. She left for America in 1975. There amongst other jobs, she worked in a home for senior citizens, “an experience worth having had” she says. She settled in Bangalore in 1978, and in the October of that year walked into a slum, and has ever since been involved in working voluntarily with the poor.

Going back into the years:-

- Has worked voluntarily for 40 years, with urban poor communities living in the slums of Bangalore and Chittoor, and in rural communities living in the villages of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu.
- One of the founding trustees of AVAS (1980), and the Managing Trustee of both DRRT (Dwarakanath Reddy Ramanarpanam Trust-1996) and AVAS (Association for Voluntary Action and Services), - organizations that have worked in empowering the poorer communities in various ways.
- Has been responsible to establish the DRIK Foundation (Dwaraknath Reddy Institutes for Knowledge) and DWARAKA Foundation

(Development of Women And Rural Artisans for Knowledge and Action), and Dwaraka PLUS, a Peoples Livelihoods Upliftment Society, all initiatives of DRRT, managing the functioning of these organizations.

HER WORK INCLUDES:-

- Establishing and running free educational institutions
- Reviving and promoting traditional heritage art, artisans, and different folk forms
- Supporting pre-schools, Learning and Creativity Centers
- Imparting vocational skills promoting self employment schemes
- Organizing women towards SEEGs, (Socially and Economically Empowered Groups)
- Networking adolescent girls and youth through cultural and leadership development platforms
- Building up community centers in slums and villages
- Development of infrastructures in slums and remote rural areas.
- Promoting Shelter for the poor and establishing their right to land and survival.
- Regular dissemination of information at community meetings on the communities' socio-economic-cultural rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis housing.
- Making women the focal point of all community decision making and development strategies.
- Integrating the communities with the neighborhoods.
- Established socio-cultural educational platforms to promote urban-rural linkages so that both communities from the cities and the villages benefit through an empowering cross-linkage programme.

Mile stones and Achievements

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| 1980 | Founded AVAS, a public Trust with other socially concerned activists and professionals. |
| 1981 | Women's voice was established – Anita is a founding member |
| 1982 | KKNSS – A State level Slum dwellers Federation was born – Anita is a founding member. |

IN-SITU SLUM REHOUSING PROJECTS in Bangalore done by **AVAS** under the leadership of Anita Reddy that included developmental work by DRRT with children, youth and women. The challenges included threats to her life and success came against all odds in resolving land and shelter issues in:

1. LAKSHMIPURAM in Indiranagar for 127 families, currently residing in their new homes + incremental rise in housing stock and no.of families rehabilitated there.
2. SOMESHWARA in Ulsoor for 46 families .
3. SUDHAMANAGAR near the airport proposed initially to house 304 families, but succeeded in housing over 1000 families.
4. WAHAB GARDEN – for 55 families + incremental rise in housing stock and families
5. BHANDHAVYANAGAR (PARSI GARDEN) – for 41 families + incremental housing
6. VYALIKAVAl (1&2) – for 42 families.
7. SHASTRINAGAR (Koramangala belt) – 80 to 100 families + overall impact on hundreds rehabilitated in this slum belt
8. HOSKEREHALLI – for 127 families originally; incremental housing model enabled additional housing for another 200+ families
9. KRISHNANPALYA – for 105 families (facilitated with KKNSS)
- 10.GANGANAGAR – 86 families + families also added on (facilitated with KKNSS)
- 11.SANYASIKUNTE II – 206 houses in coordination with KSCB
- 12.SANYASIKUNTE I – 204 houses in coordination with KSCB
- 13.MRS Palya – 165 families. (165 families and another 350 indirectly- by struggling for land for the Khabrastan families also).

Facilitating Housing for the Poor in Chittoor district

- 14.Housing in Shankarayya Gunta in Chittoor, AP
- 15.Facilitating housing upgradation in Nakkal Colony Tiruchannur, AP.
- 16.Facilitating housing for Kattladoddi community in Chittoor, AP

INFRASTRUCTURE : individual, integrated, community owned, collectively managed, separate and common infrastructure including potable water, toilets, roads, electricity, sanitation, pavements, etc. have also been implemented by DRRT & AVAS in many slum communities and villages.

