

Art for Livelihood Project

Summary Assessment Report

by
UNESCO New Delhi

1. Background

Art for Livelihood project implemented by banglanatak dot com since 2004 with a primary focus to improve the livelihood of traditional rural artists communities in the 6 districts of West Bengal attracted the attention of UNESCO New Delhi office in 2007 because of its great potential to contribute to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and as a possible model to advance the discourse of Culture and Development in India. In 2008, UNESCO requested banglanatak dot com to produce a report summarizing the project methodology and self impact evaluation. In 2009, as Art for Livelihood project entered in its second phase with the funding of the European Union, UNESCO New Delhi has agreed to be part of the project board members with a view to assessing the viability of methodology and the impact of the of Art for Livelihood project. The report accordingly summarizes the Project's approach (target and design), its achievement& deliverables as well as impact against success indicators. Overall analysis of the project is provided at the end.

The present brief report is based on various monitoring notes produced by banglanatak dot com and the interactions between UNESCO officer and the office of banglanatak dot com and various project stakeholders including artist communities, event organizers, artists and academics from abroad between 2007 and 2011. UNESCO New Delhi had opportunities to make field visits to some of the key project sites (Purulia and Paschim Midnapore) both during the normal period and festive season.

2. Art for Livelihood: Its Approach in Brief

Target/Scope: 3200 artists involved in 6 dying art forms in the 6 most economically backward districts of West Bengal

Chau Dance	Jhumur	Baul & Fakirs
Beneficiaries: 1256	Beneficiaries: 1046	Beneficiaries: 272
Purulia	Purulia and Bankura	Nadia
Ghambira	Domni	Patachitra
Beneficiaries: 315		Beneficiaries: 311
Malda		Purba and Medinipur

Design Summary

Impact Folk artists in the 6 selected districts of West Bengal earns their livelihood better using their inherent traditional skills	Success indicators • Income from shows/sales • Change in standard of living
Outcome New direct market opportunities are created for folk artist communities	Success indicators • Average number of shows / year • Number of choice for place of performance • New promoters
Outputs 1. Rural artists communities are organized and trained to earn their living out of their traditional artistic skills; 2. Rural artists are equipped with marketing tools 3. Rural artists are known to wider audience	
Activities 1.1 Knowledge-Aptitude- Practice Study of folk artists to understand their level of knowledge of art form and motivation towards the participation in the project. 1.2 Develop SHG, provide bank account and train how to run SHG. 1.3 Provide health insurance to all the members of the SHGs and their family members 1.4 Organize local guru-shishya training to improve capacity 1.5 Organize basic life-skill workshop including working together, sharing benefit, maintaining a bank account... 2.1 Develop new productions/repertoires. 2.2 Document/record art forms 2.3 Develop promotional materials (fliers, CDs, YouTube) 2.4 Develop 6 resource centres in 6 districts and train the villagers on how to manage it. 3.1 Organize exchange programmes with artists from India and abroad; 3.2 Invite foreign universities to study Art for Livelihood project 3.3 Sent artists to various existing events in India and abroad; 3.4 Organize Village Festivals	External Funding Support Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre / Ministry of Rural Development, Govt of India (2005-2009) Rs. 2.6 Crore European Union (2009-2011) Rs. 5.4 Crore

3. Project Achievements/Deliverables (2004-10)

Activities	Deliverables/Outputs
1.1 Knowledge-Aptitude- Practice(KAP) Study of folk artists	In 2004, KAP study conducted targeting 5000 rural artists, out of which 3200 artists were selected as project participants / beneficiaries. The survey enabled also to identify some 400 'group leaders'.
1.2 Develop SHG, provide bank account and train how to run SHG.	233 fully operational SHGs created with bank account for each SHG.

1.3 Provide health insurance to all the members of the SHGs and their family members	Insurance provided to all the 3200 project beneficiaries and their immediate family members.
1.4 Organize local guru-shishya training	All the 3200 members received 6 month long training in total
1.5 Organize basic life-skill workshop	400 identified group leaders received training for 4 months.
2.1 Develop new productions/repertoires.	23 new productions got developed in Chau, thematic presentations developed in Baul Fakiri, Vegetable based colour preparation and Patachitra diversified products, Domni Gambhira positioned as social communication tool, Jhumur dance and music repositioned.
2.2 Document/record art forms	More than 1500 songs recorded, 25 DVD/CDs produced, 5 documentaries made.
2.3 Develop promotional materials (fliers, CDs, YouTube)	Fliers developed for each of art form with name and contact of the artists
2.4 Develop community resource centres	Fully operational community centre created in each of the 6 districts run by artists 'communities. Resource serves as places to stay for guests/ researchers, display their work, store materials, for artists to practice and meeting place.
3.1 Organize exchange programmes with artists from India and abroad;	12 collaborative workshops took place with 25 international and 10 national artists.
3.2 Invite foreign universities to study Art for Livelihood project	2 Phd students preparing thesis on Art forms, art for livelihood and 12 MA thesis were done.
3.3 Village Festivals	7 Village Festivals organized
3.4 Sent artists to various existing events in India and abroad;	27 artists visited UK, France, Bangladesh and China.