FINANCING THE HOUSING IN SLUMS :

DRRT & AVAS have successfully raised funds for housing slum communities through

- a) SELF – HELP GROUPS that are motivated to save and help act as social collateral's to access loans.
- b) HUDCO – with either Government guarantee or community guarantee.
- c) HDFC – with community guarantee and a risk – guarantee seed capital.
- e) ROTARY CLUBS and other Charitable institutions.

Recovery records have been near perfect.

1996

DRRT (Dwaraknath Reddy Ramanarpanam Trust), registered by its founding trustee Mr. Dwarakanath Reddy. Since 1998, Anita is working as its Managing Trustee. In that capacity, and as the Managing Trustee of AVAS, she has capably interlinked and networked all the organizations with AVAS' programs.

1999

DRRT initiated two platforms which have worked as partners with AVAS.

DRIK and DWARAKA

DRIK focused on establishing education models for the poor, especially children in slums, evolving curriculum that is grass roots based, rights oriented and truly empowering.

DWARAKA worked towards livelihood generation and socio-economic empowerment of villages.

Anita's work has been always been towards the holistic development of Communities. As a result, aspects related to women, health, land and shelter rights etc. have all been included in her struggles for the poor.

DRIK(Dwaraknath Reddy Institutes for Knowledge)

<i>DRIK - DRISHYA (June 2002)</i>	Learning Centres for children living in Bangalore slums - 6 slums in Bangalore are covered at present. (Evolved into Drishya Foundation)
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<i>DRIK - Jeevanostava (2002)</i>	A cultural empowerment network for thousands of children from different slums of Bangalore, villages of Karnataka, rural communities in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh (including DWARAKA), in Tiruvannamali in TN, and Government schools in these States.
<i>DRIK-VIVEKA (2002)</i>	A 40 acre residential campus developed and DRIK-DWARAKA Academy established to take “education beyond schooling” – promoting the EKO-ARC program.
<i>DRIKPATASHALA (June 2006)</i>	A school with a difference for children living in Chittoor slums – promoting an evolving curriculum on rights based learning.
<i>DRIK NACOLDEV (Since 2008)</i>	Established An educational programme and Government collaborated school for the tribal children of Nakkal colony, Tiruchanur, Chittoor district, .
<i>DWARAKA (1998) (Evolved into DWARAKA PLUS in 2009)</i>	Established in villages around the temple town of Srikalahasti in Chittoor district, in Andhra Pradesh as the platform for the Development of Weavers And Rural Artisans in Kalamkari Art has impacted the livelihoods of the kalamkari artists and weavers families. Also touching the lives of many other people in this area, it has worked for the socio-economic empowerment of the Sri Kalahasti region.It evolved into a registered society, Dwaraka PLUS (Dwaraka Peoples Livelihoods Upliftment Society).
<i>SWECHA (2004)</i>	(Satsang Womens Empowerment Collective for Holistic Advancement) SWECHA started working with ‘Sugali’ tribal families in Madanapalli, Chittoor district Andhra Pradesh – livelihood generation, spread to rural areas.
<i>NACOLDEV (2005)</i>	A nomadic community of tribal families, now settled near Tirupathi who trade in costume, jewelry, beads and trinkets – livelihoods generation.
<i>SHILPI (2007)</i>	(Society for Holistic Initiatives and Leadership Promoting Institute) Promote the Craft of terracotta sculpting for rural youth, especially dalits, from Chikkaballapur district.

<i>RATNA Centre</i>	(Ranjini Amma Training and Networking for Action Centre) at Chittoor Deserted and destitute women from the slums and villages around Chittoor are being given opportunities towards skill development and income generation helping them to become economically independent.
<i>INDIRA and SURU Centres (2010) Pulicherla</i>	(Indian Network of Development Initiatives for Rural Action and Society for Urban and Rural Upliftment) Women from rural backgrounds around Pulicherla villages of Andhra Pradesh are being given skills, and self-employment opportunities to become self – reliant. Youth are being trained to learn computers, and improve communication skills in villages.

Impacting State and National Policy:

ANITA has also served in various policy making committees at State and National level in her capacity as:

- Board member of Karnataka Slum Clearance Board
- Task Force Member on housing the poor, set up by the Government of Karnataka
- A Member of the National Committee set up by Government of India towards the United Nations Conference on Human Settlement at Istanbul, Turkey
- Member of the Highlevel Task Force Committee on Affordable Housing For All set up by Govt. of India - from Jan 15th 2008 to date
- Member of the ABIDE Committee (Agenda for Bangalore Infrastructure Development) set up by the Govt. of Karnataka and heading sub-committee on urban poor
- Committee Member of the Micro – Housing Finance set up by ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India
- Member, Planning Commission set by Government of India in 2011, sub-group on artisan’s welfare and development and working group on urban poverty
- Member of BUPP-Bangalore Urban Poverty Alleviation project steering committee established by Karnataka State Government and the Netherlands Government.

- Member of the National Committee for RAY- Rajeev Awaz Yojana towards formulating National housing policy and contributed in impacting slum “insitu” development.
- Jury Member in Namma Bengaluru Awards selection panel.
- A Trustee of the Sarvodaya International Trust, Karnataka Chapter
- Ex-Board Member of Public Affairs Centre (PAC)
- One of the founding members of Women’s Voice-a movement of Urban Poor women in Karnataka
- One of the founding members of KKNSS (Karnataka Kolageri Nivasigala Samyukta Sanghatane) - a movement of urban poor slum dwellers in Karnataka.

UN CONFERENCES ATTENDED / REPRESENTED COUNTRY

- 1987-UN Conference at Nairobi, Kenya, Africa on Shelter for the Shelter less
- 1995-UN Conference on Women at Beijing- Huaru, China.
- Represented country at HABITAT-II - Second UN Human Settlements Conference in 1996 in Istanbul, Turkey.

RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS

- ❖ *Padma Shri Award was conferred on her by the Hon’ble President of India – 2010 (received on April 1st 2011)*
- ❖ *IFAM- International Folk Art Market at Santa Fe, USA- Community Impact award–2019.*
- ❖ *Padma Legends award from ART MANTRAM– 2019.*
- ❖ *Life Time Achievement Award from Crafts Council of Telangana’s -Sanmaan Awards –2018.*
- ❖ *The Lifetime Achievement Award from the TANA Chittoor district NRIs – given in Detroit in July 2015*
- ❖ *Mantram Achievement Awards for Women 2014 was conferred on me (received on 18th June 2014) for life time achievement in reviving the Heritage Arts*

- ❖ *Kempegowda Award 1997 from Bangalore Corporation*
- ❖ *Public Relations Award in 1994 from Public Relations Society of India*
- ❖ *Bengalurean Citizen of the year award – Namma Bengaluru Foundation – for 2010*
- ❖ *Mahila Sadhaki Award of the Guild of Women Achievers in 1997*
- ❖ *HUDCO recognition award for outstanding performance amongst NGO's in 2001-2002 (to AVAS)*
- ❖ *Award from Telugu Vignana Samithi- Krishnadeva raya celebrations 2010*
- ❖ *Chittoor Dt. Centenary celebrations award –Government of Andhra Pradesh-2010*
- ❖ *Professional Excellence Award 1989-90 from Rotary Club of Bangalore*
- ❖ *On the occasion of 64th Republic day, Canara Bank honored her with an award for her yeoman service to society (received on January 26th 2013)*
- ❖ *Uttama Vanitha Award from Bharathamuni Academy (April 2012)*
- ❖ *HUDCO Hari Om Ashram First prize 2001-2002 (AVAS)*
- ❖ *Women Achiever Award in 2002 from Ladies Circle India*
- ❖ *An expo of the best in Bharatiya trade and industry in 2000 – Dwaraka, 'Swadesi Mela*
- ❖ *Award of Honour from Altrusa of Bangalore*
- ❖ *Air force Welfare Association Award on March 8th 2001*
- ❖ *Dr. B.R Ambedkar Award in 1999 from V.K.M Kalavidaru, Bangalore*
- ❖ *The recognition of support for various community service project during the year 98-99 Rotary International Award*

- ❖ *HUDCO Hari Om Ashram Sir. M Vishveshwarayya Prize Rs. 75,000/-(AVAS)*
- ❖ *The Jean Harris Award from Rotary International*
- ❖ *Prathibha Shri award from Shesha Maha ganapathi mahila sangha 32nd anniversary celebrations 2016*
- ❖ *WCC alumnae award from Women's Christian College*

Working intensely at grassroots to create sustainable settlements in a number of slums and villages she says,

“The greatest award has been the work itself – humbling as it is-- touching lives, life itself has been a challenging and happy journey of service and fulfillment. In the giving has been the receiving” .