4. Project Impact

Chau

Indicators	Baseline (2005)	2010
Income from shows	The groups hardly earned from performance. Average payment received for a show was Rs. 1800-.3000 which hardly met production cost.	Payment per show is in the range Rs.3000 – Rs.15,500. Nearly 40% mentioned minimum income from show is Rs.4000 or more. The acclaimed groups get around Rs 7000/- when they perform within the district and around Rs 20000/- while they perform in Kolkata and around Rs 30000/- outside the state. The artists are earning about Rs 3000/- per month on an average.
Change in standard of living	The Chau dancers lived in abject poverty.	Except for Arsha, Bandwan and Purulia-II, in all other blocks it was found that 30-40 % of the Chau groups now have electricity at home while

		practically none had electricity at home when the project commenced.
<i>Average number of shows/year</i>	Average number of shows in a year was 10-12.	Average number of shows in a year is around 25. Leading 30 groups get above 150 shows in a year
<i>Variety of market outreach</i>	Market was limited to Purulia and in a few cases groups performed at Jharkhand.	The Chau groups are invited by Puja organisers across West Bengal and festivals organised by the Government as well as private organisers. They have performed in New Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka and West Bengal. They have performed in UK and Bangladesh.
<i>New promoters</i>	There were few patrons beyond Purulia.	Clubs, College festival organisers, Durga Puja organisers come regular patrons.

Jhumur

Indicators	Baseline (2005)	2010
<i>Income per shows</i>	There was hardly any opportunity for paid performance	Rs.2500 – Rs.8000 (Purulia) Rs.800– Rs.3000 (Bankura)
<i>Change in standard of living</i>	Jhumur was not found acceptable to gentry and was castigated as art of lower class.	Jhumur singers are now respected and are many have got felicitated in local events.
<i>Average number of shows/year</i>	Rs.500-Rs.1000 (Purulia)	Rs.2500 – Rs.8000
	Rs.500-Rs.1000 (Bankura) 70% did not receive any payment.	Rs.800– Rs.3000
<i>Variety of market outreach</i>	There was hardly any opportunity for paid performance	The groups now perform at West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa. They have attended festivals at Goa, Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore
<i>New promoters</i>	There was no audience for male singers singing Jhumur.	The cultural events and festivals in the region now take pride in presenting Jhumur song.

Bauls and Fakirs

Indicators	Baseline (2005)	2010
<i>Income per shows</i>	Most of the Bauls and Fakirs received Rs.40-500 per show. Many never received opportunities for paid performance.	Average income from shows is Rs 2500-10000 (per group of 4-6).
<i>Change in standard of living</i>	Many did not have sanitation at home	The singers have repaired their house. Most have installed latrines. Almost all leaders own mobiles. Some have bought television.

<i>Average number of shows/year</i>	Average number of shows in a year was 8-10.	Average number of shows in a year is around 60- 80. The leading Bauls have 200+ shows in a year.
<i>Variety of market outreach</i>	While one fourth groups had no market reach, others performed mostly in Baul Melas and Akhras in Nadia and a few had been to fairs in Birbhum & Murshidabad .	70% of the groups have performed in different districts all across West Bengal. Artists have performed at Delhi, Jaipur, Dehradun, Goa, Rajasthan, Mumbai and Bangalore. The artists are performing for TV channels like Tara, Akaash, Zee Bangla, 24 Ghanta, Star Jalsa, Mahua TV and All India Radio. Singers have visited China, Bangladesh and UK. They have performed at International Sufi Festival where they interacted with musicians from Egypt, Syria, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Bangladesh and also other parts of India. They are also performing in renowned festivals like Virasat & events like Commonwealth Games.
<i>New promoters</i>	There was lack of promoters and patrons. Only a handful of Baul & Fakiri singers received patronage.	Percussionist Tanmoy Bose has played a key role in promoting Baul & Fakiri art form as part of his group Taal Tantra's programs. Film maker Gautam Ghosh made a national award winning film where the folk artists sang and performed. Television channels regularly telecast Baul & Fakiri programs. Times Music & UD productions have launched CD featuring them.

Gambhira and Domni

Indicators	Baseline (2005)	2010
<i>Income per shows</i>	Rs.1700-Rs.2500	Rs.4000- Rs.9000
<i>Change in standard of living</i>	Most of them had no basic infrastructure namely sanitation and electricity.	94% have sanitation at home and 60% have electricity.
<i>Average number of shows/year</i>	Average number of shows in a year was 10.	Average number of shows in a year is around 30.
<i>Variety of market outreach</i>	Only 3-4 leading groups got opportunities to perform.	The groups are performing all across West Bengal and some have performed at other states as part of awareness campaigns.
<i>New promoters</i>	There was no promoter.	Local cable channels have played a key role in promoting the art form. There are increasing demands for social awareness campaign

Patachitra

Indicators	Baseline (2005)	2010
Monthly income	Rs. 500 in average	Rs. 7000 in average. 40% of Patuas now earn Rs. 15000.
Change in standard of living	Patuas lacked basic infrastructure namely electricity and sanitation.	Most of the Patuas now have sanitary latrines and home. 60% have access to electricity. The leading Patuas now live in brick houses..
Number of fairs attended / year	About 10% of the artists have never attended the fairs. 50% of them attended 1 – 5 fairs a year.	Approx 40% of artists attend 10 – 15 fairs; another 35% attend 5 – 10 fairs. The least successful artists still attend 1 – 5 fairs a year.
Variety of market outreach	Art form was dying due to lack of demand	New orders for apparel and decorative items as well as awareness campaign materials.
New promoters	No regular promoters	District Industries Centre, Development Commissioner of Handicrafts, Galleries, District administration, NGOs, Handicraft retailers like Sasha, Weavers Studio

5. Observation and Conclusion

- Successful results in terms of income generation of artists after 6 years of project investment confirm that using traditional artistic and creative skills of people as source of livelihood is a **viable development model** for rural India.
- The success of the project is due to its **holistic approach** combining KAP baseline study, capacity building, and sustained effort to create direct market linkages for the artists. This methodology has **potentials to be replicated** in another part of India. More over, it has demonstrated that investing in culture could be a tool for rural development.
- Increased income generally leads to improved living conditions and enhanced attitude to take part in development process. Following the increase of the average income from Rs 400 to Rs 2000+ per month, with top 10% earning in tune of Rs. 12-17,000 per month. The availability of sanitation has increased from 4% to 87 % of overall project beneficiaries. The attitude to send their children to schools has increased from 3% to 94%. Equally important is the enhanced social status of the folk artists. Those who were surviving as unskilled daily laborers are now respected and earn income as full-fledged artists.
- The project has revealed to be **cost-effective** with Rs. 8 crore investment, the cost per artist over 6 year between 2005-2010 is only Rs. 25,000. This investment has in turn led to the general increase of income of individual artist by about Rs 1600+ per month.
- The project has turned out to be **an efficient tool for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage**: encouraged by commercial success and increased income opportunities, the number of regularly performing artists groups has increased and the interest was raised among the younger generation to take part in the practice as their future job option. For instance, the average age of Baul Fakir singers have decreased from 62 to 43.

- The success has also helped folk artists to understand the market interest on the tradition itself and gain confidence in maintaining the original features of the art forms, which has resulted in *safeguarding their authenticity*
- Media coverage and village festivals have helped the enhancement of community recognitions.
- The next challenge consists of addressing the disparity within the folk artist communities. Not all the groups are equally talented and commercially successful. Still a limited number of opportunities do not allow all the artists groups to have the same level of market exposures. Effort is being made to this end to promote the villages of folk artists as destination for cultural/educational tourism to experience authentic folk cultures. This approach, bringing urban audience/customers to the villages, has an advantage of giving market exposures to a larger segment of artists groups in comparison to conventional marketing strategy consisting of sending artists to urban market which usually supports only a limited number of beneficiaries.
- Finally, the project shows the possibility for a traditional art form to survive through creating its own market and to convert the conventional government "subsidy" and "patronage" to "investment". **Recognizing its methodology, UNESCO Headquarter has accredited banglanatak dot com as NGO in advisory status for the Intergovernmental Committee of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010.**

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